



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

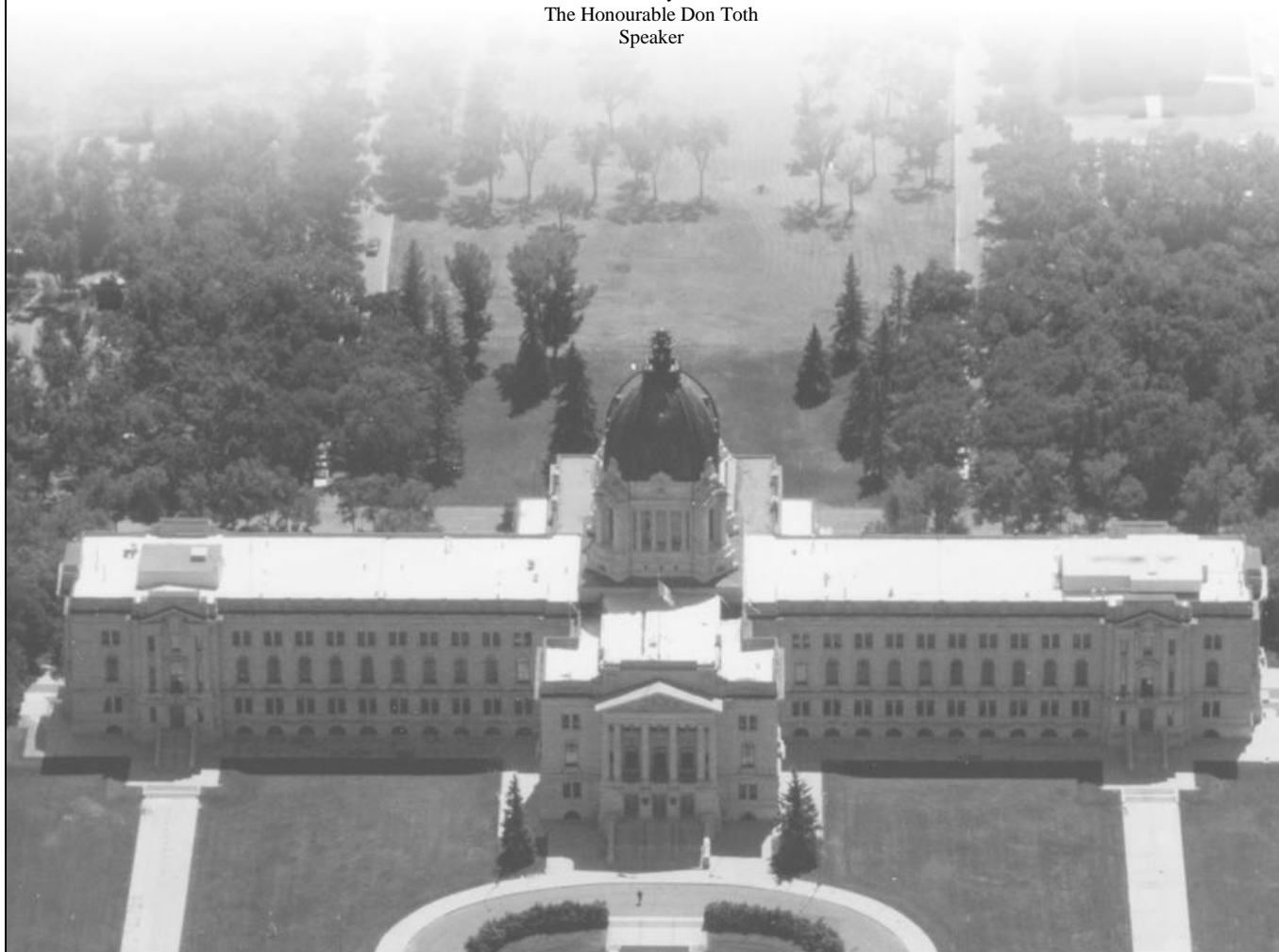
of the

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 — Lorne Calvert

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Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
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Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
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Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
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Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all members of the Assembly, this afternoon seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, are 18 men from a group of stakeholders in this province to my ministry of the protective and emergency services branches, representatives of the Saskatchewan association of firefighters, Mr. Speaker. This group represents professional firefighters, sorry. This group represents about 700 firefighters in this province. And today with the 18 of them, I am pleased to say two of them are from Prince Albert — Lloyd Zwack and Alex Paul, if you want to stand up, you guys. Perfect; it's a privilege, I guess.

Along with them though are their president, Gerry Huget; secretary treasurer, Brian Belitsky; and vice-president, Kirby Benning. I'd like to welcome all to their Assembly today, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Well again to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I have another honour today to introduce to you members from the policing community. Today we have class 57 from my alumni, my old police college, the Saskatchewan Police College. If you want to stand, please. Some of these men and women are being resourced by this government as part of our initiative of the 30 officers this year in the budget, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much, you can sit down.

With them today, Mr. Speaker, are Gary Morin, the director of the college, and the college's training officer, Basil Kuzyk. I'm also very happy to say that today we have members of the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police in the gallery, Mr. Speaker. Chief Dale McPhee, from my old police service, the Prince Albert Police Service, is the president of the Association of Chiefs of Police. We've got Chief Clive Weighill, the chief of the Saskatoon Police Service; Superintendent Murray Roe representing the Regina Police Service; and Superintendent Jim Templeton of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police].

If I can add, Mr. Speaker, before I close, is that for some reason we had a strange request to have these men and women from the firefighters and the police tour our offices for some reason. I'm not quite sure why — something about calendars, I understand. But on a serious note, I also want to let people know here, and I've said it before, that these two groups of men and women provide a very essential service to the citizens of this province.

When men and women run away from problems and disasters

and situations, it's this group right here — I'm very proud to say — run into those problems, Mr. Speaker, deal with them head on, putting themselves into harm's way to protect every citizen in this province. And they do this without question. It's a matter of pride and dedicated service to this province and to the citizens. And welcome to your Assembly. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On behalf of the opposition, I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming our many guests today to the House, the 18 members of the Association of Professional Fire Fighters and their president, Gerry Huget, and the members of class 57 from the Saskatchewan Police College. Welcome to our Assembly, hope you enjoy your time here today, as well as your instructors and the members of the chiefs of police. We welcome you here today and join with the minister in hoping you have a good day.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, two fine young men, Mr. Dustin Bisson, a grade 12 student from Craik High School, who is very interested in politics and hopes to be sitting in a seat in these chambers one day. Dustin is on a work experience program through his school and is spending his time learning about running the legislature. He said he believes his greatest achievement in life so far is to be allowed to be here.

Dustin is a busy young man who works for a lawn service in the summer, shovels snow during the winter months, and volunteers at the Craik library. He likes to curl and go biking. He's just a very busy young person. And we wish you well in your future career, Dustin, and hope to see you back here in these chambers some time in the future.

Accompanying Dustin is Dylan Bossenberry, currently enrolled in grade 11 at Craik High School. A member of the senior boys' basketball team, Dylan is on the Craik School community council and also interested in politics.

I ask all members to join in welcoming these two fine, young, high school students with aspirations of sitting here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, in your east gallery I would like to you and through you introduce to the legislature some health care workers who provide services in our health care

system, but these members are members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees bargaining committee. And a particular mention to Gord Campbell, president of that bargaining unit, and the health care workers, and chief negotiator, Mike Keith.

I ask all members to welcome them to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the legislature, and I'm very proud to introduce 27 grade 10 students from Melville Comprehensive School. I'd also like to recognize their teachers, Mr. Speaker, and chaperones, Perry Ostapowich, Stuart Wilson, and Bob Simpson.

Mr. Ostapowich is probably becoming a very familiar name in this legislature. He's been a faithful visitor with his classes here for many years; in fact almost as long as I've been in this building. And I think all members probably really appreciate the interest that he takes in the legislative proceedings, but makes sure that he passes that on to his students.

So I ask everyone to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased again to stand and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, 27 grade 6 students from W.F. Ready School in my constituency. Mr. Speaker, they're here today to see the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly.

But I have to say, Mr. Speaker, their teacher, Stephanie Wotherspoon, has informed me I'm not her favourite MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask all members to join me in welcoming Michael Couros who's seated in the back row of the west gallery, who has moved from the backrooms of politics to now the back row. Mr. Couros is a long-time resident of Saskatoon, a financial planner, and I'm pleased to see him in his legislature today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to join in with the member from Regina Dewdney and welcome my wife Stephanie to the Assembly

with her wonderful class of grade 6 students from W.F. Ready School.

I certainly hope that I'm her favourite MLA, but I'll clarify that maybe later. I know that those students sitting up there have incredibly bright futures before them. I know that my wife, their teacher, certainly appreciates teaching them and just appreciates her students. So I would like to welcome these students to our Assembly here today. I know they have report cards coming out on Friday; I wish them well with that.

And tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, they're visiting the city of Regina landfill, and they're studying their recycling program and the composting program and the gasification program that's going on. I welcome them; I welcome the class. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce a couple of constituents and friends of mine from the Beechy area: Ed Bothner who is also the president of the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association. With him is Reg Schellenberg who is the second vice-president, I believe, with the stock growers, and joining them is Chad McPherson, the executive director. And I ask all members to please give them a warm welcome to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan families who are having difficulty accessing or/and affording quality child care spaces for their children which really limits their future in today's economy. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately add at least 1,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to present a petition regarding means testing in the seniors' drug plan. Many seniors in our province are finding it difficult to afford their drugs and their rent:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to means test seniors and ensure that all seniors continue to have access to affordable prescription drugs.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from Holbein, Duck Lake, and Prince Albert. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on indexing the minimum wage to protect Saskatchewan residents from the cost of living and sporadic wage increases. The petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to indexing Saskatchewan's minimum wage to ensure that the standard of living of minimum wage earners is maintained in the face of cost of living increases.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Petitions are signed by residents of Saskatoon, Regina, and Churchbridge. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of affordable housing for Saskatchewan seniors, a very critical issue as we approach winter. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to act as quickly as possible to expand affordable housing options for Saskatchewan senior citizens.

I do so present. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition concerning the high cost of post-secondary education. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to increase funding for post-secondary

students and to help to alleviate the large financial burden placed on students for pursuing a post-secondary education at a Saskatchewan institution.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition was presented to me through the Canadian Federation of Students, University of Regina Students' Union, and the University of Saskatchewan's Students' Union, and the First Nations University of Canada Student Association. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions in support of a property tax reduction. This is desired by Saskatchewan families and business people across our province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to stop withholding and to provide significant, sustainable, long-term property tax relief to property owners by 2009 through significantly increasing the provincial portion of education funding.

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

These petitions are signed by concerned citizens of Regina.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Canadian Transplant Games

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of some very special athletes that have overcome challenges that not many of us face. This summer, a very special Team Saskatchewan headed off to Windsor, Ontario, to take part in the Canadian Transplant Games.

The team was very successful and returned with some very impressive results including: Orest Saskiw, Saskatoon, silver medal in long jump, heart transplant; Larry Krekelwich, Melville, silver medal in golf, kidney transplant; Carol Epp from Langham, gold in 100 metre, 200 metre, 3 K road race, silver in ball throw, liver transplant; Sheryl Mamchur, Saskatoon, gold in ball throw, bronze in 100 and 200 metre, liver transplant; and Jamie Bourassa Vermeulen, Saskatoon, gold in the 3 K, 100 metre and 200 metre, and he had a liver transplant. And Norm Paproski, from Saskatoon, silver in golf, a double lung transplant.

Now Norman says, and I quote, "The interaction with other transplant recipients across Canada and especially with donor

families created the best support group that one could ask for.” He goes on to say, “I feel very strongly that organ donation does work, and we need a greater awareness program.”

In the past, athletes have been sent to world games as well. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, they are involved in a movement that profiles a very important issue in health care — organ and tissue donation. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating these athletes and we wish them the very best in the many years ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

National Addictions Awareness Week

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, November 16 to the 22 is both Saskatchewan and National Addictions Awareness Week.

This year Saskatchewan Addictions Awareness Week will focus on examining the role alcohol plays in the lives of youth and adults. Communities across our province have worked hard to plan events to commemorate this week including family skates, poster contests, and sober walks.

Our website, healthysask.ca, offers resources like fact sheets and games for communities to use when planning activities. This year we have also developed a series of posters for youth and adults. The message to youth is that you can have fun and fit in without drinking. To adults the message is to think about how they are modelling alcohol for the youth.

Mr. Speaker, we need to remember that addictions work takes place year-round. In this year’s budget, our government committed more than \$47 million for alcohol and drug services alone. Alcohol and drug services are available in every health region. In Saskatchewan there is a variety of detox, in-patient, and outpatient services. We offer day treatment, community mobile treatment, and methadone maintenance therapy.

Mr. Speaker, life with an addiction is not easy. People who want to recover need support not only from their families and friends but also from their communities. Join us in recognizing Saskatchewan and National Addictions Awareness Week.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my honour to attend the Duke of Edinburgh Awards this past Saturday, November 15. The Duke of Edinburgh Awards were founded by His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. They are intended to promote and to foster the healthy development of our young citizens. The program focuses on setting and achieving personal goals in four areas:

community service, skills, physical recreation, and adventurous journey.

Awards were presented by His Honour the Hon. Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, to the following Saskatchewan youth: Zoe Parkinson of Unity; Kate Humphreys of Wilcox; James Howden, Edgeley; Terra Lynn Lekach, Kelliher; Kolby Kostyniuk, Imperial; Brandon Cressman and Trevor Paschke of Tisdale; Adam Kapeller of Crooked River; Dominique McKercher of Oxbow; Shayne Suchan of Estevan.

Of Regina: Jennifer Smith, Graeme Andrews, Eva Rennie, Christina Leurer, Nolan Werry.

Of Fort Qu’Appelle: Max Cheers, Michael Head, Jylissa Hinton, Mercedes Hollerbaum, Wendy Li.

I would like to thank all those who assisted these youth in achieving their goals and all of the supporters, volunteers, and staff of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards of Saskatchewan. I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in extending to these youth our pride and our gratitude. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Qu’Appelle Valley.

50th Anniversary of Stem Cell Transplants in Saskatchewan

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fellow members of the Assembly, I am pleased to call your attention to a notable anniversary in health. Fifty years ago today the first stem cell transplant in Canada was performed right here in Saskatchewan. Two physicians conducted the procedure in Regina on a leukemia patient from Moose Jaw. This medical first in November 1958 helped pave the way for improved cancer treatment in Saskatchewan and across Canada.

This anniversary is an excellent opportunity to renew our commitment to both patients and to our partners in Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the Saskatoon Health Region. With their support we ensure viable, sustainable stem cell transplant services for our residents. Mr. Speaker, we believe it is vitally important to provide patients with specialized services close to home.

We support a strengthened program that will increase our capacity to provide these services. Advocacy groups such as the Saskatchewan Stem Cell Transplant Advocacy Group play a major role as we develop plans for improved services. Patients and their families are a rich resource of information and insight. We need and appreciate their active participation. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Métis Korean War Veteran Honoured

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of a man who was a friend to many in Moose Jaw and across the province. Mr. John Pederson passed away on Monday, November 12 at the age of 79.

John, the eldest sibling of 12, was born in Ile-a-la-Crosse, then resided in Buffalo Narrows where his family fished, logged, and ran a mink farm. At the age of 13 years, he ventured to the Meadow Lake area looking for work. And at the age of 22, he joined the army and was sent overseas where he served from 1951 to 1953 as a medic in the Korean War. After discharge, John eventually made Moose Jaw his home and began a 37-year career with the city.

John involved himself in many organizations, and he was very proud of his Métis heritage and served as an elder to the Southern Plains Métis Local 160. John was also a tireless advocate for Korean veterans and sought justice and equal treatment for his fellow comrades.

In 2005, the Year of the Veteran, John received a number of honours for his dedication and service. And just this past summer, he had the opportunity to travel to Korea to attend ceremonies in recognition of the 55th anniversary of Métis vets. He described the excursion as “the trip of a lifetime.”

John was predeceased by his first wife, and he leaves to mourn his son, Rod, and family; his wife, Maxine; and a large extended family. John Pederson will be remembered by all who knew him for his kind words, his warm smile, a bit of a mischievous personality, and a strong support for community.

I would ask all members to join me in expressing condolences to the family and join with me in celebrating a life well lived. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Education Portion of Property Taxes

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is reporting Saskatchewan businesses are the most optimistic in the country. After an exhaustive survey, the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] found most business owners in Saskatchewan are the most likely in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker, to say that they expect performance to be much stronger over the next 12 months. Why, Mr. Speaker? Here’s what the CFIB’s Marilyn Braun-Pollon had to say:

The Premier’s bold economic statement in October sent a very positive message to Saskatchewan’s business community that the province is serious about putting the economy first in these uncertain economic times. The next step for the provincial government is to take the same vigilance towards providing long-term education property tax relief.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me read from our “A Stronger Saskatchewan. A Better Life.” Throne Speech:

The Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Education continues to work diligently on this issue.

He has conducted meetings with people and organizations in the education field and has also made a call for submissions from those who want to have a further opportunity to make their voices heard [on this very important issue].

A final report on this important issue will be delivered to the Minister of Education in early 2009 — a report that will . . . [form] the basis for reforming the education tax system and reducing the education portion of property tax.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Parkridge Centre Computer Program

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the Parkridge Centre is a long-term care facility situated on the west side of the city of Saskatoon in the constituency of Saskatoon Fairview. Residents and clients have wide ranging medical conditions and diverse physical and psychological abilities.

Since their opening in 1987, the Parkridge Centre has been considered one of the finest examples of barrier-free living for the physically challenged. The centre was designed with a strong emphasis on the quality of life for residents and their families.

Mr. Speaker, the Parkridge Centre offers a number of programs that accommodate the diverse needs of residents who live there. The residents’ computer program is one of those programs, and Parkridge Centre is the only facility in Saskatoon that is staffed with a coordinator and assisted by a group of volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, Tammy Jackson, assistant technologist at the Parkridge Centre, works with over 50 active residents with the number of participants increasing every day. The residents’ computer program provides cognitive stimulation as well as provides leisure needs.

Mr. Speaker, in early October I attended an event to celebrate improvements made to the computer room that will assist residents in becoming more independent using computers. Improvements involved making the area more accessible as well as providing more equipment that would be accessible to the majority of the group’s needs.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to see and participate in one of the programs offered in the residents’ computer program. Skype has online chat capabilities with a webcam so residents can see who they are speaking to during their online chats. This important program has opened up communication for residents and their families as residents are now able to see and speak to

their families outside the Parkridge Centre.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in recognizing Tammy Jackson and the Parkridge Centre for their great enthusiasm and support for residents who call Parkridge Centre their home. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before I call question period I just want to remind members again of the rules that have been adopted through the years through the hard work of members from all sides of the House. Rule 19(3) indicates to us and more specifically to ministers that:

Responses shall be relevant to the question, but a Minister may decline to answer or may take notice of a question.

I just bring that to your attention.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Fire Protection Issues

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, firefighters regularly place themselves in danger, protecting the lives and property of Saskatchewan people. Currently these professionals can only receive entry-level training in Saskatchewan but have to complete their program in Alberta. To the Minister of Advanced Education and Labour: will he commit to providing additional funding so that a state of the art fire college can be created in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to talk about the future needs of firefighters across the province. Mr. Speaker, again we've had the opportunity to explore this. This conversation has come up in a number of communities. We've had this discussion ranging right across the province starting in Lloydminster, areas in Swift Current as well as over in Yorkton. So, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly under consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, it has been determined that esophageal cancer is occupationally linked to the firefighting profession. Mr. Speaker, it has also been determined that firefighters contract testicular cancer at a rate higher than normal, and that this type of cancer is becoming more apparent in young males. Will the minister commit today to amend *The Workers' Compensation Act* to include esophageal cancer as being linked to the occupation of firefighting and to amending

the WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] regulations to reduce the latency period from 20 . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I ask the member to place his question.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to amending the WCB regulations to reduce the latency period from 20 to 5 years so young firefighters can receive the coverage and compensation they deserve if they contract testicular cancer?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, certainly members of our caucus were part of a meeting this morning. Those conversations are certainly under consideration. As far as the years of neglect, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are probably better positioned to look at those.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the insufficient staffing of fire departments not only reduces the level of service provided to the communities they serve but also increases the level of risk to those professionals. Will the minister agree to provide the funding needed to assure that professional fire departments throughout Saskatchewan are adequately staffed — a minimum of five initial responders — so that firefighters can meet the needs of the communities they serve, Mr. Speaker? And this will cost approximately \$2.4 million.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member opposite for the question.

I would like to say that it was for the last 16 years that this issue has never been addressed by that previous government. I will have the members of the Legislative Assembly know today that the great work done by the members of the local fire services in this province are putting forth a study — I've asked my members from Prince Albert to do that in Prince Albert and take it to the executive — a study indicating what they actually want, where the services will be used, how many members are required. If they want to advance public safety, Mr. Speaker, this government and this side would love to help them, Mr. Speaker, in some way. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Support for Workers

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cost of living is rising in this province, partly due to the decisions that the Sask Party is making, for example the decision to increase home heating costs. Saskatchewan workers deserve the security of knowing that their wages will keep pace with these rising costs.

The previous government set in motion a set of increases to the minimum wage, the last of which will take effect next year, but the Sask Party has done nothing to provide for further increases. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: does this government have any plans to increase the minimum wage?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, as I have told the member opposite on a number of occasions — I will continue to repeat it because I think it's a good news story — is that we increased the shelter rates for our clients. For any clients under Social Services, the utilities are fully paid. Even if they're increased, they will be fully paid. For the low-income earners, if the member from Moose Jaw would just listen, for low-income workers we significantly increased the Saskatchewan employment supplement, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, over the last three days we've heard how the Sask Party provides for its friends. In just one year they spent millions of dollars lining the pockets of Sask Party insiders and millions more to get rid of people who didn't want to share in the glory of the Sask Party . . .

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, working families don't find life under the Sask Party quite so glorious. Workers earning minimum wage in particular are struggling to make ends meet, and many more wonder whether their income will keep pace with the cost of living here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Labour: will he index the minimum wage to inflation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak about the 520,000-plus people working in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — 17,100 new jobs, October to October, Mr. Speaker. Youth employment up, Mr. Speaker.

Aboriginal employment up, Mr. Speaker. Thirteen thousand new jobs for women, Mr. Speaker, year over year. A 10 per cent drop in EI [employment insurance] benefit recipients, Mr. Speaker, August to August; 3.3 per cent unemployment, the lowest unemployment in the country.

And, Mr. Speaker, regarding wages, a 4.9 per cent increase July to July, which is the largest year-over-year increase in wages in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Our track record speaks for itself. The working people of this province are doing very well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, this minister likes to talk about a track record, but if you're living from paycheque to paycheque, it doesn't mean an awful lot. What they really need is a paycheque that's a little bit larger — period. Not everyone is making \$120,000 as a chief of staff to this, for example, some of the Sask Party ministers.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Labour: why does this government have one standard for its friends and another for people trying to make ends meet on minimum wage?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we could ask the 80,000 people that have been taken off the tax roll that question, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Or we could also remind the member opposite that already in this year, we've increased minimum wage already twice, Mr. Speaker. That's why, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — As far as the broader question, Mr. Speaker, it's still under review and I appreciate the opportunity to continue speaking about the working people of this province. In fact we can make reference to the population where over 16,000-plus people have moved back to or to the province for the first time because they're so optimistic about the working conditions in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Essential Services Legislation

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, we have tried, we have tried, and we have tried to get simple answers out of the Minister of Labour, but between, Mr. Speaker, between his over-the-top

rhetoric and his lack of knowledge on his file, we all know that hasn't been easy. We asked the question last year and we asked this question this week and still we have no answers.

To the Minister of Labour: will he please just table a list of what public sector workers are affected by essential service legislation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the opportunity to provide additional insight . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well regarding music therapy, I will respond over here. It seems like a fair question. You know, a few weeks back at the SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour], there was a version of music therapy and I think a number of members opposite participated in that.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we can talk about regarding essential service, Mr. Speaker, we can go back to the four criteria, Mr. Speaker. That is regarding human safety. We can look at property and the premises, equipment. We can look at environmental damage, Mr. Speaker, as well as disruption to the courts.

Mr. Speaker, the key here is to ensure that the people of this province know that when snow falls, the highways will be plowed. If there's a strike like there was last year at the Royal University Hospital where towards the end of that strike over 400 people per day were being turned away, Mr. Speaker, they have access to health care, Mr. Speaker. That's what the people of this province need to know and they know that as the Act stands, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, earlier this week there were members of the public service here in the building and they seem to know — unlike the minister — who was affected. They said that 95 per cent of the public sector workforce was affected and this included musical therapists and librarians. And the minister was asked by the media, is this true? And of course the minister had no idea. So he got one of his officials to answer the questions. The official called these claims by the unions to be quote "unsubstantiated allegations." To the minister: will he stand by his official's allegations?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, obviously the months that intervened, the member opposite really, he didn't work to enhance his understanding of essential service legislation, Mr. Speaker. He's got a lot of work to do, Mr. Speaker, and that is it's enabling legislation, Mr.

Speaker.

That is there's a 90-day threshold. The parties are meant to ensure that they come to an agreement, Mr. Speaker. If they can't, there's a second threshold at 30 days, Mr. Speaker. Then the list is made available from the employer to the bargaining unit, Mr. Speaker. From there again there's an opportunity to resolve any outstanding conflicts. The reference point is not the minister, Mr. Speaker. It is the Labour Relations Board, Mr. Speaker. It's a key and philosophical premise that that way the parties can be heard in a fair fashion, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the member opposite comprehends that notion of what's included in essential services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, it's laughable about the minister talking about comprehension of services but, Mr. Speaker, it's actually pretty simple. We have a list, and here's the list from one of the health regions — just one health region, Mr. Speaker. It is 10 pages long and has 200 types of occupations. And yes, it includes musical therapists and librarians.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these people do important work. But maybe the minister can answer: why are they considered essential. Simple question, Mr. Speaker. Do musical therapists affect public safety, or do they prevent damage to property? Which is it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, absolutely the government's number one priority is the safety and security of our Saskatchewan residents. If that means in a hospital setting, Mr. Speaker, our hospitals do have to remain open so that there's emergency care, so that there's urgent care.

And in the case of for example a librarian, would that be classed as essential? Let's review the case. If a surgery is under way and a surgeon needs information from a research librarian, would that be essential? Because there have been deaths in the United States when those people were not made available to a surgeon, and that would be . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. If members want question period just to roll by without any questions, continue to interfere. Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I call the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow to order. Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, in that situation, that would definitely be classed as an essential service. But this needs to be looked at by reasonable people. Is a music therapist an essential service? No, it isn't essential service. Is a librarian

that will give research to a surgeon that has a very important case essential? You bet it is, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, at least the Minister of Health knows yes or no, which obviously escapes the Minister of Labour. But, Mr. Speaker, let me remind you of what the minister's senior official told the media and the public on Monday, and I quote, "The fact that someone makes an unsubstantiated allegation that is not heard before the Labour Relations Board is not evidence of anything."

The minister was standing right there when his official made this commitment to the media. To the minister: why did he not correct that official? Was it because he wanted this false information out there, or did he just not know the answer?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, once again we go to the fundamentals of essential service Act, Mr. Speaker, the four criteria. We can talk about the balance, Mr. Speaker, between the right to strike and helping to ensure the protection of the people of this province.

But really what we see across the way, Mr. Speaker, is an attack on a public servant, Mr. Speaker, a witch hunt. So, Mr. Speaker, what we see is the opportunity for the people of this province through this legislation to be protected, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful what that member opposite has just done.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you about witch hunts. I'll tell you about the essential services legislation here in this province — that's a witch hunt, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this minister and this government are just using essential services as a tool; they're using it as a tool to attack the entire public service in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And when the Premier said he was going to war on labour, I guess we see that he wasn't kidding, Mr. Speaker. He wasn't kidding. But will the Minister of Labour admit that he and the rest of that cabinet over there are directing, giving instructions directly to the bargaining tables in this province? Will he admit that, and will the minister admit that they don't believe in collective bargaining, they don't understand collective bargaining, and they are just using essential services as a tool against the public servants in this province? That's what they're doing. And will the minister finally admit that he too has joined the Premier's war on labour in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I think what I'll do is join my colleagues in analyzing that as not a question but a soliloquy, and a sad one at that. Mr. Speaker, let's go back to the basics, the basics, Mr. Speaker. This is about ensuring public safety, Mr. Speaker. The criteria are spelled out.

It relates to the safety of the people. It relates to protecting property. It protects the environment. Mr. Speaker, it ensures that the courts will continue to function. Really, in short order, Mr. Speaker, it ensures that when snow comes, the highways will be cleared, Mr. Speaker. That's what this means. It's consistent with the best practices from across Canada, Mr. Speaker. What's sad is that an opposition could be so out of touch with the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Support for Livestock Producers

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, this morning in Saskatoon, the National Farmers Union issued the results of the year-long study into the cattle industry. The data, Mr. Speaker, is compelling. The cattle industry is facing prices that have collapsed, and in fact this year, prices are half of what they were in the '40s, the '50s, the '60s, the '70s, and the '80s.

To the Minister of Agriculture: how is his government intending on responding to the collapsing prices in the cattle industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the member. Mr. Speaker, for the last year we've been trying to clean up the mess left behind by an NDP [New Democratic Party] government that ignored rural Saskatchewan for 16 years, Mr. Speaker, and that takes a while to get the program starting to turn around and heading in the right direction. That doesn't happen overnight, Mr. Speaker. You can't totally ignore an area for 16 years and expect someone to come in and fix those programs in one year.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to start that to happen. We're putting more money into the programming. We're talking to the federal government, trying to improve the programming, and, Mr. Speaker, maybe a positive sign in the last couple of days is cattle prices have moved up just ever so much. And I think we all know the real answer is if the prices would improve, the dollar stayed down, we'd all be better off, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, this report is crystal clear. Cattle producers in this province and in this country are facing prices half of what they were in the '40s, '50s, '60s, and '70s. And what does the do-nothing government in Ottawa, Regina, have to say? They have absolutely nothing to say.

In fact former Sask Party director and now Conservative MP [Member of Parliament] Lukiwski is quoted today, talking about sector bailout from the federal government, and he says, and I quote, "I do believe that the Prime Minister and the federal Minister of Finance are aware of some of the problems in our sectors, particularly the auto industry and the manufacturing industry."

To the minister: can he get on the telephone and call up Mr. Lukiwski, his cousin in Ottawa, and tell them that the livestock producers are a sector that needs help?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, it just happens that the Premier did talk to the Prime Minister just last week.

Mr. Speaker, I might also add to that, that this afternoon at 4:30, I have a call coming from the Minister of Agriculture to talk about a number of things . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Members will know we have a number of individuals who have joined us today, and I think many times they find it difficult to hear the questions and the responses. I'd ask them to keep this in mind. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also I might say to the member, Mr. Speaker, is that this afternoon at 4:30, I have a call coming from the Minister of Agriculture federally. And that will be one of the issues that we will be talking about.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is totally unlike the opposition sitting over there. When they were here, they were confrontational. They wouldn't even talk to the federal government about anything reasonable, especially for agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan, because the last thing they wanted to do was put any money into rural Saskatchewan and to the agriculture industry in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I see that the Premier's telephone call to the Prime Minister worked so well that there isn't one reference in today's Throne Speech to the livestock industry, Mr. Speaker. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, our favourite son, Tom Lukiwski, says the focus will be on sectors outside of

Saskatchewan since the province is doing so well.

Does the provincial Agriculture minister agree with his federal friend, his Conservative federal friend, that the cattle sector in Saskatchewan is doing well?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we all know the cattle industry is under stress, the hog industry is under stress. And, Mr. Speaker, the main reason it's under stress is because they don't have an adequate program to deal with downturns in the economy like we're seeing right now.

Mr. Speaker, if we go back to 1992, the last time we had a program, the last time . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, the last time we had an adequate program in the province of Saskatchewan that even come close to addressing problems when they arose was the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program. Does anyone on that side of the House remember what happened to the GRIP program? It was ripped up by that government when they came to power. And I believe the premier of the day, Mr. Romanow said, we'll replace it with something even better.

Well to this date, in fact as of November 7 last fall, there had been absolutely nothing put in place. In fact Mr. Wartman, the previous Agriculture minister, did everything in his power, confrontational with the federal government, but everything in his power to actually put in place a program that would deal with the problems in agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to repeat the comments by Kevin Hursch when he says:

The Sask. Party government has been largely ineffectual in stemming the downturn in the cattle and hog industries. The new government [quote] has actually been less supportive than the previous administration.

Now we have a federal Conservative government in Ottawa with an Agriculture minister from Saskatchewan. We have a Conservative Prime Minister in Ottawa with a conservative Premier in Saskatchewan. Now it seems to me that the Premier and the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Ritz, and the Minister of Agriculture in our province can get together and do something, Mr. Speaker.

The livestock industry is hemorrhaging. When are they going to get off of their seat and do something about it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear to us on this side of the House what the previous NDP government thought of rural Saskatchewan. In fact it goes on to say and talk about our rural, redneck base. Now that's quite a comment coming from someone that was in government for 16 years and really let on . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I call the members to order. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was always in wonderment at what they really thought of rural Saskatchewan and where their priorities were. And some of those priorities are starting to come to light, Mr. Speaker. And it comes through the Agri-Food Equity Fund.

And I just want to remind the member, do you know where they put the dollars that were supposed to be designed for agriculture? They invested them into private business all over the province to the tune of \$31 million over about a six-year period.

You know how many dollars they actually lost on those ventures, Mr. Speaker? \$19.5 million were lost because they got into private business out in rural Saskatchewan in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, if their priorities were in order, and actually cared about farmers and ranchers . . .

The Speaker: — The minister's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations.

Saskatchewan Transportation Company Expands Northern Service

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I rise today to inform the House about a very important and positive development for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Transportation Company, STC, has been providing safe, reliable, and courteous bus passenger and freight services to Saskatchewan since 1946. Starting today, Mr. Speaker, under this new Saskatchewan Party government, STC will begin to serve four additional communities, over 8,700 citizens, located in northeast region of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this will be the company's most significant expansion of service in 30 years. These communities now being serviced will be La Loche, Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, and Beauval with connections through Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, this new service shows STC's commitment to building a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life for Saskatchewan citizens.

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to come . . . Order. The Minister of Health will come to order. I'd ask members to allow the minister to make his ministerial statement.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes indeed, a better life for Saskatchewan citizens, a better life for Saskatchewan First Nations, Métis, and other northern citizens.

Mr. Speaker, compared to 2001, the total population along this route has grown by some 6 per cent, as reported by Statistics Canada in the 2006 census. The size and growth of the total population in this area were significant factors in the decision to establish this service.

The new service will be provided through joint business arrangements with the private sector in these communities. STC has contracted local entrepreneur Mr. Larry Young of Buffalo Narrows to operate this service. He will operate a 27-passenger coach with wheelchair accessibility. If volumes warrant, Mr. Speaker, this coach may be upgraded to a larger coach in the future, and we certainly hope that this does happen.

STC has established agencies in partnership with the following private businesses: P R Service Ltd. in La Loche, Buffalo Narrows Esso in Buffalo Narrows, L & J Confectionery in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and MDeez Confectionery in Beauval.

In addition to the new passenger bus service, Mr. Speaker, citizens and businesses will also have access to STC's express service for their parcel and freight delivery needs.

STC anticipates that these services will benefit the area's health and medical sector greatly. Regular scheduled service in these communities will occur four times a week — every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday. Mr. Speaker, with this upgraded service, and this new service, STC now connects 282 Saskatchewan communities, bringing Saskatchewan people closer together. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And first of all I want to thank the minister for making a copy of his comments available to me earlier this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly good news for the people who live in La Loche, Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, and Beauval, that they'll now be able to participate in the STC services and will, I'm sure, muchly appreciate that.

It's truly good news for those folks, and I had the opportunity of travelling through northern Saskatchewan, those communities as well as many others, a couple of summers ago on a different mission on behalf of the government. And I would encourage all members to take the opportunity to travel northern

Saskatchewan because you get a sense there that you don't really understand unless you've been there, and that's the great, vast distances between communities.

And STC will now connect these communities in a very positive way. I think it will serve the elders in the area well, allowing them the opportunity to travel to southern parts of the province for medical purposes or to visit families. It will meet the needs of the youth and the students who will be able to now travel not only to the institutions of learning, but be able to travel home to visit their families on a regular basis in a much easier fashion.

This is truly a service that will be utilized, and I think warranted by the strong growth of the economy in northern Saskatchewan that continues on. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Young, the successful bidder and the entrepreneur, and congratulate him on the good service that he will provide. I know that he as an individual has a good reputation in that area.

I also want to wonder why it took so long for STC to finally get around to doing this because I understand from my colleague, the current member from Athabasca, when he was the minister the deal had already been made at that time. It took nearly a year before the government finally got around to implementing it. But it is here. It is truly good news, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the minister for continuing doing the good work that was set out before him. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 65 — *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act, 2008*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 65, *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act, 2008* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 65, *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act, 2008* be now read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered a second time?

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 66 — *The Witness Protection Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 66, *The Witness Protection Act* be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing has moved that Bill No. 66, *The Witness Protection Act* be now be read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered a second time?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report that it has considered certain estimates and presents its fourth report. I move:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 64 — *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 64, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present an amendment to *The Northern Municipalities Act* that completes the legislative groundwork to provide an updated property assessment and taxation system to Saskatchewan's northern communities.

This amendment, which is being introduced in time for the upcoming 2009 provincial reassessment of properties, matches legislative changes that were passed in 2006 for southern, rural, and urban municipalities. More specifically it ensures that the economic realities of property values in the real estate market can be reflected in a more understandable and transparent system.

Mr. Speaker, the property assessment process is a complicated and technical one, as was acknowledged in committee debate on April 20, 2006 when the Legislative Assembly agreed to update the assessment and taxation systems for southern municipalities. Since that was over two years ago and involved a few different elected members than are present today, I would like to mention a few points that were key to the discussions then and remain relevant today.

[14:30]

First, under the new system, property assessors will be able to employ any of the three internationally recognized methodologies for determining assessments: the sales comparison approach, the replacement cost approach, and the rental income approach. This will help to ensure that the system becomes more results driven, and as a result property owners will get more understandable assessments.

Secondly, because of the realities of Saskatchewan's real estate market and the many different sorts of property that exist, some types of property will continue to be assessed using the formulas, rules, and guidelines established by the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency and set out in its manual. These properties include agricultural land, heavy industrial property, railways, oil and gas well equipment, and mines.

Third, Saskatchewan is the last jurisdiction in Canada to move to a market-value-based system. This is a significant step for economic development and the attraction of new business to our province. Mr. Speaker, both *The Cities Act* and *The Municipalities Act* which guide Saskatchewan's towns, villages, and rural municipalities, are organized very differently from the present northern municipalities Act. The assessment and taxation amendments being considered today are largely modelled on those Acts. We are updating these parts of the NMA [*The Northern Municipalities Act*] now in order to meet immediate requirements.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the ministry for the work to advance changes to *The Northern Municipalities Act*. Further, I thank the members of the NMA review committee for their time and commitment to the review process. The committee's contribution is extremely valuable and will be reflected in the Bill we have before us today. I appreciate the

patience of our committee members and northern partners.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 64, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs has moved second reading of Bill No. 64, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise to speak at second reading on Bill No. 64, the Act to amend *The Northern Municipalities Act* and to make consequential amendments to *The Local Improvements Act*, Mr. Speaker.

I listened carefully to the minister moments ago who introduced this Bill. Mr. Speaker, it is quite an extensive Bill, as anyone who has had the opportunity to have a look at it today, Mr. Speaker . . . It's quite extensive. I was listening carefully, Mr. Speaker, to the minister's comments in introducing the Bill, and I was listening, Mr. Speaker, specifically for the words consultation, Mr. Speaker. I don't recall the minister opposite, in his introduction of the Bill, referring to the consultation with northern mayors and community leaders, Mr. Speaker, although I know that some consultation has taken place. And I believe very seriously, Mr. Speaker, that consultation with northern communities is absolutely critical in legislation like this.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, because I also heard the minister opposite talk about this legislation coming after the consultation had occurred and legislation passed with regards to the municipal Act and *The Cities Act*, Mr. Speaker, that are the first two of three steps in developing the province-wide assessment system in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I was there for a lot of the consultations on *The Municipalities Act*, a lot of the consultations on *The Cities Act*. Mr. Speaker, we worked very closely with those communities at that time and reached a general consensus, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we had the beginnings of an assessment system that would in fact, Mr. Speaker, be able to apply right across the entire province.

At that time, Mr. Speaker, we were engaged in discussions, that is the Government of Saskatchewan was engaged in discussions with northern mayors, communities and community leaders — especially through the organization that represents them in this manner, Mr. Speaker, the organization known as New North. And, Mr. Speaker, there was some concern back when *The Cities Act* and *The Municipalities Act* were passed, or were being brought forward, before they were passed, Mr. Speaker, there was some concern by northern leaders that in fact the consultation process had not concluded. There were matters affecting northern communities that do not affect southern communities, that the community leaders had not yet felt had been taken into account in preparing the language for developing the province-wide assessment system.

And, Mr. Speaker, they talked to us about a number of issues

including property that exists, property being interpreted as a cabin or a residence, Mr. Speaker, on a lakeshore that's used primarily for the trapping season or the fishing season or those types of things. Also, development authorities in the North, Mr. Speaker, as we know, some of the communities are seeing subdivisions develop at a very fast pace, Mr. Speaker, because of the development of the resource sector in the North.

And, Mr. Speaker, community leaders told us at that time to make sure that we had our i's dotted, our t's crossed, that there was an understanding generally. So, Mr. Speaker, listening carefully to those community leaders, the government at the time chose — and it was very much a choice, Mr. Speaker — chose to listen and did not bring forward *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act* dealing with the assessment processes, Mr. Speaker.

So now the new government is bringing forward the Act and, Mr. Speaker, that was why I was listening carefully for the words, consultation, in the minister's speech because, Mr. Speaker, that's what was promised and I believe that's what was to take place with regards to the finalization of *The Northern Municipalities Act*.

Now that having been said, Mr. Speaker, we all know and share the support for a province-wide assessment system. That's the goal, Mr. Speaker. It was of the previous government and it apparently appears to be, with the introduction of this Act, it appears to be the goal of the current government — a province-wide assessment system. So Bill 64 is aimed at doing exactly that, Mr. Speaker.

And in fact part of the explanation, the explanatory notes that accompany the Bill, Mr. Speaker, actually refer to parts of the Acts are meant to replace assessment and taxation provisions for consistency, Mr. Speaker, with *The Municipalities Act*. We all believe in consistency, Mr. Speaker, but we also recognize that being consistent, one can also recognize the unique circumstances of the people who live, work, and build their lives in northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, the explanation note carries on to talk about the introduction of a province-wide, market-value-based property assessment system. So, Mr. Speaker, I realize and recognize that's the goal and the intention of the government. It's a goal and intention that New Democrats, while in government and now in opposition, support, Mr. Speaker. It's just a matter of, has this Bill done what is expected this Bill to do? That is from the perspective of our northern communities, who we assume have been consulted in this way.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are going to take a little bit of time to . . . maybe not a lot of time, Mr. Speaker, because I want this put on the record, I guess. I should make sure I put this on the record, Mr. Speaker. New Democrats in opposition are certainly aware of the need to proceed expeditiously with this Bill if there has been general consensus achieved amongst northern leaders. The expediency, Mr. Speaker, is quite simple: that if this Bill were to move forward quickly, the assessment process can be in place for 2009, which is a goal again that we all share. Mr. Speaker, we would like to see if at all possible the implementation of a province-wide assessment system to be in effect for 2009. It is for communities. It is for cities. It is for

towns. It is for villages. It is throughout central and southern Saskatchewan.

But for northern communities, Mr. Speaker, to be a part of this, we need to have this legislation passed, and I'm certainly aware of the need to proceed expeditiously. So, Mr. Speaker, we have begun the process of consulting with northern community leaders to ensure that there has been consultation, that there is a general consensus to proceed, and should that be the case, Mr. Speaker, we will assist the government in moving forward quickly.

If there remain questions, if there remain concerns, we will raise those and bring them forward through the committee process. So we will take a couple of days, Mr. Speaker, to complete our consultation process that began when the government gave us notice that they were going to proceed with this legislation. And we should be able to report to the House, to the public in Saskatchewan what our intention is on this Bill in the very near future.

So that having been said, Mr. Speaker, I want to move that debate on Bill No. 64, *An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act* be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 64, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 62 — *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2008*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today to move second reading of *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2008*. *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2008* has been developed to address many issues concerning the evolving rental housing environment in our province.

First, the report of the task force on housing affordability delivered in June of this year by former MLAs Ted Merriman and Bob Pringle recommended that our current legislation be amended to provide for six months notice of rent increases for month-to-month leases. This legislation achieves that.

This legislation also clarifies that in the case of fixed term lease, any rent increases must be specified in the lease document or those rent increases will not be allowed.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, our government has recognized the need to make some changes respecting security deposits. Currently if a landlord wishes to retain any or all of the security deposit to cover repairs, the landlord must apply to the Office of Residential Tenancies for an order permitting the retention of the security deposit. Mr. Speaker, these amendments reverse the process in the case of security deposits. When this legislation is

passed, if a landlord wishes to retain a security deposit, the landlord will notify the tenant of this intention. The tenant will then have 120 days to apply to the Office of Residential Tenancies to oppose the landlord keeping the security deposit. No fee will be charged to the tenant.

This is a practical solution since most landlord's applications to retain a security deposit are not opposed. They will also decrease the workload for the Office of Residential Tenancies.

Third, this legislation will streamline the process for applications to terminate a lease in cases of tenant misconduct. In the event of egregious behaviour by a tenant, the Act allows landlords to apply to the Office of Residential Tenancies for an immediate order of possession. The Act also allows a landlord to apply for an order to end a tenancy early for cause, such as chronic failure to pay rent on time. These orders for cause become effective no earlier than one month from the date of the order and at the end of the rent period.

Mr. Speaker, with these amendments an application by a landlord for immediate possession order will now be considered an application for an order to end the tenancy early if the evidence shows that immediate eviction is not warranted but an order to end the tenancy is appropriate.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, consequential amendments are necessary to *The Saskatchewan Assistance Act* to reflect the changes to the procedure for security deposits in *The Residential Tenancies Act*. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2008*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved that Bill No. 62, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2008* be now read the second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister's second reading speech received some applause and that's probably all that it deserved, Mr. Speaker. It deserves some applause.

And I know that the minister has expressed a desire that this matter move to committee in a fairly rapid order so that the work can be done on the Bill, and the opposition sees the need for some work to be done on that Bill that can only be done in committee and not here. So I think at least some of my remarks will please the minister; maybe not all my remarks will.

The minister made some interesting comments when speaking to the press about this Bill before he gave his second reading speech in this legislature. And one of the things he said was that what we might call over here a housing crisis, or at least a housing problem, was in his view a period of significant rental adjustments.

[14:45]

And I will probably refrain from passing on to my constituents who find their rent increased by 40 per cent or 50 per cent or doubled over a relatively short period of time that that's not a crisis or a problem, perhaps forcing them even out of the city of Saskatoon, certainly forcing them out of the home in which

they've lived for some period of time. It is, in the view of the minister responsible for residential tenancies, a significant rental adjustment and that in his view the period is over, and we can now start to relax.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that that is the case. But if it is the case, Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting admission on the part of the government. Here's a party that said, housing crisis, what housing crisis, before the campaign, before the election campaign of 2007. They said, why is the NDP raising this issue? We have nothing to say. We have nothing to say about housing. We have nothing to say at all. There'll be nothing in our platform about it. There'll be nothing in our policy about it, and we will say nothing about housing during the campaign, before the campaign, immediately following the campaign because for us it is not an issue.

It is what the minister, who is wishing to join debate from her seat, said, a void in their policy after the election was over. It was a void in their policy. That was her admission, Mr. Speaker.

So I think some of the editorial writers and some of the pundits who were questioning the New Democratic Party at the time, summer of 2007, about the housing crisis have probably rethought their position. I mean, some commentators, radio and newspaper, said, there's no housing crisis. What is the current minister of Justice — which was then me — what are they talking about? I think they've all rethought that. And this government, this government rethought it after they formed government, but they didn't have a policy.

What they did for themselves is buy time. Not for renters, Mr. Speaker — they didn't buy any time for renters until today, a year later. What they did is they bought time for themselves, Mr. Speaker, by asking, well is there a problem and what might we do about it? And then they've got a year's time for themselves, Mr. Speaker, to do this, this that deserves, as I said, a little applause, Mr. Speaker.

This doesn't address the issues of the cost of living for people who've had their rent increased and who still will have their rent increased. It doesn't assist them at all, Mr. Speaker.

I, Mr. Speaker, unlike the member who wants to join the debate, I'm speaking to the Bill at this moment. This Bill doesn't do anything for those who have incurred rental increases, will continue to incur rental increases. This does nothing to assist them with their rent, as would rental rebates which we have called upon the government to consider and to which there was resounding silence, Mr. Speaker. Resounding silence.

This doesn't address the issue of cost of living for renters the way natural gas rebates would, Mr. Speaker — which again, our call for that was met by resounding silence by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. Resounding silence.

So what we have, Mr. Speaker, now is some proposals that will benefit renters and some proposals that will take away their rights, Mr. Speaker. And I guess the removal of some of the rights of renters and making it easier to do things on the part of landlords who can afford the lawyers, unlike the renters, is all being sugar-coated in the one provision — the one provision to

extend the notice period from three months to six months, Mr. Speaker. Now again that deserves some applause, and it received very little applause but some applause from the government side. And I join in that mixed enthusiasm, Mr. Speaker. But this Bill could be better. More could be done.

In a similar situation, Mr. Speaker, in a similar situation when there was a boom in Alberta and there was a crisis in rental accommodation in Alberta, in Conservative Alberta, Mr. Speaker, the government brought in a provision that there could not be more than one rent increase in a year, Mr. Speaker. If that's good enough for Conservative Alberta in a very similar situation to what people are experiencing today, it should be good enough in Saskatchewan as well, Mr. Speaker.

There are other improvements that can be made to this Bill. They can't be made here. They can be made in committee. We are willing to improve this Bill — improve and pass an improved form of this Bill to benefit renters. The minister wants this done expeditiously. We want it done expeditiously. He has our co-operation if we have his, Mr. Speaker, in making this a better Bill for renters. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is Bill No. 62, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. To which committee shall this Bill be referred?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Intergovernmental Affairs, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to Intergovernmental Affairs.

Bill No. 63 — *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act, 2008*

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act, 2008*.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that available and affordable housing is necessary for sustained economic growth in this province. In March 2008, I appointed a task force on housing affordability to provide recommendations for improving housing affordability, increasing housing capacity, and ensuring long-term monitoring of affordability in Saskatchewan.

The task force spent more than two months meeting with the stakeholders across the province. In total, 85 individuals, groups, and organizations were consulted in 16 Saskatchewan communities, and 53 written proposals were received.

In June 2008, the task force presented their report which outlines 36 recommendations on how to address affordable

housing challenges in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that our government has acted quickly to deliver on several of those recommendations. These include increases to the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement and the income threshold for Saskatchewan Housing Corporation's social housing rental program, enabling more accessibility for seniors renters.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we are taking steps to implement another task force recommendation which requires a change to the corporate structure of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation. Throughout its consultations, the task force on housing affordability heard that the current corporate structure and mandate of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation should be revised to better reflect the needs of the communities it serves.

Concerns were raised that there were no representation from housing stakeholders or municipalities in the corporation's governance. *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act* amendment that we are requesting, Mr. Speaker, will deal with that concern.

By expanding the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation board to include a minimum of five persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the corporation will benefit from broader, ongoing stakeholder participation, greater public and region input, and diverse expert feedback on important housing decisions.

In short, a larger board will incorporate more than just the opinion of management, Mr. Speaker. It will further our government's commitment to accountability and transparency, and ensure that the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation will better reflect the needs of the clients and communities it serves.

Mr. Speaker, the current structure of the board consists of one person, typically the deputy minister of Social Services appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Under this structure, the sole board member is responsible to the minister. The president of the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation acts as the chief executive officer of the corporation.

Mr. Speaker, this structure has not changed since 1995. The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation cannot implement a new and improved board without the said amendment because they cannot legally deviate from the Act. Mr. Speaker, once the amendment has been approved, I can assure you that the government will begin the recruitment process and implement the new board early in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, as I have stated earlier, the amendment I am introducing today is a significant step forward in improving coordination between the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation, housing authorities, the clients, and the communities it serves in this province. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act, 2008*.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Social Services has moved that Bill No. 63, *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak at second reading of Bill No. 63, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act*.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister explaining the Bill correctly outlines — or as I would expect, correctly outlines — that the legislation in front of us basically increases the size of the board of directors and modernizes provisions basically in accordance with current drafting standards. Mr. Speaker, some would say it's a housekeeping Bill. Others would say it's a major step forward. And I think, Mr. Speaker, it is a piece of legislation whose time is certainly due. Changes were necessary to increase the size of the board to enhance the ability of the board to respond to the community needs.

Mr. Speaker, in this regard just let me say a couple of things about the housing authorities around the province and the work that they are doing, Mr. Speaker. I watch very closely what's taking place in our housing authorities around the province. A number of years ago, just before I was elected in 2003 and shortly thereafter, Mr. Speaker, the housing authorities were renovating properties across the province, were expending a number of dollars for those renovations to upgrade properties again throughout the province. They have worked diligently, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that individuals within our communities who needed affordable housing were able to obtain that housing.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the Minister Responsible for Housing that those housing authorities have certainly served the people in our community extraordinarily well, and Sask Housing Corporation provides a very valuable service to the people of Saskatchewan. And I'm pleased to see that in a number of ways the Minister Responsible for Housing is addressing some of these structural matters. And certainly increasing the size of the board, Mr. Speaker, is a step in the right direction.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the minister informs us that the Bill itself was one of the recommendations on the task force on housing affordability that reported earlier this year, Mr. Speaker. Indeed the proposed amendment to the Bill is a recommendation of the task force. Mr. Speaker, one could very well argue that in fact the minister responding to the task force's recommendation is picking what they call the low-hanging fruit from that report, Mr. Speaker. There's quite a number of recommendations in that report — some of them extraordinarily innovative, Mr. Speaker, that have yet to be addressed by the government opposite.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that the housing stock in this province is under stress. There is a greater need for living accommodations, rental accommodations in this province, Mr. Speaker, than there are units available. Mr. Speaker, there's never been — except maybe back way in our earlier history, Mr. Speaker — there's never been a more stressful time for people seeking shelter than there is today in our so-called boom times, Mr. Speaker. And so it's very important that when — as has happened in this case — a task force has been struck and that task force reviews the circumstances of housing in the province and makes recommendations, that the government

reviews those recommendations seriously and moves in the direction of some of the things that are most needed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know there are a lot of vulnerable people in our communities. And one of the task force recommendations, Mr. Speaker, that could be addressed by the minister and the Saskatchewan Party government, is a recommendation to help those vulnerable people who don't always have cash to deal with the security deposits or first and last month's rent. The recommendation in the report, Mr. Speaker — a recommendation that's very close to the recommendation for increasing the size of the board, Mr. Speaker; the recommendation for the creation of a rent bank or the ability of the government to help provide vulnerable people with access to loans to assist them with security deposits or first and last month's rent, or actually getting into a shelter unit, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they are able to protect themselves and their families.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, that piece of fruit is a little higher up on the tree, and the government has to start taking steps to move — not just from picking the fruit that's close at hand, but take a step up the ladder, Mr. Speaker. View the innovation that was contained in some of the recommendations and, Mr. Speaker, start to take some action.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also remind the minister, while I'm on my feet, that in committee last spring she answered a number of questions from me regarding money that had been allocated to various communities that has not yet been spent — money allocated for housing. Mr. Speaker, the minister will be aware that in that committee I asked her specifically about \$3 million set aside for the city of North Battleford for new housing projects.

Mr. Speaker, the department or the ministry had advertised, had received applications, and that was in the spring, Mr. Speaker. We've gone through the building, the summer months, the construction months. We're now going into winter, and not a single announcement has been made in the community, Mr. Speaker, about the approval of funding for new units, Mr. Speaker, new units in The Battlefords where housing is a critical issue — an issue, Mr. Speaker, that affects seniors and students and immigrants and First Nations people.

So, Mr. Speaker, the minister may in fact be trying to answer my question right now, but I must say that I can't hear and neither can the people in my community, Mr. Speaker. But I would hope that in addition to addressing matters like increasing the size of the board, she's also interested in increasing the number of units available for vulnerable people within our communities, and especially in communities where monies were allocated a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, but has not yet been spent by this government.

And I remind the minister opposite that after a year in government we have yet to see her announce one new project that was not funded, Mr. Speaker, by the previous government. Mr. Speaker, we have yet to see a single new project announced. So, Mr. Speaker, we are anxious, we are anxious for the minister to be in our communities, to be announcing new

projects, to be adding to the housing stock in our communities. We are anxious to see that, Mr. Speaker.

And so in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I simply say to the minister here on the floor of the Chamber that while we support the increase in the number of members of the board, we also support the increase in the number of housing units in the province. And we look forward to her announcements in that regard.

I know that I have other members in the New Democratic Party opposition caucus who wish to speak to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, so therefore I today would move that debate on Bill No. 63, *An Act to Amend the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act* be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment on Bill No. 63, *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 73 — *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2008*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to move second reading of Bill 73, *An Act to Amend the University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995*.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to building a stronger Saskatchewan through higher education, research, and innovation. And, Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that the University of Saskatchewan along with other institutions remains an important partner in building a stronger Saskatchewan. That's why I am proud to bring Bill 73 forward for second reading today.

Mr. Speaker, the University of Saskatchewan approached our ministry to request some much-needed updates to the legislation regulating the university. As we are focusing on balancing the public interest with the needs of a modern, dynamic university, we were able to come forward with the changes that are reflected in Bill 73. These amendments provide for both continuity and change that will help to strengthen the University of Saskatchewan.

The university noted that the existing legislation locked the institution into a process for selecting a chancellor that simply is not effective in today's environment. The university posited that the two-term limit set out in existing legislation means that all too often government-appointed board members have to leave just as they have gained valuable experience within the university milieu.

And it explained that the traditional position of Visitor as an avenue of appeal was a holdover from the earliest days of university governance in the United Kingdom. Today the

university's robust internal mechanisms are balanced by a number of external avenues of appeal, and the university has asked that the Visitor position be removed. Mr. Speaker, Bill 73 addresses these important concerns.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 73 also establishes an easier, more cost-effective selection regarding the position of chancellor. Bill 73 also expands the term limit for government appointed board members to three terms. And Bill 73 will also remove the position of Visitor, reflecting a more modern governance approach.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 73 is a common sense solution that meets the needs of the University of Saskatchewan while being mindful of the importance of modern, effective legislation that is good for the public interest and good for the public institutions of our province. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 73, *An Act to Amend the University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Advanced Education has moved that Bill No. 73, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2008* be now read the second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me today to speak at second reading on Bill No. 73, *An Act to Amend the University of Saskatchewan Act*.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to review this Bill quite extensively, listened carefully to the remarks of the minister in his explanation as to why the Bill is necessary, and I have a few remarks to put on the record here, Mr. Speaker, before proceeding further with this legislation.

For all intents and purposes, Mr. Speaker, *The University of Saskatchewan Act* certainly appears to be very practical. It appears — and the minister confirms this in his remarks — it appears that the provisions contained in here have been requested by the University of Saskatchewan community itself. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have to assume that indeed the direction that's being taken in this legislation is direction that has been deemed appropriate by those in the university community. And I think, Mr. Speaker, we will confirm that in fact what the university community has requested is indeed reflected in this Act before we are able to conclude our debate and questions on this.

Mr. Speaker, I think we are all aware that the University of Saskatchewan is indeed a first-class university not only in Canada but, Mr. Speaker, in North America and around the world. I graduated from the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in the early- to mid-'70s. Mr. Speaker, I graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a Bachelor of Arts degree. I had a major in English and art. Some people would wonder on occasion how I could possibly be in this place with a university education, Mr. Speaker, but it sometimes happens.

Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my time there, but that was quite a few years ago, and I've watched carefully, Mr. Speaker, as the

University of Saskatchewan has evolved over the years. And, Mr. Speaker, today when we look at the university campus, it is a far cry from what it was when I was there in the 1970s. Mr. Speaker, we were proud of the university in those days, and of course every graduate felt that the world was theirs for the taking, Mr. Speaker, and by and large, graduates from the University of Saskatchewan have indeed gone on to many different lofty, renowned careers around the world.

But you look, Mr. Speaker, at the university campus today, and it is not just an academic institution. The campus now is a research facility, and it has commercial development opportunities, and it's a disease control facility. And, Mr. Speaker, the work that is being done in the scientific community is benefiting people all around the world and attracts people from all around the world.

Mr. Speaker, this university campus has evolved dramatically. And over the last — let's say — 20 years, Mr. Speaker, that institution, thanks to the governance of the university itself and, Mr. Speaker, the support of the government in place over the last 20 years, Mr. Speaker, has helped to make that university what it is today. And we're all very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

So when the community itself comes to the government and makes requests to ensure that they're able to be the administration, the administrative facility, Mr. Speaker, for all that is taking place there, we have to listen. We have to listen carefully, Mr. Speaker, because, for all intents and purposes, these are the people who best know the direction that they are to take. And within the power that government has to balance its resources, Mr. Speaker, the government has to ensure that there is adequate funding to meet the needs of that university community.

So by and large, Mr. Speaker, we've seen some incredible increases in facilities, in teaching, in development of extension that exists within the university, Mr. Speaker. And therefore, I think that we are likely to support the legislation in front of us with some consultation with the university community to ensure that the legislation is written as they have requested.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this legislation would be able to move forward fairly quickly. So as I indicated, Mr. Speaker, this appears to be practical in its application. And with some consultation and with some additional comments from my colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, or knowing that there will be some comments from other members of the New Democratic opposition on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, I would therefore move that debate on Bill No. 73, An Act to amend *The University of Saskatchewan Act* be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 73, *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2008*.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 58

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantefoer that **Bill No. 58 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to speak to this income tax amendment Act which is Bill No. 58. And what I essentially want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that Saskatchewan is enjoying a great boom. The economy is very hot; I've said this numerous times from this very place in the legislature. And it is a real joy that my constituents and the people of Saskatchewan are witnessing a boom in the economy.

But the joy is tempered with the knowledge that with a hot economy, it gives the government of the day huge, tremendous choices in what they can do with the revenue that comes in from that. They could, as is the case here in Bill No. 58, introduce some income tax cuts. And I want to for the record say, Mr. Speaker, that I am, like most of my neighbours and like most of my constituents and I think like most people that I know everywhere . . . we kind of wish we didn't have to pay any income tax. But with this caveat: we wish we could maintain a relatively high level of income and not have to pay any income tax.

[15:15]

But I come at it with a different tack, and it's one that my parents taught me, and it's stood me well through the course of my life. And it is, it is . . .

An Hon. Member: — And that's a long time too.

Mr. Trew: — Yes, it is a long time as my seatmate, colleague has pointed out. My life has been a long time. Not long enough yet, I don't think.

But what my parents taught me as I was growing up, Mr. Speaker, is that we can't afford not to pay income taxes and taxes in a general situation. We work together in an organized society, and our taxes pay for the services that, as an individual, I couldn't even begin to afford — the services, you know, to have a doctor at my call or a hospital at my call. But by paying my taxes, and collectively we work this together, I have a very good health care system at my beck and call and at the beck and call of my family. That's because I pay taxes. And we all do our little bit, and we pool it. And we put that money together, and it can do some amazing things.

The same thing can be said about our education system. We pay taxes, and that supports our education system — be it preschool, K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12], post-secondary. It supports the whole gamut. Of course, we have tuition fees,

and I want to speak a little bit about that a little bit later. But our highways are funded through taxes.

And the premise of my speech today, Mr. Speaker, is to clearly acknowledge that I wish we didn't have to pay taxes. But the premise is that every dollar that a government gives away in tax cuts is a dollar that's not available for that government to spend on hospital services or health care, nursing homes, on education. Certainly we have a tuition freeze that has been lifted this year. And it's all about choices. Every dollar that a government gives away in tax cuts is a dollar that they don't have at their disposal for providing services that, in our society, we have come to really appreciate. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, this is something that I very much support is that government is about choices. And it's all about choices. We can either have income tax cuts as is proposed under Bill 58, and they're welcome, but at what price?

One of the choices that was made by members opposite, the government, was they means-tested the seniors' drug plan. They means-tested a drug plan where seniors have to prove that they're poor before they can get the help that's available under the seniors' drug plan. And that's a change, Mr. Speaker, because a year ago there was no means test. If you were a senior, you're 65 or older, you qualified for a prescription drug plan.

And the Deputy Premier is saying, whoa; he's saying, \$63,000 is poor. The fact is that you have to prove that you're poor; that's the offence. The offence . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And, Mr. Speaker, I invite the Deputy Premier to speak to this Bill. I'm not filibustering the Bill. We all have an opportunity to speak to the Bill. He's had an opportunity to speak to it in cabinet. I didn't have that opportunity, and I'm taking my opportunity to state on behalf of my constituents what I believe the majority of my constituents would feel.

My constituents do not like means-testing a seniors' drug plan. My constituents believe that wealthier seniors — that is, seniors with a big income — will get it taxed back. We pay income tax. That's the principle of income tax: the more you make, the more you pay income tax. It's just a straight-up function of that. And I've had, over my lifetime, I've had people complain about the amount of income tax they've had to pay, Mr. Speaker, and I've said, well I wish I had that problem because I wish I had that income.

So we can have income tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, or we can make choices. We can make choices like means-testing the drug plan, or we can make a choice to . . . Well let me put it another way. A little over a year ago when we were in government, we lump summed a significant . . . more than \$70 million into housing, low-cost housing, to provide adequate, affordable, safe housing for people of limited income.

The reason we did that is not because we think we're Santa Claus with the taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker. The reason we did it is because all of the studies that we had access to were virtually unanimous saying that the most important indicator of wellness and of health is having a stable, secure, safe house, a safe home that you can build your family out from. But you have to have affordable, safe, and decent housing. That's the first thing. And so we chunked over \$70 million into it last year,

prepaid it; was one of the first years we actually had money that enabled us to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And what did this government do in their budget? They cut 5 million, clawed back 5 million out of that this year and that at a time when it was done, the surplus was \$1.9 billion — billion with a "b" — and that surplus continues to grow today.

And, Mr. Speaker, the choices have been clear. We had started low-cost housing programs. We had announced programs. The construction of many of them had started. Some of them are starting now even yet. But the proof of the pudding is not one single new housing initiative has been announced by this government. And I say that's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

Tax cuts are one thing, but governing is all about choices. It's all about choices. Never, ever in the history of Saskatchewan has a government had so much resources, so many dollars to do so much with and yet done so little.

Mr. Speaker, tax cuts are not the panacea. They're not the be-all and end-all. They don't cure everything that's wrong with our society. Tax cuts in itself don't help a single parent.

Mr. Speaker, I'm touching some chords and I really look forward to government members speaking to this Bill. And I know it is their right to do so, having served in this Assembly for over 20 years now. I know that every one of us in this Chamber have the ability to speak to this Bill. And I look forward to some government members talking on this very one.

The choices that are made, Mr. Speaker, are we can have an income tax cut, Bill 58, or we could continue to have the lowest cost utility bundle guarantee that Saskatchewan people have enjoyed for four years — a low-cost utility bundle guarantee that guaranteed all of the people of Saskatchewan would pay in total the lowest utility bundle cost of any province in Canada. So if you lived in Saskatchewan, that was your right, and we were proud to introduce that program, Mr. Speaker. We fought an election on it, won that election. We didn't do so well in the last election although we've got a fairly decent smattering of members on this side of the legislature. And I predict, as long as the do-nothing government continues to think that income tax cuts are everything — as long as that's the mindset — then I predict that there's going to be more New Democrats elected after the next election than there are today.

Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing heckles about, not if we're going to raise the taxes. And I want to remind all members that our history was one of balance. Early on in our administration, early on in our administration we said . . . It's as simple as this: we were never dealing with \$2 billion surpluses. We struggled and fought and sometimes we'd get \$40 million surplus in a year, sometimes more than that, but always the tightest of surpluses. And we said in simple terms, one-third of our surpluses, Mr. Speaker, would go to paying down the debt; one-third would go to programs; and one-third to tax cuts, one-third to tax cuts — so thirty-three and a third roughly.

So we did. Every time we had extra money we'd introduce a portion of tax cuts, a portion of new income programming like the children's dental program where we provided a fluoride-type treatment to them. That program incidentally was

chosen to be eliminated by this government. It was a very basic children's dental program that we had.

But you can't be everything to all people. If it's just tax cuts, there is a price to pay. There is service cuts, and these service cuts that I've outlined are cuts that affect my constituents — people that I'm proud to represent, people that feel there is something different than mere tax cuts.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we've got here under Bill 58 is under Bill 58 we have a promise for income tax cuts for seniors, you know. And seniors, like the rest of us, welcome tax cuts. But what's the hard reality for seniors? The hard reality for seniors today is they've seen . . . And the member for Moose Jaw North will have an opportunity to speak here. I really wish that he would get off his seat and speak to this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the hard reality for seniors today, the hard reality for seniors today is that they have an income tax cut promised in Bill 58. And when they file their income tax in the spring, some of them will get some money back or reduced income tax payment, and that'll be welcome. But October 1 their cost of their natural gas for heating their residence has gone up 20 per cent — 20 per cent. And on top of that, they got that approved by the rate review panel, Mr. Speaker, and then just for good measure, they threw in another \$2 a month just for the pleasure of getting the gas delivered. That's an additional charge on top of the 20 per cent increase in the cost of the gas itself.

So seniors are paying the additional cost of home heating thanks to members opposite. Seniors are paying additional money for their groceries. Seniors are paying — in all too many instances, Mr. Speaker — are paying rent increases.

An Hon. Member: — Choices and options.

Mr. Trew: — And as my colleague says, it's all about choices and options. We could do income tax cuts, or we could've not taken the \$5 million out of the low-cost housing program. That would have been a good start. Or we could have not tried to means test the seniors' drug plan. That would have been a good place to start. Or we could have continued with the lowest cost utility bundle. That would have been a good place to start.

Or we could roll back the gas increase that at one point looked like it might actually have been justified because the price of natural gas was skyrocketing. It actually looked like it might have been a reasonable thing. That's not the reality today, and I would urge the government to apply for and to reduce the cost of natural gas for our homeowners because the price of natural gas on the world market has come down. And, Mr. Speaker, that is something that I very much would welcome of this government.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province deserve to participate in the benefits, and it is true that we do welcome some income tax relief. But what about the cattle producers? And we had the head of the Stock Growers Association in the visitor's gallery here during question period. I know that these very same cattle producers have written to the Minister of Agriculture asking for relief. You can provide broad income tax relief, Mr. Speaker, or you can provide . . . Another one of the choices is you could provide some support to an industry like the livestock industry,

that as our critic for Agriculture pointed out, livestock prices are at a historic low, lower than they were in the '40s, '50s, '60s, and '70s — historic low.

[15:30]

My seatmate keeps reminding me that I was raised in Beechy and indeed I was. And we had livestock producers . . . Well we had livestock on our farm and our neighbours all had livestock as well. So it's an industry that while I won't claim to be an expert in, I won't claim to be a total stranger in that industry either. I understand some of the economics of raising cattle, Mr. Speaker.

But for the purpose of Bill 58, it's about choices. The government has a choice. They can support cattle producers in this dire time of need, or they can provide income tax relief.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. In this Bill 58, the income tax breaks are much larger for families than they are for an individual living alone. And the only reason I . . . It's probably appropriate that it's that way. I'm not attacking the Act for that. But if you are a single senior or a single person of any age, your heating bill is going up. Your groceries are going up. Your rent is going up. I know this. I have family that's living alone and in this very situation that I'm describing — rising costs and no help from this government other than some promise of, well maybe next spring.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is about choices that a government can make. They can choose to spend money on people directly, on programs that benefit people, or they can choose to provide what Bill 58 provides and that is a promise of some income tax relief in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end where I began, and that is by saying that clearly all of us wish that we could pay less taxes. Broadly speaking that's a pretty universal view, but I want to remind everyone in this House and even beyond that none of us can afford not to pay taxes.

All of us benefit from the programs and the hospitals and the health care services that are provided in part through our tax payments. All of us benefit from an education system that is the envy of most of the world. All of us benefit from a highway and road system that is literally the envy of the world. We like to complain about potholes, and I'm no different than anyone else in that, but the hard truth is we've got more kilometres of pavement per capita, per person, than anywhere in the universe. That's one of the things Saskatchewan enjoys, and I'm proud that we do enjoy it, but it comes at a cost, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it comes at a cost. And as a taxpayer, I'm proud to support that infrastructure and the standard of living, the things that we all enjoy here in Saskatchewan.

The Bill itself is okay, but there's so many other choices that this government should be making on behalf of my constituents and my people. Mr. Speaker, I think there will be more to be said on this Bill by some of my colleagues and in the interest of preserving their place, I move that debate on Bill No. 58 be adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — The member for

Regina Coronation Park has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 43

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 43 — *The Trespass to Property Act*** be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to talk about Bill No. 43, *The Trespass to Property Act*. And I want to do what some of my colleagues have done in their speeches, and that is to ask what is the overwhelming issue or the problem or the concern that has brought about this legislation. I confess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there's not a long list. In fact the list is zero of people that have ever asked me to deal with the trespass Act in Saskatchewan. It just has never come up. In my travels it's not come up.

I know that from time to time there will be a dispute between neighbours over where a fence should go. Or in rural Saskatchewan it might even be a dispute over, can I cross your land to get to my land so I can seed it and plant it. For the most part, for the most part those things are easily resolved, although it's never easy when one's neighbours start feuding. But there are mechanisms, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to deal with that.

So then the question is, well is this to deal with maybe snowmobilers or all-terrain vehicles, that sort of thing, and to put it bluntly, urban people going out onto farms and driving our snowmobiles and our all-terrain vehicles? And I wondered if that might be part of it. But lo and behold in the minister's first paragraph of his speech, he says, and I quote, "We do have . . ." and this is in the very first paragraph, and I'm quoting from November 5 *Hansard* on 1594, where the minister introducing the legislation said, and I quote:

We do have legislation dealing with specific circumstances like snowmobiling and operation of all-terrain vehicles. The new legislation is not meant to replace these pieces of legislation and they will continue to apply.

So in the very first paragraph of his second reading speech, the minister made it quite clear, it's not to deal with snowmobiles or all-terrain vehicles. So what is this casual trespass Act about, Mr. Speaker? What is it? So I read it very carefully. And one of the little pieces that kind of caught my fancy was that in the definitions it says that . . . I'm just looking for that. Here we go, here we go. In the definitions, Mr. Speaker, it talks about premises and the definition in the Bill:

"premises" means lands or structures and includes the following:

(i) water;

(ii) ships and vessels;

(iii) trailers and portable structures designed or used for a residence, business or shelter; [and]

(iv) trains, railway cars, vehicles and aircraft, except while in operation.

So ships and vessels are covered under this Act. And then I headed off to the penalties, offences and penalties, found on page 5 of this Act, and it's clause 14. The offences and penalty is: "Every person who contravenes any provision of this Act or the regulations is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of not more than \$2,000."

So I kind of chuckled as I thought about the supertanker that was just hijacked off the coast of Somalia with \$1 billion's worth of oil in it, Mr. Speaker. And I want to point out, if that had been the case in Saskatchewan waters, there'd have been a \$2,000 fine on summary offence to those hijackers. Clearly that's not what this is designed for, but as I read it that struck me.

But what is this legislation about, Mr. Speaker? It's not to deal with the hijacking of supertankers of oil. It's not to deal with problems like a snowmobile or an all-terrain vehicle trespassing. There is legislation around hunting and the posting of lands right now. And I believe the minister pointed out that this doesn't prevent lawful hunting. This legislation doesn't prevent lawful hunting in any way, shape, or form. So what really, what is the driving force of this?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have come to this conclusion. What this is about is restricting individuals' ability to peacefully protest or peacefully let elected officials at all levels know of our displeasure. What I mean by that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take some time to develop.

There are a number of . . . sorry, I got ahead of myself here. There is a definition of Crown land and there's a number of exclusions of Crown land where this is covered. And they say that:

vacant Crown agriculture land [is one of the items covered];

Crown resource land;

park land as defined in *The Parks Act*;

any other Crown land or any category of other Crown land that is prescribed in the regulations.

Prescribed in the regulations, Mr. Speaker, would be covered under this. So that's the hook.

We can get into the regulations and you could have wide, wide Crown lands prescribed as an area where you could prohibit people from trespassing. And then the question is, then the question is, what about peaceful protest like a strike, you know.

Let me use an example that came to my mind. We've recently had the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, a publicly traded company, and its United Steelworkers locals were striking. Well by definition the potash mine shaft is going to be on property owned by the Potash Corporation. So let's get it straight then.

If there's a strike that we recently had, these potash workers would carry their pickets on land owned by the Potash Corporation? I don't think so. I think the Potash Corporation might invite them off their land and say they're trespassing. You're not on the payroll; you're trespassing; away you go. They might just do that.

And it's just not Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. I just bring that up simply because that was recently in the news. It could be any company, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Anyone can do that when it's on their land under this Act. Is that what it's really all about?

Have we come to be that shallow that we . . . I mean earlier today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Fairview in question period was raising questions around essential services. And one of the things that I learned earlier today is that one of the health districts named . . . And I want to point out that musical therapists are valued employees, librarians do valuable work. And when the member from Saskatoon Fairview asked the Minister of Health, are these two examples essential? Should they be covered under essential services legislation, that is not allowed to strike? And the Minister of Health said that absolutely the musical therapist, not, but the librarian who might do research for a doctor who's about to do surgery, that that would be an essential service, and that would be a lifesaving effort.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want, for the record, I want a doctor that doesn't need to have somebody doing some research in the middle of an operation. I want my doctor to get it first-hand out of a medical somewhere. I don't want, I don't want the member for Moose Jaw North to be doing the research. I want the doctor to do their own research, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

So we see that the government opposite is very, very nervous about working people. They seem to be portraying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the view that working people are the enemy — and particularly if these working people happen to be unionized or organized, then they're doubly the enemy. And I can't believe that attitude, but that's what this Bill seems to be portraying. Because I read the minister's second reading speech from cover to cover, and I couldn't find a reason for this legislation. He actually gave reasons not to have the legislation, and that I can accept.

We've already got *The Snowmobile Act* and we've got the all-terrain vehicle situation covered. We've got trespass covered. But this Bill will allow all kinds of powers under regulations. And one of the things I have to wonder is, are roads Crown land? I believe they are. Sidewalks, Crown land? I believe they are. This legislature and the steps and the rotunda, the steps outside the legislature here? Crown land.

So the Crown can then say you're trespassing, and restrict you and push you away. So we could have a situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where my constituents or yours or anyone else's can't even come for a peaceful protest to say with respect, my government, I think you've got this wrong. With respect, I think you've got this wrong. You know, what kind of a society are we

coming to where we can't even accept constructive criticism? What kind of a society is it where we put up barriers and protection so that nobody can get at us?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday from this very place I said what we need is to engage people. We need to involve people. And the way to do that is to reduce the barriers, the restrictions that stop them from getting at us. And I would want people of Saskatchewan to have reasonable access to their elected government at any reasonable time. Clearly middle of the night is not a reasonable time, but at any reasonable time — business hours — people should have the right to peacefully picket in front of the legislature, or even come into the legislature and have an opportunity to talk to the minister or opposition member about whatever it is that concerns them.

We fight our battles in Saskatchewan and in Canada almost . . . By and large, we fight our battles at the ballot box. That's where we take up arms so to speak — at the ballot box. And it's a wonderful system. You know, we don't always win, but we have our opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to go there. We have our opportunity to put our case forward to the electorate to the best of our ability, and the electorate will choose. And I've said before, the electorate is always right. And they choose, and they choose wisely. In this case I'm glad they've at least saw fit to include me in Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition where I can point out problems like this, like these problems, for working people, for organized people.

The problems under Bill 43, *The Trespass to Property Act* are legion. And I just, I just don't get it. As I pointed out early, nobody's ever asked me to introduce legislation around trespassing. We have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now, now, now I hear some rejoinder from members opposite. I invite the minister opposite who's heckling to stand on her feet and join this and say it because that's not what the person sitting on your immediate left, the minister responsible for it, said anywhere — anywhere — nowhere in his second reading speech.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are. And this is the great standoff, isn't it? We're concerned about this legislation. There's not a big hue and cry. We've had neighbours having disputes with neighbours for decades. Certainly longer than I've been alive neighbours have had disputes with neighbours around fencelines. For the most part, those disputes get amicably resolved. For the most part, it gets resolved one way or another.

Snowmobile and all-terrain vehicle, we have legislation that deals with that. Theft, we certainly have lots of laws dealing with theft, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with theft. One of the government members was heckling that farmers are having a problem with theft. Well I mean, we have laws dealing with theft. We have laws dealing with theft, Mr. Speaker. This is a trespass Act. It's not an Act about theft. This is an Act about people coming onto your property . . . or not your property but someone else's legal property.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that some of my colleagues will have more to say on this. I'm just raising the problems that I see with this legislation. It's not about theft. It's not about snowmobiling. It's not about all-terrain vehicles. It's certainly not about supertankers full of \$1 billion worth of oil being hijacked. It's not about theft because we have legislation

dealing with theft.

It has to be about peaceful assembly and it has to be about preventing that very peaceful assembly. It has to be about stopping picketers and having picketers . . . In my earlier example, the potash workers couldn't picket on the potash property, couldn't picket on the public road. Where would they be restricted to picket? Perhaps in their living room, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well I'm sure that's going to have a great deal of effect.

Mr. Speaker, I have said what I want to for now on Bill No. 43, *An Act respecting Trespass to Property*. I beg leave to adjourn this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — The member for Regina Coronation Park has moved adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Carried. I would also like to remind the Assembly that any debate coming from behind the bar will be ruled out of order. I encourage all members to take their seats if they would like to enter debate.

Bill No. 59

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 59 — *The Election Amendment Act, 2008*** be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Despite some encouragement to talk about what the Speaker meant by the bar, I'll try to limit myself to the Bill that's subject to debate.

It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill No. 59 — albeit I think briefly, Mr. Speaker — recognize the intent or at least the perception that the government wishes to cast in respect to the legislation. I only wish to mention a few little caveats about why people might not want to be as enthused as the minister was when he presented the Bill in second reading. *The Election Amendment Act* is built around the assumption that the fixed election Act is actually the fixed election Act and not the no-later-than Act.

The fixed election legislation, Mr. Speaker, both in parliament, in the national parliament and here in the provincial province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, provides that — and in the case of the federal legislation provided that — the election would be held on a certain date unless the parliament was earlier dissolved. And our legislation that the government is quite proud of, I think, that provides the same — that the election will be on a certain date unless the legislature is dissolved.

Now we found out what exactly the federal legislation meant, Mr. Speaker. It didn't mean very much. The Prime Minister made the argument, publicly made the argument that he didn't have the confidence of parliament. Although it may have been a

specious argument, it's the argument he made. Parliament was dissolved. There was a federal election. And it's rather recent memory, Mr. Speaker, that we had a federal election in the hopes that the government would be re-elected before the economic crisis struck in fall. And of course, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what happened.

So we have provincial legislation that has the same provisions, Mr. Speaker. It'll be a little harder for the Premier to say, I don't have the confidence of the legislature, given that he has a majority here. And so it would be a little harder to make the argument that the Prime Minister makes. At least to now he seems to have the confidence of the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

But we've had majority governments in the past — the last couple years of the Devine government where they couldn't pass a budget — where having a majority didn't mean you had the confidence of the legislature. You can lose the confidence of your own members. And previous Conservative governments have done that, Mr. Speaker. So it's possible that that might happen. I don't expect that will happen — at least not this term, Mr. Speaker, of this government — but it could happen. But it would be a harder argument to make.

But it's conceivable that there might be, two years from now or two and a half years from now, some motivation for the Premier to treat the fixed election Act as the, indeed it is, not-any-later-than Act and call an election, say, in the spring of 2011 instead of fall 2011. I don't expect that will happen, Mr. Speaker. But to paraphrase an old expression, what I would say to party members, NDP members is, trust in the government's intent to keep the law but keep your powder dry.

Anyways assuming that the election is in November 2011, you will know after this becomes legislation, this Bill becomes legislation, when various spending limits — if that's not too strong a word — will take effect. And I say limits because there aren't set amounts here. And what can be spent under this legislation in the period immediately preceding election depends on what was spent in the year preceding that, Mr. Speaker. It's based on an average.

And you can't spend, under this legislation as it's proposed, spend more in the period immediately preceding the election, assuming we know when that's going to be with certainty, than you spent in a period preceding that, Mr. Speaker, which I think has the unintended consequence — I'll give the government the benefit of the doubt — I think it has the unintended consequence, not the intended consequence, of encouraging increased spending by the government earlier so as to raise the bar. So that the average is raised so that you can spend more in the period immediately preceding an election than you spent, say, now, Mr. Speaker, because now it's not going to be working to the average. Now is too far away, Mr. Speaker.

So if we don't like spending going up six months before a possible election, Mr. Speaker, what are the people of Saskatchewan going to think when spending goes up 18 months before and stays up? Eighteen months before a near certain date for an election, Mr. Speaker, in order to raise the averages.

Now members opposite may take offence, and I'll remind those who weren't listening earlier that I think this is an unintended

consequence, not an intended consequence. But it's an unintended consequence, and I don't think it'll take very long for a political party, perhaps the governing political party, to realize that unintentionally they left an enormous loophole in this legislation, Mr. Speaker. And so that's our concern.

I think that's one of our concerns over here, Mr. Speaker, is that this won't have its intended consequence. It will have the unintended consequence of actually increasing government spending on communications prior to an election and for a longer period prior to the election, Mr. Speaker.

And I know a lot of Canadians were excited following the primaries in the United States and for a long period of time before either the Republican or Democratic Party picked their nominees, Mr. Speaker. But I think a lot of people, a lot of Americans — maybe not so much this time — often find that excruciatingly long, and I expect the candidates do for sure.

The fixed election date legislation itself and this Bill in particular even more so I think have the unintended consequences of sort of extending the campaign period here in Saskatchewan. If we think we know when the election date is and we know when the spending limits are going to click in, I think we're going to have longer unofficial campaigns than we do now and not necessarily less government money spent on communications, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

The other issue that I will raise here is that like some other Bills that we've seen in the first session of this legislature and in this session of the legislature, they're really for show, Mr. Speaker, and they actually have no force and effect, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, I think I was just commenting on a Bill downstairs, or two, that are for the most part unnecessary and primarily for the reasons of calling a press conference. And this has in fact no force and effect.

You can look through this entire rather short Bill and try to find the penalty and the sanction, and who would it be imposed against if the government decides to ignore this legislation, Mr. Speaker? What is the sanction, Mr. Speaker? What is the consequence to the government? What is the consequence to any minister of the Crown? What is the consequence to the Premier? What is the consequence to anyone if they ignore this legislation? There is none.

They have — and I'm not so sure in this case unintentionally, Mr. Speaker — left out any penalty provisions whatsoever. Mr. Speaker, they can crow; they can be as proud as they like, but if by inadvertence or otherwise, if just by local blindness or just by carelessness they fail to follow the legislation, do they need to lose any sleep about whether they're actually following it or not? Does anybody need to be carefully scrutinizing whether they're actually following the legislation or not? Well no they don't, Mr. Speaker, because there's no consequence. There's no penalty in not following it, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, a nice little showpiece. We'll see, we'll see, Mr. Speaker. And I know other members have other concerns and share those concerns, and so I will adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan) — The member for Saskatoon Meewasin has made a motion to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 60

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 60** — *The Senate Nominee Election Act* be now read a second time.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Bill that I am speaking on is the election of Saskatchewan Senate nominees. It's a not insubstantial Bill that deals with questions of a list of Senate nominees being provided through elections in Saskatchewan. It deals with who the election officers and how to commence elections for Senate nominees. It deals with the questions of candidates and nominations. It deals with the questions of elections and voting. There are other sections dealing with controverted elections and the like.

This is an issue that certainly has seen a great deal of debate over the years. I think most people in Saskatchewan will have some opinion as to the efficacy and the need for elections for senators, certainly will have some thoughts on whether or not there should even be a Senate in Canada. We've seen lots of discussion over the years. In fact a former law clerk called the Senate, one Russell Hopkins wrote in 1962: "The volcano of 'Senate Reform', never extinct but for sometime dormant, may erupt once more." And of course it has on numerous occasions since that time, Mr. Speaker.

So what he's saying in a very nice way, that this is an issue that's always with us, sometimes lies dormant, sometimes erupts, whether it's because of voices on the right who have their own take on Senate reform in this country or whether it's other members of parliament — and notably members of parliament from my party, the New Democratic Party — who have advocated abolition of the Senate over the years. I will remember the former member for Yorkton-Melville, Mr. Nystrom, having very strong views on that subject and has certainly espoused those over the years.

And again I think most people in Canada are kind of aware that there is a Senate and are aware that there are lots of different takes on how to reform the Senate or whether in fact there should even be a Senate, Mr. Speaker. So there's been lots of discussion over the years. Lots of — how shall I say? — entrees into the question of Senate reform over the years.

There are lots of references that if people want to go to it — and I don't want to belabour the point today — and start to go through a list of punitive reforms to the Senate of Canada that have taken place over time, but as early as 1874 a Member of Parliament, one David Mills, states in the House that quote "... our Constitution ought to be reformed . . . to confer upon each Province the power of selecting its own Senators."

And that was followed by proposals to fix a senator's term of life. And the list goes on. Every few years there's some . . . whether it's some report or such as the Pépin-Robarts task force on Canadian unity in 1979 recommending a council of the federation as opposed to a Senate. The Alberta government in 1982 supporting reform along the lines of the House of the provinces. So this just goes on and on and on, whether we need it or not, every few years.

And most lately again the federal government now proposing to limit the number of terms for senators. That in itself has engendered a debate whether the federal government can in fact be doing that, because the Senate was constructed to form the role of regional balance to popularly elected members of parliament. And therefore, if it's to represent the regions, then is that really a role for the federal government to move unilaterally without having the advice of the provincial governments in reforming the Senate by, in this case, seeking to limit the terms of senators?

I'm speaking, Mr. Speaker, to oppose the Bill and I oppose the Bill because this surely is one of the most frivolous pieces of legislation that we've ever seen before this Legislative Assembly. I've been in this Legislative Assembly now for some 22 years and I can't really think of a more frivolous piece of legislation and, by inference, a more frivolous suggested waste of money that I've ever seen in this Legislative Assembly that's inherent in this Bill, Mr. Speaker. I've never seen the likes of this where a government would concern themselves with such a frivolity because somewhere in their past they took a position that there should be an election of senators without having really considered all of the ramifications of that — never mind what the reality might be. Never mind. They seem determined to press ahead and to push this election of the Senate although, again, it makes very little sense.

Mr. Speaker, why spend money to elect a senator when that senator has no effective role? And that's one of the issues I will be discussing. Why spend money to elect a senator when that senator would reinforce an unequal representation in Canada's Senate? And I will be speaking on that subject as well, Mr. Speaker. Why spend money to elect a senator when that will not provide for the fundamental changes in our constitution when that is in fact the only way in which the Senate can be reformed in our country, Mr. Speaker? And I would like to deal with that as well.

Mr. Speaker, speaking to the question of an effective role, you know, the question really is, why spend money to do something when it really doesn't provide for a more effective Senate, recognizing that the Senate really doesn't perform any effective role any more in our federation. The Senate, for example, has no authority — unlike parliament — has no authority to spend money, has no authority to vote on taxes, to raise or to lower taxes. And it's largely been held that, you know, the Senate because it really can't deal with issues of money can't for example veto any money Bills that come from parliament. Because it's held that the Senate would act as some kind of check and balance for a parliament where all the members had been elected at large in constituencies that more or less conform to population across the country, a Senate would provide for some kind of balance and therefore some kind of check on members from one part of the country or another. Because

there's so many seats, who then could push through an agenda for the country that really doesn't meet the needs of the whole country? Therefore you have a Senate that then provides some regional balance.

But I tell you on the very important aspect of money, there is absolutely no opportunity for the Senate to second-guess what it is that parliament is doing. There's no opportunity for them even in the, you know, the few things that a Senate could do and is anticipated they could do, money is not one of those things. They have absolutely zero ability to veto money Bills or to deal with the question of money. In fact it's patterned after the British House of Lords and section 53 of the *Constitution Act* of Canada denied Canada's Senate the power to introduce Bills quote “. . . for appropriating any Part of the Public Revenue, or for imposing any Tax or Impost . . .”

And of course that section has been subject to various interpretations over the years, but it's generally held that the Senate absolutely has no ability to, certainly to introduce money bills, as I say, to deal with the question of spending or the question of taxation. And it's also largely held that the Senate really has no authority to veto money bills.

There's also a real question as to whether or not the Senate of Canada has the ability to veto any other forms of legislation. And even if that is something that the senators might be in a position to do given, you know, any reading of the *Constitution Act* — and some would argue that it doesn't — the fact of the matter is that senators who are now appointed are reluctant to veto any legislation or to weigh in on any legislation that comes from the House of Commons. And that might be an argument, some would say, then for electing senators because if you elect the senators then they might weigh in on legislation. But as I will point out later, that's not really very effective either.

I might say that one of the functions that the Senate has performed over the years, and I guess it's one of those things where a group or body finding that it really has no effective role in terms of what upper chambers are for, which is to provide some check and balance for the other chamber — in this case the House of Commons — then seeks to find other roles in which it can be useful and productive. And I must say that the senate has performed a very positive role in Canada when it comes to inquiries.

There had been over time many Senate inquiries into issues that faced Canadians and senators have issued a great number of reports on various issues that confront Canadians. Some I think are still part of popular history, such as the contribution made by Senator David Croll in the 1970s to look into the issue of poverty. And there have been other reports by senate committees looking at various issues that, again as I say, that confront Canadians, and I think those senators have done a terrific job.

[16:15]

That's not to say that that's not a job that couldn't be done by royal commissions or for that matter, couldn't be done by members of parliament themselves, and raises the question of, if that is a useful role for the Senate and all the senators now elected, will they continue in that role because they might say,

well like members of parliament we have other roles now that we need to concentrate on.

But I'd be the first to admit that the Senate of Canada has performed a very useful role in this country when it comes to the question of inquiries, looking at complicated items. We have to recognize that the senators in Canada are appointed people, and I would recognize that many of those senators have been appointed because of the contributions that they've been able to make in public life. And therefore, they bring something to the table in terms of experience, knowledge, understanding of issues that stands Canadians, I think, in good stead when it comes to looking at issues.

Also because the upper chamber, the Senate, is less political, less partisan in many ways, again because of the nature of the appointment, sometimes there has been less — how shall I say — divisiveness in the inquiries and in the committees that the Senate has employed to conduct inquiries. And therefore, you see far more informed discussion and debate in Senate committees.

I would also point out that Saskatchewan has benefited from appearances before Senate committees. I was privileged to be able to represent Canada . . . or to represent Saskatchewan before the standing committee on national finance of the Senate, to speak to senators about equalization provided to Saskatchewan people at that time, with a forum to speak about equalization at a time that there was very little understanding in the rest of the country about equalization.

We were able to appear before those Senate committees. We were able to make our points. There was informed discussion about our position. Not to say that every senator agreed with our position — in fact some didn't — but the dialogue was a respectful dialogue and I think at the end of the day was an informative dialogue for Canadians who are seeking to understand complicated issues such as that.

So I would say, and again I would agree, that that has been a very useful and important role for the Senate. But again it's a role that I think that they've defined for themselves over time because there's very little other useful role that can be performed by the senators in Canada, given the restrictions that are there in our constitution.

And again the restriction too, the fact that these are appointed members as opposed to elected. And, you know, members opposite would be saying, well isn't that then an argument for electing them? But as I will show later on, that's not really a good argument.

It's interesting to note that the legislation completely ignores the question of effectiveness. And if I might, Mr. Speaker, just parenthetically point out that there has been lots of discussion over time about the three Es of the Senate. When people speak of Senate reform, they speak of three Es. People might remember that.

Well one of those Es is elected, but another one of those Es is effective. And that's getting then at the topic that I'm dealing with now is, well okay, you can have elected senators, but it also has to be an effective Senate. So that Senate then needs to

have some described powers to in fact do its role.

And that is an issue that I find that minister, when he was explaining to the Legislative Assembly and to the people of Saskatchewan, didn't really deal with the question of how it is that Senate nominees from Saskatchewan who might be elected would in fact deal with the question of an effective Senate. Because what is the point actually of electing someone that really can't perform an effective role?

If the role of the Senate is simply to rubber-stamp parliament, what is the exact point of electing someone to act as a rubber stamp? This is something that defies understanding, and the minister made no effort to deal with this major shortcoming in the logic of the government when they said, well we need to elect senators.

I mean again, if the role of the Senate is to rubber-stamp, if you elect them — that's one of the three Es; elect them — what is the point? Why elect someone to that station to rubber-stamp parliament? What is the point? I'm not sure I understand it, and I'm not sure anyone in Saskatchewan understands it. And I think the minister should be faulted in this case for not outlining clearly how it is that electing senators would in fact help result in a more effective role for senators. And that was not dealt with, Mr. Speaker.

Is an effective Senate really required? That's another question, I think, that can also be raised. You know, if you think that electing a senator might result in a more effective Senate somehow, is an effective Senate still something that is required in this country? And I think that's a legitimate question.

When you look at what it is that the Fathers of Confederation, who spent an inordinate amount of time talking about a Senate as part of this new country called Canada, spent a lot of time discussing a Senate, the thing that they landed on was that a Senate would help achieve some kind of regional balance in Canada. That you had a situation where you had one or two jurisdictions that had very large populations versus other jurisdictions — say, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick — that had very small populations, that if the only chamber you had in this country was a parliament which is more or less elected on the basis of population, then the interest of those large jurisdictions would surely prevail over all of the rest of the country — would surely prevail over the rest of the country.

And therefore as a check on that kind of power being inherent in that particular chamber, the House of Commons, it would be helpful to this future country of Canada to have a Senate to act as a check on those powers. And therefore, as opposed to having senators elected or based on population, you might have a relaxation of that rule to provide some check and balance against the powers of parliament.

But one of the other things that's happened in this country since that time is that there has been a further refinement of the powers over the provinces that constitute Canada. And it's largely been held that Canada now is one of the most decentralized — if not the most decentralized — country in the world.

And therefore there's a question here. If the country is so decentralized because of the division of powers between the federal government and the provinces and the province has taken on their own roles . . . We just discussed the question of income tax. We discussed the question of tenancy. These are all issues that are within the control of the provinces. The provinces have the right to raise taxes. In fact there's a question as to whether the federal parliament has the right to raise income taxes, and there have been some court cases on that.

But the fact of the matter is that the provinces are very powerful, have a lot of power and authority to govern. And therefore the question is, well given that power, do you still need to have then a so-called effective Senate that can effectively act as a check on the actions of the House of Commons?

And there's a real argument here as to whether or not you would need some further check on the powers of parliament, given the effective powers that the provinces have and the powers that the provinces bring to the table when it comes to governing this country, because it's not just the federal government by itself unilaterally. Certainly it does in many areas, whether it's the post office or the questions of foreign affairs, the question of our military. Those are areas in which the federal government can act unilaterally. But there's many other issues that the federal government becomes involved in that the provinces are also involved in. And so the federal government cannot act unilaterally in many areas without consulting the provinces.

So if that's the case and if that's how we have evolved in our country, probably to a far greater degree than was ever anticipated by those who framed our constitution — and they did it on a large part on England and England is a unitary state, doesn't have provinces — there's a question now whether we would, in terms of an effective Senate, really need that to act as a check and balance on Central Canada or wherever the major bases of population are in this country. So that's an argument that people will have in academic circles, but that's an argument that we shouldn't lose sight of, Mr. Speaker, if we speak on the question of an effective Senate.

So the question is, is an election really required? And even if electing all of the senators, if we should ever get to the point of where all the provinces follow the lead of Saskatchewan and Alberta . . . And we're not taking the lead here. We're just simply doing what Alberta has done in the past, and that's not uncommon for this government to take their lead from Alberta. But if all the provinces were to take the lead of Alberta and now Saskatchewan and elect their senators, is this an arrangement then that we would be satisfied with? That we have an elected Senate and that elected Senate were to be able to accrue unto itself some more effective powers for the Senate in terms of reviewing legislation from the federal government. Certainly not in a position to weigh in in terms of financial issues as I've indicated. The Senate would have no power. That's clearly prescribed in our constitution.

But even if through all of that, through all of that electing all the senators, that Senate would have some effective powers then, why would we for one moment be satisfied with that, given the present inequities that are there when it comes to where it is that

senators come from? And if we all elect them, why would some province that has now far greater representation in the Senate and therefore those senators would be performing an effective role, why would they give up any of that?

Why would they then go back and say, well now that we've all elected senators and we have X number of senators from our province — say 24 from Ontario versus 6 in Saskatchewan versus 10 in Nova Scotia — why would Nova Scotia for a second want to give up any of those powers if they thought those senators were performing some effective role? What would be the incentive? Why would you do that? What sense would it make for the people of Nova Scotia to give up that power? Why would you do that? Why for a second would you try to put into practice something that would disadvantage the people of Saskatchewan vis-à-vis other jurisdictions in Canada? What sense does that make? Why would you do that?

And those are not questions that the government answered when it moved its second reading of this debate.

And that brings me to another one of the Es that I talked about. Again the three Es that people have talked about is, one is the question of election, another E is the question of effective role, and the other E is one of equal representation. Okay, so that's the third E.

And typically upper chambers, so-called, — and the Senate is referred to as an upper chamber — upper chambers in other countries in the world, whether it's our neighbour to the south, United States; whether it's Australia, which has a system that is more similar to ours, in those particular jurisdictions their division of power is very much based on an effective role for a Senate, but that Senate then also providing a check and balance in the sense that there's equal representation from each of the states or each of the . . . Yes, also the Australian states. So that each state in the United States is eligible to elect two senators, and whether you come from California which has a population of probably close to 40 million people or whether it's from the state of North Dakota which might have 6, 700,000 people, each state is eligible to elect two senators.

[16:30]

In fact we have the oddity in the state of North Dakota where North Dakota, because of population and the way districts are set up for their House of Representatives based largely on population, North Dakota's able to elect one member of Congress but is able to elect two senators. Of course in California they would be electing many, many representatives to their Congress, but still only two senators.

And again because the role that they foresaw for the Senate, they ensured that there is equal representation from each of the states in that Senate to act as a balance to the House of Representatives, which was based on, again like our House of Commons, based on population and therefore certain populated areas having more power because of the seats being relatively — how shall I say? — based on population.

Australia similarly has an upper chamber that has an equal number of representatives for each of their states, whether it's New South Wales or Queensland. It doesn't really matter how

many members they might have in their parliament; each of the states has an equal number of senators. I believe in their case it's six members.

Now the Fathers of Confederation, when they were grappling with this issue . . . And maybe that's why of the 14 days or so they spent discussing our constitution, they spent six of it dealing with the Senate. And we're still dealing with it today, Mr. Speaker. Well you know, maybe that's our curse as a country that we're forever . . . You know, other countries might have earthquakes and they may have volcanoes, but our curse as a country is to forever be discussing Senate reform in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

The Fathers of Confederation had a great deal of debate about the principle of equal representation but decided to not apply the principle as such. There were great concerns at that time if the principle were applied that, for reasons that one can go into in some considerable detail, the province of Quebec — and in particular the francophone population in Quebec — might then become isolated within Canada.

And also recognizing that there was a huge disparity, a huge disparity between those colonies, British colonies — Upper Canada, Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island — was also part of the discussion. Don't forget that it was the Charlottetown Accord I think that . . . or at least the Fathers of Confederation met at one point in Charlottetown. Prince Edward Island was very much an active participant in discussions on the future of this country. There were such huge disparities between Upper Canada, Lower Canada, and colonies such as Prince Edward Island, they took the point of view that strictly to have equal representation for each of the colonies that were to constitute this country would not be appropriate.

And therefore they took the point of view that, in this Senate for Canada, that Ontario should have 24 senators. Quebec should have 24 senators. New Brunswick would have 10 senators. Nova Scotia would have 10 senators. And then later when PEI [Prince Edward Island] did become a part of the federation — and PEI was not one of the four original colonies that became part of Canada; I think PEI signed on a little bit later — PEI was given four seats. So you had a regional balance certainly in the Senate of 24 from Ontario, 24 from Quebec, and then 24 from the Atlantic provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, so that there was a rough regional balance in the Senate.

But when the federation moved west, they then assigned arbitrarily six Senate seats to Manitoba and British Columbia, and then to Saskatchewan and to Canada. So the present alignment in Canada is that Ontario has 24 Senate seats, although that's 24 out of 100 senators which is what the Senate was originally designed for — about a quarter of the Senate seats although they have probably about a third of the population. Quebec, which had a population that might have been about the same as Ontario in those days, now having substantially less in population but the same number of Senate seats. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, 10 Senate seats each. Oh yes, Newfoundland was added, so now the Atlantic region has 30 Senate seats where Saskatchewan has six.

And so you have to ask yourself, how satisfied are we as a province to in effect enshrine that kind of imbalance in a future Senate? If you take the point of view again, if you take the point of view again that electing senators — even though they have no effective role, or should they — if you elect them and because of the fact that they now have a greater authority because they're elected and therefore are able to carve out for themselves a more effective role, why would we take the position that that's okay and we should continue to be disadvantaged in terms of lower representation because, again, what is the possible incentive?

What is the possible incentive, possible incentive for any jurisdiction to give up power in Ottawa through reducing their members of a then elected Senate? What possible reason is there, and why is it that the provincial government, the Minister of Justice, hasn't dealt with these issues? Why is it that they've been silent on that? Why is that they've been silent on the question of an effective Senate? Why is it that they're silent on the question of an equal Senate that had provided for some greater equality in Canada?

And is this the formula, is this the formula that we seek to enshrine in our Senate, Mr. Speaker? And I don't think for a moment we do. And I don't think that this is an issue that has been thought through by the provincial government. I think this is one of these things where they've got some, you know, political bee under their bonnet about electing senators. And therefore we'll just elect them and don't really analyze and deal with what that means for the people of Saskatchewan, what it is that we might be giving up by electing Senate nominees. No thought had been given to this. This is strictly — how shall I say — slavish adherence to political thinking that comes from the right wing in Saskatchewan and comes from the right wing in Western Canada, Mr. Speaker. No real thought had been given to the consequences of this.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit that the only real way, the only real way to deal with this question of election and the question of the effective role of the Senate, the question of the equal representation for Canadians in the Senate or equal representation for the regions in that Senate or equal representation for the provinces in that Senate — none of which is really clear, a lot of which is confused — but that the only real effective way to deal with that is through constitutional reform, that you can't do constitutional reform somehow through the back door.

Constitutional reform needs to be dealt head-on as such. Constitutional reform needs to recognize that if there's some improvement in the Senate, as an example, that benefits my province, that benefits my region, that there might be other things that I would be prepared to have in the constitution that I wouldn't necessarily agree to. But if that's a trade-off for increased power for the Senate, which I value, then that's the only real way that you can deal with it, and that's through constitutional reform.

And that kind of in-depth discussion needs to be undertaken by the Government of Canada with the provinces, and you need to get agreement then from . . . and I forget the exact formula, Mr. Speaker, but certainly any agreement for a constitutional change in Canada would surely have to have the support of the majority

of the population from those provinces that agree and/or a majority of the provinces agreeing and probably would need some regional agreement as well.

You can't have a situation where Western Canada, Ontario agree to a change in the constitution, be damned what it is that Quebec or the Atlantic provinces say because they don't have the majority of the population; they don't necessarily have a majority of the provinces. Those are the kinds of things that need to be taken into account when we're talking about changing the constitution.

And of course each province will have their own process for dealing with any changes to the constitution. Some provinces have mandated that there needs to be a public discussion before a provincial legislature can agree to changes in the constitution on their part. Other provinces may not go that far, but take the point of view . . . And of course you can't have a provincial government, you just can't have a provincial government on its own saying, oh okay we agree to a change in the constitution. And we will on behalf of the people of the province sign on to this constitutional change. No. Any constitutional change at a bare minimum would need to see dialogue, discussion, debate in the Legislative Assembly.

And as I indicated, many provinces also take the position that if you have a constitutional change and that constitutional change, those amendments, those changes that you would make to this country we call Canada and the implication that has for children in the future in this country, that's important enough to subject it to also public dialogue and to invite the public to weigh in on the changes in our constitution. And I think that's fair ball, Mr. Speaker. This is not a thing that can simply be dealt with behind closed doors.

This is an issue that at some point, even if there's agreement among the premiers and the Prime Minister as to what needs to be done, at some point Canadians need to weigh in. And that has happened before in this country where the premiers dealt with the question of Meech Lake, the Meech Lake Accord, on how to change our constitution.

And this is one of the ironies that I see in the Bill before us, that recognizing the genesis of where this proposal for electing senators comes from . . . and it comes from the right wing of this country, and it comes from the right wing in Western Canada. This is a group prides itself on belief that senators should be elected, although there haven't been any real announcements. Well what the heck that might mean, as I've indicated in my remarks, in terms of effective role and equal representation? But never mind, they strongly believe that.

It is a great irony that, I think, the last major attempt to change the constitution in Canada through something called the Meech Lake Accord because the accord was agreed to by the premiers of the day in Meech Lake, Ontario . . . I think it's Ontario. It's not Meech Lake, Quebec. I don't know, one or the other, but Meech Lake, Canada, Mr. Speaker. That the prime minister and the premiers agreed at that time to changes in Canada's constitution.

And that was a constitutional accord that again had trade-offs in it. This was a constitutional accord where Quebec, after our

constitution having been patriated by the former Trudeau government, the Quebec government at that point — Premier Bourassa and Prime Minister Mulroney — had discussions, the Quebec government signalling that perhaps it might be prepared to sign on as a signatory to the patriation of the Canadian Constitution, then saying that, but if we do that, there's some trade-offs that we would like. And one of the trade-offs would then be recognition of Quebec as a distinct society, I believe it was.

[16:45]

But that constitutional accord then also provided for changes to our Senate — to provide for an elected senate, to provide for an effective Senate, and to provide for a different distribution of Senate seats — one that might not be perfect but would perhaps . . . [inaudible] . . . greater comfort for the people in various regions of the country. And so part of the constitutional accord was an agreement that they would debate this. And if they failed to resolve it, here was a bottom line that would be implemented if the premiers could not agree on the specifics of the changes to the constitution with respect to Senate reform.

Well now here is a real irony, that the group in Canada that was the loudest, the most vociferous, the most demonstrative, the most . . . Well there's some words I can't use in this Legislative Assembly. But the group that without a doubt voiced the greatest opposition to the Meech Lake Accord was the very right wing that is today advocating an elected Senate. And this a great puzzlement to me, that the right wing and especially the right wing in Canada would take the position that they should oppose this — the one real chance that we've seen in our lifetime for changes to the constitution to provide for a more effective Senate and to provide for elected senators would be opposed by them.

But I guess that would because in those days the folks opposite were thinking regionally as opposed to having regard for the country as a whole. Now of course they morph themselves into a Conservative Party, and I'm speaking of the former Reform Party, that was very insistent in terms of the change that should or should not be made to the Constitution of Canada, and you know in some ways not acting any differently than the groups that — say the Bloc Québécois that represents Quebec — having a narrow regional view of Canada and how it should be constructed and as long as I get what I want, then the rest of the country really doesn't matter. The question of Senate reform is secondary to what I want for my region, recognizing that when you have regional interest, then you need to begin to trade off interests and concerns, one for the other, to get what it is that you really want. But that's something that never crossed their minds and something that Preston Manning was dead set against. And you know, when you look at it, you wonder like what were their real interests in terms of Canada as a whole, because all they could see it through was through the blinkers of their narrow regional viewpoint.

So I find it's ironic that the right wing continues to champion the issue of representation or election of senators as somehow being the way to reform the Senate when there's very little credible opinion in the country that would agree with that.

Again, like why would any jurisdiction having achieved a

certain level of power in Ottawa . . . Because you decided to all elect senators and because those senators are largely successful in carving out a more effective role, although may not be that effective for reasons that I mention and may not be that effective because there hasn't really been any changes over the years . . . In fact the senators have retracted from exercising the bit of leeway and flexibility that might be in the *Constitution Act*. Why would any region in this country, why would any province in this country give up something that they have in terms of power in Ottawa? And I have never been able to get an answer to that question from the right wing what might compel them to do that.

Once they've got it, what incentive is there to enter into Senate reform as part of some other constitutional package? My sense is then that constitutional reform might become even more difficult for Canadians to become involved in, or for our leaders to become involved in or Canadians, Mr. Speaker. Again it is just a source of complete puzzlement to me as to why they continue to push this point of view, Mr. Speaker.

This is a Bill that is not going to change the Senate for the better. This is a Bill that will do absolutely sweet tweet in terms of improving the Senate. This is a Bill that will do absolutely sweet tweet in terms of making the Senate a more effective institution in dealing with the needs and the wants of Canadian citizens. This is a Bill that will do nothing, nada, not a thing, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, in so many words, or not in so many words, it's a sham Bill. It's a real sham.

And again here's where the other puzzlement comes in that if there is to be a Senate election, we're not really clear when we would have those elections. Now the Minister of Justice mused that well, you know, maybe we can elect senators at the same time we have a provincial election to save money. But if there's no vacancy, then what kind of election would you have? Would you anticipate vacancies? You know that senators have to resign when they reach age 75, and maybe if the federal government is successful in terms of pushing through changes to limit the terms of senators, you might have some greater clarity about when it is that you should have an election for senators. But it's anything less than clear.

And now here's the other thing that is really a puzzler. Here we put forward a Bill to finally get what the right wing wants, right? And especially Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada — who comes from this Reform base in Calgary and comes from this base of electing senators — here we have now the Prime Minister indicating through his responsible minister, Steven Fletcher, saying, well hold on here, we may not want to do that. Say what? Say what, Mr. Speaker? You may not want to do that?

Well now they're expressing concerns that, well we want to make sure that we get our agenda — that is the Conservative Party agenda — through the Parliament of Canada. And we certainly don't want any obstructionism or what have you from the Senate to slow us down in the package that we have for Canadians, although I'm not really clear if there's been a lot of obstructionism over the years. And some of the obstructionism they've probably agreed with; and some of the obstructionism the right wing has probably been an author of. But never mind. What obstructionism?

But now he's saying that because of potential obstructionism, we're not sure we want to take an elected nominee from Saskatchewan. We may want to appoint our own people. We might want to appoint partisans who will unfailingly and without any second-guessing carry out the agenda of the Conservative government. Well to me it sounds more like the Prime Minister needs ways, like Conservative and Liberal parties have over the years, to reward their friends by appointing them to the Senate, Mr. Speaker.

But so, I tell you, electing them for what? Why would we elect them if he's going to go ahead and appoint senators anyway? You know, these are questions that the ordinary guy might have about what's taking place here. But you know, do we get any answers from the government on this? Has the Minister of Justice been clear in terms of articulating what it is that this election of senators really means? No, he's provided us with a Bill on process and how we might do it, but has not weighed in on the question of what this really means for Canada, what this really means for the federation of Canada. Hasn't done that, hasn't talked about what impact this might have potentially on Saskatchewan. He has done nothing of that.

And so again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all in all considered, when I look at this Bill I say the Bill is again probably the best example of a frivolous piece of legislation that I've ever seen in this Assembly. The best example of a money-wasting Bill in this Assembly, the best example of how to take a Bill to waste the taxpayers' money in Saskatchewan. And I could tell you, I've been here a few years, Mr. Speaker, so I've got a bit of experience in terms of judging legislation here over the years. And no doubt they'll have lots of examples too. But as long as you're providing a list of examples of frivolous Bills, this one goes number one. This one goes through the top, Mr. Speaker. So I really wonder what the purpose is of the Bill, what it's going to resolve. You know, I just don't know, Mr. Speaker.

So one of the things that we've looked at to enable the people of Saskatchewan to call into sharper focus as to whether or not they even agree with the concept of elected senators . . . And it sounds good. Like on the surface of it, it sounded like a great thing.

I mean who could oppose elections? Everybody loves an election. We love an election. Never mind that you're electing somebody to rubber stamp something. Never mind, we love an election. I mean do you ever go to a meeting, Mr. Speaker, and there's not necessarily any motions before the meetings? You get any group of people together, and they all want to raise their hands for something. They all want to vote for something. They think it's like part of your civic duty to vote for something.

But I tell you in this particular case this is a sham. This is an election that will result in nothing. This is an election that if you carry it through to its logical conclusion means a diminution of the power of the people of Saskatchewan relative to the rest of the country. And there has been no clear talk about this by the provincial government. None whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

And so I think we need to call this into sharper focus for the people of Saskatchewan. And that is why we are advocating that maybe the central question that the people of Saskatchewan should be discussing is, should we elect a senator? Given all the

warts, given all the faults, given all the restrictions, given all the limitations that I've talked about, given all the potential outcomes which means a lessening of the powers of Saskatchewan in the overall context of the Canadian federation, do we still want to carry on with an election of senators? Or should we have another alternative to propose to the people of Saskatchewan, and that is the complete abolition of the Senate of Canada?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — That is the question I think that the people of Saskatchewan need to be discussing, Mr. Speaker.

So one of the recommendations that we are making is that at an appropriate time that we alter this Bill, amend this Bill, improve this Bill so that we provide the people of Saskatchewan with a more reasoned choice about going forward when it comes to the Senate of Canada, that we ask the people of Saskatchewan whether they approve this Bill or that we abolish the Senate, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time of adjournment having been reached, this House now stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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