



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

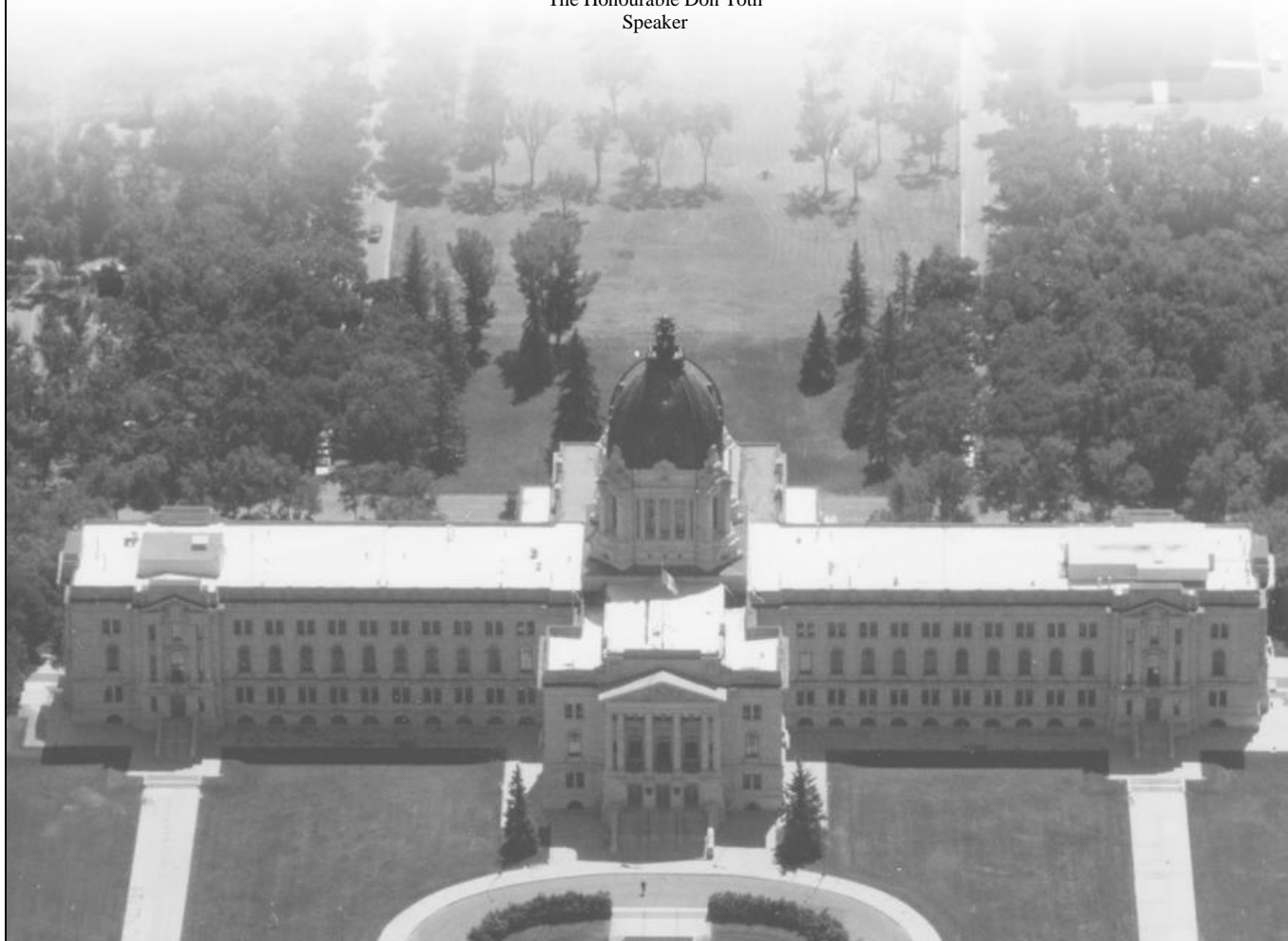
of the

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

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 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

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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

The Speaker: — Welcome back, members, to the spring session 2009. I trust you'll find it enjoyable.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature 18 students from Sheldon-Williams Collegiate, seated in the east gallery. They're accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Steffany Salloum, and they're here to observe the first day of the session in the spring. And I would ask all members to welcome them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of guests in your gallery that I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly. I don't have my list here but I will ad lib it, I guess, from the start.

We have retired Brigadier General Cliff Walker, a long-time friend and very, very supportive to myself. And when I call for advice, I get lots of advice from Cliff. We have the hon. Larry Schneider in the gallery. Tim Cheesman is one of the reserve COs [commanding officer]; we have Tim here. Kenny Garbutt — Ken's an honorary colonel. Brad Hrycyna is a CO of the squadron. We have Bob Cade, Colonel Bob Cade and his wife, Val. And Bob is an honorary colonel. Cory Thiemann from the naval side.

And also, Mr. Speaker, we have the Shipways here. Their son was lost in Afghanistan and we're very pleased to have them with us here today.

We have a number of our veterans that have returned from Afghanistan here with us today. Special acknowledgement of Tim Huckle. His father and I used to fly together and Tim is a veteran of Afghanistan also.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to see who I've missed here now. Colonel Jim Stakiw is with us from Saskatoon. Malcolm French is exec officer for HMCS [Her Majesty's Canadian Ship] *Queen*. We have Petty Officer Mauro, Master Corporal MacKenzie from the North Saskatchewan Regiment, Master Corporal von Falkenhausen from the Regina Rifles.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased to have these guests with us here in the legislature today, and I would ask all the members to give them a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, in the Speaker's gallery there are two interns who have offices beside me. Andrew Restall is my intern. And since Glen Hart isn't here, this is his intern, Dawn Gibbons. And they're working with us for three months so I'd like you to give them a warm welcome, please.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I would like to introduce three special guests seated in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, my mother, Anne Broten, is seated there, as well as my sister, Julianne Broten Noble, and my sister, Nancy Johnson.

Julianne is home for a visit from Northern Ireland where she works in the legislative assembly of Northern Ireland in Stormont, and my sister Nancy works at the University of Saskatchewan at the Language Centre. So I'm very happy that they're here to join us today. And my mom works at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] as well, so that's important.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition that speaks to the cost of living, in particular to housing and the impact that it is having on Saskatchewan senior citizens. Mr. Speaker, the petition speaks to the need for affordable housing options that would be helpful to seniors across this province, especially those living on a fixed income. And the prayer reads:

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.

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

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

today to present a petition. Wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers . . . We know that many of these folks are chronically underpaid and in fact work at poverty level wages. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the development and implementation of a multi-year funding plan to ensure that CBO workers achieve wage equities with employees who perform work of equal value in government departments.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

These folks, Mr. Speaker, are from Foam Lake, Yorkton, Langenburg, Norquay. Some are from Saskatoon, Regina; again, Yorkton; Watson, Prince Albert, Hudson Bay, and we have folks here from Swift Current and Humboldt. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present two petitions. Mr. Speaker, the first petition I wish to present today is in support of a new Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. It recognizes that the existing, nearly 100-year-old structure is in much need of replacement. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners call on the Legislative Assembly to:

. . . call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately recommit funds and resources for the continued development and construction of a new Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford and provide the Prairie North Regional Health Authority with the authority necessary to complete this essential and much-needed project.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of The Battlefords. The first name on the petition, Mr. Speaker, is Mayor Julian Sadlowski, city of North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, the second petition I have today recognizes the need for affordable housing in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, and it recognizes that the vacancy rate for rental accommodation in The Battlefords is very low. Mr. Speaker, the petition to the Legislative Assembly asks that the Government of Saskatchewan should:

. . . invest in an affordable housing program that will result in a greater number of quality and affordable rental units to be made available to a greater number of people throughout The Battlefords and across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this petition on housing in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, is signed by residents of The Battlefords and the surrounding area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions in support of a reduction in the education portion of property taxes. This is needed by Saskatchewan families and business, many of whom have seen a large increase in their taxes as a result of 2009 reassessment. 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.

And these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are signed by good folks down in Estevan. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. First of all let me begin . . . I'm not sure if it's the lights in the Assembly or the long time we've been away, but I'd just like to remind members that firstly in regards to petitions — one petition per individual per day. And so if we can keep that in mind for the future, that would be appreciated. Order.

Before I call for statements by members, just a heads-up. Member statements are 90 seconds. The Speaker has in the past allowed for — if it's on a specifically personal nature — a little extended time. But I'd appreciate if members would keep in mind the 90-second limit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatoon Organization Fights Homelessness

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, February 26, Saskatoon's Passion for Action Against Homelessness held a series of events to work towards ending homelessness in our communities and in fact throughout Canada.

The day started at city hall at noon with a lunchtime rally and a downtown walkabout, marching to the local Social Services, Sask Housing offices. They called on motorists along 22nd Street to honk to end homelessness, and the day ended with soup and bannock and an evening vigil at the Rainbow Community Centre.

Debbie Frost, the local representative for Canada Without Poverty, brought greetings of support from Calgary, including Susan Scott, the author of *All Our Sisters: Stories of Homeless Women in Canada*. A group of Calgarians held a moment of silence in support of the day of action in Saskatoon. People signed a petition supporting Bill C-304, proposed by NDP [New Democratic Party] MPs [Member of Parliament] Davies and Leslie, calling for a national housing strategy. And in fact the Act will likely be debated in parliament as early as April.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we look to our young people for the right words. Meighan McGraw, 14, that night read her poem, “What can I do? How can I help?” She asks:

They have a life just like I do
And I wonder to myself . . .

What can I do? How can I help?
It hurts not only them but me.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Saskatoon’s Passion for Action Against Homelessness for their leadership on this very important task. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Recognition of Saskatchewan Curling Team

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, I stand today to talk about an outstanding group of local athletes that have done our province proud on the national stage. I speak about Team Saskatchewan, the Lawton curling team which made it to the playoffs in the Scotties Tournament of Hearts.

After a shaky start, Team Saskatchewan came roaring back with six straight victories and entered the playoffs as the third ranked team. Sadly Lawton’s team was defeated by Team Canada, led by Jennifer Jones, this past Saturday.

They exemplified the true spirit of competition and sportsmanship and showed that Saskatchewan curlers can still throw with the best of them. I invite my colleagues to join me in congratulating skip Stefanie Lawton, her sister, Marliese Kasner, Sherri Singler, and Lana Vey on their performance.

I would also like to offer our prayers to Stefanie and Marliese for their mother, Linda Miller, who was unable to watch them compete due to an inoperable brain tumour. This kept their father and coach, Bob Miller, from their side and it took a lot of strength to compete at such a high level with greater concerns on their minds. Marliese Kasner eloquently stated in the *National Post* a couple of weeks ago:

It puts things into perspective . . . We have other things in life.

We play the game because we enjoy it.

Once again I would like to extend congratulations on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan to Stefanie Lawton curling team. We are proud to have such strong and inspirational role models.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Recognizing AIDS Saskatoon

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday,

February 23, I had the pleasure of visiting AIDS Saskatoon, a community-based organization serving Saskatoon as well as central and northern Saskatchewan. While AIDS Saskatoon helps many throughout our province, it is located in the constituency of Saskatoon Massey Place just a few doors down from my constituency office.

Founded in 1986, AIDS Saskatoon supports people affected by HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] and educates for the prevention of HIV infection. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with Nicole White, executive coordinator of AIDS Saskatoon, as well as board Chair, Katie Scouler. I found our visit to be very informative and eye-opening. They shared with me information about the many services and projects under way at AIDS Saskatoon and also about their plans and ideas for the future.

I also had the pleasure of meeting the many dedicated staff members of AIDS Saskatoon and, in speaking with them, it was clear to me that they are highly committed to their work and to making life better for the most marginalized in society.

Mr. Speaker, whether it’s a warm meal, advice on harm reduction, or simply providing community and belonging, AIDS Saskatoon plays a very important role in the lives of many Saskatchewan residents. I would ask all members to join me in thanking AIDS Saskatoon for the good and important work they do in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Pharmacy Awareness Week

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is Pharmacy Awareness Week across our country. It is during this week that we take the opportunity to recognize the value and the importance that pharmacists play in our society. With an aging population throughout Canada, along with the ever-increasing number of medications, pharmacists offer a vital advice and services for all types of health issues.

Our government understands the importance of readily accessible prescription drugs for members of our community. That’s why we made a campaign promise in the last election to ensure that prescription drugs covered under the provincial drug formulary were capped at \$15 per prescription for children under age 14, as well as for seniors with a net income under 64,000. Our government kept the promise and provided this \$15 cap in last year’s budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that personally I had the pleasure of bringing greetings to a recent grand opening of a new Medicine Shoppe pharmacy. And this pharmacy is located in my own constituency of Regina Qu’Appelle Valley, and this pharmacy is owned by Mr. Spiro Kangleff.

Mr. Kangleff is an individual who is passionate about providing a comfortable and inviting atmosphere to his pharmacy

customers. Congratulations to Mr. Kangleff and his commitment to health care in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

New Facility for Veterans' Club

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw ANAVETS [Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada] Local 252 held a grand opening of their new facility in January of this year. I was very pleased to participate in the ribbon cutting ceremony, along with my colleague from Moose Jaw North. In attendance were many ANAVETS members, life members and directors of the organization, and a number of interested citizens.

The new building is somewhat smaller, but members can expect the same level of service in the new headquarters. There is a lounge and a bar, as well as various activities that are available.

The organization, which is a veterans' club, derives its name from those remnants of British and French colonial regiments which were left in Canada when their regiments returned home following their tours of duty. These members banded together to exchange information on service benefits available to them and to fraternize. They called themselves the Army Veterans in Canada. Since that time, to recognize the inclusion of members from both the navy and air force, the official title was changed to the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada — commonly known, the ANAVETS.

In June of this year, the ANAVETS provincial command will be hosting their 47th biennial convention in Moose Jaw, where they will be welcoming leaders from their organization from across the province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the ANAVETS for not only the services they provide for veterans but for the work they do in our community, and extend to them congratulations on the opening of their new location.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Rural Women's Month in Saskatchewan

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government has proclaimed March Rural Women's Month in Saskatchewan.

Dedicating this March to rural women is about recognizing and celebrating the contributions rural women have made to our province. It also raises awareness and appreciation of the significant role, past and present, that women have played and continue to play in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Rural Women's Month will be observed in conjunction with events held in March by various women's

groups in communities across Saskatchewan. Many of these events are in association with the United Nations International Women's Day on March 8.

Mr. Speaker, rural women in Saskatchewan have and continue to have a significant influence in the development of our health care, education, and social services. Rural women serve as volunteers in churches, schools and hospital boards, 4-H clubs, sports organizations, and agricultural societies, and are leaders in many of our small communities. In many cases they are at least half of many farm operations across our great province.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to their dedication to the land, many work in off-farm jobs in addition to raising their families. Everyone in Saskatchewan is indebted to these great accomplishments of Saskatchewan's rural women since these early homesteading days.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the rural women of our province for the contributions they've made to their communities, and I would invite all members to join with me in thanking rural women for the important role they play in shaping the Saskatchewan way of life. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Christmas Dinner for Less Fortunate

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my honour to act as a server at the eighth annual Christmas dinner for Regina's less fortunate residents on December 22. I was joined by the member from Regina Elphinstone. This event is organized by the Regina & District Labour Council along with affiliate and non-affiliate unions, the Saskatchewan Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council, and community partners. This event would not be possible without the incredibly generous donation of the Delta Hotel and its staff.

At this year's event, more than 1,400 people attended and were provided a fantastic meal and warm drink. Christmas is a time of year that can be incredibly strained on individuals and families that are struggling financially, emotionally, and socially. The thankfulness and sincere happiness of guests while sitting at the tables to warm up and receive an excellent full-course meal was evident.

I would be remiss not to thank organizing Chair for this year's dinner, Janice Bernier, and the many, many volunteers and donors that made this evening possible.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in thanking all of those who recognized some broader needs within our community and supported the eighth annual Christmas dinner. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Rosemont.

Property Tax Relief

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The Sask Party is failing the people of Saskatchewan. When they were in opposition and oil was \$40 a barrel, they complained that the NDP was sitting on a mountain of money and insisted that the money existed now to help families. And during the last election they made a promise to the people of Saskatchewan. They promised to save the average homeowner more than \$450 a year in education property taxes.

We've recently learned, Mr. Speaker, that Regina property owners will be paying at least 8 per cent more in property taxes this year — before increases in program costs are taken into account. To the minister: when will this government keep its promise to save Regina homeowners \$450 a year in property tax?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do want to inform the member opposite and the people in the province of Saskatchewan that we've kept one very significant promise that the NDP didn't keep, and that was to deal with infrastructure in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget alone, in this budget alone, Mr. Speaker, we promised during the time of the budget that we would spend \$117 million on infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, I was very proud to announce not more than a few weeks ago that we were enhancing that by \$142 million.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, \$259 million in infrastructure to build the schools that the former government, the NDP, refused to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Taxpayers in The Battlefords are tired of paying more for property taxes, Mr. Speaker. They want to know when this government is going to keep the promise that they made when they were in opposition — like when the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford said back in 2005, the government was doing well but people were struggling and that had to change.

To the minister, Mr. Speaker: when will this government keep its promise to homeowners in The Battlefords — a \$450 a year savings in education property tax?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's time for people in the province of Saskatchewan to

understand where those members have been on this particular issue. And I want to read a quote from *Hansard* of September 22, 1987, and it says this:

And I say, Mr. Speaker, is there any wonder that a tax revolt is brewing in this province? People are being taxed to death and they're saying, we can't take any more.

Mr. Speaker that's a quote of the former premier of this province in 1987.

Mr. Speaker, I do also want to say, that there's another quote of very great significance. And it says this:

Our priority in tax reform for government over the next several years must be the matter of funding education.

The status quo is not on.

Mr. Speaker, that also was the leader of the NDP at a 2003 SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, Mr. Speaker. We will continue with our rebate program and we will ensure that taxpayers understand that we are helping them.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well homeowners in Moose Jaw are still waiting to find out how much they're going to be paying for property tax this year, but it's a safe bet that we're going to be paying more. And we're still waiting for property tax relief that the Sask Party kept promising while they were in opposition, like when the member from Wood River said in 2005 — I know that's a little recent for the minister but it's the best one we can do — that "There's been enough study and it's time for action." Well over 14 months in government, when will this government keep its election promise and save Moose Jaw property tax owners \$450 a year?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, besides dealing with the tax problem, and it is a problem and we understand that, and that's why we have a rebate program for the short term. And we are going to look at a long-term solution.

But I do want to talk about five other initiatives, Mr. Speaker: income tax savings, loan income tax credit savings, active families benefit . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I ask members to come to order and allow the Minister of Education to respond. Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Seniors income plan increase, Mr. Speaker, and the fifth one, employment supplement increase.

Mr. Speaker, for a family of four with a \$35,000 income, the savings to that family alone, provided by the Saskatchewan Party government in a short 14 months, is \$2,648, Mr. Speaker — way more than that government ever did over its 16 years, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're told that Saskatoon property tax payers will pay significantly more in property taxes before increases in program costs are taken into account. It's time for the Saskatchewan Party to live up to its rhetoric in opposition, like when they promised to reduce property taxes in both the 2003, 2007 provincial election campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the support of the NDP rebate program, but when will the Saskatchewan Party keep its election promise to save homeowners in Saskatchewan and in Saskatoon \$450 a year in property taxes?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, we made, as a political party entering an election campaign, we made a promise. We made a promise that we would implement a four-year rebate structure and while that rebate program was in place, we were going to look at a permanent structure within the mandate of this current government.

Mr. Speaker, we have kept that promise. We have indicated that the rebate program, which was at 12 per cent and was enhanced to 15 per cent, and now will be moving forward to 17 per cent and 20 per cent over the four term.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP who promised agricultural owners, landowners in rural Saskatchewan, nothing, Mr. Speaker — nothing — we have indeed kept our promise. In fact we have increased the percentage from 47 to 56. We will be looking at a 66 per cent rebate, Mr. Speaker. And in the final year, if we're not at a permanent structure, that rebate, Mr. Speaker, will be 80 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — ... on both sides of this Assembly should be rightfully standing on this issue. As you can see, this is an issue right across our province. Saskatchewan people are tired of paying more for property taxes, particularly at a time when other costs are rising as well — thanks to this government.

People and families want a permanent solution and permanent property tax relief, instead of paying more year after year. And like the member from Rosetown-Elrose said last summer, I

quote: “(Education property tax) has been studied and studied and studied . . . It's a question of how we set priorities and get things done.”

To the minister: when will the Sask Party set some priorities and get things done?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the audited financial statement for this fiscal year will show that by March 31, 2009 the Saskatchewan Party government will have returned \$156 million to the people of Saskatchewan in the way of a rebate. Mr. Speaker, is that enough? No. And we have indicated to the people of Saskatchewan that we're going to change those percentages. And, Mr. Speaker, that number will rise to \$200 million if indeed the rebate program is going to be the solution for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read a quote from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*. It's dated April 3, 2007, and it says this, and I quote:

It is now four years since Premier Lorne Calvert told rural municipal leaders that when it comes to stratospheric levels of property tax in Saskatchewan, “the status quo is not on.” As his term draws to a close, there is still no long-term plan aimed at reducing the education portion of property tax.

Mr. Speaker, that was a quote in the year 2007, and I can assure the members opposite that we will be moving forward with a plan that is sustainable as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Energy Costs

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear the Deputy Premier speaking of rebates. Mr. Speaker, in this economic boom Saskatchewan people are asking what they and their families can expect from their government. So far people are paying more for heat, more for power, more for property taxes — more for everything.

Just in time for the coldest months of the winter, the Sask Party hiked natural gas prices by 20 per cent, and then they threw in an extra \$2 a month for good measure.

Will the government today commit to rebate SaskEnergy customers for the amount that they were overcharged last winter?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our commitment to Saskatchewan people is to provide them the service and the commodity at the lowest possible cost, and that's indeed what we have done, Mr. Speaker.

I remind members opposite that SaskEnergy has . . . SaskEnergy, for example, has provided gas at the lowest cost in the country for 7 of the last 10 years, including, including the entire 2008 — if the members opposite will just listen closely, they'll gain a valuable fact here — the entire 2008 time period, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the members opposite that it's the same policy that was under the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party government is finally requesting a rate reduction for April 1 when the winter is basically over — too little, too late, Mr. Speaker. Families need to stop paying more now, not when the snow melts. The Sask Party government should provide relief from the gouging — starting today, not a month from now.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will he implement the SaskEnergy rate reduction today instead of April 1?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it didn't take long. We heard from the wannabe leader of the NDP that he was soon going to order or direct his members to start asking these questions in the legislature. And I quote:

“I am confident that my members, NDP members, will hold the Wall government accountable,” Lingenfelter, [said] getting a little ahead of himself, on the SaskEnergy pricing issue.

And we all know the drive-by flurry that was created by that.

Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy rates are the lowest in the country, they have been the lowest in the country. In 2008, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents paid an average of \$7.20 a gigajoule — lower than Alberta, lower than Manitoba, the lowest in the country, bar none, Mr. Speaker. That's what we'll continue to do, provide the lowest possible cost utilities, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is on the verge of making a terrible mistake and if they proceed, Saskatchewan consumers are going to pay a lot more.

Today's natural gas costs are plummeting. Coal costs are dropping worldwide. SaskPower made \$138 million profit in 2007, the last year they filed a report for. The Sask Party government has agreed, in the face of all this, to have SaskPower rates go up by 13 per cent when there's clearly just no justification for any rate increase. The government should be asking SaskPower to implement a rate decrease.

My question to the minister responsible is: will he instruct SaskPower to ask for a rate decrease?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I don't have to take instruction from that member or any member opposite on the file of SaskPower, Mr. Speaker.

What did they do when they were in charge? They had one plan, one \$4.2 billion plan for a new coal facility. What did they do? They dropped that like a hot potato, ran the other way. Did they have a plan B? None whatsoever. Did they have an infrastructure plan for SaskPower going forward? None, Mr. Speaker. Did they have any plans at all to address a growing economy? They were planning for failure, Mr. Speaker. That's what members on the opposite did.

That's not what members here will do. We will plan for a growing economy. We will provide safe and reliable power for Saskatchewan families, Saskatchewan businesses. And that will drive our economy, whether the members opposite like it or not.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is failing the people of Saskatchewan, and they completely miss the point when it comes to our Crown corporations.

As New Democrats, we believe that the Crowns exist to provide Saskatchewan families with a quality service at an affordable cost. But the Sask Party seems to have a completely different philosophy, one that the Minister of Parks explained back in December when she increased provincial park fees.

To the minister: does the Sask Party believe that Saskatchewan families just don't appreciate home heat and electricity enough? Is that why we're paying so much more under a Sask Party government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'm trying, I'm trying really hard to find the humour in that question, but I just can't, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate again. What this government is committed to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Minister of Crown

Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to talk about the policy regarding Crown Corporations and pricing going forward and over the past number of months since we've been in government.

We've provided the lowest possible cost for Saskatchewan residents. We've provided . . . In 2008 SaskEnergy rates were the lowest in the country. And I'd ask members opposite to compare. If they know somebody, for example that was living in Calgary back in June or July of last year, ask them how much a gigajoule they were paying at that time, when Saskatchewan . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The minister may finish his response.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I just throw that out as an example. There are many other examples that we can use across the country, but the bottom line is that Saskatchewan residents paid the lowest cost, will continue to pay the lowest cost.

At the same time we will be addressing the infrastructure needs, not only of schools and highways, but of the Crown Corporations because that is our commitment, to ensure that the Crown Corporations are properly funded — something members opposite failed miserably to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Tuition Fees

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is failing the people of Saskatchewan. A few months ago the Sask Party Minister of Advanced Education axed the fully funded tuition freeze and announced he would be hiking tuition through something called a tuition management system. But all we know so far about this new system is that students will be paying more.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's that time of year when students and their families are starting to make their plans for next fall. To the minister responsible for the tuition management system: how much more will he force students to pay?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity to provide an update. I guess I better contextualize this. Here are a couple of quotes: "Anywhere that we've seen tuition freezes . . . [put] in across the country, they just haven't worked." That's from Andrew Thomson. He considered running for you guys again but changed his mind.

"The government doesn't favour a tuition freeze . . . in other provinces it has been shown to be non-sustainable." Graham

Addley says that. "Reducing tuition does nothing to narrow the yawning gap in academic performance between low-income high school students and their high-income counterparts." A gentleman by the name of Sean Junor said that.

Mr. Speaker, what we can say is all the members opposite need to do is glance their eyes just slightly one province to the east and see what's happening in NDP Manitoba, as the NDP there are rolling off a tuition freeze, Mr. Speaker. We're working on behalf of the students and post-secondary stakeholders to ensure that affordable tuition remains the order of the day.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — The minister can go on all he likes, but he can't escape the simple fact that students are being forced to pay more for their education because of the Sask Party government. The Sask Party chose to end the funded tuition freeze. They decided that students and their families should pay more tuition and go further into debt.

Mr. Speaker, it's often said that a good education is the best defence against an uncertain future. But in the midst of global economic uncertainty, the Sask Party has chosen to make a good education less affordable and less accessible. To the minister: why is he forcing students and their families to pay more for tuition in these uncertain times?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, we can focus on the graduate retention program that provides the most aggressive youth retention program in the country. It's been recognized in other provinces. People have called and said, what is it that you're actually doing here, Mr. Speaker. They're wondering what Saskatchewan's doing, making sure that those attending — from journeypersons all the way through to the completion of their undergraduate degrees — are benefiting from the most aggressive youth retention program.

What I can say to the virtual critic, what I can say is, I didn't see him. I didn't see him at the University of Saskatchewan when we announced within 48 hours of receiving the report — I didn't see him there either — of new student housing, Mr. Speaker. I didn't see him. What I can say, Mr. Speaker — the dialogue continues. What we're working towards, Mr. Speaker, is sustainable and affordable tuition right here in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's the priority and that's what we're staying focused on.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this is what it comes down to: students are facing increased expenses across the board now

that that minister and the Sask Party government want them to pay more for tuition.

To the minister: does he have the same philosophy as the Minister of Parks? Does he simply believe that students were not appreciating their education enough? Is that why students and their families will be paying more for tuition this fall?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, Mr. Speaker, across the province we've had a few events lately, and again I haven't seen the virtual critic. What we can say is the students and their families are benefiting from record investments in advanced education. We can see that in Prince Albert with the recent announcement. We can see it in Swift Current. We can see it right here in Regina. We can see it in Saskatoon. We can see it across the province, Mr. Speaker: \$26.4 million out of a \$500 million booster shot put into advanced education to reinforce the students, their families, and other stakeholders within advanced education remain a priority — a key priority — for this government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Provincial Park Fees

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there seems to be no end of added burden that the government wants to place on Saskatchewan families — more for property tax, more for home heat and electricity, more for putting their kids through the post-secondary education, and also now more for people to go and camp in their provincial parks.

People are trying to make their decisions now about what they're going to do about their summer vacation. The Minister of Parks said back in December that she's increasing the fees because campers just didn't appreciate the parks enough. The Premier described this as reasonable, which kind of shows us where he is as it relates to the cost on families here in Saskatchewan. To the minister: why is she making families pay more to take a holiday in our provincial parks?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you for the question. Camping reservations in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, have doubled from 2008 to 2009, and, Mr. Speaker, they have quadrupled for 2007 to 2009, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has the second lowest nightly camping fees in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and of course the members opposite are aware of the fact that every penny and more collected in fees is reinvested back into the parks.

Mr. Speaker, this government's commitment to the parks in Saskatchewan is unparalleled: \$20 million over four years, Mr. Speaker, to improve the parks. Under the members opposite, when they were in government, they did almost nothing for the provincial parks in this province. Mr. Speaker, our record of commitment in the provincial parks in the province is unparalleled and stated clearly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Lakeview

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, not only is the Sask Party adding cost to people who want to use our provincial parks, they're being hypocrites when they do this because basically what they did last year was remove the campfire fees that were part of the system, save \$375,000 and made a big hullabaloo about that and then, this year, they increase the fees right across the board which raises 1.25 million a year. So they've raised three times the revenue than what they got rid of last year.

How is this smaller sum worth taking the fees away around the campfires and making sure that people will stay away because of those fees when she says that if they increase the fees, the people will appreciate what's going on.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has also indicated that he thinks that these fees are reasonable and that they shouldn't be a real concern for Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I call the House to order and ask the member to state his question.

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier and all of the members of his government, why are they so oblivious to the increasing cost to families right across the province that they raise the fees in all of these important areas that we've discussed today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from the January 8 *StarPhoenix*. This is from president John Froese of Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association, and we agree with his point of view on this: "I would much rather the government uses my tax dollars on things such as health care, education, infrastructure, and affordable living for the underprivileged workers than to heavily subsidize campers at provincial parks."

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we've done with the rate increases, Mr. Speaker, increasing regional parks from \$75,000 a year to \$600,000 a year. Mr. Speaker, our investment in the provincial parks is unparalleled. And we again — I will say it again — we stand by it and we will see that it happens, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce today the creation of the Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour. This is a scholarship that will show Saskatchewan's utmost admiration and respect for the courageous sacrifices of the men and women who serve in the Canadian Forces.

The scholarship, Mr. Speaker, has been created for Saskatchewan soldiers returning from active duty since September 2001, and for the spouses and the children of soldiers who have been severely injured or killed in active duty since September 2001.

The scholarships are valued at \$5,000. They are available to all eligible candidates enrolled in a recognized Canadian post-secondary institution. Mr. Speaker, they don't have to be enrolled at a post-secondary institution in the province but anywhere in Canada.

The Scholarship of Honour, Mr. Speaker, will provide valuable support to the brave women and men who unselfishly give of themselves to build a better world and a stronger future for all Canadians. As well it will assist the immediate family members of those who are severely injured or who have made the ultimate sacrifice in order to preserve our freedom.

Mr. Speaker, our government is pleased to bestow this scholarship on Saskatchewan's returning soldiers as well as their spouses and their children — their sons and their daughters — for those who have lost a parent who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The scholarship is one way that we can recognize Saskatchewan soldiers who stand up for all of our freedoms with courage and with dedication. Mr. Speaker, we thank them for our peace and for our prosperity. We thank them for our security. We thank them for their selflessness and their willing to give the utmost sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I extend my thanks to the Premier for providing us an advance copy of his statement today.

Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition today welcome the introduction of the Saskatchewan scholarship program, Mr. Speaker, as we welcomed the announcement that was made in the Throne Speech. And today we welcome the Premier's answer to that commitment and to seeing it in place.

This scholarship, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated,

will be for members of the Canadian Armed Forces from Saskatchewan who return from active duty, and in some cases for their spouses and their families. It is, Mr. Speaker, a very tangible gesture of appreciation that this legislature and the people of Saskatchewan can make to those who serve us through the Canadian Armed Forces.

Mr. Speaker, there are some details of the scholarship plan that are yet to emerge surrounding eligibility. And it's my hope that the criteria will be as broad as possible — for instance, in the definition of active duty.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me say while today we recognize the contribution and sacrifice of those who serve us in uniform through the Canadian Armed Forces, and we also would want to recognize those who serve us through uniform in other capacity. And the events of this very week in Saskatoon remind us of those who serve in the policing services and the protective services who wear uniform and who are also sometimes called upon to provide the ultimate sacrifice.

And if I may say, Mr. Speaker, and on occasion there are those who don't wear a uniform except perhaps for a hard hat, and once a year we recognize the sacrifice that some who are injured and killed on the job. And so, Mr. Speaker, while we very much welcome this gesture of appreciation, this very tangible and meaningful gesture of appreciation to those who have served in the Canadian Armed Forces, we would also want to recall and remember all those who serve us in uniform and out.

And as the opposition, we will be very supportive of this scholarship program; and as an opposition, we will continue, Mr. Speaker, to call upon this government for more universal access to post-secondary education for all. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

TABLING OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, it is my pleasure to submit supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to rise for the message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 2009, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. [Signed by] His Honour Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

Please be seated. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, I would like to move a motion permitting

absence of a member from the House.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to move a motion regarding a member's absence. Is the House agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

Leave of Absence

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, by leave of the Assembly:

That leave of absence be granted to the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood for Monday, March 2, to Friday, March 13, 2009, to attend the 58th Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedures in Westminster on behalf of this Assembly.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved, by leave of the Assembly:

That leave of the Assembly be granted to the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood for Monday, March 2, '09, to Friday, March 13, '09, to attend the 58th Seminar on Parliamentary Practice and Procedures in Westminster on behalf of this Assembly.

Is the Assembly agreed to the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 70

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 70 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this Bill in respect to restitution orders, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act*. On the surface this Bill appears to be one that will provide a benefit to the people of Saskatchewan. The amendment addresses the enforcement mechanism provisions of the existing Act and

provides clear authority for the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General to enforce restitution orders on behalf of victims.

These new provisions respecting enforcement of restitution orders will apply to orders the judges may make at the time of sentencing and include sentencing of people convicted of provincial offences and people convicted of criminal offences under the Criminal Code.

Mr. Speaker, collecting on a restitution order can be a long and complex process and of course the cliché that one cannot get blood from a stone often unfortunately applies. But these changes will, it appears, assist victims in collecting on restitution orders. By taking steps to enforce compliance with the court orders that require offenders to pay their debts to victims, these changes will result in a greater accountability on the part of offenders.

Mr. Speaker, there's a — well a relatively new model; it's not that new — model of the criminal justice system in respect to restorative justice, Mr. Speaker. Restorative justice involves a great deal more, Mr. Speaker, than merely restitution. And restitution ordered by the court isn't necessarily the type of restitution that is foreseen by the proponents of restorative justice, Mr. Speaker.

But restitution — trying to make the victim as whole as the victim can be made under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker — is under that model of restorative justice not only a benefit to the victim, which it clearly is, Mr. Speaker, not only of benefit to the wider community, Mr. Speaker, but is seen as a benefit to the offender. An opportunity to the offender, to the extent that it's possible, restore the victim to the place that they were, and thereby pay a debt that they owe to society and pay to society ordinarily and traditionally in our criminal justice system, but a debt that they owe to the specific victim as well, Mr. Speaker.

And the value of doing that, the value of doing that of course goes first to the victim, but secondly to the offender — the offender's opportunity to rejoin the community against which he has offended. And of course anything that benefits an offender, particularly a first-time or a young offender, benefits society as a whole. Restoring these people to the community, giving them an opportunity to make restitution, of course, is good for their future and what's good for their future is of course good for the future of a community that has fewer victims for that change.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, this doesn't really speak to the model of restorative justice. I know that model was strongly felt within the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General when I was minister. I hope that that model is still there, Mr. Speaker. I hope that those voices are still being heard. But by taking these steps which, as I say, Mr. Speaker, don't do much in respect to the model, but are good steps, they're taking these steps to enforce compliance of court orders that required offenders to pay their debts to the victims.

These changes will result in greater accountability on the part of offenders, and these are good measures, Mr. Speaker. This is not to give a carte blanche to the Bill. I think it requires some study. But the government seems to be moving in the right

direction and the opposition is willing to see it go to committee. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and our remarks in the Chamber.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is Bill No. 70, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

The Speaker: — Which committee shall this Bill be referred to?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — This Bill, Bill No. 70, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008* be referred to the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

[14:30]

Bill No. 47

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Boyd that **Bill No. 47** — *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And just a signal to the Assembly and the minister opposite: I will be very brief in my remarks on the Bill. The Bill before us is indeed Bill No. 47, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008*, Mr. Speaker.

This legislation was introduced in the fall session, Mr. Speaker. We had the opportunity to listen to the minister's remarks at second reading and, Mr. Speaker, had the opportunity to do a brief response in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. We took the opportunity to consult widely on the legislation, Mr. Speaker. I say widely — not a lot of stakeholders affected directly by the legislation, Mr. Speaker. But for the most part, the response we got back was this legislation has value, Mr. Speaker.

And we are now prepared to see the legislation discussed in committee where we have an opportunity to ask a couple of questions, Mr. Speaker. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I don't have any further concrete or specific remarks on Bill No. 47. We would like to see it move to committee. And so at this point, Mr. Speaker . . . Strange sounds in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I can claim there's a stranger in the House, can I? No.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would conclude my remarks and ask the government if they're prepared to move the Bill to committee at this time.

The Speaker: — If I could call members to attention, we'll have someone check on what the emergency sound is that we're hearing at this time.

While we're waiting to hear back, the motion before the Assembly is the motion regarding Bill No. 47, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008* be now read the second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Bill No. 57

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 57** — *The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a second time.]

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's a pleasure to rise this afternoon, this time to address Bill 57, *The Land Titles Amendment Act*.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of those occasions where one can't help but comment on how the members opposite, now in government, have changed their tune. The land titles in Saskatchewan always operated under what is called the Torrens system, which I am not going to wax eloquently or wax on about at all. The system served the province very well and served the West of Canada very well and indeed was a great improvement upon its predecessor, a system of deeds.

But the paper system that was in place for much of this province's history grew ponderous and often difficult to use. And as pieces of land changed ownership, but also different interests applied to these pieces of land, it became more ponderous and more difficult to use and a question would arise as to why one would continue to use a paper-based system when the digital equivalent was already in place in so many different areas.

And so the Information Services Corporation was created and, Mr. Speaker, it deals now with far more than land titles. It deals with personal property as well and it has a role now in vital statistics, and there is nothing like a convert, Mr. Speaker. When the Saskatchewan Party has learned that an initiative of the previous NDP government has worked, although it takes them a while to learn that, Mr. Speaker, they are willing to adopt it, and in this case they have and they have, I think, with enthusiasm, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite never used to miss an opportunity to criticize ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan]. Now they clearly recognize its value and these amendments, I think, have to recognize that, at least implicitly. Members opposite don't want to make that explicit admission now.

The legislation is intended to address the issue of fraud attendant to land sales. And while that is very rare, Mr. Speaker, and even more rare that that cannot be addressed under the current system, on the occasion . . . which is not entirely speculative, Mr. Speaker. It may approach that, but on the occasion when it can occur, it creates enormous difficulties. This particular legislation appears to give the registrar the power to correct titles, which used to be reserved pretty well for the courts, and that's to the good.

This legislation also relates to the registry of grants and will provide information setting out what the original grant was from the Crown. It does raise the continued question of how we move forward in the province as we deal with unpatented or ungranted land in all parts, but especially in northern Saskatchewan.

The legislation allows for the compensation for appropriate extra costs if they relate to the problem of title, including fraud. We do not believe, having looked at the legislation, that it is a gift to title insurance companies who would be getting fully compensated by the Government of Saskatchewan — which the victims of the fraud would have been compensated by the Government of Saskatchewan in any case — but we want to keep an eye and make sure that it actually adds something to people's protection, Mr. Speaker, and not just redirect the payment.

Another positive point of the legislation is that there are quite a number of places where the present rules are located in regulations — in other words, that are easy to change by the government. Easy to change, I think, without a lot of government members noticing, Mr. Speaker, if the first 14 months of this government is any indication. And it's been recognized by officials that they should actually be in the legislation so that if the government members aren't paying attention to what other government members are doing, at least the opposition has the chance of addressing those matters when they come before the legislature, when they are actually in the Act and not in regulations.

So, Mr. Speaker, on the face of it, all improvements, with the caveats that I mentioned. In all likelihood a Bill that we'll be able to support. Again some questions, and it may give rise to some issues in committee, but that said, we'd be happy to see it go there, Mr. Speaker. And that's the conclusion of my remarks.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is Bill No. 57, *The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Bill No. 65

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 65** — *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act, 2008* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased this afternoon to stand and enter into debate on this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 65 is a Bill about the seizure of criminal property. Mr. Speaker, this Bill looks just about identically to a Bill that was introduced in 2005 by the then New Democratic Party government, Mr. Speaker, that had the ability to do the exact same thing. Mr. Speaker, so of course I guess we are in a position where we will support this Bill because it in essence does exactly what was being done previously, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is an attempt to make the new government look like they are tough on crime and they are dealing with the issues that the people of Saskatchewan care about. But, Mr. Speaker, and we agree they should be dealing with seizing property, Mr. Speaker, but at the same time, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is just about identical to a previous Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we support the Bill and we supported it in 2005. Mr. Speaker, in 2005 this was a new approach, trying to give the police new tools, tools in which they could hold those who are involved in criminal activity in our province to a higher standard so they could be held more accountable, and so that the profits made partaking in criminal activity could in fact be seized. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's something that we would all agree with. I think all members of this Assembly, both then in 2005 and today, would agree. Mr. Speaker, it was good legislation in 2005; it's good legislation today.

But it's only one element in a broader strategy that needs to be looked at in order to curb crime in our communities, Mr. Speaker, and the previous government put forward many, many initiatives to try to curb crime in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

And at the time members opposite talked about our auto theft strategy that was put forward and the effect we've had on our communities and those who have, Mr. Speaker, been dealt with as a result of that strategy. It has resulted in our communities being safer. It has resulted in those who would steal cars being held more accountable, Mr. Speaker, and it has resulted in an

overall reduction in the theft of vehicles in the city of Regina and the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation changes the emphasis. In the previous legislation, the police had the authority to seize the property. In this particular case, the emphasis has now been moved to the Crown, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, the Crown also had the authority in the previous Act and this Act in fact leaves the authority with the Crown, but takes it away from the chiefs of police and police departments.

There is no reason that the previous Act could not have been amended if that's what the government wanted to do, rather than repeal that Act and bring forward a new Act, Mr. Speaker, that does virtually the same thing, except this government wanted to take credit for something that the previous government actually put in place, Mr. Speaker. So this is another example of the Sask Party taking credit for things that other people have done, taking credit for the work of others and the accomplishments of others, Mr. Speaker. We see that in the provincial economy, we see it on resource revenues, Mr. Speaker, and we see it regularly from this government.

Mr. Speaker, Brad Wall and the Sask Party . . . Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, want to take credit for this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. It is a positive piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, but it's one that could have been amended from its previous form without the introduction of a new Bill and, Mr. Speaker, we believe that that should have been done.

Why are they repealing a good piece of legislation and reintroducing virtually the same Bill, Mr. Speaker? They're doing that because they want to take credit for something that's been previously done. They want to create an illusion that they're going to be tough on crime and that they are tougher on crime than the previous government, Mr. Speaker, but that's simply not true.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we've learned to expect from the new government — to repeal legislation and put virtually identical legislation in place in order to take credit for initiatives. But, Mr. Speaker, they don't fool the people of Saskatchewan. They certainly aren't fooling members of this legislature. And, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation that we have before us today does the same thing the previous piece of legislation did so, Mr. Speaker, how can we not support what we did? So at the end of this, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we will have to support this legislation because of course it's just building on what we've already done.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Saskatchewan Party may be confused about the fact that we have gang problems in our provincial jails. They may be confused about the fact that we have gang problems on the streets of our cities in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, but we're not on this side. We knew that. That's why we introduced this legislation in 2005. That's why today we see strategies to help reduce crime on our streets, Mr. Speaker. It's why we had put in place an auto theft strategy. It's why we put in a strategy to deal with break and enters, Mr. Speaker. It's because we wanted to have an impact on the criminal elements in our communities, Mr. Speaker, and we wanted to decrease, Mr. Speaker, those types of violations in

our communities, Mr. Speaker. And they have worked.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of the legislation moves the onus from the police departments and puts in on the Crown, Mr. Speaker. We don't particularly have a problem with that, but had they wanted to simply do this in a more effective and faster way, Mr. Speaker, they simply would have amended the legislation that was in place with a simple amendment, and we could have had this passed many, many days ago.

Mr. Speaker, the main difference between the Bill in 2005 and this one is the Crown has the authority to seize the property — not the chiefs of police, not the police departments. Is the Sask Party saying that they don't have faith in our chiefs of police and our senior police officers in this province, Mr. Speaker? I hope not. I hope they in fact have looked at this and are believing that this strengthens the Bill in some way.

[14:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, the Crown had the authority in the 2005 Bill, as they do in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, so why was the need to introduce this Bill, Mr. Speaker, to simply take away authority from one group and not adding to any particular group, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, we have faith on this side in both our police departments across the province and, Mr. Speaker, with our Crown prosecutors and the Crown. Mr. Speaker, we all want to have a province where we work together to try to reduce crime, on crime reduction strategies, and we will continue to support legislation that's brought forward that's going to help achieve those objectives, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that members opposite obviously think is important enough to repeal and reintroduce in virtually the same form, Mr. Speaker. We do agree that the legislation is valuable, Mr. Speaker, and will help to achieve a goal of holding those who are involved in criminal activity in our province more accountable and give the opportunity to seize the assets from those who are involved in criminal activity and any assets in particular, Mr. Speaker, that are acquired as a result of that criminal activity.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill that we're going to continue to consult with others about prior to moving it to committee. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of debate. Is the Assembly agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I just need to remind the member that the member has returned it once and is unable to adjourn it the second time. We'll need another member to adjourn the motion.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We would like to adjourn the debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has

moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 65. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Bill No. 73

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 73 — *The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2008*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really quite pleased to be able to enter into debate on the amendments that the government is proposing to *The University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995*.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to review the proposed amendments and they are few in number. And I think for the most part, two of the amendments are amendments that certainly make sense. The notion of deleting the visitor — which does seem to be an archaic way of approaching conflict at the University of Saskatchewan — and also the notion of extending the government appointments to the board of governors from two years to three years . . . or two terms to three terms does make some sense.

Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to speak to a number of people who are members of the convocation. And to be a member of the convocation, it means that you are a graduate from the University of Saskatchewan. And once you're a member of convocation, you have the opportunity to participate in the election of our chancellor at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, what the university has asked the government to do is to change the process by which the chancellor is chosen. At present, all members of convocation — that means all people who've graduated from the University of Saskatchewan — have an opportunity to vote on who they would like to see as chancellor of the university. And the chancellor is always a graduate and member of convocation as well.

What the university is proposing to do is to change that process so that those of us who are members of convocation, but do not sit on the board of governors, who are not members of the senate, we will no longer have the opportunity to help determine who the chancellor of the university will be. And this causes consternation for a number of members of convocation who have . . . one of their things that they've been able to do as a member of convocation is to choose who our chancellor shall be.

And, Mr. Speaker, I remember as a young student who convoked, John Diefenbaker was our chancellor, the former prime minister of Canada, Member of Parliament representing our province. And when I convoked, I was able to have my hand shaken by John Diefenbaker. And that is a memory that I

will have for some time.

Mr. Speaker, the members of convocation, all of those people who are graduates of the University of Saskatchewan, had an opportunity to choose who our chancellor would be. And in this case the members of convocation chose the Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker.

Over the years, Mr. Speaker, we've had the opportunity to vote for former Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Fedoruk. And I remember as a member of convocation, I got to vote for Ms. Fedoruk, who I think is an outstanding member of convocation, and obviously other members of convocation thought she was because she was elected.

Last time, Mr. Speaker, we went through a process and we elected Dr. Vera Pezer who is an outstanding academic, taught at our university, but also is a world champion curler, Mr. Speaker. As a member of convocation I got to participate in Vera Pezer's election.

With the amendments that the government is putting forward, I will no longer have that opportunity. The only people that will be able to choose who the chancellor will be, will be members of the board of governors and the senate. And I think that that is very sad. And I understand the reasons why the university is proposing this. They're proposing this because they indicate that it costs a lot of money for members of the convocation to participate, and they want to implement a different procedure.

The procedure now will be two members of the board of governors, three members of the senate; they will sit down and determine who they're going to recommend as chancellor to the senate. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a problem with that. I think that as the world becomes more complicated and more complex, I think that we as legislators need to assure ourselves that we give people more opportunities to participate in their institutions, and the University of Saskatchewan is an institution that people need to participate in.

And if you look at what's been happening at the university, extension services are no longer there, and that's also referred to. Extension was the way for people to participate in the university. In tough times the university got rid of extension services. The university is now recommending — I suppose in tougher times, in order to reduce costs — that there is a less expensive way for a chancellor to be chosen.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ. I think that in tougher times we need to figure out how people can participate. The last time I participated in the election of the chancellor, I did so over the Internet. I think with email nowadays that there are cost-effective ways for members of convocation to participate in this type of an election. And so I would say, Mr. Speaker, that this amendment, while it's being requested by the university, it's not something that the government of the day needs to agree to.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the university and the government of the day needs to do everything that they can to ensure that those of us who have graduated and convoked from the University of Saskatchewan continue to participate in this fine, fine institution. Members of convocation for decades have

determined who the chancellor should be. And, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to the university and to members in this House and to government members that members of the convocation should continue to determine who the chancellor should be — not a small group of people representing the board and the senate determining and then making a unanimous recommendation to the senate, who would then rubber stamp the recommendation.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I wanted to put my comments on the public record. There are many other members of convocation that support my comments. And so, Mr. Speaker, when I speak in this House, when I speak on this matter, I am speaking upon . . . I'm speaking for hundreds of members of convocation who hold my view, Mr. Speaker.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly, the member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate. Is the Assembly ready for the question? Is the Assembly agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 66

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Hickie that **Bill No. 66 — *The Witness Protection Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 66, *The Witness Protection Act* may now be based on the high-risk witness protection program put in place by the previous NDP administration in September 2007.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP program was put in place to protect witnesses who did not meet program criteria for the RCMP's [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] national source witness protection program. Mr. Speaker, as the minister had said, the federal witness protection program, which is administered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, did not meet the needs of some witnesses for protection that were less extreme.

Mr. Speaker, we had a program in place, a policy program which worked quite well. We see that the present government wishes to pass legislation. The content, Mr. Speaker, is similar, and we look forward to this program.

Mr. Speaker, our government invested over 80,000 for the remainder of 2008 fiscal year and 320,000 thereafter. Our program, Mr. Speaker, was to be staffed by one program officer and one support person within the Department of Justice. As I see, this Act establishes a \$500,000 fund to pay for the cost of protecting witnesses, and that witness protection will be the responsibility of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing officials rather than Justice, Mr. Speaker.

Since the witness protection program has been running for a year, I assume these changes reflect what has been learned from that year in experience, Mr. Speaker. We would hope that, unlike the past where this government continually refuses or does not see the importance of consultation and discussing issues with the public or stakeholders, perhaps this might be a slight change.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety and Policing, that the minister at least acknowledges that the previous NDP administration had a witness protection program in place. There was no such acknowledgement of the previous administration's seizure of criminal property Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the Premier and the Sask Party talk about being tough on crime, but they appear to have no ideas of their own about how to go on about it, Mr. Speaker, again borrowing here as they have done continuously during their first year, announcing and re-announcing programs and policies that we have put forward, Mr. Speaker. Not a lot of initiative, Mr. Speaker. Not a lot of initiative. Not a lot of consultation by those members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Both of the Sask Party's anti-crime Bills are ideas they've lifted from the previous administration. And, Mr. Speaker, they were part of our overall strategy to reduce crime that was working, Mr. Speaker — another good proposal adopted by this government who clearly in some cases, Mr. Speaker, have lost . . . no sense of ideas or creativity in areas.

Mr. Speaker, *The Witness Protection Act* and *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act* are both examples of the Premier's and the Sask Party introducing legislation that make them appear to be competent on the law and order file, or are they simply taking credit from the previous administration's work, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, just to make a point in that, I would probably repeat that I understand the members opposite are quite interested in this. *The Witness Protection Act* and *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act* are, as I said, two examples of the Premier and the Sask Party introducing legislation to make them appear to be competent on the law and order file, Mr. Speaker, while they are simply taking credit for previous administration's work.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we originally put the witness protection program in place and that legislation makes law because we recognize this necessity, and we can support this Bill as long as it meets the witness protection needs that must be met.

Mr. Speaker, with this we do not see . . . And I suppose I am glad in some ways that they simply accepted the work that we have done, but it would have been much better had there been some consultation and perhaps a written review, so we could all see the highlights, perhaps the highlights of the good work done by the previous administration in this area.

Again, Mr. Speaker, just to put this into focus, to just make the

points that I have made, is that this Act is based on the high-risk witness protection program that the former NDP government administration had in place in September 2007. Mr. Speaker, this program, again, was put into place because the federal government has a witness protection program, but it was felt that citizens . . . that what was needed was a proposal to give assurance to all our citizens who choose to come forward with testimony against individuals accused of crime receive protective services.

Mr. Speaker, this is an attempt, and I'm glad that they can see a more comprehensive attempt, at dealing with this type of legislation. And again as I said, we look forward after more work — which we need to do to talk to people, which the opposition members failed to do — we will be looking over the Bill carefully to establish that it meets all the criterion, and in fact nothing has been left out which was in the previous program, Mr. Speaker.

On first review, it does appear that most things are in and are in place. Mr. Speaker, again, the amounts of money that we have put in that we hope that these again will be met by this government, that we will have . . . that the program will be an efficient program, and it will meet the needs of Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, the Act again, as I said, establishes a \$500,000 fund to pay for the costs of protecting witnesses and that the witness protection will be the responsibility . . . Again we had it under Justice; they are putting it under the Corrections, Public Safety and Policing officials.

Now we can only hope that we get a little better responses and we get a little bit more information, and quicker information where necessary, or at least the appropriate administration of this Bill from that particular minister, which has not been our past experience with this minister. So I can only hope that this all goes well even though we have done all the work for them in this program.

Again as I said, it is good to see that there's an acknowledgement of the previous NDP administration's work in this area, and as well as the . . . Where however there was no such acknowledgement, Mr. Speaker, under *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act*. Mr. Speaker, it sometimes takes a while for a government to understand that perhaps reaching across or working together, that things can be accomplished — and not grandstanding and perhaps taking all the credits for themselves; that in fact these issues are shared. When we come here, some of the issues that we deal with are shared issues and we too are in favour.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that we had policies up and running. That we had put in staff and a budget in place definitely showed our commitment to that. I hope that the commitment from the other side is equal to the task. And I would say to that minister, not often does he get credit. But under this, that there was some acknowledgement from that minister of the work that the previous administration had done. So, Mr. Speaker, he got that right. And I would also say to him and thank him for that.

This whole area, Mr. Speaker, it is a benefit to residents of Saskatchewan who come forward and are prepared to act as

witnesses that they have protection. And perhaps after we have a closer look at this, we can give it our final nod, Mr. Speaker, to have this Bill proceed.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we put in, because there was a need because of consultation, because of discussions with the residents of Saskatchewan, we put forward policies and put forward a witness protection program because we saw the need for that. And to put legislation to it, we have to look at the legislation to make sure that in fact it purports to do what our policies had initially intended.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other points here that need to be made in terms of when police and Crown prosecutors identify that a witness may be at risk, an assessment of that individual, a threat to the risk — all of those things, Mr. Speaker, we'll have to have a look at before moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, just with those acknowledgements of the previous work done by the former government, at this time I would just, subject to us doing some further work, I'd like to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Fairview has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 66. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Bill No. 67

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 67 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)/Loi n° 2 de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and join the debate on Bill No. 67, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995*, with some consequential amendments to various regulations.

Mr. Speaker, as I've gone through the related information — the Bill itself plus the explanatory notes and some background information, and also had a look at the minister's initial remarks that were made in this House that speaks to the reasoning and rationale behind the changes to *The Education Act*, the intent of what it will accomplish and what it does — I'm a little surprised by some of the comments, and not necessarily the comments themselves but how this whole process has unfolded.

The minister made the point that he felt that these changes that he was introducing would strengthen the education system for students and ensure that Saskatchewan is compliant with other jurisdictions across Canada. And he also spoke to the reasoning for putting in place these changes, that it would bring

Saskatchewan in line with an interprovincial protocol to include improvements to the process of identifying and disciplining teachers who have behaved in a manner that constitutes professional misconduct or incompetence.

So he talked about compliance with the interprovincial protocol, what he felt it would do, seems to be quite in favour of it, and of course he must be, being he signed the legislation and brought it forward. But one of his comments really strikes me as being a little unusual. And it says that it is our hope that this legislation reflects the high standard, and he was speaking to educators in the province of Saskatchewan and the reputation that they have.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the minister would do more than hope. I would have felt that it would have been part of the minister's responsibility to do a thorough consultation on this legislation before it was put forward. And from many of the people that we have spoken to, that is an area that we have heard a number of concerns been raised over the past number of months, and that is a problem.

Mr. Speaker, if you look to other provinces and you look at the history of Saskatchewan and the partnership that the previous governments of Saskatchewan have always maintained with the education sector, it is second to none right across this country. It is something that Saskatchewan should be very proud of it because it has paid benefits with the superior education system and the relationships that we have. And in those relationships it has really meant that we have been able to solve problems and work through issues and move ahead opportunities, not only for the professionals in this field across the province but also for students. I mean everything that works well in this province and in the education sector really filters down to students and provides Saskatchewan students with opportunities that are second to none, Mr. Speaker.

So that really is the concerns with this legislation, that it has not been considered to the fashion with which the education sector in Saskatchewan is accustomed to, and some have even said that it's ill-considered and conceived in a bit of a vacuum. And that really speaks to the lack of consultation and the process that some feel was fundamentally flawed. And often the comments are that this flawed consultation process that was used is really a complete departure from the customary full consultation practised by all previous governments in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't take long to realize the value of the consultation process and the discussion between the stakeholders and the partners in the education sector. And if you have an opportunity to speak to others across Canada, they are often impressed and amazed by the amount of communication that goes on here in the province of Saskatchewan between the ministry, between the stakeholders. And they are often envious of this communications because it is continual.

It can be very onerous at times. Without a doubt to have this level of communication and this level of interaction with all people connected to the education sector, does take a great deal of work and does take a great deal of effort. But, Mr. Speaker, it truly is a benefit to the sector right across Saskatchewan and a credit to the people that work within the sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is a great deal of the concerns that I have

heard when we talk about *The Education Amendment Act* and what's been proposed.

Now when we look at the actual proposals and changes that are recommended in this piece of legislation, many feel that it is appropriate, that the changes are probably in the best process to put forward for dealing with issues that do arise within the education sector. So for many people, it isn't about the intent of the Bill, that that's not necessarily the concern, but it's the process, the content, and the implications that are all an issue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at making changes within a sector, there is often a need. I remember a colleague of mine that said, you know, as government you can put in place any Bill or changes to legislation that you like if you have the numbers. And it's true; you could jam through just about anything in this Assembly. But the value of legislation, the value of the process is that you aren't forcing changes upon someone.

They may not agree with you. They may not support what you're doing. But there is a real value in having a good consultation process so that those stakeholders and those people that may be affected by the changes that you are proposing have a clear understanding as to why they are being put in place, how they are being put in place, and the process that the minister or the department has chosen to move this legislation ahead.

[15:15]

In the end of all that, Mr. Speaker, they still may not agree with all of the changes, but there is great value in having an understanding as to why they're being put in place, and also a great value in stakeholders having input into the decisions and changes that are being put forward.

So, Mr. Speaker, while it may not be, as I said, it may not be the intent of the legislation that is a concern, it's just that many of the stakeholders have not felt like they have had adequate input into the legislation and the changes, and that really is a problem.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is a number of issues that are brought forward in this legislation. Some seem to be purely housekeeping changes, modernizing so to speak, of some of the titles and some of the designations that were probably formerly more common than what they are today. So we are seeing a number of those changes that have been made.

But there's also the process that's put in place quite clearly if there is a complaint against a teacher within the education system in Saskatchewan: what happens, what process is followed, who would be part of what would be called a professional conduct committee, how it would be structured; if there is a notice that is given or a public complaint against a teacher, the steps that need to be followed. The professional conduct committee — how that committee is established by the minister and what kind of information and how a hearing will be held by this professional conduct committee.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is hopefully a committee we won't have to use too often, but we always need to be prepared and there always needs to be processes in place if a complaint should arise.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a number of good parts to this legislation, but again what we're hearing over and over is that lack of consultations and the lack of input that many stakeholders have been able to have input into the legislation. Now I'm sure the minister may be able to provide a bit more information, and I know that there are stakeholders that we need to touch base with to see if any of those concerns have been dealt with over the recess that we had over the last few months.

But, Mr. Speaker, again I want to say to the minister that Saskatchewan has a reputation, we have a history of having a very good consultation process. Sometimes it may seem too lengthy, sometimes it may seem too intensive, sometimes it may seem repetitive, but it has great value and has had great results over previous governments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just say to the minister that there does need to be more consultation done on the proposed changes to *The Education Amendment Act* and that there needs to be work done.

And what we will do over the next little while, Mr. Speaker . . . I know there are colleagues of mine that would like to make some comments on this legislation, and there are stakeholders that we would like to touch base with again to see what changes, if any, have happened over the last couple of months. But I truly believe that it's in the best interest of quality education policy that the government slow down, revisit the consultation piece — on this piece of legislation especially and maybe within the department totally — and address the many questions that this current legislation is raising with members of the education community. Saskatchewan's working reputation and reputation across Canada is well deserved, and we need to make sure that it remains so and that there is good input into all changes and any changes proposed to *The Education Act*.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those short comments, I will adjourn debate on the Bill.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 67, *The Education Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 71

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Stewart that **Bill No. 71** — *The Innovation Saskatchewan Act* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise here today and to discuss some of the changes that Bill 71, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Act* presents in practice from this Assembly.

On a broad brush it would be worthwhile to note, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan's history is filled with stories of innovation, of Saskatchewan people's successful search to find creative solutions to the many problems and issues of our days and over the years. Our history is rich with the ingenuity of

Saskatchewan people and the innovation that our province has served the province. This is why the list of Saskatchewan firsts is so impressive. It's ironic that many of those innovations are precisely what the members opposite consider to be wrong with the province — our health care system, our incredibly forward-looking social policies, and our publicly owned Crown corporations. In fact this one's really kind of interesting, because I know the minister opposite who's listening in has, in essence, created a new Crown corporation. And certainly that hasn't been consisted and supported by all of the support on that side of the House or that base of support for the Saskatchewan Party.

We certainly support investment in research and development and are extremely proud of our record in supporting new, innovative initiatives and technologies. This is really important, Mr. Speaker, as we look at the broadening of our economy beyond the resource- and petrol-based reliance and the busts and booms of that resource economy. And I know as oil sits around \$40 a barrel right now, Mr. Speaker, I know the Finance minister's making more difficult decisions here as we speak, so I don't have to preach to a converted Finance minister who likely now understands the importance to diversify this economy.

But I can certainly speak to specifics that we're incredibly proud of in our role in fostering and developing. And I can point to the synchrotron, certainly the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, the International Test Centre for CO₂ Capture at the U of R [University of Regina] right here in Regina — real proud of that institution — Innovation and Science Fund that leverages funding from the federal government and other national bodies, our Saskatchewan Research Council, and the role in fostering commercialization of new technologies such as enhanced oil recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I think we can be incredibly proud of some of these achievements and some of the roles that these entities play, arm's-length, within our economy and within our province. I think we can notice the discussion that goes on globally here now around carbon capture and sequestration. We can be proud of the investment that Saskatchewan New Democrats and that the innovation of Saskatchewan people had in making this possible.

This new entity, Innovation Saskatchewan, with its seven-person board of directors and the way it is funded . . . And basically it's mandated as another new Crown corporation. And I know the Deputy Premier, I have his attention. I was surprised to know that the Minister of Enterprise was such a fan of expanding our fleet of Crown corporations. But you know, never, never . . . You can always be surprised.

The Sask Party is creating agencies of government that remove transparency and accountability. Innovation Saskatchewan, along with Enterprise Saskatchewan, essentially take the place of the entire Department of Industry but with far less financial scrutiny. Detailed budget entries will be replaced with a single line item for Innovation Saskatchewan. This is a concern, Mr. Speaker, at a time where we should be offering more separation, more transparency, more accountability, more access to where our public dollars are going. We're going in the exact opposite direction with this Act.

The Sask Party has been in the past extremely critical of investment in immature industries, but now they seem to be more willing to look at this. In fact this is exactly what this is intended to do. The Sask Party claimed in the past they would never pick winners or losers, but again this whole structure of Innovation Saskatchewan is designed to do this completely. And actually I'll quote the minister here in a *StarPhoenix* article on October 23, 2008, and I quote:

Unlike Investment Saskatchewan with its independent board, there . . . [will] be political involvement in the decision-making process around investments, Stewart acknowledged.

This is interesting, Mr. Speaker. This is the exact opposite way that governments around our globe are going, and it's interesting that they would choose to do this — to be investing into immature industries when in the past they haven't supported that investment, and that they choose to remove some of the accountability that is so important to Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Politicizing investment decisions could prove problematic for Saskatchewan research and development organizations, like the Saskatchewan Research Council and the synchrotron, that should remain arm's-length from government. It's important that they have that independence, Mr. Speaker.

There were some failures of these kinds in the past, I guess back to the Devine era. And I know members opposite get tired of hearing about Devine era mistakes because there are so many and so many different aspects, Mr. Speaker. But just in case the Saskatchewan public might have forgotten some of these mistakes, I guess we'll look at some of the investments that were made back in the, you know, back in the Devine era there and some of the losses.

I know the member from Wood River can basically read off any penny that was lost under the 16 years of strong financial management that the New Democrats provided, but he sometimes doesn't point to the losses from the Devine era. So we'll look at a few. Impact Packaging systems, \$17.2 million loss. Intercontinental Packers, \$16.8 million loss. Federated Co-op, \$15 million loss. Flexi-Coil, \$10 million loss. Westank-Willock, \$7.4 million loss. Supercart, who knows, but it certainly lost. And then maybe the mother of all of them, GigaText, with \$5.5 million lost, and of course convictions and other things which is a shame.

I guess we need to talk about Joytec too, which was a sort of golf simulator which, you know, it certainly never made the member from Coronation Park a better golfer, and it lost the people of this province \$1.5 million, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the Sask Party claims that Innovation Saskatchewan will only invest in non-mature industries. But this is the same Sask Party government that dismantled the \$320 million Green Future Fund, Mr. Speaker. This would have inspired and allowed some of this very kind of innovation and investment that we are looking at here today.

So this is the same Sask Party government that continues to ignore forestry despite the potential for innovation in the new

sector. And we have new opportunities if we're looking at wood products and biomass. At the same time, they specifically mention coal — hardly a spring chicken when it comes to new technologies, when it comes to industries — as an area possibly that will receive some interest. This Sask Party says that the Enterprise Saskatchewan and Innovation Saskatchewan are about consultation despite the fact that this government has failed to consult with people on a wide variety of significant issues.

So there's a lot of inconsistencies here, Mr. Speaker. I'll point out, I guess, another comment here. It attacks some of the values of the Saskatchewan Party. At one point the Saskatchewan Party claimed that they would never pick winners and losers as I've mentioned. This does the opposite. The minister has already admitted that politics will be a factor in how these decisions get made. How can they justify this hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I think the article in *The StarPhoenix* on October 23, 2008, the headline sums it up best: “. . . investment agency a flip-flop”. So, Mr. Speaker, at a time where people are expecting more of their governments, we're getting less when we're talking about transparency and accountability and separation. We certainly support investment into industry to foster new technologies, to diversify our economy. But let's make sure that the Saskatchewan public's well aware of the risks that they're taking on, the losses and the gains that will be incurred, instead of having this one line that will be reported back through estimates. It doesn't offer Saskatchewan people a fair process for the dollars that they've placed in trust with this government.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many more questions to be asked, a lot more members on this side of the house that will want to discuss this Bill. But at this time I move adjournment of the debate on Bill 71.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved that Bill No. 71, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Act* be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

[15:30]

Bill No. 74

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 74 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (English) Amendment and Repeal Act, 2008*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this afternoon to enter in debate on *The Miscellaneous*

Statutes Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, this is the type of Bill that we see year after year in the legislature that helps us to ensure that our legislation, our regulations, Mr. Speaker, are current and relevant to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, every year a number of Bills are repealed and a number of regulations as well, Mr. Speaker. And it is an ongoing process to update and keep legislation relevant and current, Mr. Speaker, and ensure that those provisions within the legislation, in fact, reflect upon the values of the people of Saskatchewan and reflect upon the current trends and importance of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Many pieces of legislation that are introduced in a particular period of time, Mr. Speaker, are relevant for a number of years and then perhaps need to be amended, updated, or repealed in order to reflect current practices within society, Mr. Speaker, or to reflect changes in the needs or importance of the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

So what we have before us is a Bill that repeals pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that are no longer relevant, no longer needed by the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And as I said, Mr. Speaker, we see a Bill like this on an annual basis in which some changes are made in order to update and keep legislation both current and relevant.

Mr. Speaker, an example is the one piece that's being repealed, Mr. Speaker, *The Agri-Food Innovation Act* that came into effect in 1995. It in fact established a fund aimed at enhancing the agricultural industry in our province. It was a fund that was needed at that particular time to move forward with some particular needs in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that that fund isn't needed today, Mr. Speaker. So as a result, of course, it's being repealed. And, Mr. Speaker, there's no sense keeping legislation on the books that's no longer needed or required.

Mr. Speaker, as we're moving forward and we see these Bills . . . On an annual basis they will repeal different pieces of legislation — some that are perhaps 10 or 15, 20 years old, Mr. Speaker; some that are only a few years old; some that may have been introduced to fix a particular problem that no longer is an issue or no longer a problem, Mr. Speaker.

So what we have before us today, Mr. Speaker, is a Bill that is largely housekeeping; in fact is referred to as housekeeping on an annual basis. But it changes or repeals various sections of Acts or entire pieces of legislation to, Mr. Speaker, show us that we . . . to show the people of Saskatchewan that we in fact do want to keep our legislation, Mr. Speaker, and regulations current and up-to-date.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't a whole lot that can be said about this particular piece of legislation. We also have a bilingual form of the same Bill before us, Mr. Speaker, that the members of this Assembly will also look at. There are a number of Bills, Mr. Speaker, that come before the House in both French and English and, Mr. Speaker, we're making the same changes in both the English version and the French version and repealing legislation that . . . in repealing these particular Acts, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that at least one of these pieces of legislation goes back several years to talk about dealing with community programming, and that only cablecasters in our province did in fact put forward community programming on their cable stations, Mr. Speaker. And it dealt with a very specific need at a period of time to have local programming with our cable providers and on our cable channels in the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's no longer a required and necessary provision. We have other provisions, Mr. Speaker, that in . . . both under the CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] and other legislation that provide for Canadian content, local content in our programming, Mr. Speaker. So as a result, that particular piece of legislation's being repealed.

And, Mr. Speaker, as this is largely housekeeping, Mr. Speaker, there isn't sense taking hours of the members' time talking about this particular piece of legislation. We will want to deal a little more in-depth, check on each of the particular pieces to make sure that they're in fact, you know, doing what we believe they're doing. But, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would move we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 74, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (English) Amendment and Repeal Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 75

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 75 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Bilingual) Amendment and Repeal Act, 2008/Loi corrective (lois bilingues) de 2008*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 75 is in fact the French version of Bill No. 74. It's the repeal of the same legislation in French, Mr. Speaker. It is a requirement that legislation in our country are provided in both the French and English language, Mr. Speaker, so this is identical to the previous Bill.

Now Mr. Speaker, if I wanted to challenge the members' French opposite, and try to actually speak to this Bill in French, I think many of them would be more confused and would have to take more time in order to examine their own legislation. So, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to try to confuse the members opposite, or for that matter, my own colleagues on this side, Mr. Speaker.

But this particular legislation, once again, is housekeeping. It does nothing but repeal pieces of legislation and portions of the Act, Mr. Speaker, that are no longer required. Now, Mr. Speaker, because it's identical to the previous Bill, Mr. Speaker,

I'm not going to take a great deal of members' time, and at this time I would move that this Bill be adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member of Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 75, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Bilingual) Amendment and Repeal Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Bill No. 76

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Heppner that **Bill No. 76 — *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was just reviewing the information for the amendments to *An Act to amend The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, and also to amend *The Wildlife Habitat Lands Designation Regulations*.

Mr. Speaker, the information that I have comes with a series of maps that shows where the land that is being changed . . . changing the designation on this land and the areas across the province where it is located. So, Mr. Speaker, there is a concern here, and I know . . . Previously I was involved in a number of debates. People in Saskatchewan are quite protective of the wildlife lands. There is always a very conscious effort to make sure that there is adequate wildlife habitat across the province.

We have a number of species that are endangered and protected but not only that, for producers, for hunters, for naturalists, for birdwatchers, there is always concern about the amount of habitat that is available for species right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that Saskatchewan people take very seriously. And there is always concern for what's being . . . lands that are being established and developed right across the province and to make sure that that wildlife habitat is maintained, and officially maintained, not just set aside as designated here or there, but they want official designation. They want the land posted to make sure that people are well aware of the importance and the need for maintaining habitat for wildlife right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, when previously we've dealt with any changes being made to wildlife lands, it can come in really a wide variety of issues that we're dealing with. Often we'll see that when there are changes or proposals made for adjacent land or for the land itself that there may be some inaccurate descriptions that have been entered into land titles or when the land was first designated. So some of it may be just to update those designations, update the descriptions, and make sure that they are accurate in land titles. Also it may be adjustments for neighbours where there have been mistakes in the descriptions of the land.

But, Mr. Speaker, sometimes it's to change the designation, to

remove the designation, and have the land used for something else. And there can be many, many reasons for a change in designation. So, Mr. Speaker, that's actually . . . When you look at the maps, you wonder, is it just a correction? Is it a change in designation? Is there some reason for these specific designations to be put forward as ones that are needing to be changed?

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about . . . The people of Saskatchewan are very particular about wildlife habitat. There's a great deal of work that goes on by many organizations across the province to make sure that there is adequate habitat across the province. So, Mr. Speaker, the first thing that comes to mind is, when the minister is putting forward changes to land that is wildlife habitat and under the protection of the Act, we have to ask, why, why the specific pieces are being changed as designation? But also what land is being replaced with the wildlife habitat protection to replace the habitat that is obviously being pulled from the protection of the Act?

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a number of questions. The maps, for sure, are helpful in looking at where exactly the land is and what it joins up to and what may be the reason. But these are more questions that we will need to ask of stakeholders across the province and the various groups that pay a great deal of attention and put in a great many hours of hard work to make sure that there is wildlife habitat across the province.

We always had a policy with the previous government that when land was removed, it was replaced with comparable land, preferably within the area, to maintain that balance of wildlife habitat. So I don't know of any land that is replacing the pieces that are being withdrawn from the protection of the Act. So those are further questions and issues that we will have to speak to stakeholders about.

Understandably and occasionally there are mistakes that are made, like I say, in descriptions of the land, and those errors need to be corrected. But what we need to do is make sure that we have that balance and that we are maintaining adequate wildlife lands across the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a number of people that we will need to consult with, and we will have to look at the specific changes that are being made to the wildlife lands. So with that, Mr. Speaker, and the work that we need to do, I would adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 76, *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Bill No. 68

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Tell that **Bill No. 68 — *The Arts Professions Act/Loi sur les professions artistiques*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to enter into the debate about Bill No. 68, *The Arts Professions Act*. This legislation somewhat mirrors the status of the artist legislation that was introduced in last term by the NDP government under the former premier, Lorne Calvert. It was a privilege for me to have been part of the process and debate of the status of the artist legislation. Status of the artist legislation was a federal initiative that the majority of provinces adopted on a provincially regulated level, and the NDP was, and is, fully committed to seeing similar but comprehensive legislation in the province of Saskatchewan.

In 2002 status of the artist legislation was implemented which laid down in law, for the first time, the following principles among others: number one, the right of artists to free speech and freedom of artistic and cultural expression; number two, the ability of artists in all artistic fields to earn a living from the making of their art; and number three, the rights of artists to enjoy the same economic and social benefits that are available to other workers in Saskatchewan.

[15:45]

There was a tremendous amount of work not to mention extensive consultations that took place under the two former NDP ministers of Culture, Youth and Recreation — the former minister, Joanne Crofford, and the former minister, Glenn Hagel. The dedication of the department officials and staff should also be recognized as well as the countless volunteer hours that were provided by the stakeholders to the process.

The fruition of that work was *The Status of the Artist Act* that was first introduced in November 2006 with an amended final version in early May 2007. This legislation provided a means by which artists could organize and bargain collectively and provided for advisory committees on a number of issues important to artists including pension plans, the application of workers' compensation and occupational health and safety legislation to artists, education and training programs for artists, and taxation issues.

Now this legislation, because of the amount of comprehensive consultations that it undertook, also went through a rigorous process in House committee, in the Human Services Committee, again which I was privileged to be privy to. There were countless hours spent in debate by both the NDP government at the time and the opposition members, and it provided very good discussion and very good information that was sought to further clarify some of the questions that the committee had. I'm encouraged to see from the government's press release that the Minister for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport says that "The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to creating an environment in which the artist is able to thrive and succeed' . . ." And I'm also encouraged to see that the Saskatchewan Arts Board Chair, Ken Sagal, says:

"Today's legislation will benefit Saskatchewan artists and help protect their professional integrity . . . [as] *The Arts Professions Act* assists Saskatchewan artists in furthering their careers and recognizes a valuable contribution of

professional artists to the cultural and economic prosperity of this province."

There are a number of things to be celebrated in the legislation that has been presented; however, one has to question why the name of the legislation has changed. We have status of the artist legislation federally. We have status of the artist legislation across the country in various provinces. We had status of the artist legislation in this province which unfortunately didn't get passed in the final hour because for some reason the Sask Party opposition at that time saw fit to ruin the hopes and optimism and joy that the arts community was going to experience with the announcement of the passing of that legislation.

So one has to find it somewhat questionable as to why the Sask Party government has now decided to change the name of that legislation, which has become so well-known across the country under its title as status of the artist legislation. We'll have to, I guess, wait and see what nefarious workings going on there are.

But the obvious and most glaring omission in this legislation is the fact that it doesn't contain collective bargaining. And collective bargaining was one of the primary concerns of the arts community in terms of making sure that their work is valued as much as any other professionals we have in our society that are functioning under the same advantage.

Another thing that one has to question, Mr. Speaker, is — despite the fact that this legislation has, as I said, first been tabled in 2002 under the NDP government and was then tabled as an Act in November of 2006 with an amended version in May of 2007 — why it is, with all those consultations that took place over all those years with all the dedication and hard work that was applied to making sure that this legislation gets implemented in Saskatchewan, moves forward, and becomes part of the working advantage of the artists in our province, why this Act is not going to come into effect until 2010.

That is to me a giant question mark which has yet to be answered. It wasn't addressed in the minister's comments when she stood on the first reading of this legislation in the House. And I would be interested to know why the delay must take place for such a significant period of time. There surely is enough information, enough consultation that's taken place over the years that this is something that could have been implemented quickly, if not immediately. And the delay until 2010 causes me to wonder as much as the new-found title that the Sask Party government has decided to apply to it.

There are some concerns about this legislation outside from what I've just described. We also have, for instance, the executive director of the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, Marnie Gladwell, said that she was at this time still reviewing the legislation but welcomed some of the changes — as do I, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. This is long overdue.

There was no reason for it not to have passed in May 2007. The Sask Party opposition at the time was not showing any major concerns with respect to the legislation and quite frankly, in the eleventh hour, the day before a session ended, decided to pull the plug on this legislation and sink it, so to speak. There was no explanation given by the Sask Party opposition at the time as to why they were sinking the legislation. And the few

explanations — the two minor explanations, I should say — that were given didn't hold water. So I'm still interested in someone giving me an explanation as to why the legislation couldn't go forward at the time.

Now Marnie Gladwell, who is the executive director of Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, also says that "It includes a definition of a professional artist, which looks positive." She's saying that they're still needing to look at it "... but in general" [she says] I think it's a step forward."

So again I question the legislation from that perspective, Mr. Speaker. Why are we only taking a step forward when we could've taken a giant leap forward, so to speak, for the artists of this province? There is no reason to be taking baby steps at this time, Mr. Speaker. As I said, there was extensive consultations done since 2002 when the NDP government at the time first introduced status of the artist legislation.

There were comprehensive consultations done, reviews done, studies, cross-country studies done with respect to comparisons of other jurisdictions. And why we're only taking a step forward at this point instead of a giant leap forward on behalf of the artists in this province is something that is troubling to me and is troubling to the arts community and quite frankly should be troubling to the Sask Party government as well. But unfortunately it looks like they may be somewhat out of touch, or perhaps it ties into the nefarious goings-on of why they wouldn't let the legislation pass in May 2007 when we were literally sitting in the eleventh hour assuming that it was going to pass that evening.

And if anybody is truly interested in seeing what the goings-on of that committee was at the time — and you can imagine the shocked expression on some of our faces — I suggest they simply go on to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly archives, and they can actually view the streaming video of that committee proceeding and can see for themselves what occurred that evening and that we had no knowledge, prior knowledge, that there were some significant concerns on their behalf and that they wouldn't allow this legislation to pass. So I would suggest that the viewing public may want to research that for themselves.

Now the minister said that "The collective bargaining aspect is not currently being considered . . ." One has to wonder why that is. As I said, they were part of the extensive committee proceedings, had as much opportunity to ask as many questions as they wanted and didn't seem to have any overarching concerns as to the issue of collective bargaining.

Marnie Gladwell, who is the executive director of Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, also said that legislation to allow collective or sector bargaining for artists who are contract workers is something the arts group would still like to pursue. And she's saying, "We can see it as being the next place we need to go."

So if this is something the arts community is still wanting to pursue, if this is something that the arts communities were expressing to us should be part of the comprehensive package of status of the artist legislation, and given the amount of consultation and consultative process that took place, one has to

wonder why that omission is present in this current Act that they're putting forward, which is *The Arts Professions Act*.

Again, why take baby steps when there was no need to simply take baby steps? Why not make this a comprehensive piece of legislation that would bring absolute and true value to the arts community of this province versus them having to lobby for some more baby steps to be able to move forward to get the legislation in place that they truly need. And it's not a matter of just want, Mr. Speaker, it's a matter of need. And that's why I'm saying I'm surprised that the Sask Party government is so out of touch with the actual needs of the arts community in this province.

One also has to also look at, for instance, some of the disappointment that was being projected after the Sask Party didn't allow the status of the artist legislation to pass in May 2007. We can look at, for instance, a quote from Brian Dojack, the secretary-treasurer of the Regina Musicians' Association. This is from June 9, 2007 in the *Leader-Post*:

To say I was disappointed to see the Opposition's tactics on May 17 is a gross understatement.

Government members of the committee reviewing it were willing to extend sitting time in order to get Bill 68 dealt with; the Opposition [Sask Party] was opposed to doing so.

It is long past time for the opposition to quit playing games and get this bill, which it acknowledges is needed, passed into law.

So as you can see, the arts community was told and was informed by their discussions with the then Sask Party opposition, that the Sask Party opposition didn't have any major concerns. The arts community believed that the Sask Party opposition was going to be supportive of this legislation, that they also believed the arts community deserved this legislation, and then in the eleventh hour decided that, no, I guess no, they didn't deserve it, or whatever their reasons were for deciding the legislation was not going to be passed in the eleventh hour.

Another quote for instance, from the *Leader-Post* from May 18, 2007, says:

Pat Close, Saskatchewan's representative for the national artist advocacy organization CARFAC, said the legislation represented the culmination of efforts around policy development in the arts for the past nearly twenty years.

Now Pat Close, I know, was one of the original stakeholders involved in the original consultations of status of the artist legislation. This man gave an amazing amount of dedication, time, knowledge, expertise, passion to seeing this Bill passed — to seeing status of the artist legislation as comprehensively as it was presented under the NDP in 2006 and 2007 — to seeing that legislation passed. This was part of his life's work, if I dare say — having dedicated, as he said, nearly 20 years to seeing this legislation going forward as comprehensively as it was presented.

He goes on to say:

“This morning I’ve been dealing with e-mails from all across the country, saying what a wonderful initiative this was, how other provinces and other jurisdictions were looking forward to us having passed it so they could advocate in their own provinces for similar legislation,” Close said.

So how disappointing, how ultimately disappointing for the arts community to believe the Sask Party was supportive of this legislation, for the Sask Party opposition at that time to have allowed the arts community to feel that they were going to be supportive, only to literally have yanked it in the eleventh hour before the last day of session. It is absolutely unconscionable, Mr. Speaker, that that happened at that time.

Now in case the Sask Party government is somewhat remiss as to what was done under the NDP government in terms of the ongoing support of the arts community over the years leading up to status of the artist legislation — which should have passed had it not been for their partisan beliefs or whatever other beliefs led them to simply walk away at the eleventh hour from allowing that legislation to pass in May 2007 — let me just fill in some of the blanks.

[16:00]

On record, the NDP increased base funding for the Saskatchewan Arts Board by 14 per cent in the 2007-2008 budget. On record, the NDP government provided \$2.5 million in special funding to the Saskatchewan Arts Board in October 2007 for the status of the artist initiative, including funding for touring and arts marketing. The NDP government at that time provided \$2 million in special funding for cultural industries as music, film, video, publishing, and visual arts in October 2007 to assist with marketing, the creation of a fund to provide small loans and equity investments, technological innovation, and the development of business and marketing skills. The NDP government provided and respected artistic freedom of expression and the independence of the Saskatchewan Arts Board in its funding decisions.

Now someone’s chirping from their seat that this is why we lost the last election. God help us if that is their actual belief because that is absolutely not the case. My goodness.

So the NDP government at that time . . . Apparently they don’t want to hear what the NDP government did at that time, Mr. Speaker, because the volume is being turned up a bit. But you know what, there’s so much more that I could say that the NDP government did at that time, so I think I’ll just keep elaborating some more.

The NDP government at that time provided low-income workers, which included artists, with better access to health benefits like prescription drugs, eye exams, and chiropractic services. The NDP government at that time, as the NDP opposition at this time, recognizes the struggle of the artists to have the same advantages of other workers in this province and in this country and will do its utmost to ensure that changes take place to ensure that they have those advantages going forward.

As you can hear, Mr. Speaker, they have all sorts of interesting revisionary stories as to why the legislation needed to be pulled

in the eleventh hour of May 2007. Of course those are interesting revisionary stories, and I’m sure at some point before I finish my political career somebody will explain to me the actual truth as to what happened that evening as to the nefarious goings-on.

Now as for where the Sask Party is going with this legislation, as I said, these are some welcome changes. These are some baby steps. It’s unfortunate that the legislation isn’t more comprehensive in terms of what it needs to do, what it could do. And those changes are still able to take place, Mr. Speaker, if the Sask Party government is courageous enough to do so when of course the Bill goes to committee and we get to have a good discussion about some of those changes that should be made, amendments that should be made.

And I’m sure that if the Sask Party government doesn’t want to believe what the NDP opposition has to say on the issue, all they have to do is ask people within the arts community. And people in the arts community would be only too willing to provide that information for them, as would the Ministry of Tourism, Culture under the new minister, because they certainly have record of all the consultations that took place.

So this Bill is oriented as a individual entrepreneur bill of rights and unfortunately ignores provisions that set out a collective bargaining structure. And it’s unfortunate that the Sask Party government felt that this was an omission that was all right to have. Now the New Democrats, of course, are committed to addressing the pocketbook issues facing artists and to provide artists and cultural workers with the respect they deserve. The Sask Party claims it supports arts and culture, but they don’t respect artists and cultural workers for their contributions to our economy and our communities. Unfortunately one can see that with, like I said, the omission to the Bill and some of the other omissions to the Bill.

The ministerial advisory committee on the status of the artist, of which Patrick Close was a member of — as a matter of fact there were two committees set up, and Patrick Close was actually a member of both of those — laid out a number of concerns and a number of desires in terms of the wish list that they would like to see going forward. And those were all presented in the original status of the artist Act which was initiated in the fall of 2007. What we have here now, unfortunately, is a watered down version of the old Bill, and it’s renamed in the hopes that people won’t notice it, quite frankly.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is so much more to be said but unfortunately there’s so many other Bills that we still need to go through, and seeing that we’re getting to a later hour here and there’s still a hefty agenda ahead of us, I’ll just conclude my remarks by saying the Sask Party government seems to want to do absolutely nothing that would lend legitimacy or assist workers in the pursuit of their Charter rights to engage in free collective bargaining, as we see from the omission in this legislation.

I am pleased with the baby-step steps that are going forward and look forward to ongoing discussions with the Sask Party government as to the amendments that this NDP opposition would like to see presented in the legislation in the committee.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Walsh Acres has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 68, *The Arts Professions Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 51

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 51** — *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to provide comment on Bill 51, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act*. Bill 51 in principle is designed to carry out two discernible objectives: number one, enforce professional accountability and transparency with the extension of investigative powers; and number two, to provide administrative clarity related to the valuation of pensions upon breakdown of a judge's spousal relationship.

There was legislation similar to this in the works while we were in government, Mr. Speaker, and while we support this legislation in general, we're not ruling out amendments as it does contain some clauses that had not been discussed while we had it under consideration.

It's my intention, Mr. Speaker, to briefly comment on these two discernible objectives. Number one. First, Bill 51 provides for the extension of authority of the Saskatchewan Judicial Council to conduct an investigation into allegations of professional misconduct for a period of two years after a judge has either tendered a resignation or retired. Currently under *The Provincial Court Act, 1998*, the court only has jurisdiction over current judges.

So if allegations are made of misconduct not related to criminal wrongdoing, investigation can be avoided through resignation or retirement. If criminal issues were the nature of the misconduct, then the investigation already would go to the police regardless of resignation or retirement. This Bill gives the Saskatchewan Judicial Council jurisdiction over judges for two years after retirement or resignation so judges could no longer avoid investigations of misconduct by resigning from the bench. However the Bill provides for no sanctions beyond removal from the bench and therefore accomplishes little of real substance in terms of disciplining judges found guilty of misconduct.

The second objective of Bill 51 relates to providing further administrative direction to the judges' pension plan administrator when a judge's pension is divided upon the breakdown of a spousal relationship. Bill 51 specifically places a requirement on the judges' pension plan administrator to

divide the pension plan upon an interspousal agreement or court order and further that this portion will go to an RRSP [Registered Retirement Savings Plan] or similar type of savings plan. Also, if the interspousal agreement is filed only by the spouse of the judge, the administrator will provide notice to the judge and an opportunity to object.

Mr. Speaker, in this matter clarity is of the utmost importance when it comes to provisions relating to pensions, benefits, and remuneration. So, Mr. Speaker, it is my advice to the House that these matters receive appropriate scrutiny in committee to ensure that the direction is advisable.

In recognition of the legislation again that we have on the agenda today, I now move that we adjourn debate on Bill 51, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act*.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 51, *The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 61

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hutchinson that **Bill No. 61** — *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to enter into this debate. It's the debate on local government elections and the amendment Act as proposed by this government.

It gives me a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Speaker, because it causes me the opportunity to reflect on experiences of the past, and I might say the long past — not most recent past but the long past. And that was way back in the days when I had the opportunity of sitting on a local government as the councillor for division 5 of the RM [rural municipality] of Clayton, No. 333. And I can relate to some of the experiences that's outlined by the minister in his comments on this Bill and second reading comments on this Bill. And there is certainly the opportunity to look into the Bills and to modernize the election process of local governments. I think that from our own experiences in the past that that is something that's probably long overdue.

And I could see that the SARM . . . This is another thing, Mr. Speaker, that I find quite interesting: that in local governments, whether it be the rural municipalities or the urban municipality or the school boards, they all have a different process for elections. And yet what we're doing is electing local people to do the governing of the various jurisdictions for us — and we're asking them to do a fine job — but yet we don't have any consistency. And I find that a bit strange.

And I think that the recommendations put forward by the minister on this Bill, Bill 61, move in that direction — to bring some consistency to the election process and to bring some predictability, I guess you would say, to the process and also maybe even efficiencies, as I see them. And I would certainly strongly support that because there's a number of rules and regulations that govern the operations of, the election operations of rural municipalities and urban municipalities that are really resulting in inefficiencies.

And I see that the SARM, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, has asked for these amendments to allow councillors to stand as candidates in by-elections for mayors or reeves without resigning their council positions.

Without the amendment, if an election were to be held and several councillors wanted to run for the mayor or for the reeve's position, they would all have to resign their council position. This would then create really a problem for the council itself to be able to continue to operate, having lost quorum. The municipalities would then be unable really to conduct their business and during that by-election period and during the second by-elections to fill the council positions. And that really is perhaps an extreme case, but it also is a real case of instances in Saskatchewan that such occurrences could take place.

I would say that most recently the need to modernize our electoral process is very evident. In rural municipalities for example when I was a councillor, the municipal term was two years. So every two years a councillor was up for election. Now in the rural municipality case, the reeve was also up every two years, and his election or her election would take place at the same time as the odd-division elections. And even-division elections would take place without the reeve election. So that if you were a councillor for, say, an even-numbered division, halfway through your term, you would have to make the decision of whether or not you want to seek the reeve's position. If you do, you'd have to resign your council position to seek the reeve election.

[16:15]

Now if you were not successful or were successful in retaining the reeve or being elected to the reeve's position, a vacancy would then occur at the council level of which a by-election would have to be held to fill that position, and that position would be filled for, in most cases, less than a year.

That's quite expensive and I mean it's, I suppose in relative terms, not a huge amount of money but if you look at the municipalities and the amount of money they'd have to, you know, and the process they'd have to go through to fill that by-election, it actually is fairly expensive. And for what reason? To fill that position for a few months.

So I think that the suggestions by the minister here to move forward on having the terms expanded to reflect more the terms of provincial governments and federal governments — a four-year term — and to make the necessary changes to permit councillors to seek other council positions without having to resign their seat, I think is a worthwhile one.

Just this past year, in fact last fall, was municipal elections in

the RM of Clayton and the reeve position came available. And here's just one example of what I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker. The reeve position came open and one councillor had decided that his division was an odd-numbered division, so his term was automatically up. So he decided he wasn't going to seek re-election as a councillor, but he was going to run for the reeve's position.

Another councillor from an even-numbered division decided that they too would seek the reeve's position, but they made that decision after the normal electoral process of notification of vacancies and therefore they had to resign their seat in order to seek the reeve's position. They were successful, therefore creating a vacancy in this particular division which had to be filled with a by-election. Being that the by-election was taking place at a little later date than the reeve election, of course that meant that the new person elected would serve for less than a year and have to be back into the electoral process.

So I believe that it's time that we take a close look at some of the recommendations that are coming forward in this Bill and look at the real need to identify ways and means that we can improve upon the electoral process.

And it's my experience that if you talk to the people on the front line, the councillors for the rural municipalities or the urban municipality councillors, they're the folks that are dealing with these issues on a day-by-day basis. These are the folks that are dealing with these issues right upfront and, quite frankly, they're the ones that'll have the solutions too.

So I think there's a real need to ensure that we have, you know, a good open process here that allows the urban municipalities, the councillors, the reeves, the mayors, the opportunity to have their input into what changes that they would like to see made in the electoral process, and how those changes should come about and how they could affect their operations in a positive way.

And I think that this Bill moves in that direction. I think we have to be careful that we don't act in too much haste. We want to make sure that we have all the i's dotted and the t's crossed and we give the opportunity to councillors to have that input and to recognize that that input is so very, very valuable.

I just want to bring to your attention and to the attention of the Assembly here the importance, the real importance of local governments and how local governments serve us in a very efficient and effective way. I remember during my term as councillor in division 5 of the RM of Clayton, a hamlet in our RM — which had not been an organized hamlet — but a hamlet who wanted to improve their lot in life by installing a pressurized water system to their residents, did so by going through a fairly lengthy process of becoming an organized hamlet.

And under the rules and regulations of operations of the municipalities, an organized hamlet then enjoys the opportunity of having its own governance board. And if my memory serves me correct, I believe it was a governance board of three people who were duly elected by the residents of the organized hamlet. They then were able to levy a special levy on their own residents. The residents of that hamlet would then receive and

enjoy a special levy that would raise money that would cover the costs of a water system.

And they did that. And, you know, my hat's off to them. It'd take a fair amount of leadership for these folks to — and initiative — to go out and convince their friends and neighbours that, yes, their tax bill would certainly increase a marginal amount. But as a result of the increase they would give them the powers to financially be able to establish a water system that would serve their residents and certainly, you know, certainly provide them the luxury, I guess you would say, of having running water, but also provide them the opportunity to improve their property and to enhance the value of their property.

And they did that. They qualified for grants, government grants, and took that money, and they established a water system that serves the residents of that particular hamlet. They did so by establishing themselves as an organized hamlet, electing themselves an administration committee, I guess you'd call it. And they're governed by the rules and regulations of the local government, which simply stated that they would report to the local RM. The RM would levy the tax on the residences of that hamlet only, collect that tax, and then turn it over to the administration committee to administer, and actually did very well.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, there was another hamlet in the same RM that did not take the initiative to become organized; they simply remained as a hamlet under the jurisdiction of the RM. In fact they fell under the jurisdiction of the councillor — in this case was myself — and so it was . . . I suppose it's an opportunity both ways for communities and local government leadership to look at ways and means that they can improve the lots of their residents and the lives of their residents, and in such a way it was done in a co-operative and forthright manner.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that it appears that the provisions of this legislation do come from an ongoing process that has been developed over many years within the department of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. And where people run into problems in local government elections, they're the ones that can come forward with the ideas of the change and the corrections.

And we need to ensure that we have a good dialogue with these people right across the province, whether they be from municipalities in rural Saskatchewan, and whether that municipality be on the east side or the west side or the south end of the province; or urban municipalities right across this great province of ours, whether they come from large, large cities like Regina or Saskatoon, or smaller communities out there like Southey, for example, or La Ronge, or any of these here communities that play such a major role in our economy and our society of the province of Saskatchewan here.

But I think it's also very important that we have an open and a clear, concise dialogue with the northern municipalities because they have a lot of challenges that perhaps aren't experienced by other municipalities across this great province. Having had the opportunity a couple years ago to tour much of northern Saskatchewan and really get to meet a lot of the residents of northern Saskatchewan first-hand, you quickly recognize that

one of the huge challenges that they have is the challenges of distance. There's large, large distances between communities in northern Saskatchewan, and these distances can create some special challenges, I suppose, for those communities to be able to stay in touch with one another, to be able to work co-operatively with one another.

And it's an interesting experience to have travelled northern Saskatchewan and to have taken the time to meet in most cases with the local leadership there, the local governance there, whether it be the mayor — and usually it was the mayor — and the councillors that we would certainly make the opportunity to get together with and have a discussion on the issue that we were dealing with at that time. But one of the things that was quickly recognized was that the distances involved in these communities staying in touch and being able to, in some cases, share services that mayhap they couldn't afford on their own, but in a collective manner they could.

And it was neat to have the opportunity to meet with the parent organization, I guess you would say, the New North, which is the organization that consists of the mayors of all the northern communities there, and sit in on their meetings and listen to their discussions. And they took the time to share with us — me in particular — some of their concerns and their thoughts on the challenges that they face in northern Saskatchewan.

I suppose the number one challenge is roads, a lot of roads up there that quite frankly I don't believe are up to a reasonable standard. I think that there certainly needs to be work done on those roads, and I think that perhaps not enough attention has been paid in the past to the plight of the northern residents and the needs of the northern residents. And I would hope that we would see the opportunity perhaps through this process, but the opportunity somewhere for the northern leadership, the northern community leaderships — the mayors, the councillors — to have the opportunity to express their wants, their desires, their needs to the governing body of Saskatchewan.

And I say roads because probably roads is one of the first things that you see because that's what you drive on. And I had the opportunity of driving up there, mostly in the summer months although some winter trips we did make, but mostly in the summer months. And some of those roads, Mr. Speaker, were, well less than adequate would be probably the way I would describe it — less than adequate.

And something that we overlook perhaps in southern Saskatchewan here is the fact that we're usually served by roads leading us at least in two separate directions — if not in four but certainly in two separate directions — so that if for one reason or another a road in one direction isn't passable or isn't fit or isn't very good, we can always get out another way. That's an option that is not available to communities in northern Saskatchewan.

Northern Saskatchewan, most communities there are served by one road. You go in on that road and you come out on that road. If anything should happen, as weather-related conditions to that road, you're stranded or you're isolated. And we've seen that happen in the past, particularly with spring flooding.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, and when you drive up there in the

summertime and you drive on these roads and they're for the most part gravel roads — and I say gravel rather loosely; I think they're mostly dust roads — we recognize quickly the real need for the northern leadership there to get their message out to the government, whether it be through the municipal system or through highways system, to address this particular need because it's a road that serves the greatest resource that we have in this province and that's the people of Saskatchewan.

And if you drive on these roads, you find that these people living in these communities are isolated to that one road. If they wish to travel out, they travel out on that road. When they travel in, they travel in on that road. They have only one way — only one way in and one way out. So that road of course is very, very important.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, that this is why it is essential that we have a good consultation process with the leadership of the northern municipalities so that we can give them the opportunity to fully express to the officials of government their needs as they understand it, their challenges that they are facing. And I would hope that this government would be open to receiving that.

I would hope this minister, perhaps even through this legislation, would find a way to perhaps amend the legislation to allow for really a focused, really a focused attention on providing the opportunity for northern mayors and the representatives of New North to be able to on a regular basis — and I'm saying a couple of times a year — to have that opportunity to sit down with the minister and discuss the challenges that they're facing in northern Saskatchewan. I think that would be very worthwhile, not only to the good folks who live up there, but also to the government itself to be able to hear first-hand from people who are experiencing those difficulties. And I think that would be a very, very worthwhile venture and I would urge the government to move in that direction.

[16:30]

I think another thing, Mr. Speaker, is that this Bill relates to the fact that there is a desire by local level to have many of the rules of the local elections be similar or the same as those in the provincial elections and in some cases federal elections. And I think that's only reasonable. I think that consistency is important.

I think that you and I and the members in this House who pay a lot more attention to the rules of elections and the governance of elections and the implementation of elections than probably the average person does, and I think you would, if we went out and talked to oh, pick 10 people in Saskatchewan and we asked them about what they thought about the election process — whether it be municipal or whether it be provincial or whether it be federal — I think they would say that common sense would tell you that they should be consistent. The terms should be of the same length. The process used to elect people should be the same. And I don't think we'd disagree with that.

It's right now quite awkward in the local government process. If you look at the rural municipalities, the term of a councillor in the RM of Clayton, for example, or any RM in Saskatchewan here, is two years. They are elected on a two-year term whereas

in the urban municipality setting they are elected on a three-year term. And then we have a different process again for the election of school boards and we have elections at various times throughout, throughout our electoral year.

So I think that there's a real need for some consistencies to bring things into line, some simplification of the electoral process, and to encourage more people to get involved in that process.

I know that in some cases I've read articles in the paper where municipalities, rural municipalities in particular, are finding it difficult sometimes to fill vacancies. There seems to be a lack of interest in some circles to participate in the local government process. And that's unfortunate because they do serve a very useful purpose and I would like to see perhaps consistency . . . Perhaps length of term would be more attractive to somebody would really want to get involved and seek a local government position simply because they would have the opportunity of time to be able to fulfill their ideas, fulfill their mandate to the good folks that they asked for support from. And a four-year term certainly would give a greater opportunity than a two-year term.

Having experienced two-year terms myself as a municipal councillor, I know that you spent the first year trying to do enough stuff to win the support of the election on the second year. So it was an interesting process of which you put yourself through, but a four-year term in my opinion would expand the opportunity for individuals who found themselves fortunate enough to be elected as a councillor and give them the time to be able to put together a plan to develop their division in a way that would benefit all the people in that division. And I think that that's quite important, doing so within the framework of the RM, and the RM ensuring that whatever was done in a division was supportive of the rest of the work being done in an RM.

So I think that there's a lot of fairly good stuff in this Bill, Bill 61, *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2008*. I do think though that there is a real need for us to be careful of speed in which we move forward on this Bill. And I do believe that there is a need for us as the opposition to take a closer look at this Bill, and ensure that the provisions of this legislation apparently has come from a process that it had developed over many years by the Department of Municipal Affairs.

There's a real desire at the local level to have many of the rules in the local elections to be made similar to that of the provincial elections, or in some cases, federal elections. It's important that we take the time and we spend the time in looking at the specific provisions to make sure that we catch all the nuances of the suggestions or identify the problems that may arise. We have quite a number of people with that experience on this side of the House, who have experienced either local government at some level, and we may identify areas that we would suggest the legislation could be fine-tuned.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think we need the time to consult with the various stakeholders across this province and to get feedback from the front-line people. Because I personally believe that's very important because it's the front-line people, the front-line people, who deal with the issues on a day-by-day basis. These folks are the ones that have identified the

problems. These are the folks who can identify the solutions. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Northeast has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 61, *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 46

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Stewart that **Bill No. 46 — *The Labour Market Commission Amendment Act, 2008*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Harper: — The members on the other side, Mr. Speaker, said they haven't had enough yet, so I'm back on my . . . [inaudible] . . . I will attempt, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite I will do my best to keep them awake, although I can't guarantee that, but we will certainly do our best.

Mr. Speaker, it again is a pleasure for me to rise and to enter into this debate on behalf of the fine people of Regina Northeast. You travel across this great province of ours, you'll quickly recognize that there are no finer people in the world than Saskatchewan people, and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, there are no finer people in Saskatchewan than the people in Regina Northeast. So I really appreciate the opportunity to . . . and the honour it is to represent them and to have the opportunity to rise in this House and share with you and the members of this House some of the thoughts and the feelings on various issues as felt by the good folks out there.

The Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission was formed on the basis that labour market planning and coordination is best achieved through partnerships between labour, business, education and training of students, government and other stakeholders to essentially connect all the dots within the Saskatchewan labour market. Mr. Speaker, it has worked well.

The Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission will have the industry focus on providing advice to Saskatchewan's key strategic labour market issues. It was built, Mr. Speaker, and operates on the principles of co-operation, recognizing that bringing all the stakeholders together at one table, so to speak, to be able to, on an ongoing basis, discuss the issues that are facing the marketplace in Saskatchewan would be nothing but beneficial to all the stakeholders. So it would be done on a co-operative basis.

It would be done by working together — identifying the issues, identifying the concerns, identifying some of the peaks and the valleys within the industry, recognizing ways and means of

levelling off some of the peaks and filling the valleys so that we didn't have great, wild fluctuations in our marketplace here. And it meant nothing but the betterment of the industry. The betterment of the industry means the betterment of the stakeholders and those involved in industry.

And it was also a forward-thinking tank in some ways. It would look forward into the future as much as possible to identify upcoming or possible upcoming issues — whether they be positive issues or negative issues — but identifying those issues so that the industry itself could be ready for it. The industry could react and not be caught off guard, but could react to the changing climates as they were recognized and head off any possible problems that could arise and avoid pitfalls and avoid troubles within the industry. The establishment of the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission, which brings together labour, business, First Nations and Métis, and the social economy, the training systems, and government to provide strategic advice to the labour market, as far as trends and issues and strategies is concerned.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment to say that the social economy is a term that's used here. And the social economy means the not-for-profit sector that seeks to enhance the social, economic, and environmental conditions of our communities and includes a volunteer sector. So it brought together the whole gamut, the whole gamut of our society as it would reflect upon the marketplace and reflect upon the market trends. And it would help by sitting down and having those representatives of the various aspects of industry to be able to identify some of the problems that they are facing, some of the problems that they foresee in the future, and based on the experiences of the past and based on their advice, often policies could be adopted to be able to head off any real negative impact upon our industries.

And is it an important thing? I think it's very important, Mr. Speaker. I think it's very important that we have that communication, that dialogue take place to ensure that we as a society in Saskatchewan here benefit from it, to ensure that we benefit from having a strong industry. And that strong industry can only be obtained by working together in a co-operative atmosphere.

And it's very important, very important particularly in slow times when the economy is slower, when perhaps there isn't as much activity going on as we would like to see it, where there isn't as much happening and there isn't much employment. It's very important. But, Mr. Speaker, it is also just as important, maybe even more so important, in boom times. In times of a strong economy, we need to have that co-operation and understanding so that we can avoid any pitfalls, any negativities out there that may impact upon the industry that would then in turn impact upon the players within that industry, whether it be the employer or whether it be the employees, and the off spin of that on the social economy, and so on and so forth.

So I think it's very important that we maintain that dialogue; we maintain it in the strongest method possible. And in order to do that you have to have good representation from a wide variety of those that are involved in the industry. And that is something that, in the past at least, the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission did was it brought about that representation. They

brought together those people from a broad, broad sector of our economy that played a major role in market developments and provided the opportunity to share information with all sectors of that industry.

It's a little like the role that was played at one point in time by the Saskatchewan Construction Panel which I did have the pleasure and honour of chairing for a number of years. I believe now the member from Weyburn chairs that. I thought that was also a very good process because it did similar type stuff. It . . . Oh, I see. We have a new Chair over there now. Okay. Well at one time the member from Weyburn chaired that, anyway.

But I thought it was a very good process because it brought together all the stakeholders. It was done with the best interest of the industry. It certainly was not done with the interest of somebody competing with somebody else, or getting ahead, or even a political umbrella over it. None of that was involved because we had people from all political stripes on that committee, and they worked together very, very well. They worked together very, very well.

And I found it very useful because it identified not only some of the pitfalls within the industry and the sharing of information, we were able to perhaps in some cases address issues before they got away from us. We were able to identify solutions to some problems that were brought forward. But it also gave an opportunity for new and innovative techniques to be brought to the table and be shared by all the participants within the industry. So I thought that was a very useful tool, and much would be served in the same way by the Labour Market Commission.

I think really the Labour Market Commission should be expanded, not downsized as this government intends to do. But it should be expanded to incorporate more people and more aspects of the industry into that continuous discussions and continuous identifying issues and problems. There's several conversion factors that cause the tightening labour market conditions including . . . and that's something we're facing here today. We hear on a regular basis of the booming economy having caused a shortage of skilled labour. And that's part of it, there's no doubt about it, that's part of it.

[16:45]

But as the economy cools off, we still find ourselves facing, in a lot of cases, a shortage of skilled labour. And some of that is, yes as I said, the strong economy and the strong growth in that economy. But also we're looking at an aging population. Some of us — not you and I, Mr. Speaker, I know — but some of us are getting older as time goes by. In the whole process, there's a huge bubble within a short period of time of baby boomers who will be retiring, and that's taking a lot of people out of the marketplace. But what it's also taking out of the marketplace is a lot of experience, a lot of knowledge, a lot of skill is coming out of that marketplace when we lose that group of people. So those are some of the issues that are facing our industry today.

And Saskatchewan is experiencing a shortage of skilled labour and qualified labour, a shortage of skilled and qualified labour, and most difficulties in finding workers to fill the skilled trades and labour category. And of course, our health care concerns

continue on with a shortage of health care professionals right across the piece. Despite the efforts of the minister across the way, he's come up pretty short on that particular front.

Mr. Speaker, the Labour Market Commission serves an extremely useful purpose. It's a board that has in the past been, I believe, it was a 10-person board, is now being reduced to a 6-person board. And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, the process that's taken place to cause this reduction.

It had not been one of full and open consultation, but rather it's been one of stealth. I suppose you would say, was just implemented without any real discussion, particularly with labour, as to the changes to the makeup of the board. And as a result of that we're seeing a downsize of the board, down to representatives of three and three — three from labour and three from the employers.

And that's sad, Mr. Speaker, because at a time like this when we really need more expertise to identify the issues that are facing us, particularly the skilled shortage, the shortage of skilled workers would be one of the issues, but there are other issues on the horizon. We have less people to call upon, less expertise to call upon, and what we're seeing is a loss of those members from the board. With that loss we're seeing a loss of knowledge, a loss of experience. We're seeing a loss, really, of different points of view. And that is very, very alarming to me because we need that different points of view in order to maintain a balance. We need to maintain a balance within the board in order to ensure that as a result of the discussions that the board comes up with the best possible policy. It has arrived at the best possible policy because they have a difference of points of view coming together, discussing the issues, and then coming up with an acceptable solution.

Not everybody on that board will get everything they want, but what will . . . The opportunity there will be given there for those individuals to express their thoughts, their concerns, and be able to deliberate to find the best possible solution for the issue at hand.

The legislation removes the onus to consult with organizations representing business and labour before appointing board members. Well who is the government to decide that they know better than the organizations such as the chamber of commerce or the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour? That's, Mr. Speaker, a bit alarming when we see the government making the assumption that they no longer need to have the input from the stakeholders, the front-line people, the people who are dealing with the issues each and every day. They no longer need that input. They would rather just make that decision on their own.

And that I find disappointing, to say the least — just disappointing. Because I would hope that in a time like this with a strong economy with a need for growth in our construction sector particularly, with a growth in our labour pool, we would be looking at ways and means to identify how we can do this in a co-operative way, rather than being rigid and saying well we're just not going to listen to you. We're going to impose upon your industry, our will. The Labour Market Commission was an opportunity for business and labour to work together to identify issues of concern, to identify solutions

that would be compatible to all. And that is a bit disappointing that the government of the day hasn't moved in that direction.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the budget of the Labour Market Commission has been cut in half from the previous year, reducing yet its ability to work, reducing yet its ability to work co-operatively with each other, reducing yet its ability to recognize the issues and the problems that are facing Saskatchewan people on this particular front. And not moving forward in a positive and progressive way but actually moving backwards and isolating themselves and leaving the inability for the stakeholders within the industry, particularly the construction industry, to be able to share their concerns and their thoughts, their issues, as they identify them.

Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to help Saskatchewan meet the many challenges that come with a strong economy. And there are challenges. I mean nobody will deny that we all want to live in a society and an economy and in a jurisdiction of the province of Saskatchewan in a time of prosperity. We want this because this is great. It's always great to have prosperity. But at the same time, there is the dark side to that. There's a dark side to a boom, and there is a responsibility that government has to address the victims of the boom, the victims who find themselves on that dark side.

And I would hope that . . . the Labour Market Commission was one of those vehicles that the government could use to help identify and address those issues that arise on the dark side of a booming economy and could be . . . But certainly when you restrict the commission's ability to operate — when you restrict the commission's ability to operate through manpower, reducing the number of people on that commission to a mere six; cutting their budget in half; reducing their ability once again to be able to research and identify issues and identify solutions to those issues — you certainly are not, certainly are not working to identify those victims who find themselves on the dark side of a booming economy.

And that's disappointing once again, Mr. Speaker. I'm disappointed to see that the government hasn't moved in a more positive manner towards assisting those people because all people in Saskatchewan are Saskatchewan residents. They all deserve to be treated with, you know, with the opportunities that a booming economy brings to us. Unfortunately that doesn't always happen. I mean, I think we would all agree we would like to see everybody share in it, and we would like everybody to share equally.

And unfortunately it doesn't always happen and there needs to be systems put into place. And there is a role for government to play there — to identify those issues, to identify what needs to be done, what the government can be done either through themselves or through other agencies to provide the safety nets for those people who don't fully participate in the booming economy of Saskatchewan here.

Saskatchewan is currently experiencing a serious labour shortage, and there is a deep gap between what the government is doing and what actually needs to be done to address it.

And I think this is just one example of what creates that gap, Mr. Speaker, is rather than enhancing a tool . . . And that's what

the Labour Market Commission would be is a tool to be able to address some of the shortfalls that we experience in our economy here. In order to use this tool effectively, it has to have the resources, and what we're seeing through this Bill is we're seeing the stripping away of those resources, stripping away of those resources by reducing the manpower, the person power on that board. Reducing it from a high I believe of 11 or something along that line — I can't remember the exact number — and seeing it reduced down to six; three representatives from the employers and three representatives from labour. And that lessens the ability for these individuals to be able to effectively do their job. But what really restricts them is by restricting their resources of funds, having their budget cut in half restricts their ability to go out there in a meaningful way and do the research that's necessary to do the investigations that are necessary to identify the shortfalls within the industry and identify solutions for those shortfalls so that the people of Saskatchewan benefit from it and not be the losers, but really be the winners.

We have a great deal of respect for the work that has been done by the Labour Market Commission in this province. They have a long history of doing good, positive work for the people of Saskatchewan. And there is, to me, all the reasons . . . If you look at that history of the work that they have done since they were first formed, if you look at that, the results of the work that they have done, you would say that its evidence is obvious, that this is an organization or an agency that should be enhanced, not reduced. But it should be enhanced because of the quality of work it does for the ordinary people of this province, for the quality of work it does for the participants within the construction industry, for the participants within the labour market itself right across this great province. They have a track record that's unblemished, a track record that we all will be quite proud of when we look at the reality of the work that's being done by this agency and by this commission.

And at first glance you just wonder, why would you cut this back? Why would you reduce the number of people on the commission? In fact what you think you should do is enhance it based on the quality of work. Based on the record that they have achieved under their term, you would say it should be enhanced and they should be given greater resources, give them more people. They should be given more money to ensure that they continue to do the quality of work that has stood them so well in this great province.

This legislation is based on the government's belief that the current Labour Market Commission is an impediment to the economic growth and this is not the case. It does not impede the growth of the marketplace. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it assists in that growth. It assists in that growth because it is able to work, bring together all the various stakeholders within the industry, bring them together in a central location on a regular basis, give them the opportunity to discuss the issues of the day that are facing the industry.

It has been well established that when this process is implemented and when this process is carried out to its fullest, it does nothing but benefit the industry. When it benefits the industry and causes the industry to grow, it benefits all the stakeholders within that industry. So co-operation is truly a solution to some of the issues that are facing the industry here today.

Some of those issues, yes there's a shortage of skilled workers. We recognize that and by working in opposite directions to try to address that issue, we're not going to be able to resolve it. What we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is work co-operatively in a manner to ensure that all the stakeholders, all the stakeholders are able to share with each other their issues, to identify the pitfalls as they recognize them, to put forward their thoughts on what it will take to address those pitfalls to ensure that Saskatchewan people and Saskatchewan labour people have the strongest labour market available. Because it serves not only the individual labourers involved there, Mr. Speaker, but it ensures that industry and the chamber of commerce and investors within our province here enjoy a strong marketplace. And they, in turn, enjoy a return that they would expect to be a fair and reasonable return while, at the same time, providing great opportunities for the people in this province to be able to live the quality of life that they are entitled to.

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

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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