



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the galleries today, mostly seated, Mr. Speaker, in the government gallery opposite, are some very special guests that I have the privilege of introducing to you and through you to all members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, last September I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Advanced Education and 50 different employers, 50 companies in the province of Saskatchewan, to a job fair in Toronto to promote Saskatchewan, to promote the opportunities that are here and hopefully to attract some new residents to this great province. This was in addition to some advertising we had done — I think with some significant effect when you look at the numbers in Alberta in terms of attracting people, as well as Manitoba — and then the on-the-ground effort at the job fair.

And just very quickly, Mr. Speaker, if I may, I want to introduce them to you, not individually, there are too many here. But we were celebrating the fact that just from that one mission alone, 86 — 86 — families from the Toronto area have moved to our province in the last number of months.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We had a chance to host them for a bit of a lunch today. Represented in the group this afternoon were information technology professionals, engineers, tradespeople. They've moved to places like Regina obviously, our capital, and Frontier, Saskatchewan in the Southwest, Saskatoon, and Langbank, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if all members will join with me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I simply want to join with the Premier in welcoming the guests that are in the gallery today, many of them relative newcomers to our province. With the Premier and with the government, we are very, very happy that you have chosen to make Saskatchewan your home. We wish for you long and prosperous lives in our province for you and your children and your grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I expect that some of the folks who have joined us today, and some who have come to our province, have come under the immigrant nominee program and the family category there. They have received invitation from the current government. They received invitation from the former

government, and we are all, as Saskatchewan people, so happy to have them here.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am truly honoured today to introduce individuals in your gallery, and you'll recognize them with Hockeyville jerseys. We have some of the individuals who are working extremely hard to promote that Humboldt is Hockeyville. We are in the last finalists of five, and so we all need to support Humboldt for Hockeyville for Canada.

With us today, we have Malcolm Eaton, the mayor of Humboldt. We have Gord Lees, the chairperson of the Humboldt is Hockeyville committee; and Kerri Martin, another diligent worker on the committee. Could everyone please join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, in your gallery is my intern Nicole Leach. Nicole and I are working together until April, and I'm very pleased to have her and she's very busy. Nicole is completing her B.A. [Bachelor of Arts] with honours in political science and economics at the U of R [University of Regina]. And I'm happy to have her, and we're doing a lot of good work together.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce four ladies seated in the west gallery: Jacqueline Tisher, Melanie Kohlruss, Norma Knuth, and Karol Schram. And these ladies are from Hope's Home.

This home has been in operation for almost four years, and provides a daycare for medically fragile children, staffed by nurses so that the parents can be allowed to go back to work. It is an integrated care along with typical children so that kids can be kids, which aids in the development of these medically fragile children. And I ask all members to please join me in welcoming these guests today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I also want to join with the member from Humboldt in welcoming the Humboldt delegation who are here wearing the appropriate jerseys.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have this very fond memory of Hockeyville in Shaunavon, Saskatchewan these many years ago. It's a great tribute to a community. It's a great tribute to a province to host Hockeyville. We can make it happen.

I know the Premier has encouraged us all to vote early, vote often. In getting Hockeyville to Saskatchewan, I want to join with the Premier encouraging all of the colleagues here in the House. We've all got computers. The Minister of the Attorney General is doing it right now, he tells us. So 100 votes each from this room will help Hockeyville. We wish you all the best, Humboldt.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce in your gallery a gentleman who's no stranger to these Chambers. I'm talking of course about Mr. Michael Radmacher.

Michael is one of these guys that's had such a great time working as a page in this legislature, he thought he'd come back for another helping as a legislative intern. He's completed his Bachelor of Arts Honours at the University of Regina; has just received word that he is granted a full scholarship at the University of Victoria which he will commence in the fall.

It's a great pleasure working with Michael. He's an individual that combines passion and intellect and does a great service to the legislative internship program. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I beg of the members, leave to just extend the invitations, welcomes. I noticed one of the guests in the galleries that the Premier introduced a moment ago, a gentleman who's kept me up to speed on health issues and doctor issues in the Broadview area, working with Seed Hawk, Mr. Gordon Wyatt. And I'm sorry Gordon, that . . . The gentleman beside you is from Ontario too, working with Seed Hawk. I want to welcome you both to the Assembly, and especially Mr. Wyatt for your interest in our province and the voice you represent to our province. Thank you.

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 deals with the housing market here in the province of Saskatchewan and that the squeeze in the housing market has really translated into some challenges for renters and that includes senior citizens right across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, 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.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition. It's entitled wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers, and of course many people throughout this province are concerned about the wages paid to the people who work in this very important sector. I'll 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 equity with employees who perform work of equal value in government departments.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these folks are signing this petition come from Saskatoon, Regina, Aberdeen, Torquay, Birch Hills, Estevan, throughout the province. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of a new Saskatchewan hospital. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners note that in 2006, the Government of Saskatchewan committed funds and resources to the development and construction of a new Saskatchewan hospital in North Battleford. The petitioners therefore pray:

. . . that the Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased 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 Prairie North Regional Health Authority with the authority necessary to complete this essential and much-needed project.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of The Battlefords.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before I recognize the next individual, I would ask members to respect the right of individuals to present their petitions without interference.

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 tax. This is needed by Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan business who are increasingly challenged by the implications of reassessment here in 2009. The prayer reads as follows:

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

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

These petitions are signed by concerned citizens and residents of Regina. Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hockeyville 2009

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been much talk already today about Hockeyville. But not enough, not just yet, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to again encourage Saskatchewan people to support the efforts of Humboldt to become Hockeyville 2009.

Just a few minutes ago, I was able to join with the mayor and the members of the committee outside of the rotunda and had a Humboldt Broncos jersey on. I don't mind wearing a Broncos jersey, Mr. Speaker, but generally it's from another community than Humboldt. But I was grateful for the opportunity to put it on and do a little bit of promotion.

Mr. Speaker, just so people know what's at stake here, it isn't just bragging rights for the province and for the great community of Humboldt, it's also \$100,000 worth of upgrades to the local arena. The runners-up will each receive \$25,000 to be used for arena upgrades as well, and of course "Hockey Night in Canada" will broadcast the pre-season NHL [National Hockey League] game from an arena in the winning community. In this case, we know which arena it will be for sure. Mayor Eaton says the competition has been great for his community.

And I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, the three ways to vote, if I can, in the time remaining. I want to emphasize what the Opposition Leader said — this is an occasion where it's okay to vote often. The mayor wants everyone to vote 100 times and then to start over. And here's the three ways to do it, very quickly. You can go online at www.cbcsports.ca/hockeyville. You can do it by toll-free — 1-866-533-8066 — or you can send a text to VOTE Humboldt 222111. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Eastview.

Health Sector Leader Remembered

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. February 18, Saskatchewan lost a dedicated servant and a citizen with the death of Jim Fergusson of Saskatoon. Jim was, among his many accomplishments, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatoon Health Region from 1996 to 2004. Jim and I knew each other through many of our career changes. I was always impressed by his insight, his direct approach, and his frank advice. Above all I appreciated his calmness. He rarely got rattled.

Jim was committed to the health of Saskatchewan people, the health system, and the thousands of health providers who deliver our health services. His was a sought-after opinion, as he always had a concise grasp of the situation, good advice, and a gentle sense of humour.

As CEO of the largest health district in Saskatchewan, Jim's contributions to the health services and their delivery is embedded in the culture of Saskatoon Health District. His imprint on many initiatives and accomplishments is there, and there is a lasting legacy of his leadership in many of the successes of the health districts.

Jim's presence will be sorely missed by his wife, Angie, his family, friends, and colleagues. Jim was my sounding board and my friend, and I too will miss him greatly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Labour Recruiting Drive

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in the House today and report to this Assembly that Saskatchewan remains a land of opportunity. While we are not immune to the effects of the global recession, for many people across Canada and around the world, Saskatchewan is the place in which they're choosing to work and raise families. Since being elected, our provincial government has taken long overdue steps to address Saskatchewan's labour shortage.

One of those steps was a very successful recruiting drive in Ontario last fall. That recruiting drive has resulted in a wide range of workers, from IT [information technology] professionals to engineers and skilled tradespeople moving from Ontario to Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier noted just a few minutes ago, 86 families are now living and working in cities like Regina and Saskatoon and in smaller communities such as Frontier and Langbank because of this drive. These talented newcomers are making an immediate difference in their new home communities and we welcome them.

[13:45]

Our government, Mr. Speaker, is focusing on ensuring the Saskatchewan economy remains strong and steady. We will once again accompany a major contingent of Saskatchewan

employers to the national job fair in Toronto later this month. We will once again be telling the Saskatchewan story. It is a story of opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and by helping this province's employers find the skilled, qualified, and talented workers they need, our government is looking to the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Moose Jaw School Celebrates Centennial Kickoff

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday, February 4, I was very pleased to join the students and staff of Empire Community School in my home constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow as they celebrated, on the 100th day of school, the kickoff towards their 100th birthday which occurs in 2010. Empire is believed to be the oldest elementary school still operating in the province, and the day was celebrated with birthday cake, storytelling, and some wonderful musical performances by students.

Empire Community School has a long history, and before the school was built, the location was part of a trail used by settlers, Métis, and the North West Mounted Police. The trail was also used by the Canadian Pacific Railway as a location to get water for steam engines. In 1909 the Moose Jaw Public School Board decided South Hill was in need of a school. Empire was built, and by 1927, the school expanded, adding four more classrooms. In 1961 the school grew yet again to accommodate students from the Canadian Forces base south of Moose Jaw.

Empire Community School has become a place to welcome new people. It was the first school in Moose Jaw to offer English language classes for immigrants and refugees, and it was the first temporary home for francophone education in Moose Jaw as the first location for École Ducharme.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Empire Community School for their centennial kickoff and wishing them many more years of providing excellent education for students and the community of Moose Jaw. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Second Annual Premier's Ride

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, last Friday the member from Yorkton and myself had the opportunity to ride in the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association's second annual Premier's Ride. Unfortunately the Premier couldn't attend due to an infrastructure announcement in conjunction with the Prime Minister.

This ride took place in Nipawin, which is in the heart of Carrot River Valley constituency; the best constituency in the province, I might say. Despite a wind chill of minus 45, the

rally was well-attended with 35 sleds making the actual run of about 50 kilometres, with the member from Yorkton providing lots of hot air to warm us at lunch break halfway through.

The following day the SSA [Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association] and the P.E.A.C.E. 100 [Police-Elks Assisting Community Education] held a combined banquet with 383 registered attendees. There were sledders not only from Saskatchewan but also Alberta, Manitoba, and even a couple from Germany. This banquet and silent auction raised about \$32,000 for the D.A.R.E. [drug abuse resistance education] program which is a program that teaches young people the pitfalls of drugs and alcohol. Last year 129 D.A.R.E. officers taught 4,150 students.

My hat is off to the town of Nipawin, the Nipawin Elks, the Nipawin Trail Blazers, and the P.E.A.C.E. 100 organizers, and the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association for this worthy event. I ask all members to show their appreciation to this dedicated group of volunteers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

United Way Spirit Awards

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my pleasure to attend the 2008 United Way of Regina Spirit Awards luncheon celebrating workplace campaigns all across our city. I was joined as well by the member from Regina South.

This year's campaign titled Live United was effective in raising more than \$3.75 million. These dollars go back into our community. I will quote from the United Way's literature:

We all win when a child is ready to learn on the first day of school; stays in the classroom until graduation; and plays in a neighbourhood where the shouts are of joy, not despair.

That's what living united is all about.

Because underneath everything . . . everything we are, we are one community — connected, interdependent, and united.

Mr. Speaker, the United Way through its network of community partners puts these values to action, providing needed services to our community and offering solutions to some of the toughest challenges facing our community. I thank and recognize the United Way's campaign cabinet, its leadership, its staff, its volunteers, and the multitude of business, unions, and organizations that ensure the ability of the United Way to reach its goals.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in extending our recognition and gratitude.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Saskatchewan's Economy

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, I have some very good news to report to this Assembly and to the people of Saskatchewan. It is contained in the Conference Board of Canada's provincial outlook for the winter of 2009.

The Conference Board is reporting that while most other Canadian provinces will experience negative economic growth in 2009, the Saskatchewan economy will grow by 1.6 per cent this year. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan economy, unlike most other Canadian provinces, will grow this year.

And why is that, Mr. Speaker? Well the Conference Board of Canada is crediting measures taken by this government to ensure the Saskatchewan economy remains strong and steady.

Let me quote from the Conference Board report, Mr. Speaker: "Massive income tax cuts, combined with a swift increase in infrastructure spending, will boost Saskatchewan's economy by 1.6 per cent in 2009."

To continue, Mr. Speaker, and I once again quote, "Incomes will get a further boost from the province's \$300 million personal income tax cut, which will keep retail sales at a healthy pace."

The good news does not end there, Mr. Speaker. The conference report also says that the strong economic outlook will continue to attract national and international migration, further stimulating the domestic economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Property Tax Relief

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier refused to answer questions from the media about his promise to reduce education property taxes. Surely it's not too much to expect the Premier to answer questions on one of his election promises. This is an important issue for Saskatchewan people. To the Premier: how does he plan to keep his promises? What is his long-term plan to reduce the education portion of property tax?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for that question. And as he is very well aware, Saskatchewan property owners bear a disproportionate amount of provincial education costs through education

property tax. He's aware of that. His government was responsible for producing that situation, Mr. Speaker.

We have moved in the direction of providing assistance to Saskatchewan taxpayers by looking at the rebate program. And, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday to the media, to the people in this House, we are looking at options that have been presented in the report produced by my colleague, the member for Rosetown.

Mr. Speaker, we've also done a number of things to address concerns of Saskatchewan taxpayers. We've looked at the income tax savings. And, Mr. Speaker, we just heard how the Conference Board of Canada views that particular assistance as very significant in the Saskatchewan economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are many more things that have been provided by the Saskatchewan Party government, and I'm going to outline them after the member asks me the next question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I'm glad the minister already told us that he's not going to answer the next question either.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party promised during the election to save the average homeowner at least \$450 a year. Yesterday the Minister of Education talked about small increases and rebates over the next three years — a plan that will result in big increases for many homeowners. There was no mention of a broader, long-term vision for property tax relief, despite all the Sask Party's promises while in opposition, like when the Premier said back in 2006 that people were fed up with being told that the issue would be dealt with when things got better.

To the minister: are rebates the Sask Party's idea of a long-term plan for property tax relief?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The answer to that question is no.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosetown-Elrose studied this issue for more than a year. The minister has the report in his hands, and for some time, but wants to hide it from the Saskatchewan people. We still don't know what this report says, but we do know that the only plan the minister is talking about is rebates.

To the minister: why the wait? Why is the Sask Party hiding this report from Saskatchewan families? Does this report simply recommend rebates as a long-term solution to the property tax

issue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the media back in the first week of February when I received a very comprehensive report from the member from Rosetown, this report is guiding me as the Minister of Education. It is guiding the Minister of Finance in terms of our decision as to what is the long-term solution to the property tax question.

Mr. Speaker, we have not said that the rebate program is the only program. That is the program that was introduced for a short-term relief.

And we know very well, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure the member opposite knows, that as I indicated in my first answer, is that there is a disproportionate reliance on the property tax to fund education. And we are looking at the solution, Mr. Speaker, and we are working with the people in finance, and we are looking at what is a solution that is going to be acceptable and will be sustainable, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before I recognize the next question, I just want to ask members to respect the right of individuals, not only to ask the question but to respond. I know everyone would to ask and everyone like to respond, but we only recognize one at a time. That would be appreciated. Member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I guess, Mr. Speaker, there's only two explanations for why the Sask Party's hiding the secret report. Maybe they're hiding the report because they know Saskatchewan people will not like it, like they did when they failed to announce the creation of a new entity in government, the P3 [public-private partnership] secretariat. Or the signing of a major interprovincial labour mobility agreement or . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Or the opposite. Possibly they're hiding the report because it makes recommendations or suggests options that Saskatchewan people would like, but the Sask Party has no intention of implementing. To the minister: which is it? Why is he hiding the report?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the media when I received that report — and I did that in front of television cameras and I did that in front of microphones — I indicated that I was going to use that report, I was going to study it, and it was going to guide me in terms of the plan that we would release, Mr. Speaker, on budget day. And I indicated, Mr. Speaker, that day, and that plan will continue, that we will release that report in its entirety on the day of budget, Mr.

Speaker.

So that is a promise that I indicated back when I received that report. That promise has not changed. We will release the report for everyone to see. And, Mr. Speaker, it is a great report. It has a number of options that we are analyzing right now, and we will follow through with enhanced support to Saskatchewan property owners, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Support for the Forestry Industry

Mr. Vermette: — The Minister of Enterprise and Innovation said back in November that Saskatchewan is in the middle of an economic renaissance. But for the forestry workers it's more like the Dark Ages, and the Sask Party and their so-called friends in Ottawa seem to be unaware that not everybody is benefiting from Saskatchewan's economic boom. Mr. Speaker, what is the Sask Party's plan to rebuild the forestry industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As that member will be aware, there are a number of initiatives under way, and some deals in the process of being made. A new arrangement for forestry allotments is in the making.

Mr. Speaker, a rising tide floats all ships, and Saskatchewan led the economy of the country in 2008 with 5.4 per cent growth. We will lead the country again, according to the Conference Board of Canada, with 1.6 per cent growth in 2009. And some banks, Mr. Speaker, are predicting that we will lead the economy again in 2010. Mr. Speaker, this negativity is not helpful.

The minister responsible for forestry has been working very hard and will continue to do so, and the forestry industry will survive in this province and make a great comeback when the prices turn around.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the recent federal budget had millions for the auto workers and for other sectors, but nothing for forestry workers in Saskatchewan. Maybe they figure there was no need, given that the Sask Party has spent less than 5 million out of the 36 million they received in federal community trust money for the forest communities. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what happened to the money?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Enterprise and Innovation.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — I'd like to thank the member for that question, and the fact that he's asking it shows a lack of understanding of the program. All of the money, all of the money that was allotted to the first year of the program has been allotted to various communities — all of those communities, Mr. Speaker, in the forestry, northern part of the province, and all of those communities hurt by the downturn in the forestry industry.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — The Sask Party threw out the previous government's plan for the forestry, Mr. Speaker. Now they have the responsibility to act, but forestry workers in forest communities are suffering while this government does nothing. And their lack of action on the file has apparently convinced Ottawa that it doesn't need to help either.

To the minister: why has the Sask Party's relationship with Ottawa failed to produce any help for the forestry workers? And has Ottawa stopped listening, or did they even bother to ask?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Well I thank the member for that question as well. The Community Development Trust Fund money, \$36.4 million as memory serves, is being spread around the forestry communities in this province as we speak. All of the allotment, as I say, for the first year of the program has been spoken for, and those funds will be disbursed as the communities require.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — The Minister of Energy and Resources clearly believes that Saskatchewan forestry has no future; obviously he's convinced his friends in Ottawa of that too. His advice to the forestry worker has been other opportunities — advice which, for the most people living in the forestry community, amounts to being told to move. Why is the Minister of Energy and Resources telling skilled and experienced forestry workers to move? Doesn't emptying the forest community of these skilled and experienced workers amount to an admission that this government sees no future for the forestry industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. This government sees a bright future for the forestry industry. Right now we're in the worst downturn in the

forestry industry in the history of the province, with the housing market in the United States absolutely collapsing. The recent history is, for the benefit of the member, Mr. Speaker, that eight mills — eight mills — have closed, six of those under the government of the NDP [New Democratic Party]. We are doing something about it. We'll see that turn around before the end of this term.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Support for Agriculture

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, on January 20 this year, the Minister of Agriculture flexed his muscles at the Cattlemen's Corral dinner in Lloydminster, boasting about the power the Sask Party has in Ottawa. And he said, and I quote:

When we go to Ottawa, the whole picture has changed.
We scared the hell out of them down there.

Now I gather Gerry Ritz, the federal Minister of Agriculture, must have missed this speech because it's crystal clear there's no money coming from Ottawa. So to the minister: can the minister tell us what happened to all of his power in Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, let's go back . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I ask members to come to order so that we can hear the response to the question. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's review, in the answer to this question, where the NDP were with the federal governments previously when it come to the ag file, and this isn't just the federal Conservatives but also the federal Liberals. They were confrontational consistently and got nothing out of each government, as they were in place, for our ag sector. Now the member opposite is saying that Mr. Ritz should be coming to the forefront — which I've said on a number of occasions now — and putting dollars in.

But the difference being, Mr. Speaker, is when the NDP came back to Saskatchewan, they did nothing for our producers in Saskatchewan — absolutely nothing. Mr. Speaker, we've come to the table with our 40 per cent that we put on the table at the federal meetings and we have come out with a \$71 million payment for cattle and hogs, something I believe that is appreciated by the industry right across Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, while the minister and his

government use the give-peace-a-chance approach with his buddies in Ottawa, livestock producers back here in Saskatchewan have been waiting and writing and phoning, and waiting and writing and phoning. And when the minister finally provided some assistance to producers, he said he believed Ottawa would provide cash as well. Well if the minister believed all he had to do was to put the provincial share of the program up in order to get Ottawa to do something, why did he refuse to do anything until a few days before this legislature started to sit?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, one year ago the cattle industry and the hog industry were in my office asking for a \$90 million loan. What did we do as a brand new government? We provided \$90 million in a loan to both parts of the industry. Mr. Speaker, that's what they asked for at the time and the member knows that well.

Mr. Speaker, the industry didn't just get in trouble on November 7, 2007. These problems were there for a number of years under that NDP government, and what was their response? Absolutely zero, Mr. Speaker. So for that member to get up is somewhat hypocritical to say now, like crop insurance and all the other parts of the ag file, we're supposed to straighten the mess out in one year. Well, Mr. Speaker, we did respond with a \$90 million loan and now a \$71 million support . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I think it was the Sask Party that told us all that if we elected a Sask Party, that they would improve their relationship with Ottawa. Well, Mr. Speaker . . . How's it working for you? Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I can see this is going to be a very interesting session. The member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear the Sask Party's relationship with Ottawa has been useless for the livestock producers. While other industries in this country are receiving cash from the federal government, the Saskatchewan livestock sector has been told over and over again they'll be getting nothing. To the minister: will he finally admit that as long as the province votes Conservative and delivers 13 out of 14 MPs [Member of Parliament] to Ottawa, there's no reason for Stephen Harper and Gerry Ritz to step up to the plate and help our livestock producers?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I guess I could come back from the meetings in Ottawa and do nothing but blame the federal government, and then sit and not do anything for the producers in this province.

That member should listen to what the producer organizations said on Friday after our announcement of \$71 million. I didn't see one producer organization that didn't like what we announced on Friday. I didn't see one producer organization last January, when we announced the \$90 million loan program, that didn't like the program.

So, Mr. Speaker, she should also take a look at the Agriculture budget for the province of Saskatchewan in 2008. Under the NDP the previous year it was around \$299 million. Today, for 2008, the Ag budget in the province of Saskatchewan is \$444 million. Mr. Speaker, does that sound to that member like we're a do-nothing on this side like their track record shows that they did?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Relationship with Federal Government

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About a month and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, the Premier of our province gave the federal budget, the federal Conservative budget, the grade of D. Now on that particular occasion we were in agreement.

Now as a result of that, the Premier of Saskatchewan then called upon the 13 Conservative MPs from Saskatchewan for an immediate meeting. Now apparently these 13 MPs couldn't come to Saskatchewan; the Premier had to go to Ottawa to meet with them. Now going into the meeting, the Premier said he expected a rocky ride — that's what he expected — when many of us thought it was the MPs that should be getting the rocky ride.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question today to the Premier is: what was the outcome of his meeting with the 13 Conservative MPs? What did that meeting produce for the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I would invite that member there, the member for Riversdale, the Leader of the Opposition . . . And this is an important debate to have and I'm more than happy to engage in this debate. I would invite him to question his seatmate, his deputy leader, the member for Nutana, as to the name that she just hurled across the aisle and determine if she thinks that is appropriate, if it elevates the debate.

We can have the discussion. We can go down the list of things that have been achieved. You can be critical of the record of the government; that's free speech.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And I'll defend the record of the Government of Saskatchewan. As you are critical, I would expect your side to do it professionally; you can expect in kind from this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, a revisionist history from the Minister of Agriculture here today as we regularly get from the Minister of Agriculture. Now we've got a duck and dive from the Premier.

The question is very simple: what did the Premier achieve for the province and the people of Saskatchewan with his meeting with the 13 Conservative MPs in Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I knew that I'd be there that day at the invitation of the Canadian Nuclear Association to give a speech, and so we undertook to meet with the members of the federal caucus and express in that private meeting, as we have done publicly very much the same, that the Government of Saskatchewan was disappointed with the federal budget for any number of reasons, that there are a number of other files we're going to continue to advance.

Agriculture was one of them, but certainly the carbon capture piece is another file we expect to advance. We expect we're going to work hard towards federal dollars into the province with respect to carbon capture. The nuclear association, the nuclear industry is something that's a priority for this government. We expect to be able to work with the federal government and receive some support there as well.

And in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, this government will do its part to ensure, as the Conference Board of Canada has concluded again today, that notwithstanding the actions of any other government, this province will lead the country, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, let's get this straight. We were told by this government that a new relationship with Ottawa would produce significant new benefits for the people of the province of Saskatchewan — more in fact than a fair deal under equalization would produce.

So let's review the record. We've now had a federal budget. The Premier gave it a D grade. Well we agree on that because, as we've heard today in the House, in that federal budget there was nothing of substance to support the forestry sector in our province, absolutely nothing to support the livestock sector, nothing to show that we're going to get a fair deal for our non-renewable resources.

Now the Premier's saying, well no, but the relationship with Ottawa has all been smoothed over and everything is just fine and copacetic. Well I tell you what. I've heard today that the Premier's going to Washington. I hope he has better luck in Washington than he's had in Ottawa.

My question to the Premier is: why has he given up on these important files of the forestry, of the cattle and livestock industry, of a fair return for our resources? Why has he given up on these files?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what we have done on these files as a Government of Saskatchewan is moved to support the livestock industry in this province. We said to the federal government we weren't going to ask them to do anything we weren't prepared to do ourselves. That is decidedly and markedly different from the tactics we saw from them when they were in office. They'd go down and they'd yell at Ottawa and they came back here and did nothing for agriculture, Mr. Speaker. That's not good enough for the industry in this province, and that's why we've moved.

[14:15]

And moreover, Mr. Speaker, I would say this: there are going to be times when we disagree with the federal government. There are going to be other files where we're going to work towards some co-operation and some achievement for the province. That's the kind of approach that got us a quarter billion dollars for a carbon capture project. That's the kind of approach that got us \$100 million for a bridge in Saskatoon. That's the kind of project, Mr. Speaker, that's going to get us further investments in carbon capture. That's the kind of approach that got us funding for child care that that previous government left on the table, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, again we get now revisionist history from the Premier. Not one thin dime has this province received, or the people of this province have received, under this federal government that we would not have received as any other Canadian, Mr. Speaker, as any other Canadian. Meanwhile we're being punished on our resource revenues, unlike any other Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier and his government have been unsuccessful in getting money from this federal government, but in lieu of money they got some advice from the federal government. They got some advice from some of these Conservative MPs. Do you know what the MPs told this government recently? They said they should just go home, they should just go home and do for the people of Saskatchewan what they promised they would do, and that is a substantial reduction in property taxes and a long-term plan. They didn't get the money.

My question now to the Premier is: will he at least take their advice? Will we see in the budget, as we've asked earlier today, will we see something more than a little addition to the NDP rebate program? Will we see something substantive, and will we see a long-term plan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we need to correct the facts. We need to correct the hon. member's facts: \$250 million allocated for carbon capture in the federal budget last; we got 240 million of the 250 — not available to other provinces. The \$100 million for the bridge was competitive — not available to other provinces. The 30-or-so million for child care was available to other provinces but apparently ignored by members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough. We know our job's not finished in terms of attracting federal investment to this province, and we're not done working on behalf of the province. But in 14 months, that's 400-plus-or-so million dollars, and that's 400-plus-or-so million more than that government got in the last five years, Mr. Speaker.

And may I just say this with respect to property tax? The people of the province of Saskatchewan can expect something different from this side versus that side. That side made promises and broke them on education property tax. This side made promises and we will keep them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Order. The Minister of Highways has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Minister of Highways.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would have done this earlier, but the glare of the bright lights affected my vision and I neglected to notice that in the gallery, in the west gallery, two friends of mine from the community of Frontier are here with whom I assume are two of the newcomers to our province from Ontario. I should have caught on when they mentioned the community of Frontier.

Allen Iverson and his wife Monica are visiting us as guests in the legislature today. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like us all to welcome them and their new friends to this Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Agriculture has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the legislature, George Haas who is a councillor from the RM [rural municipality] of Churchbridge, president of my constituency association and long-time friend. And I want to welcome him to his legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I'd like to raise a point of order.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance. State your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the dialogue that went across the floor of this House during the question period, there has been a very clear violation of parliamentary language by the member from Saskatoon Nutana. During the course of the question and answer to the Premier from the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Saskatoon Nutana used a very unparliamentary name that she directed to the Premier.

If need be, I certainly will quote that name because several of our members heard it clearly. It's unparliamentary and I'd ask the member to do the right thing: withdraw and apologize to the Premier.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty withdrawing, but it was directed at another member — and apologizing — but it was directed to a Sask Party member who sent me a note. It was not the Premier.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I thank the Government House Leader for his point of order. I thank the member from Saskatoon Nutana for withdrawing the remarks. But I would also want to remind members, regardless of where a comment was intended to, we need to be mindful of the protocol of the Assembly and respect for other members.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 72

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff that **Bill No. 72 — *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure indeed to rise today and join in the debate on *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act*. This is a very important Act, and I have some comments I want to make specifically around the photo identification and the enhanced driver's licence. I think that's a very important thing.

I do want to take a moment and just say before I get into that, I appreciate the second part of the Bill where we talk about the circumstance where we recognize volunteer firefighters in our smaller communities that allow the municipalities to designate volunteer firefighter and first responder vehicles as emergency vehicles and, after proper training, allow them to drive contrary to the rules of the road as the emergency situations require.

But I really wanted to get up, and I grabbed the opportunity. I think I agree with the minister. This is a historic opportunity we have here today. And in my role as critic of Social Services, one of the issues that I find when I go around talking to people about what are the barriers they have, is around identification.

And so what I would like to do is, I think there's a lot of good things in this Bill and, as we move it forward, I will be asking the minister in committee some questions about how SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] can help out that process around reducing barriers when it comes to ID [identification].

I don't know; I haven't had the chance to talk to the minister. This came up today, so I hope we can have that opportunity. But when I go and I talk to people, it's one of those things that, for example, I haven't had the experience with. I've had my identification, my family has; it seems to be something that works okay for us. But for some people there are barriers, whether it's the cost now that we have for licences, birth certificates, that type of thing. It's becoming more and more of an issue. People raise it right away. But I ask them, is it been an issue?

And today for example, there's a story in the paper. Many of us may have seen it in *The StarPhoenix*, a big, full-page story. It's called, "No place to call home." And one of the people does talk about, for example, and I'll read the quote from *The StarPhoenix*. And I quote, "He used . . ." This is the start of the quote: "He used a friend's address so he could collect welfare, but that ended when his benefactors neglected to phone social services and confirm Pratt was staying with them."

So here's an example, today we hear about identification being

an issue. So as I've talked to people in Alberta — I was there a couple weeks ago at a national conference put on by the Faculty of Social Work called Growing Home. And actually the minister and the member from Yorkton . . . Bob Chartier, Bob Chartier was there doing an open-space forum where you got issues from the participants about what are the challenges they're facing. Identification was an issue.

Here we see homelessness is becoming more and more commonplace throughout our communities. Fact there was a community from Alberta, three high school students — homeless, absolute homeless, living in their car — they had a cellphone, but no fixed address, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So here's an opportunity I think that we can really do something about.

What are some of the barriers when you don't have your proper ID? Of course one of them is to work. And this is where it first was brought to my attention by a community-based organization, the CBO in Saskatoon, that helps vulnerable youth get work. But he phoned me, really frustrated, one day and said, why is it that we do so much to reduce the barriers, red tape for businesses, but we don't do the same for young people? And he asked me, could you possibly raise this in the House.

And I think this is the opportunity. At SGI through their identification processes, helps reduce one of these barriers for young people, for vulnerable young people particularly, enable them to reduce one barrier that they have when it comes to getting work.

Another one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, now it didn't really affect us at the provincial level, but last fall we heard a lot about the new regulations around voting in the federal election. A lot of people did not have the proper ID for that. People just assumed that they could just go in and vote like they had before, or that they just could . . . It's in their community, but they were hit with much stringent, much stronger regulations about the requirements about voting. And one was proper ID. This is a huge issue.

When I was in Ottawa, I was talking to some of the folks and they said they've identified three groups that this is a big issue for — students who are in a new community, whether it's the bigger community, say for example Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, or Moose Jaw, or some of the regional colleges, where they just moved in. Students are disenfranchised.

Another group are seniors, who voted for many, many years, have just come to assume they could go to the local school and they would be able to vote. Now they need ID. What are we doing to help seniors to meet that requirement?

And a third group, and this is — all three groups are very important, but one that we're working particularly hard in Saskatchewan — is attracting new immigrants to our communities. And we need to make sure that ID is not a barrier for them. This is a huge issue, and I think that this is something that SGI could take a lot of leadership on. And so we'll be looking forward in committee to work on this.

A couple of other issues that I think are important, when I was talking to some folks the other day, they raised the issue around

banking. Many of us take it for granted that we can just set up our bank account and we'll be able to work out how we get paid and cash our cheques and all of that type of thing. And of course it's not that easy if you don't have identification. And a driver's licence or photo identification can go a long way to help people who are at risk to solve another issue, another barrier that stops them from being fully engaged in our communities.

And of course health services is also hugely, hugely important. And, Mr. Speaker, this is not, as I said earlier, just an urban issue. It's a rural issue. It's a northern issue. Of course we've heard about the northern elections, both in '08 and '07, where many, many people were challenged about identification.

Now, I do want to say SGI has had a really strong record in terms of its corporate responsibility in our community. And I hope it continues with that because it looks to see how can it solve problems for people in our communities. And I'm thinking about the acquired brain injury work that it's done, and it was recognized last fall for their outstanding contributions to that group. And I think it's very important that, with that same spirit, that they worked with those folks. As well, many of us on New Year's see the ads around taking free buses — very important. And we see their support in the communities — whether it's at a sporting event, a cultural event — SGI has always been there as a good corporate citizen.

So I ask them, and I'm asking the minister that these will be questions that I'll be bringing forward into committee because I think it is so important that we take a look at what are the barriers that those who are less fortunate, who are more vulnerable than many of us in our communities. And I don't know the answers. I don't know how many people are affected by the ID issue. But I think if there's some that we can help, why don't we do this? And I know that it's a good, strong corporation that can tackle these kind of problems.

[14:30]

I know as well this minister is also bringing forward, and we'll be talking more about another Bill, the vital statistics Bill, now that it seems to be hooking up with the Information Services Corporation, ISC. Another opportunity for us to be leaders in our country around making sure that everyone has proper ID and there are not barriers to having ID, such as cost, or those very first pieces of ID that so many of us take for granted — the birth certificate and your driver's licence. Once you seem to get those, other things fall into place. But if you don't have those basic building blocks of proper identification, you have some real challenges.

I wasn't aware of this. I don't know if the minister was aware of this. I don't know if the government's been aware of this. But I think it's one that we can all step up to the plate and say, let's be all a little helpful here.

I know, for example — the Minister of Corrections, I don't know if he has an opinion on this — but interestingly I've talked to some people in parole. At the food bank in Saskatoon somebody was getting some food, and they had to give their place of residence or ID. He said, well I'm just out of jail. They had no ID. How can that be, coming out of jail . . . [inaudible

interjection] . . . Well, there you go. We'll find out more as we go.

But I think this is very, very important . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . There you go. And I appreciate the help. But I think this is very important. It cuts across so many, so many ministries over there. It cuts across Corrections, Public Safety; it talks about Finance in terms of income tax, making sure people get to work; Labour, making sure people are at work and they have the correct identification; Social Services; and of course SGI.

And I know there are concerns we have. And it's written in the Act, and I think it's a well-written Act. They talk about fraud, that type of thing. You have to be very careful about this, and I appreciate that there are some measures. The minister has talked about a little card they get. But I think, as we try to get people into our communities, they need to have, as much as they can have, identification like the rest of us so they don't cause more questions than answers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is an interesting, exciting piece of legislation. Of course at the global perspective, now that we're talking about the border regulations, moving into how we can cross into the United States as seamlessly as possible, that's very important. The United States is a good friend of ours in so many ways, and we travel freely and we want to keep that that way.

Business relations, family relations and just good friends down there. I know we travel down there as a legislature and many of us will be going down there this summer. We value that relationship. So on that hand, I think this is a very good piece of legislation.

But I do ask the minister when we get into committee to be prepared to talk about . . . And if his officials are listening or reading *Hansard* today, I will be asking questions in the committee, specifically about barriers for people to make sure everyone has proper ID.

And I know there are challenges. But as I said earlier, SGI has been a good corporate citizen and has risen to challenges before. And they may already have some of the solutions and it's a matter of a public awareness campaign. But I have a funny feeling it's more complicated and it's getting more complicated as we go further down the road here.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I know others want to join in that debate, so I think I'll adjourn, right? Thank you. I'll take my seat now.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to speak in support of Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008*. Mr. Speaker, this Bill does two very, very important things.

The first change puts in place an enhanced driver's licence which will help expedite movement back and forth of Saskatchewan citizens across the US [United States], into the

United States through both land and water crossings, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's extremely important.

For many Canadians, we visit and have the opportunity to visit our neighbours to the south on a regular basis. Much of our commerce and activities between the two countries is carried out virtually on a daily basis between many Saskatchewan citizens. So any ability to enhance and make that travel and interaction between our two countries more easily attainable, more speedy access, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course would be seen as beneficial by Saskatchewan residents.

I believe Saskatchewan will look upon this particular change with a great deal of favour. And as the United States is our largest trading partner, many of our citizens, as part of their jobs, travel to the United States on many, many occasions throughout the year. And every opportunity you have to cross the border, Mr. Speaker, and anything you can do to make that transition and transaction across the border more easily accessible, more speedily carried out, Mr. Speaker, helps those individuals — particularly those who would be making those trips back and forth on a regular basis.

Now, Mr. Speaker, any time that you can enhance identification for citizens in general is a good thing, Mr. Speaker, because many of our Saskatchewan citizens need to have picture identification for many, many of their activities within the province, Mr. Speaker. Citizens on a daily basis are required to show identification and any enhancement to that identification, Mr. Speaker, that makes it more clear that the individual is in fact who they say they are helps in many ways.

It helps our law enforcement officers throughout the province to ensure that the person they're dealing with is exactly who they say they are, Mr. Speaker. It helps many businesses who perhaps would be taking a cheque from somebody or something to actually ensure that the person that they're taking a cheque from is the person that they are actually speaking to, Mr. Speaker. So any enhanced identification processes would be seen as beneficial by the majority of Saskatchewan citizens, Mr. Speaker.

The issue of cross border, crossing the border into the United States, Mr. Speaker, whether it be by land or sea, is one that is still going to take some time to work on. Ideally our two countries for many, many years have had basically a seamless system which we could cross without having to have identification of a nature that would ensure exactly who the individual was.

But after the events that occurred in 2001, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the world became a different place, and the security of individual countries became more important. And as a result of that, enhanced security between our two countries became necessary. They needed to . . . The United States very clearly wanted to ensure that those passing into their country in fact were Canadian citizens and were who they said they were, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And vice versa, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian government also wanted to ensure that we had enhanced security as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because September 11, 2001, Mr. Speaker, made a difference in this world. It made a significant difference.

Mr. Speaker, the second change to this particular legislation deals with the ability of emergency responders to drive with lights and sirens, Mr. Speaker, after appropriate training, in response to emergencies within their communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a large portion of the citizens of our province rely on volunteers, and rely on part-time responders responding to many types of emergencies in their communities. I'm not sure that everyone would be aware that in most of our rural communities — in fact, 95 per cent of the communities in this province — their fire departments are entirely volunteer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and those citizens provide for those volunteers.

And I would actually go as far as to say those heroes in those communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, provide a service for the people of our province that puts their lives at risk at times in order to respond to help others in their time of need, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so those citizens need our co-operation in responding to those emergencies in as timely a manner as possible. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the volunteers in our communities that respond either to medical emergencies or to fires are themselves going above and beyond to respond to the needs and to help others in our communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And these people often live miles from where they're responding to. You may have situations where you have a volunteer fire department that has, say, 10 people in the community, Mr. Speaker. The volunteers may, by virtue of their work, be located in a number of . . . may work in opposite sides of the community; in fact, may be out of town doing their job some distance from the community. Or the fire they're responding to may be some distance from the community in which the volunteer fire department in fact houses their equipment. And, Mr. Speaker, these people would be notified via cell phone or other means of communication that we have an emergency to respond to and they may have some distance to travel.

And the fact that we're going to be able to provide them with additional training and the ability to use lights and sirens to get to those emergencies quicker can result in saving lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It'll save lives in our communities. It'll save property. But the net result is, Mr. Speaker, we're all better off. We're all better off as a result of having those responders get to those emergencies sooner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many people may not understand, but in the situation of a severe auto accident, Mr. Speaker, that first hour and the treatment that individual gets in that first hour often makes a difference between whether that individual will live or die if he has serious injuries, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So anything that we can do to encourage and help those volunteers and those individuals to be able to reach the scene of the emergency sooner, Mr. Deputy Speaker, helps those individuals in need and gives them a greater chance of full recovery, Mr. Speaker, in the event of a medical emergency.

Mr. Speaker, things like heart attacks and strokes and other things don't occur just in hospitals or in cities or for that matter in small towns, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They happen on farms. They happen on acreages. They happen on cottages at the lake,

Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's these volunteers that respond to those emergencies in these communities.

Those first responders, Mr. Speaker, provide needed and important initial medical treatment to help individuals survive after a heart attack or a stroke, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So anything we do to help to get those individuals to the scene of that emergency sooner helps that individual, Mr. Speaker, and helps our province to be an even better place for our citizens to live, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So their changes are very, very important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our volunteer fire departments throughout the province provide services to the citizens of this province in every small community virtually in this province. And it's those volunteers that ensure that if we have a fire in our community that not only is the fire put out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but they stop further damage to other homes that may be adjacent to the house that's on fire, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or business. But they also respond to fires on farms and cottages and on acreages not in communities throughout the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In this province the majority of firefighters are volunteers. In this province, because of the geographical distribution of the population, the majority of people who respond to fires and work on behalf of the citizens of this province are volunteers. So this legislation takes a step to ensure that those individuals can reach those emergencies sooner and quicker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sure you are aware that in our small communities across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, getting to the scene of a fire when you have to first leave work, and then get to the fire hall and get the equipment there takes time.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know that the first matter of minutes in getting to the scene of a fire can make a significant difference to the amount of damage that's done; and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it even makes a greater difference if there are citizens who need help to exit their homes or need help to exit their business, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So the sooner that we get the volunteer firefighters on the scene of that emergency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the better off the citizens of that community are.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a difficult task in rural communities, as it is in smaller urban areas, to get volunteers because being a volunteer firefighter requires regular training; it requires regular exercises in order to ensure that you are up to date with all the various equipment and techniques that are out there in order to fight the fires in the best interest and most efficient way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But these people give of their time freely.

They give of their time to practice on a weekly basis or biweekly basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to be there for their fellow citizens in their community and surrounding area, if and when they need them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[14:45]

And these people — who give of their own time to practice, give of their own time to train and brush up on techniques to fight fires, Mr. Deputy Speaker — came to this Assembly

asking for support, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and able to get to those emergencies quicker. And I'm proud to say that we support that. We support the members of the government who are supporting this legislation as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation deals with getting to fires more quickly. But I think we have to go a step further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have to provide funding and training — greater training — more in-detail training for volunteer firefighters in our province.

I had the opportunity to visit with volunteer firefighters in a number of communities during my tenure in this legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and talk to them about their needs. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were many needs identified by communities and volunteer firefighters across the province, not the least of is the ability to get some funding in order to enhance equipment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that they have the very best equipment. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that equipment is needed to both save lives in these communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but also to protect firefighters.

As an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is equipment out there today that actually can tell you whether or not there is a fire beyond a door, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether there is a heat . . . where the concentration of heat is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well if every firefighter had, if every fire department — pardon me, volunteer fire department — had that type of equipment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, firefighters would be at less risk fighting a structure fire in their community, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But more importantly it would be a great enhancement in the ability of volunteer firefighters and volunteer fire departments to help individuals who may be stuck in the house, Mr. Speaker, who cannot exit the house or business because of the fire. It would help them be able to locate and understand where the fire was and how to get to them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that type of equipment isn't available in all rural fire departments, Mr. Speaker, because it's very costly equipment.

So we need to go a step further, Mr. Speaker, to help rural fire departments in order to allow them to provide the best possible quality service to the citizens of our communities, Mr. Speaker, and at the same time, ensure that they, in carrying out their own duties, Mr. Speaker, are put in the actual absolutely safest possible environment in order to perform those duties, Mr. Speaker. So we need to provide them with the right tools, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, many of our ambulance services throughout the province are also volunteer, and many of our communities are serviced by volunteer ambulance services. And those individuals have to leave employment often to respond to a central area to pick up the ambulance to respond to that medical emergency. So this Bill also gives them the ability to use lights and sirens and to drive outside the rules of the road, Mr. Speaker, in order to get to those emergencies as quick as possible. And, Mr. Speaker, as I spoke earlier, that first hour in the medical emergency makes a huge difference in the survival of somebody who has a serious medical problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this helps rural Saskatchewan, so this helps all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because our province

isn't just two cities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's hundreds of small communities and thousands of citizens across this province who deserve to have the best possible emergency services that can be provided, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a good first step, but we need to go further, enhancing emergency medical services and volunteer firefighting in our province. We need to be willing to take the step to review the level of services in our communities across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And beyond the review, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to take steps to improve those services.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there was a committee some time ago set up that was looking at this very issue within then one of the government departments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it was looking at how we can enhance protection services, how we can enhance fire services in our rural communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it doesn't matter if the person's from Regina or Saskatoon or from Frontier or Climax, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If they're injured and they're in a rollover on the side of the road, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to respond as timely as we can. We need to respond with the best possible skills and abilities to ensure that individual's looked after in the best possible way.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this helps; this particular Bill helps because it will assist in getting people to the scene of those accidents quicker, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But there is much yet that can be done. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of our rural volunteers who give of themselves for their neighbours and their friends and for all of us in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Because that person lying on the side of the road might not be their neighbour or friend, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It could be me, it could be any of my colleagues, or it could be any other citizen from another area of the province. We could not know the people who are responding but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they still respond. They still look after that emergency and they still do their very best to help the people of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we all owe them a thank you. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their willingness to do that for us. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we provide them better tools, better training, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, maybe even some funding, maybe even some funding while they're performing those skills, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will not only continue to do what they're doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but maybe we can attract more people, so more people in our communities actually do this.

Mr. Speaker, in this province, one of the things we need to provide for volunteer firefighters, as I said earlier, is additional training. One of the ways we could do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is in this province have a fire training college, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a concept, it's a concept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the professional firefighters in our province want. I can assure you that volunteer firefighters in this province want it as well.

In my tenure in this legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the time and opportunity to meet with a number of volunteer fire departments, and they would like that opportunity to enhance

fire training, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They would like the opportunity to have better skills, to ensure when they're responding, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they have the best opportunity to provide for their friends and neighbours, but also, also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they would like to have that training so when they go to those emergency situations, they know exactly what they should do in each situation and what they do puts a minimal risk to themselves because they've been trained to deal with it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a fire college would give an opportunity for volunteer firefighters in this province to get enhanced training, to improve their skills, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and provide better services then to the people of our province, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this could be accomplished in a number of ways. It doesn't necessarily have to be a hugely costly initiative, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but nothing, nothing is free. It would require some injection of funds, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that would be a very important injection of funds to help the rural communities of our province, Mr. Speaker, better protect their property, better protect their friends and neighbours, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the people from their communities. But most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would show that we cared about the service that they were providing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that we understood what their needs were.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated, this piece of legislation goes one very small step to improving the well-being of citizens in our communities by encouraging and allowing a greater and more expedient response time. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can do more, and we should and we must do more. Firefighters who volunteer in our communities need to know that we understand what their needs are and that we want to help them to improve their training and improve their ability to respond to emergencies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that, unfortunately, is time sensitive. Parts of it are going to be implemented or should be implemented as early as April of this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So we're going to need to take the opportunity to speak to this Bill at length today. It may be all that we actually get a chance to speak to today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we need to ensure that we speak at length to this Bill and that we fully explain to the citizens of this province what we're doing and what we're not yet doing, and we need yet to do to help those rural fire departments and those rural emergency responders to in fact carry out their jobs in their communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, many of these people . . . I refer to them as jobs, but many of these people work for nothing. This is all volunteer people in many communities, and they volunteer their time for their neighbours and friends because they believe that helping one another is what our Saskatchewan character is all about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We believe, as part of our makeup, that helping one another is very, very important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those who live in communities that rely on volunteer firefighters and emergency responders, they understand what they do. But it's very, very important that we discuss at length the important nature of this particular legislation.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this, as I indicated earlier, is but a small step, but it's an important first step in recognizing the importance of these individuals to our communities and to the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, those who respond to these emergencies may in some cases actually be professional paid individuals as well, Mr. Speaker, but who are off duty. And when additional help is needed, they can also then use the changes and provisions that are provided in this legislation to respond in a more timely manner.

As you're well aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in many of our communities the policing situation is such that there are very few police officers on duty at any given time in a rural area. In fact there may be only one police officer on duty in a rural area at times during the 24-hour period of a day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But if an emergency were to come up, they're required to have a response of more than one individual. Many of those responding are coming from home and they're coming from off duty. And they may not have with them a vehicle at their home. They may in some cases, but they may not. But this would also allow those individuals to use the lights and sirens in their own private vehicles in an attempt to respond to that emergency, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we all appreciate that, and we all know that they're doing this without thinking about their own well-being, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but thinking about the well-being of the community, their neighbours, their friends, and those citizens of our province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation, although not quite as comprehensive as we would have liked, does provide an initial first step and will in fact help enhance the well-being of the citizens of our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But it doesn't replace the other things. I indicated earlier we need training; we need new equipment. We need to provide these volunteers with, as an example, extrication equipment. In some communities out there, the extrication equipment . . . If there is a motor vehicle accident and somebody has to be extricated from the vehicle and you have to have a jaws of life or equipment to cut an individual from a vehicle, you could be as far away as an hour or more from that equipment in our province today. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's shameful. That's absolutely shameful.

And I hear a member opposite saying it's because we closed hospitals. Well I have to tell the member opposite, we don't keep extrication equipment in hospitals, Mr. Deputy Speaker. No, they're kept at volunteer fire departments — those who can afford to buy it, Mr. Deputy Speaker — in some cases with ambulance services and first responders, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But no, we don't keep that equipment at hospitals, Mr. Speaker. And I hope the member opposite . . . You know I've helped him to learn something about his community and others. We don't keep extrication equipment at hospitals.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this Bill does a very good first step but it doesn't go all the way. It could provide more training, Mr. Speaker. It could provide funding, Mr. Speaker. It could provide funding to enhance extrication equipment in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It could do a number of things that needs to be done, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, members opposite are finally paying attention. They're liking what they're hearing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so I hope that we can expect at budget time, Mr. Speaker, some money to enhance the services in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, emergency responder services in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because it is important to do so.

If we can enhance emergency response in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, whether it be fire response, whether it be emergency medical response, Mr. Speaker, or for that matter be it police response, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is good for our communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's good for the people of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have to compare whether or not the actual costs of providing additional services, Mr. Speaker . . . Is that too much, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Is that too much? To provide a few thousand dollars, a few hundred thousand dollars of enhanced equipment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that, is that worth saving lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And we say it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And particularly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today when we have a government that is flush in money, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they can provide some enhanced rural services, Mr. Speaker, they can provide better emergency services in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[15:00]

And, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen on many, many other occasions, they can move money forward if they want, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, Mr. Speaker. So if they wanted to improve rural services, Mr. Speaker, if they wanted to improve emergency services in rural communities, they could do so, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are many, many opportunities this government can take to show that they support rural fire departments, rural emergency services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we hope that they'll take those opportunities in the upcoming budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is listening, and I hope he is paying attention to the fact that with just a few hundred thousand dollars he could improve, improve the extrication capabilities of rural fire departments in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He could improve the safety for firefighters in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Finance minister I hope is paying attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is an important issue in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we on this side support this Bill. I want to be very clear. We support this Bill but we would like to see the government go further, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We'd like to see them enhance those services. We'd like to see them provide additional support to our rural emergency and fire services, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we haven't yet seen any indication of that from the government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Rural communities need our help. Rural communities want us to pay attention to what their needs are, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker we're taking this opportunity to let

the government know that there are still needs out there in our emergency services in rural communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, children in our communities are important, regardless if they live in large urban areas or they live in small areas or small communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or they live on the farm, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we have to be prepared to respond to those emergencies regardless where they are. And anything we can do to improve those services, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an improvement, is an improvement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, several of my colleagues want to speak to this Bill, so at this time I'm going to take my seat and allow one of my colleagues to continue this discussion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wanted to also rise today to take the opportunity to participate in the issue of the Bill being forward in the House today.

I was looking through the Bill itself, and I wanted to make sure that as a current sitting MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], that we want to do all we can to support the volunteer firefighters that are out there — those that are professionally paid and those that volunteer, as my colleague said, from Regina Dewdney, volunteer in rural parts of Saskatchewan and certainly in the smaller communities throughout our land. And I want to also add, from the northern perspective, that many northern communities, First Nations and Métis communities, also have the incredible services and support of the volunteer firefighters and the different brigades that are out there.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, I want to take this opportunity to join him in recognizing some of the work that the volunteer fire brigades do throughout the North. I applaud them; I congratulate them; and I certainly want to support them in every capacity that I have as an MLA. Certainly whether it's everything from responding to community fires — whether it's grass fires or home fires — certainly they're always there. Whether it's some of the coordination through the Emergency Measures Organization that many local communities have as their plan for emergency measures, the fire brigades are always there in leading and volunteering and helping.

Whether to do with car wrecks along the highway, we find our volunteer fire brigades always out there assisting the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], assisting in forest fire work when there's threats to the northern communities, any problems with SaskPower lines in terms of them creating fires within the vicinity of communities — these are some of the work that the volunteer fire brigades have undertaken in northern Saskatchewan.

So I wanted to certainly add my voice to those members in the Assembly that are wishing to take the opportunity through this Bill to not only to support what the Bill intends to do but to recognize the volunteer fire brigades in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be noted that northern

Saskatchewan, as we know, is much further away from many services that we enjoy in southern Saskatchewan. So doing the work in many of these northern communities — whether it's the remote communities of Stony Rapids, Uranium City; whether it's the First Nations community of Black Lake; and whether it's Wollaston Post or any of the communities out there — that are having difficulty not only training the local fire brigade but making sure they have proper equipment, I just want to point out, from our perspective as an opposition party within this Assembly, that we certainly hear some of their issues. We share some of their concerns, and above all else, we certainly respect their contribution and want to share that very clearly and very openly today.

The primary focus of the Bill today is to actually assist the volunteer firefighters and the brigades that are out there throughout northern Saskatchewan and southern Saskatchewan, by ensuring simple matters of not being ticketed for going through a red light or a stop sign. And granted there aren't very many red lights in northern Saskatchewan. There are many, many stop signs. And obviously safety is paramount to not only the firefighters but the people they're trying to help. So eliminating some of the silly rules that may have existed for a number of years and a number of different governments, I think is also very important to recognize.

I want to point out that certainly this party when they were in government, they done a great amount of work. Some of the work that they did was through the fire brigade and the firemen's association, including expanding some of the coverage through the occupational health and safety rules to make sure that some of the cancers that they get as a result of responding to certain fires and certain situations — chemical fires and so on and so forth — that they're more inclusive and that they're included in some of the death benefits and some of the long-term illness benefits. And those are some of the hard work and sort of the hard slugging that the previous government certainly undertook with the professional firefighters.

We also spoke about the need for better equipment, Mr. Deputy Chair. I think better equipment is one of the things that folks talked about when we were in government and we certainly worked to that end. Whether it was better training, more comprehensive training for the fire brigades — not only the professional, city-based fire brigades, but recognizing rural and northern Saskatchewan — training was certainly a key issue and we certainly responded. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how we responded was we afforded more dollars to the municipality and we worked closely with the different fire brigades.

We also wanted to make sure that throughout our tenure as the government that we recognized those of the volunteer fire brigades that gave so much, not only their health and time away from their family, but time to train, time to become aware of more what type of equipment out there, and also to lobby the governments for a number of change I spoke of earlier. Those were some of the things that I think those that participated in the volunteer fire brigades or the professional fire brigade, they certainly contributed there again. So not only did they have to hazard different chemical fires and house fires and dangers to their health, but time away from their family; they also had to lobby the province and the government to make a bunch of changes which really helped and certainly benefited many of

the firefighters.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would point out that one of the important things of this particular Bill that I wanted to take the opportunity to do today was to really, quite frankly, recognize some of their work. And the Bill gave us a small window of opportunity to talk about the recent change.

And I would ask the many people out there, listening out there, if you contrast that to what we accomplished when we were in government, working with the professional firefighters and the volunteer fire brigade, to this most recent effort by the Sask Party to not have tickets to those firefighters that may go through a red light or a stop sign, well we applaud that minor effort — and it is a minor effort. But there's much more that could be done to assist the volunteer firefighters and the professional firefighters in our province. And I wanted to take the opportunity to say the Bill, through this small measure, is great, but if you compare that to what was done when we were in government, it's a very small, insignificant part of a major amount of commitment required with our professional firefighters and volunteer fire brigade members that are out there.

Northern Saskatchewan's perspective, as you are aware, there's been many challenges in trying to man the different volunteer fire brigades in many of these northern, remote communities. Training is always really important. You have to know what equipment's available. You have to know how to use it. You've got to be able to respond quickly, because many times, you know, there's isolation factors in making sure that you have the proper equipment and you have the proper levels of some of the fluid that are required in some of this equipment, that your fire brigade hall is heated, the equipment is warm, and the truck is able to be started easily — like all of these different challenges in northern Saskatchewan.

Many of our fire brigade members have rose above and beyond the challenges and certainly have made the protection of people and property in our communities their effort and their role and their responsibility. And that's a lot to ask for volunteer firefighters. And certainly, as many of my colleagues are doing, they are taking the opportunity through this small step that the Saskatchewan Party has unveiled as their professional firefighters strategy, we want to stand up and say, yes, okay; that's great. We applaud this particular effort. But we need to do more to support them through training dollars and to increase their ability to upgrade some of their equipment and to also make sure that they're respected, and in the event that they gave their health or their lives, in many instances, that their families are properly cared for. And that's not much to ask, Mr. Speaker — not much at all.

So I want to take the opportunity to basically get up and say today that I'm very proud of the fire brigades, volunteer fire brigades in northern Saskatchewan. They applaud every effort there is to improve the conditions that they volunteer under, and certainly to point out to the rest of the community and to the province that volunteer fire brigades in northern Saskatchewan are sometimes not appreciated, but they're held in high regard by many people.

And we ought to take every measure we can to appreciate the

firefighters and the fire brigade members that are out there because, as I alluded to earlier, they respond to a number of issues. And sometimes, whether it's the fire brigade or the EMT [emergency medical technician] folks that we have in northern Saskatchewan, that they are the ones that are at the place of crisis or a place of an accident first, and it's so very important that at the very least the community see that kind of response by very valuable people in our northern communities.

Again they need a lot of help in terms of being recognized. They need a lot of help in terms of being trained. They need a lot of help to make sure that they have the proper equipment. But the one thing we wanted to do today as a result of this legislation is to give time to recognize them, to recognize their contribution, and to thank them for their contribution. And to make sure that absolutely everybody in this Assembly and throughout Saskatchewan always turn, and when they see a volunteer fire brigade member, thank them for their contribution, thank them for their effort in trying to convince government to change various rules that will help them, as is the case of this Bill today. And more so is to look at them as somebody that's really building up their community and helping protect their community at great peril to their health and certainly at the cost of spending time with their family — and really a lot of responsibility with very, very little protection on their part.

So, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to stand up and to recognize the volunteer fire brigades that are out there, to support this small step — because it is a step forward — and to highlight the fact that many, many, many more volunteer fire brigades need much more support and a wide variety of programs and funding support to become a very effective protector of our homes, of our family, and more so of our communities. So I think it's something that we ought to take the time to recognize.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank the members for allowing me the opportunity to express my gratitude to the volunteer fire brigades in northern Saskatchewan, encourage them to continue working hard and building up their fire brigade centres, and to let them know that we sincerely do appreciate and recognize their contribution to our northern communities. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it once again is truly a pleasure to enter into debate on this particular Bill, Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment, 2008*.

[15:15]

As we note, Mr. Speaker, we look closely at this Bill, that it's obviously we see that it has really two parts of both being distinct and separate. But, Mr. Speaker, we also recognize the value that exists within the changes that are being made here. They are quality changes and one that I would . . . And I don't think anybody has any issue with — certainly not on this side of the House — with the quality of changes, the intent of the Bill, and I believe that we need to recognize that as we move forward.

The first part of the Bill is the enhanced driver's licence aspect and it's the first proposed amendment that provides Saskatchewan residents with an alternative identification source to a passport for the US land and water border crossings. The amendment will allow SGI or Saskatchewan Government Insurance to provide qualified Canadian citizens who are residents in Saskatchewan with the alternative form of an acceptable identification to the United States land and water border crossings in the form of an enhanced driver's licence or an enhanced photo ID card.

So that means, Mr. Speaker, even for those people who perhaps for one reason or another don't have a driver's licence, but they have no need for a driver's licence or whatever the circumstances might be, they will still be able to obtain an enhanced photo ID card that will be acceptable by the US customs officers when they are entering into, Canadian citizens, Saskatchewan citizens are entering into the US either through a land port or a water port. And this will hopefully provide a comfort on a number of different fronts.

As we know, the United States has been tightening up their borders and been tightening up the ability, I guess you would say, for entrance into the US to the point where they have now, if you are flying into the United States, the only identification they will accept is a passport. So far in Canada here we've been able to enter into the US with a photo ID of some type, two or three pieces of ID that would . . . [inaudible] . . . that would certainly be able to identify who we are, and that's been acceptable.

But it is in, I believe it's June 1, 2009, the United States is going to require that those entering into its country through its borders, whether they be by air or by land or by port, to do so with only with a passport. But I believe there is the opportunity and an understanding that an enhanced driver's licence containing the necessary information for the US customs officers will be also accepted to the entry into the US.

So with this in mind, I'm pleased to see that SGI is taking the initiative and that this government is joining with other governments in Canada to provide its citizenship with that enhanced driver's licence, or at least an enhanced photo identification card.

The enhanced driver's licence and the enhanced photo identification cards are a volunteer option for Saskatchewan residents to be purchased through SGI. They do not replace the requirements of having a passport to cross the border by air. I think that's very important to remember and realize that if you're travelling by air into the United States, you will still only have access if you have a passport. The enhanced photo ID identification card or the enhanced driver's licence will not be acceptable if you are travelling by air.

However they do provide the alternative for Saskatchewan residents who do not wish to have a passport or even want to perhaps go through the expense of getting a passport, or perhaps even the process of applying for and receiving a passport. They may feel that . . . Saskatchewan citizens may feel that for many, many years now they have had the access to the United States and able to enter into the United States with simply a photo ID and a driver's licence and their health card. And they'll still be

able to enjoy that luxury; they don't have to go to a passport. If they wish to enter the United States either through a land port or a seaport, they'll be able do so with their enhanced driver's licence and their enhanced photo ID card.

So I think this is something that is going to be welcomed by Saskatchewan people. From my conversations with various groups across the province and various occasions over the last six months or so — certainly since our fall sitting and this Act came forward — I certainly found a lot of support for it out there, and I didn't find any resistance. So I think it's something that will be warmly welcomed by Saskatchewan people.

The second part of this Bill, which has been covered in much greater detail by my colleague and done an excellent job of it . . . And that's one thing, Mr. Speaker, I have learned through experience of sharing — not only the opportunity in the House here to speak, but on occasions sharing the platform with my colleague, the member from Regina Dewdney, on various organizations and various occasions — that I've learned that if you make the mistake of speaking after my colleague from Regina Dewdney, usually he leaves you very little to say, and very little time to say it in. But he did an excellent job here, and I want to thank him for expounding upon the virtues of the second part of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the second proposed amendment deals with allowing municipalities to designate vehicles owned by volunteer firefighters and first responders as emergency vehicles. The amendment will allow Saskatchewan municipalities to designate volunteer firefighters and first responders to operate their vehicle as emergency vehicles when responding to emergency situations. This will include using flashing red lights, sirens, and driving contrary to the rules of the road if, Mr. Speaker, it is done in a safe manner.

And I think that's very important because we have a lot of volunteers in our province, in fact in a lot of the firefighters and first responders. A lot of the safety aspects of our communities out there is done by our volunteers. And we need to recognize that fact and we need to be able to assist them in doing their job. I mean, they're doing this on a volunteer basis. They could be doing other things, I'm sure. But they feel that closeness; they feel that need to give back to their communities and they participate in that way. And I think this is just one small way that we can assist them in accomplishing their job.

In a lot of cases, perhaps the ability for them to use the red lights and use the sirens and not have to stop at stop signs and drive on occasion — in a safe manner — but contrary to the normal rules of the road, could even save somebody's life. And I think that's worth the expenditure of changing some rules here.

To ensure the public safety, as well as their own safety, all volunteers, Mr. Speaker, will be required to complete an emergency defensive driving training before receiving this designation. Once designated, these volunteers will be recognized as being on the job as soon as they leave their home in responding to an emergency situation. So I think these changes are long overdue. I think they're very much welcomed by the volunteer community across this great province and I'm pleased to see that they will be contained in this Bill.

This amendment shows us to recognize the importance of volunteer firefighters and first responders in our province. These services are volunteers, Mr. Speaker, provided by some 6,000 of them across Saskatchewan. They provide a service that is invaluable, Mr. Speaker, since they are the best known in their community. They are the best known for their specific needs.

Municipal leaders will be allowed to authorize this designation. This includes making sure that the vehicles are mechanically fit and have proper lights and sirens, and they also ensure that these volunteers are adequately trained. So I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that you can find much resistance to the intent of this Bill on this side of the House.

I think if you visit across Saskatchewan and you ask Saskatchewan people, particularly the community leaders in our smaller communities, as to the value of this Bill, I think they will recognize that it is very worthwhile.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude my remarks on Bill 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act*, and move this Bill to committee.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Crown Corporations that Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety 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: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this be moved to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — Bill No. 72 has been moved to the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Bill No. 63

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 63 — *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act, 2008*** 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 to speak to second reading here on Bill No. 63, *An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act*.

As general statements, Mr. Speaker, I guess at least, at least we could call this Bill housekeeping and at most we could call it a modernization that needs to occur on the board side, in the structural matter in how our board functions or how our boards function. Changes are certainly necessary to increase the size of the board, to enhance the ability of the board to respond to the community's needs. So this is important, something that we support, Mr. Speaker, but we'd certainly argue that this is at best modernization, and a bit of a missed opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

As we open up this Bill and we put forward, you know, a very slim submission and change to this Bill, we had a whole other opportunity that's been missed here. And it's important to, when looking at this, to highlight I guess the context around the whole issue of housing.

We've had a government change in the province and we had an economy that was in full stride, that was pumping on all cylinders, Mr. Speaker, with all the demands that an economy of that nature has. High, high increasing demand on housing within our province — and this isn't something just within our urban centres of Regina and Saskatoon. It's our smaller urban centres. It's our towns.

We've seen a significant reduction in the rental supply, Mr. Speaker, in this province, and when we see that through condo conversions and through rental conversions . . . And this is a challenge for Saskatchewan people. This is a challenge for families who are trying to locate and to make their way, trying to eke out a good existence for themselves. We need to look at the context of the huge rent increases that have occurred across our province, and again not isolated to any one or two or three communities, but right across Saskatchewan in different locations. And certainly this change doesn't address that in any way.

It's important for us to be aware that, as a province with such a strong economy, that we've been leading the nation in inflation as well, Mr. Speaker. And a big part of why we've been leading the nation in inflation is the housing side of things, Mr. Speaker. The housing costs have really increased in our province and it's placing large pressures on many, many people. In not addressing some of the housing circumstances, we further challenge our labour market needs. And we know, chatting with business people and businesses, that there's such a demand for labour and for workers and for professionals. And to fill those gaps, it's really important that we can provide housing to those individuals.

Housing as a whole has such a broader function within society and it's so important to individuals. And if you look at young families — any family — one of the greatest indicators of one's socio-economic standing as an adult is sort of where they were born into. I think we should strive as a province, Mr. Speaker, to provide a province and a region that provides more vertical movement, Mr. Speaker, more opportunities to rise out of circumstances of poverty, and possibly lesser opportunities from the educational side and also from the labour opportunities.

Adequate housing and how it relates to educational achievement for our students . . . I mean, we know that if our

stomach is not fed, it's awfully difficult to learn in the classroom. The same could be said, Mr. Speaker, if housing isn't taken care of. And there's many children, many families for no fault of their own that are having many stresses placed upon them in this manner. And certainly if we look at accessibility of education, and our skills- and knowledge-based economy, and how we're going to need to embrace that accessibility and to engage our young people with educational opportunities, housing becomes a real big part of that. So it's when we're looking at housing accessibility, you know, it's important. We're looking at tuition and these different roles that government plays, but it's also really important to look at the role housing plays.

[15:30]

It's important, Mr. Speaker, as I say, when we're looking in that context that we've also had a year of record surpluses and record revenues as a government. The fiscal capacity to address some of these challenges . . . And I don't contend that they're exactly simple or easy, Mr. Speaker, but we need to make progress and it needs to start with investment.

But specifically to Bill 63, *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act*, I think it's important to note that Saskatchewan's housing authorities have long provided this province and our communities an invaluable service in making sure that individuals have the ability to obtain housing and to have adequate housing. They're still an incredibly important mechanism to provide that housing in our communities — the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation itself so important in making this happen.

So I guess, you know, I'd contend that although this modernization that we're seeing on the board side needs to happen, that it also might seem that we have a government wanting to appear to be responding quickly to recommendations from the task force on affordable housing earlier this year, Mr. Speaker. But by responding with this one amendment to this important Act, to this critical issue, they're really choosing some pretty low-hanging fruit, Mr. Speaker, to go after a very big issue and a really important issue, if we as a province are really going to benefit and grow and progress as we move forward.

So I would certainly, I guess, challenge the government or task the government with looking at some of the other recommendations, both from within that affordable housing task force but also in other literature that exists out there. And it seems right now that the government's hesitating to do so. They've picked kind of some of this low-hanging fruit, at the same time dismissed some more innovative and more meaningful, as far as the actual consequences for people, making affordable housing an improved circumstance for people here in the province.

There's such a need, just very simply, for us to increase the number of living accommodations, rental accommodations in this province, and make more spaces, make more units available. It's fairly simple on that side, Mr. Speaker. I know in Saskatoon alone, reports have indicated that there's approximately 3,500 units needed right now to allow it to sustain the needs of its population. This is important, Mr.

Speaker.

I could argue that there's never been a more stressful time for people seeking shelter in this province. And this is within our so-called, you know, boom times. It's really important that we balance where our investment . . . And we're strategic in doing so to make sure that shelter and quality of life is ensured while we have new labour market opportunities, and hopefully while we have new educational opportunities. In the end, if we can marry these many challenges and work towards them, we're going to progress as a society.

You know, as we look at the issue, there has been a large reduction in rental properties on the market, and a lot of this has come out of some of the, I guess, condo conversions and also sale of rental properties that have certainly appreciated in value. And it's important that we create an environment that allows rental, our rental supply to grow and to be addressed.

It's worthwhile that, you know, when we look at some of the . . . who's using our food banks in our province now, it's important for us to recognize that there's been a huge increase in workers and in students using these food banks. And this is indicative of just how cost of living is a large pressure, and it's just difficult to kind of get your footing in, you know, in society and within our cities and within our province. And it's important that as a government we work to allow people to achieve these goals.

When the task force was first struck and reviews the circumstances of housing in the province and makes recommendations, the government must review the recommendations and seriously move in the direction of some of the things that are needed most. We need to work towards progress on this file.

There is a recommendation specifically to help vulnerable people who don't always have the cash to deal with security deposits or first and last month's rent. The government should be moving on . . . this is something we think the government should be moving on, and I think it's classified sort of in terms of sort of a rental bank and could add some stability within our economy and provide some certainty in the housing circumstance of many, many people in our province.

You know, a rental bank wouldn't be about giving out gifts to individuals who were going to be wasteful with these dollars. It's about taking care of a human, a human right, arguably — that being the right to shelter. And by taking care of some of these security deposit challenges for families, I think we only see a bigger, larger benefit when we know that that family and those children have adequate housing.

In addressing matters like increasing the size of the board, the Sask Party should also increase the number of units for vulnerable people within our communities. We've had an announcement recently with some dollars flowing to housing, but the shame, Mr. Speaker, is we're a year into a new government and, you know, it took well over a year, Mr. Speaker, to see a new project to be funded and announced.

And this is a year, as I've said, I place in context the huge challenges of a booming economy that this places on people, so,

and in the fiscal capacity of a government to be acting on this. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it shouldn't just be that those booming revenues that allows a government to act on something like housing. It should be because it's quite simply the right thing to do.

So the new dollars that were finally made available, I know that in fine Sask Party fashion, it also . . . there was much back-patting and self-congratulation that went with this. But again, Mr. Speaker, I would argue they're simply doing what they should be doing by making sure the people of this province have adequate housing; to make sure that the children that are going to our schools are housed in safe and adequate housing; to make sure that the businesses who are screaming for workers and needing workers to continue to sustain the economic opportunities, we need to make sure that they can access workers who could be housed in safe living environments.

It's so important, as you know. We look at children. As a stabilizing factor in children's lives, housing is absolutely integral that that can go on. This is where something like this rent bank might have some significant merit in making sure that children don't have to be moving from school to school to school to school in one calendar year because we know that this really doesn't assist them in their academics. We know that it significantly challenges student achievement and their social well-being and how they're going to grow and develop.

There has been some good work done, Mr. Speaker, in this province, and some focus on housing by different groups, one of those groups being the University of Saskatchewan student union. And before I cite that, I guess I would make note that we're fully supportive and have called for and pleased to see the government finally moving there as far as investing into this critical need which is student housing. And this is simply recognizing the actual scope of the Act with regard to student housing, and it's a really important and meaningful investment. And there is a project that we certainly welcome and champion and cheer for up in Saskatoon up at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan].

But of course, Mr. Speaker, that challenges of housing for students specifically, and it's not just students affected by housing as I've talked about. It's across our whole cross-section of society. But if we're looking at housing for students specifically, those aren't isolated to Saskatoon. We also could expand and support Regina. We could also look at our regional college system across the province, and so many of those communities growing and having pressures on them from the strength in the economy.

I look to the member from Estevan, and I mean the whole purpose of a regional college is to provide accessible education and to sort of have a successful transition from possibly high school. And those regional colleges play such a precious role, so I'm pleased to see the scope of the Act being employed, that being into student housing. But we need to look beyond this investment at Saskatoon and set our sights further and where are we going next.

I did mention the U of S, the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union report on housing and residency, and I wouldn't mind sharing. This was released on February 2, 2009.

I wouldn't mind sharing just a little bit of information from this very worthwhile report, and it's been really well put together, well researched. I quote:

"Students continue to face a big challenge for finding decent, affordable housing in Saskatoon," said Shannon Dyck, USSU VP Student Issues who compiled the report. "Students must have an adequate place to live if they are to excel in their studies and personal development," said Dyck. "Living in inadequate spaces greatly diminishes the student experience, which hurts the student as much as it does the University."

This is a compelling quote, Mr. Speaker, and certainly right on the mark as far as the real consequences of inadequate housing for students. But the report doesn't just highlight some of the challenges that exist. It also goes into recommending some action. So the report's recommendations include, and I'll quote these:

Adequate funding for U of S projects that increase student housing on or near campus, as recommended by the Provincial Task Force on Housing Affordability;

Updating Saskatchewan Student Loans' funding to accurately reflect the needs of students;

Looking to other Provinces and cities that have already experienced similar housing booms, then reviewing and adopting certain policies that have helped them stabilize their rental markets;

Creating steps to ensure landlord accountability and increase awareness of landlord/tenant responsibilities;

Reevaluating Saskatoon's Condominium Approvals Policy due to the repercussion of increased condo conversions; and,

Keeping open communication between all levels of government and key stakeholders with regard to Saskatoon housing.

So these are the report's recommendations, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the student union of the University of Saskatchewan for the work that they've done on this file. And, you know, just to pluck a couple there, I mean, certainly the Saskatchewan student loans program right now, I believe the allocation is in the upper 300s for recognizing the cost of living. I know that other studies will indicate that this doesn't come close to the actual cost that students are incurring, and the actual cost being more in the range — and I don't have the exact numbers, Mr. Speaker — but I think I'm very fair to say that between 4 to \$600, and that's substantiated within the report.

I think it's worthwhile as well, where we have this conversation within this Assembly, to comment that it's not just this Assembly that's looking at housing. We could look federally, and there's currently a Bill being looked at there, I guess, that's been put forward and is being debated, and that's Bill C-304. And this asserts . . . is on the premise that housing is a

fundamental human right.

And certainly if we think about your very basic needs, shelter's right there, Mr. Speaker. And we know that without providing shelter that the development and normal development, the healthy development to rich and full lives that we certainly want to see our children being able to come to realize, is significantly hindered and potentially barred by inadequate housing.

So, Mr. Speaker, we really do need something so much more, and this modernization of the board, we welcome it. This is something we need to see happen. But let's look grander here, you know — what is our vision. And we don't see one right now. Opening up this Act, there was real opportunities to make a real difference, and we haven't done that, Mr. Speaker.

I might just highlight some of the articles that certainly support the need that exists in housing in the province, Mr. Speaker. And I look to the *Leader-Post* on November 19 with an article that is stated as, "Housing shortage still exists: expert" that's provided this assessment. I'll quote a little bit here, and this is quoting Keith Hanson, executive director of Affordable New Home Development Foundation. I quote, "He says governments and the housing industry must ask themselves what the need for housing is, and find ways to measure the need."

It goes on:

Hanson sees housing needs either present or developing in several demographic groups.

Seniors, for example, require appropriate and safe housing. Many seniors are struggling to survive, failing in health, and losing independence. They represent one market that must be served better by housing [Mr. Speaker].

[15:45]

Mr. Speaker, I know we can think of the seniors within our constituencies, seniors within our lives, and the importance and the value to make sure that that quality of life is there for them. These seniors that have put so much into the building of our province.

The articles goes on, and I quote:

The aboriginal community also requires better urban housing.

He met with one aboriginal family who had lived in Saskatoon for 30 years, but did not yet feel as if the city was its home.

"I found that really disturbing," said Hanson.

Low income families round out the five top groups that must be served by affordable housing, he said.

And again, just highlighting some of the need.

Another article here, Mr. Speaker, from *The StarPhoenix* on

November 26. Title of the article: "Students, workers using food bank." This is what I highlighted before, Mr. Speaker, that it's non-traditional groups — at least from a stereotypical perspective — are using the food bank. And that's because of the huge increases in the cost of living, and the lack of action from this government in being able to meet those needs. I quote:

A lot of those people were first-time users, says Merriman.

Even though Saskatchewan is still booming, Merriman expects the number of visitors to increase as economic uncertainty grows and the cost of living continues to climb.

"The gap between the haves and the have-nots just gets greater," he said, noting the "stereotypical image" of the food bank user is a thing of the past.

"These people have jobs," he said. "They're working and they're still trying to make ends meet."

[Mr. Speaker] Merriman's observations are in line with HungerCount's findings. The study showed 20 per cent of the food bank clients are employed.

Merriman says the food bank has seen a sharp increase in the number of post-secondary students using the service.

And very clearly I'd like to highlight this point, I quote:

The lack of affordable housing in the city is to blame.

"Housing is still a major issue for students in Saskatoon," said Shannon Dyck, vice-president of student issues for the University of Saskatchewan . . . "The student experience is diminished when housing is a daily concern."

It goes on and talks about some of the supports that the University of Saskatchewan is trying to provide students from its institution with regard to housing and with regard to food.

In Regina, Mr. Speaker, there's an article here from the *Leader-Post*, November 18, 2008, titled "Regina city councillor wants more from province on affordable housing." What I'm doing . . . Oh, and the . . . Right. So the minister just stopped the speech. I'm very glad she's listening here now.

I did highlight a little while back and certainly did say that we're glad to see that the scope of the Act is being employed, and that there has been this full range of student housing, and that the minister has mentioned that they are doing a project of course in Saskatoon and in Prince Albert. But there are so many communities as well. And I know this is a starting point and there's . . . And this is a starting point here right now. But we do have so many other small communities with regional colleges and certainly many of our other cities that have student housing needs as well. So I'd say, good, but let's keep the ball rolling.

Going back to the article here, one of the city councillors here in Regina is cited as saying:

“The thing about housing is choice,” he said.

“Right now, the choice at the low end is almost not there. At 1.4-per-cent vacancy (rate), it is almost not there.”

Clipsham insisted that the province needs to act on the recommendations of the Task Force on [affordable] Housing . . . and create an . . . housing policy.

Mr. Speaker, it’s not just people in Saskatchewan that want to see progress on poverty. I can cite a report here that was put forward — Canwest News Service on October 27 — an article entitled “A majority of Canadians want government action,” the study finds. And as I go into this article, basically it just shows such large support — 90 per cent support — for addressing poverty in this country. And I know the same is here in Saskatchewan. We care about our neighbours and we want to see our circumstances improved.

Mr. Speaker, I think I’ve highlighted some of my comments where we welcome the modernization of the board. We see that as something that’s important, but we want to see so much more. The people of this province need so much more. We push and challenge this government to offer much more. It was incredibly disturbing to see a year of such fiscal capacity without new announcements coming online when they really could have made a difference for people in our province.

But at this time, Mr. Speaker, on Bill No. 63, *The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act*, I’m going to adjourn debate as I know many more of our members would like to speak on this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 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 Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again it’s my honour to rise to speak to Bill No. 67, *The Education Amendment Act*. And we’ve got questions and comments about this Bill. I know that . . . I guess on the very front of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, an Act that goes about with intent to address teachers who might be, have acted in a way that could be found to be professional misconduct. Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, it’s a rare circumstance that this Act is employed.

As far as the intent of making sure that our children are safe and secure in their school environments and that our teachers are held to high accountability, we have no argument with that intent, Mr. Speaker. But we do have many questions, Mr. Speaker, about how this Bill has been put together and how it’s been derived, and we have some concerns.

My very basic questions I would have is, what was the rush with this, Mr. Speaker? What was the rush in getting this Bill into the House? I know that it’s been cited that it’s been inspired because of the interjurisdictional protocol with regard to teacher certification, of 1999, Mr. Speaker, but what was the rush that all of a sudden had this Bill being presented in the Assembly this past fall?

And the reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is it was a surprise, Mr. Speaker, to the sector stakeholders within education when this Bill was presented. And it was a surprise, Mr. Speaker, because the education sector has a long-standing history and practice of being fully involved in the deliberation and input into the construction of legislation.

And when this Bill was brought forward, there had been a little bit of initial correspondence with stakeholders, with promise, Mr. Speaker, from the ministry — and I have written statements to prove this — that there was going to be much more to follow up — forums and places for the education sector to be able to share their respective concerns and their comments and their ways to make the legislation stronger or to make it work or to represent their members’ needs.

It’s never happened, Mr. Speaker. So this is an ill-considered piece of, ill-derived piece of legislation that’s been created within a vacuum, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party’s consultation process is fundamentally flawed on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. It’s a complete departure from the ways of consultation and deliberation that’s gone on with stakeholders in education through the history of our province, Mr. Speaker. I’m going back, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, through many different stripes of government — and when I say stripes, many different political stripes of government.

So we’re concerned about what happened here, Mr. Speaker. Was this deliberate? Is this a new process in deriving education policy in this province? Or was this a mistake? Was this a learning process for this ministry and for this minister?

The Act appears to copy what has been done in other jurisdictions. But without taking into account what can be learned from the experience, certainly when we look at the interjurisdictional protocol with regard to teacher certificates, certification, Mr. Speaker, it’s not hugely . . . doesn’t describe the process in a real constrained manner.

Mr. Speaker, there’s a lot of latitude that this minister was afforded and this ministry was afforded to meet the intent of the interjurisdictional protocol. There wasn’t one process that had to be employed. However the minister choose to go forward with one process and to do so without the full consultation and engagement of the education stakeholders.

And I know that since the tabling of this Bill that the minister and the ministry has been in many, many meetings with the

stakeholders who have been able to share their direct input and concern. This should have happened though, Mr. Speaker, before this Bill was placed on the Table.

Before it was read into this Assembly, stakeholders should have been well aware of when and where they could have offered their input. They should have come together, had the opportunity to come together as a group of sector stakeholders to understand each of the partners' concerns and implications and to be well aware what this Bill, when it was placed on the Table, what it contained and to know what it meant in reality for their members.

And it's not picking one sector partner over another in feeling that they weren't consulted with, Mr. Speaker. Across the entire education sector, and I'm certainly not going to point fingers too directly here, but basically all of the partners have expressed that consultation process was a huge departure from what it has been in the past.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we have good organizations such as the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and we have LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents] — our educational administrators — and our business officials, and we have very effective organizations, member organizations that are there for a purpose. We need to utilize these organizations to bring forward and make sure our policies and our legislation addresses both the intent of where it's trying to go, but respects the needs of those member organizations.

Some of the partners, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, are clear that this Bill as it stands here right now is unworkable, that we have a Bill that's been put forward through hasty consultation or lack thereof, and now we have a Bill that's unworkable. So while the intent of this Bill is certainly not necessarily a concern, the process of how this Bill has been derived is certainly a concern, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I would argue that the approach . . . The Sask Party's approach to consultation on this Bill, specifically Bill 67, threatens long-standing relationships within the education sector and really important relationships that exist between ministry and minister and those sector partners to derive policy that, as I've said, achieves the intent desired by the minister or by protocols that we're trying to comply with, but also respects those member organizations who bring so much, Mr. Speaker, to the table that one minister or select ministry officials might not be able to recognize on their own.

So I go back, Mr. Speaker, to kind of questioning, I guess, what was the rush. Why did this Bill get placed on the Table? And why were the stakeholders so surprised with the content of this Bill and that it was ready to be tabled? They felt that they were still in drafting stages as this came to the House. I guess I would have some questions specifically. And I think these questions . . . Of course I can't have questions answered in this forum, Mr. Speaker, but I think we'll look for questions in committee, Mr. Speaker.

And it's my understanding that there's possibly going to be some changes coming forward here that are really valuable. And to be honest, Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm not plugging

really hard here, Mr. Speaker, and going after the minister on failing at this point because I know that the minister's been engaged and the ministry's been involved in numerous meetings with sector stakeholders since the last time. So we're going to see some changes or some amendments presented, hopefully, Mr. Speaker, at the committee level. And this, at that point, is going to be able to allow us to see and to work with the sector partners to see where the dust settles on this Bill.

[16:00]

But, Mr. Speaker, some of the questions that I, you know, I think that the partners have and that we would have is just, you know, where did this come from, other than I know we relate it back to this interprovincial protocol. It seems to have been rushed in a broader way. Was there any other push from any other level of government to have this come in line, or from any other provincial jurisdictions?

Questions around the process right now that's been described as members as a convoluted process, a process that's not incredibly workable and not effective. We're going to see if there's some amendments to ensure that that changes.

We also want to make sure — and we'll have questions to make sure that principles of natural justice are upheld throughout this process — to make sure that all individuals are afforded due process in that we want to make sure that . . . We would have questions I guess around how is this going to align with the current professional controls and governance controls that exist within the teaching profession?

Because we're not going to argue about intent, Mr. Speaker, on this Bill. We're striving towards the same thing on that — highly accountable education and safe classrooms, Mr. Speaker. But it's how we get there that we might end up having to have some further questions and discussions.

I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to have a clarification of what the definition of misconduct is. We're interested in making sure that we understand what misconduct defines for teachers.

And there's other questions as well about . . . I guess questions we might have is, does the minister have any concerns from a jurisdictional perspective with regard to band schools and band teachers? Does the minister recognize that mutual terminations have a benefit to school boards and as effective process? And will mutual terminations and his desire to move away from that process . . . Will he reinstate that process through some of the changes? We would like to see that discussion occur.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, that most of the members are well supported, as far as teachers, are well supported by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. But we do have independent schools as well, Mr. Speaker, and independent teachers who work for those schools. We need to make sure that they're afforded due process, Mr. Speaker.

So we do have lots of questions that are very important to the sector partners, very important to education in our province, Mr. Speaker. Will this legislation actually work? And I guess that's part of the . . . You know, will it be effective in its intent?

And we look forward to discussions around this. Certainly as it stands right now, without changes, there's contentions to the otherwise, Mr. Speaker.

But I am pleased to hear that amendments and changes are coming, and I'm certainly not going to prejudge what those amendments are.

I know it's been important to some of the business officials, Mr. Speaker, that their voice has been heard and their role recognized within the education system, and that their qualifications are identified and that they're valued within legislation. And we want to make sure that through legislation and through regulation, that that is certainly ensured.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that many of these questions, many of these concerns, could have been . . . [inaudible] . . . a long time ago. The sector partners should have been and could have been brought together and fully engaged in deriving this policy when this Bill would have been placed onto the table . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The minister says, would've, should've, could've. And I agree with him on all those pieces. And so I'm glad now that the sector's been engaged with the minister and with his ministry, and we'll see what kind of changes are going to be brought forward.

And again, I'm not going to prejudge those — whether those will meet the needs that exist out there, whether they're going to fall short. And hopefully in the end, Mr. Speaker, we have a piece of legislation that respects the needs of our member organizations that have such a rich history of deriving policy or working with ministries to derive policy in this province. And hopefully we have a Bill that achieves the intent desired by the interprovincial protocol, which offers huge latitude, Mr. Speaker, to this minister.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I've got lots of good questions for committee. There's going to be lots of good consultation that's going to occur on this side and on that side with regard to the potential changes that are put forward. But I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, we welcome those changes, and we look forward to further discussion and debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Education that Bill No. 67, *The Education 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 will this Bill be referred? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Committee on Human Services.

Bill No. 69

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 69 — *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l'exécution des ordonnances alimentaires*** 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 make comments and join the debate on Bill No. 69, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act*, and it also makes related amendments to *The Workers' Compensation Act*.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe there's any of us probably in this Assembly that hasn't, at one time or another, received a call to our constituency office from a family or a parent that is having difficulty with the enforcement of maintenance orders and issues that can arise. And for many of these people that can be single parents — any number of children — but when the court has made an order, there is an expectation that it will be followed and that as law-abiding citizens, we just follow the law.

But that isn't always the case. And I know often you will get calls at the constituency office from parents and families that are absolutely at their wits' end, not sure what they should do because they rely on this income. It's been ordered by the court. So every expectation is there that it will be forthcoming to support the family and the children. And many people have difficulty collecting and having a regular income coming in for their family.

So it's always interesting and always an issue when you see where this whole process can go wrong and what needs to be put in place to address the issues and make sure that the support payments are forthcoming, that families and children are able to maintain a quality of life and move forward with their lives in the changed circumstance that they are. So, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that the enforcement of maintenance orders continues to evolve because as we move along, as people become more mobile — as we may move from province to province or city to city — it can be even more difficult to enforce maintenance orders that are in place. And it can mean extended periods of time where you are struggling to make ends meet, can mean extended periods of time where you are living with that uncertainty.

And I'm sure all of us as MLAs have received calls at our constituency office and have tried our best to address the issues that are put before us and to be able to achieve some, well to be able to receive some support for these families and give them the support that we can as MLAs.

So as we deal with these issues, there's often glitches in the system. There's always circumstance that are unusual but there are often circumstances that will be repeats at our office when

we get the phone calls.

So this legislation is one that really has been in a process of continual evolving to meet the needs that are out there and to meet the, I guess to meet the needs that are out there, but also to meet the needs of the families that are involved. And we need to make sure that the changes are appropriate and that the changes don't have unintended consequences.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've had a look at the legislation, I've had a look at the comments that the minister made when the legislation and the changes were tabled, but also I've had a look at the comments that were made from members from our side of the House, and how they viewed the changes and what impacted them.

And when I've gone through not only the Bill itself but the explanation of the changes that are being put before us, I guess the first one that really impacted me, and that I feel truly is an important part of this, it really is that it puts the families first, as a first priority when there is . . . What it does, it establishes a priority for maintenance orders over any other unsecured debt, other than another maintenance order. And that really does put the family's needs first.

The last thing we want is that families would be having to wait for other demands on that income, other demands on those assets that are there, before family members being able to access monies that had been ordered as support payments for them. What it does also is it extends the priority that currently exists in the Act where property is seized and money is realized to a situation other than where property is seized. This defines more appropriately the processes that need to be followed. And the new provision also will limit the priority of a maintenance order to an amount equal to one year's payments.

Now there may be some that would argue or disagree with this point, especially when we are looking at some cases where there may be unusual amounts of monies that are owing, but we also have to be reasonable and we have to make sure that all circumstance are taken into consideration when the decisions are made.

In the explanation for section 15(1), it also talks about the money received by the director pursuant to this section cannot be attached or garnished by another creditor. So that is important because in clear language it really puts the family first. And I truly believe that that's where the priority should be.

Also when we look at the changes that are made, it allows the director to use his or her discretion to enforce against a lower amount of ongoing support where an order is made for the support of two or more children. So in other words, if the original order had been issued for two or three children, and one of those children ceases to be a dependant — whether they have reached the legal age — instead of having to reapply for a new order, the director can use his or her discretion to enforce against a lower amount of ongoing support. So this gives more flexibility in the original orders, and it also should make the system easier for families to deal with.

I can remember quite clearly one of the cases that we had dealt with from our office where an order had been issued. Some of

the circumstances had been changed, and the only recourse was to go back through the process and make another application for an order to be issued. So instead of the director having some discretion to reassess, and whether it is for one child or another no longer being a dependant or whether some of the other issues had changed, that flexibility was not there. And there was a constant stress and a constant pressure on the parties waiting for maintenance orders to be enforced, relying on those dollars and that support for their family's day-to-day needs. They would have to again go through a process of reapplying for an order. So, Mr. Speaker, this is something that I believe will be well received throughout the community and throughout those that rely on maintenance enforcement to assist them whenever their problems arise with the orders that they have.

One of the other sections that is new to the Act is section 40.5 through 40.91. And what it does, it's added to allow the maintenance enforcement office to attach money set aside to create an annuity pursuant to section 74 of *The Workers' Compensation Act, 1979*. So what this does, Mr. Speaker, it puts workers' compensation annuity . . . If you are on benefits for 24 months or longer, if you are a worker that is receiving WC [workers' compensation] benefits, there is a process where an annuity is set aside for you in lieu of pension, so you will have ongoing income when you reach the age of retirement.

[16:15]

But, Mr. Speaker, as many people will know, pensions and RRSPs [Registered Retirement Savings Plan] can be attached through support payments, but there was no access to the annuity that is payable through WCBs [Workers' Compensation Board]. So this changes that. And what it does, it ends up bringing WCB annuity in line with what has been a traditional practice or an ongoing practice in the way that pensions and RRSPs are dealt with. So I believe that this is good; it is a good move for families.

Mr. Speaker, when you go through the legislation, you will also see laid out in point form how the attachments will occur when the changes to *The Workers' Compensation Act*, and this mirrors the attachment of pension provisions that are currently within the Act. But it also allows the director to enforce a maintenance order by attaching an annuity if, and it lays out criteria that have to be met and it also lays out how the notice will be given to both the board and the payor, how the notice of an attachment will be handled. And also the notice of intention requires the board to provide the information regarding the annuity within 30 days to the director and to the payor.

So there are some guidelines, some very specific guidelines that need to be met, notices that have to be given. And that's all contained within the legislation. So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that that is a good improvement to the maintenance enforcement Act.

There is also a number of areas within the maintenance enforcement Act that will allow for the suspension of, if someone is delinquent in the payments that they have a responsibility for, there has to be written notice given, and it tells you how that notice can be given — there's a couple of options — but the director can direct the administrator to suspend a respondent's licence.

So this is a pretty drastic way of addressing the issue of delinquent payments. But, Mr. Speaker, it has proven to be fairly successful over the past few years that it's been in force where we have seen some substantial numbers of payments; and driver's licence suspensions have been enacted, and maintenance enforcement offices have suspended a total of 4,463 drivers' licences, and that was up until the fall of last year. So that's pretty significant because we don't take this step . . . the step is not taken if there isn't a number of months of delinquent payments, and it really comes as a bit of a last choice for sure before this type of move is made.

Also we can look at existing provisions that are within the Act. There is some changes that are being proposed. And when it comes to the suspension of driver's licence, there is an addition to require that where a suspension is cancelled as a result of a suitable payment arrangement having been made, there is some criteria that needs to be met and "the director shall notify the payor that the suspension . . . [can] be revived if, within 12 months, the payor fails to follow through with the payment arrangements."

So this Act, in a number of places what it does, it gives that flexibility and instead of having to stop and start the process all over again if there's been payment made, it can be revived through a certain period of time if those payments fall into arrears again.

So suspending a driver's licence, that's pretty drastic, but it has been used in a number of cases. And, Mr. Speaker, when people do not accept the responsibilities that they have for their own actions — and obviously too many are not taking the responsibility for the orders of the court that have been assigned to them — and if that responsibility isn't taken, then, Mr. Speaker, I fully agree with the changes that are being made and, as drastic as they may seem, at some point in time they're necessary for sure.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a number of other changes that are made. First and foremost some housekeeping . . . But it's all worthwhile and, Mr. Speaker, I want to say again that it is important that the maintenance enforcement process continues to evolve and that we continue to put in place the changes that are necessary to meet the needs of those that rely on these maintenance orders. They can be in pretty dire circumstance if these orders are not being enforced and if the payments are not being made in a timely fashion. So I think all of us would agree that any changes to the maintenance enforcement Act are good changes indeed.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say since this program has been put in place, Saskatchewan really has an excellent record of maintenance enforcement. This program has been very highly spoken of and I think has been very successful in the work that they do, and perhaps it is one of the best programs in Canada.

And while this legislation is about further improving the maintenance enforcement program and ensuring that our justice system is there to ensure that a court order results in benefits being received, first and foremost that's what it needs to do. And as we move along, I'm sure we'll continue to see this Act evolve. We will see changes made on an as-needed basis to make sure that families will always be first and that as adults

we need to be responsible for our actions in life. And children, of course, are where one of our main responsibilities are and to make sure that they are adequately cared for and that we follow through with the responsibilities that we have as adults.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's a number of the comments that I wanted to make on the Act, but I know that some of my colleagues also have comments that they would like to make on the maintenance enforcement Act. And with that I would adjourn debate on Bill 69.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 69, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 60

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

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rejoin the debate on the Senate election nominee Bill, the so-called Senate election nominee program, Mr. Speaker.

It was said of the Holy Roman Empire that it was none of holy or Roman or an empire. And I think it can be fairly said of the democratic election nominee proposal from the government that it's none of democratic, an election, or even a nominee or nomination program, Mr. Speaker. Now I assume that there are aspects of the Holy Roman Empire that were actually holy, and there might even have been some Roman connection, and there was probably some imperial ambitions, if nothing else, Mr. Speaker. So it was a kind of blanket statement, and it's rather a blanket statement to say that this Bill is not democratic or an election or a nomination. I think it has some tone of that. There's some gloss there. There's an image that's being cast. But in fact when you look beyond the smoke and mirrors, really it does have nothing to do with democracy or elections or nominations. And if that wasn't clear, Mr. Speaker, the first time I rose to speak to this Bill last fall, the Prime Minister made it very clear since, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill is a sham. And the promise of the Prime Minister on which the Bill rests is a sham. So even if the Bill itself was not a sham, its foundation has been swept away by the actions of the Prime Minister.

Now I want to address each of those aspects of democracy — an election, a nominee — briefly. We have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, in a couple of different ways to actually find out democratically what the people of Saskatchewan would like. One is that we could have a plebiscite, Mr. Speaker. Now I understand that the members opposite didn't . . . would have said last sitting, oh no, oh we've got a vacancy. We don't have time to see if the people of Saskatchewan even want to continue with an anachronistic-appointed Senate because we've a

vacancy to fill and we want to fill it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a vacancy any more. And as a matter of fact, we won't have a vacancy before 2011. And if the government really cares about democracy, really cares about what people think about this institution, whether this institution can be changed or whether this institution should continue to exist more into the 21st century than it already has, Mr. Speaker — an appointed upper house in a modern democracy of Canada — whether this should continue or not, well now we have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

And we have no pressing vacancy any longer. The Prime Minister relieved us of that. That was his commitment to an election senate — much like his commitment to fixed election dates, Mr. Speaker. It was about as real. It was about as substantial. It was about as sincere as that, Mr. Speaker. It was about as sincere as that — maybe even less so, Mr. Speaker.

But since he introduced his fixed election legislation, well he called an election and not on the fixed date. And since he promised that he would honour provinces who wanted to elect senators or nominate senators by some kind of polling process, well no, not really, Mr. Speaker, he didn't really want to do that.

What he really wanted to do was what prime ministers have done before and at least been honest about it, Mr. Speaker — at least they have been honest about it. But now if the government was committed to democracy, that would be certainly an option to them and that option will remain, that option will certainly exist in 2011. They could tag it onto the election vote. It wouldn't cost any more than whatever we would've been doing, electing a senator in the vacancy that a senator's already been appointed by the Prime Minister who supposedly supports the election of senators, Mr. Speaker.

The government impresses me in this respect on this Bill. I think it took something, it took something to bring this Bill back for debate after what the Prime Minister did. I mean, after the Prime Minister stepped back from his fixed election date promise and stepped back from his nominee suggestion to the province — they stepped back from that — for them still to bring forward a piece of legislation that is now completely irrelevant, Mr. Speaker, shows something on the part of the government, and I think I would call it chutzpah. I'm just surprised.

And I know the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy has already risen to speak, so he can't answer this on this Bill. But I wonder if any member opposite wants to explain exactly what the intent of bringing this Bill back for debate was, Mr. Speaker. And what is the intent? I mean the Prime Minister has said, oops, sorry, I'm pulling the chair away from you. Except I don't think he told them that first. They fall to the floor. They get back up, and they say, oh we're going to carry on with the Bill. There's been a senator appointed and members opposite know it. So I think it took a lot of chutzpah. I think it's maybe difficult to explain why they want to bring the Bill back.

But I would just say, as I think the government can say on a number of issues — fixed election dates, equalization promise — the Prime Minister just changed his mind. Just changed his

mind when it came to his commitments to the people of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan and that's what happened. And why will we bring this Bill forward for debate, Mr. Speaker? So that briefly, briefly addresses the issue of democracy.

I do want to make one point of a constitutional change somewhere along the way here and maybe I'll make it here while we're discussing the pseudo-democratic aspects of this Bill. And that is that there's a way of this legislature expressing its opinion about the makeup of parliament and the existence of the Senate. And this legislature doesn't need to debate an irrelevant Bill that would take effect if we had a prime minister in this country that kept his promises. That's not the way to do it. The way to do it is by a resolution in this legislature saying the Government of Saskatchewan, the legislature of Saskatchewan, wants a Senate that looks like this.

[16:30]

Now one legislature can't change the Senate; one legislature can't even hardly start the constitutional process. But if there is truly across the country a commitment to constitutional change, particularly on the makeup of the Senate, a number of provincial legislatures, acting in concert and relatively close period of time together, can effect constitutional change.

There's a formula, Mr. Speaker, and there's a number of provinces that have to be involved and they have to have a certain amount of the population, Mr. Speaker. And we would be a relatively small part of such a group. But we would be one province and that we can do, that we can do. We can be the one out of the seven, I think it is, Mr. Speaker, that starts it off. And that's what we can do if we believe that the constitution needs to change in respect to the Senate and how the Senate is chosen or whether the Senate continues to exist.

We might do that after consulting the people of Saskatchewan, if we really wanted to be democratic about it. And I know that the members opposite sort of had the ballots prepared, the process prepared for the polling — the popularity contest for who the next senator out of Saskatchewan would be — but they'll have to put that aside because the Prime Minister had other plans.

Members of a certain age who will remember when Coca-Cola decided that they could capture some younger beverage drinkers by putting more sugar in the Coke, making it taste more like Pepsi, and it didn't work, Mr. Speaker. It didn't work. They lost Coca-Cola drinkers; they didn't pick up any Pepsi-Cola drinkers. Mr. Speaker, you may have been one of them.

Members of a certain age, Mr. Speaker, will also remember that Bill Cosby was selling Coca-Cola on television at the time. And there was a cartoon — an Aislin cartoon, I think; a Canadian cartoonist — showing Mr. Cosby holding up the can of new Coke, and the hand coming in from the side with the old Coke, which the announcer decided to call Classic Coke, and he goes, Huh? And that's the government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister said, oh we're going to have a democratic Senate. We're not going to change the constitution. We're not

going to make it really democratic. We're not going to make it really elected. We're not going to do that. We're not going to open that can of worms, constitutional can of worms.

I can understand that, Mr. Speaker — opening up a constitutional can of worms. At one time, a lawyer, I studied constitutional law in law school and I thought if I heard the word constitution one more time I'd go insane. I'd rather people drag their fingernails down a blackboard. I understand why a country doesn't want to get involved in the debate too often, Mr. Speaker. But if you want to change how the Senate works, that's the work you have to do. That's the work you really have to do.

You can't do this: we'll run a popularity contest in this province and this province and this province, and pretend that we are electing people. That's not how a country's constitution is made. That's not how it works, Mr. Speaker. But particularly if he has . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . As the member from Regina Dewdney says, particularly if you don't do it. Particularly if you're out there . . .

The members opposite, the government, they're holding up the new Coke and the Prime Minister goes, no, I'm going back. I'm going back. I liked it the way it was. I liked it when the Prime Minister got to pick who it was. I liked it when the Prime Minister got to pick people who took their speeches from the Prime Minister's office, like Senator Mike Duffy, and just gives them straight, without editing — and maybe without reading beforehand either, Mr. Speaker, from all reports.

That's what he likes . . . [inaudible] . . . and he wants to back to that. And he's gone back to that, Mr. Speaker. He's gone back to that. And that's what the members opposite are stuck with.

They're stuck with a Bill based on a promise that's been broken. And it's not, it's not a serious promise, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't like the equalization promise; it wasn't even like the fixed election promise, Mr. Speaker. It was cosmetic. I mean, that's the point. It was cosmetic. But still, it was a promise.

So in big things, when he promises the people of Saskatchewan that natural resource revenue will not be included in equalization: well no, I don't need to keep that one. And in little things like this, like the Senate election nominee process: well, I don't need to keep that either.

So in great and small, essentially the Prime Minister says, and to the continual embarrassment of the members opposite of the government who believe, who believe they have some influence — maybe they don't believe that any more today but — believed they have some influence to their continual embarrassment, Mr. Speaker. The chair is pulled out from under them again and again. It's like Charlie Brown and the football — first it's equalization, then it's fixed election dates, and now this. You know, they took another run at that football and got pulled away again and back on their backs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the election part of course is probably the least appropriate term used in the title of this Bill because, of course, it was never going to be an election. There was never going to be an election because the person the people of Saskatchewan would have voted for in the greatest number was

not going to be elected to any office because this Bill did not change the Constitution of Canada.

We still have an appointed Senate. Senators are still appointed at the whim of the Prime Minister, and that's not hypothetical. We know that. He just did it. They weren't going to be elected to anything except to the position that the winner of a popularity contest is, Mr. Speaker. The winner of that election is the most popular person in that vote. I won't call it an election. It's not an election. Nobody's elected to that office. The Senate would have continued to have been, continue to be, an appointed body; everybody in it appointed by the prime minister of the day.

They wouldn't be elected to anything. There would be a vote. There would be a poll. There would be a popularity contest. And why would the government members call that an election? They would call that an election because the Prime Minister promised to appoint the winner of the popularity contest to the Senate.

Well that does not make it an election. As a matter of fact, in this case, that doesn't even make it a promise. And of course the legislation says he might; the legislation doesn't require him to do it. The legislation can't require him to do it. It's not the prerogative of this legislature or the people of Saskatchewan to elect senators.

The people of Canada have had an appointed Senate since Confederation. It long outlived its usefulness. People have called for its abolishment. The movement to which I'm a proud heir has called for its abolishment for a long, long time. My colleagues on this side of the House who've spoken on this Bill have called for its abolishment. I don't know if that's where the people of Saskatchewan are at. Maybe they want to reform it.

We can ask them now. The members opposite were prepared to have an election or a vote. I have to correct myself, Mr. Speaker. They were prepared to have a vote to determine who, of the people who put themselves forward as potential appointments from the Prime Minister, was the most popular with the people of Saskatchewan, or most popular with the people who decided to vote in what is not really an election, Mr. Speaker.

They were prepared to do that. So are they prepared to ask the people of Saskatchewan whether they even support the institution of a Senate? Are they prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker? It won't cost any more; I think it would cost considerably less than this popularity contest that they were going to have before the Prime Minister pre-empted it.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did that, and one of my colleagues asked how he did that. He did that because that's his prerogative. That has been the case since this country was founded in 1867. Nothing about this Bill changes that. Nothing about this Bill makes this an election.

Now the members opposite, and the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy in particular, made as persuasive an argument as can be made that this was an election because it was, as the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy said, a matter of evolution. You know, it would become a convention. Provinces would have these votes, and the person that won these votes

would be appointed to the Senate. And over time, that would become a constitutional convention. I think that was the argument from the member of Weyburn-Big Muddy.

And I suppose that's true, you know. I suppose that is true that eventually, eventually, I don't know how many decades, I don't even know how many centuries it would take for this to become a convention, but the way it becomes a convention, the way it becomes a convention . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Meadow Lake is shouting across about conventions as well.

The way it becomes a convention is it works in practice. You have the vote, you have the vote, Mr. Speaker. Then the Prime Minister makes the appointment. Then you have another vote and the Prime Minister makes the appointment. Then you have another vote and the Prime Minister makes the appointment. It doesn't work, Mr. Speaker, if you pass a Bill so you can have a vote and the Prime Minister says no, I didn't really mean that. I'm going to have the appointment. You don't have to have the vote, I'm going to fill the vacancy. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, this Bill is going to be irrelevant until there's another vacancy in the Senate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the next Prime Minister of Canada may not make this same commitment, and the fact that this Prime Minister has made this commitment is obviously meaningless, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely meaningless. So we have a meaningless commitment, and then we would pass the Bill based on a speculative commitment that we would get a prime minister that would make the same promise to this government and keep it, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know. Why don't we wait and see? Why don't we wait and see if that happens? And in the meantime, in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, this legislature can express its opinion about what kind of Senate we would like. The people of Saskatchewan could be asked first in a plebiscite. I think we may have plebiscites on less important things actually, Mr. Speaker, if that's possible. That could be done, Mr. Speaker.

And the third part of this, the third part of this is the nominee part, Mr. Speaker. It's not democratic, Mr. Speaker. It's not an election, and it's not really a nomination program, Mr. Speaker. Because if it was going to be a nomination, then somebody — and I guess the government position is somebody, the people of Saskatchewan in this case, I think, would be the proposal of the members opposite, government — would nominate someone for the Senate. Well that's contradictory with the second part, the election part.

It's either an election, Mr. Speaker, which I think we've agreed it's not, or it's a nomination. It can't be both. And I would argue that it's neither. But it certainly can't be both. We either are electing somebody to the Senate of Canada . . . which of course we're not, for two reasons.

First of all, the vote doesn't result in them taking the office, as it does when people elect people to this Chamber or to the House of Commons. And the second reason, of course it doesn't have that effect, is because the Prime Minister isn't appointing these people anyway. He's appointing somebody else. He's

appointing his choices. But even if he was going to appoint the winner of this vote, that would make it an election.

Arguably the nomination, the nominee part, is a little bit more accurate, Mr. Speaker. Arguably if the Prime Minister hadn't done what he did — pull the chair away, pull away the football before Charlie Brown over there could give it a good kick, put back the old Coke, Mr. Speaker — if all of that hadn't been done, you might be able to argue that, okay, is kind of like a nomination. The winner of the vote isn't elected to anything, but is nominated by the people of Saskatchewan.

[16:45]

But that's not how the members opposite want to sell this. The members opposite want to sell this as a democratic decision where people are now electing their senators, and of course that's not what it is at all.

The nominee proposal's a little bit better, but again it depends upon, it depends upon someone selecting the nominated person in an actual election. You're nominated to seek office — often we understand it to be by political parties or by bodies — and then someone else makes the final decision about you going on.

Well as I understand it, the idea was, the concept was here that the government would appoint the person who got the most votes. Well they're not the nominee. They've won. They've won under this system. They're there. We're not nominating a group of people. Alberta isn't nominating somebody and Saskatchewan isn't nominating somebody else and somebody else decides who gets there.

Arguably that kind of worked for the Supreme Court. You know, unfortunately each province doesn't get its own Supreme Court justice. I have a personal bad experience with this, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan was robbed — by this Prime Minister again, Mr. Speaker — of its Supreme Court justice. But we don't all get our own Supreme Court justice.

So there is sort of a contest there where the three prairie provinces nominate candidates. The previous Liberal government kind of formalized the process by which these people were chosen, and then a final decision is made in essence by the Prime Minister — and that's the nominee process.

But that's not what's going on here, Mr. Speaker, or what was supposed to be going on here. What was supposed to be going on here is that the winner of this vote would end up being the senator from Saskatchewan, not in an election, not in a democratic process, and not truly being nominated in any kind of contest. The winner of that popularity contest was supposed to become a senator, and that is supposed to make the Senate a more democratic place because it has amongst its many, many dozens of members, it has two now, maybe three, maybe four . . . How many senators were just appointed by the Prime Minister?

An Hon. Member: — 18.

Mr. Quennell: — 18? 18. So 18 out of that whole group — people who won popularity votes, people who won popularity

votes — 18. And that makes it the democratic place, Mr. Speaker? I don't think it does. I don't think anybody would argue that it is a more democratic institution because a very small handful of the people sitting there weren't appointed by the Prime Minister without a popularity vote being held in their province beforehand. That would not make it a democratic institution, Mr. Speaker.

But we don't need to worry about that facade, Mr. Speaker. We don't need to worry about that because the Prime Minister realized that it's a facade. The Prime Minister realized it was a facade and the Prime Minister realized that what he held out to governments, like the Government of Saskatchewan — that they would allow those governments to look democratic, allow those governments to look populist, to allow those governments to look like they're forward thinking, that they want progressive change — the instrument that he was going to use to allow governments like the Government of Saskatchewan to do that, he decided, well no, I changed my mind; I want to make these 18 appointments myself.

I don't think the Senate is much less democratic for his decision, Mr. Speaker. I really don't. And how can it be? It was only going to be a minority anyways, Mr. Speaker.

Now I do want to wrap up. I know that there's other members who want to speak to this Bill, and I know specifically there's one at least who wants to speak to it today. But as I started off at the beginning, I want to conclude by saying the Bill is not democratic. It wasn't going to make the Senate democratic, and it's not democratic consultation with the people of Saskatchewan.

It's not an exercise of the constitutional power of this legislature to initiate constitutional change. It's not an election. Nobody was being elected to office if this Bill had passed and if the Prime Minister had kept his promise. Nobody was. Somebody was going to win a vote, Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister had kept his promise and this Bill was passed. And that person would have been, if the Prime Minister kept his promise, appointed to the Senate.

But that's not an election, Mr. Speaker. That is a sham, and that would have kept, in the Prime Minister's back pocket, the prerogative that they've always exercised, and they exercise again, again, after holding out that he would not, to appoint senators. And it's not truly and would not have been truly a nomination process.

I would sincerely . . . Mr. Speaker, I don't often ask for the government to withdraw legislation, Mr. Speaker. And I said at the beginning I admire their chutzpah for even bringing it back on to the floor. But I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, if they care about democracy, if they care about constitutional change, let's have a plebiscite at the next provincial election on the Senate.

Let's put the option of abolishing the institution; this undemocratic, appointed institution on that ballot and see what the people think. The people may support an elected Senate. If they do support an elected Senate or they support abolishing the Senate, then let the next legislature initiate real constitutional change by resolution of this legislature as we are empowered by the constitution to do. Let's do that, Mr. Speaker. Why not do

that?

There is no urgency, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister has taken away the urgency. There are no Senate vacancies. There is no reason why there can't be democratic consultation and democratic constitutional change initiated by this legislature, Mr. Speaker. There is absolutely no reason why we cannot do that. That's what I call upon the government to do, to put some meaning in at least one of the words, Mr. Speaker.

We can't put any meaning, unilaterally we can't put any meaning into the word election. We unilaterally cannot put any meaning into the word nominee. But we can, Mr. Speaker — we can if we care to, if the government cares to — put some meaning into the word democratic, Mr. Speaker.

Those conclude my remarks. I know that the member from Regina Northeast has some comments to make, and so I will take my seat.

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

Mr. Broten: — With leave to request to introduce guests, please.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to introduce to all members of the Assembly someone seated in your gallery, and that's Mr. Bill Ziebart. Mr. Ziebart is a long-time family friend of my family's and he's lived in Saskatoon Northwest constituency with his wife Linda. He also has two children, David and Kyla.

Bill informs me this is his first trip or visit to the Legislative Assembly so it's a great honour and privilege to have him here with us today.

He's had a number of occupations in his life. Highly involved in the business community and in his community as a whole and also in his church. And I would ask . . . He's presently here . . . Well he's presently employed as the executive director of the Saskatchewan Association of Automotive Repairers. So I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Mr. Ziebart to the Assembly, please.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LeClerc: — I would also ask leave to follow the introduction.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. LeClerc: — I would also like to echo the member from the opposition. Bill is a good friend of mine, and I'm looking forward to having supper with him tonight. And he's involved on my executive and my fundraiser, and we've been good friends for years. And it is good to see him down here joining his legislator, legislation, and the fellow that he supports as his MLA. I welcome all members to give welcome to Mr. Bill Ziebart.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 60 — *The Senate Nominee Election Act* (continued)

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured and privileged to have the opportunity to rise in this House and participate in the debate on Bill No. 60, *The Senate Nominee Election Act*. It's an interesting Bill, Mr. Speaker. It's almost a waste of time really, when you look at the reality of what has occurred over the last few months. But the Senate has always been a topic of conversation wherever you go in Saskatchewan, whether it be in rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan.

In my past life, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity of working for a couple of members of parliament: Simon De Jong as his constituency assistant, and then later with Lorne Nystrom as his chief of staff. And during that experience I found probably a close relationship to the Senate at that time as being an issue that would often be discussed in Saskatchewan. I had a gentleman once tell me that talking about the Senate in Saskatchewan was sort of like talking about the weather — everybody talked about it, but nobody did anything about it.

And that's a little what we're seeing here now, Mr. Speaker. We have a Bill here suggesting a process to elect a nominee to the Senate — well, to a body that really provides absolutely no service to the reality of the political spectrum or the democratic process in Canada here. It's a body that's really, in reality — if we cut through all the frills around it — it's a body that's really a very lucrative, sophisticated, illustrious retirement program for old political hacks. And if you look at the make-up of the Senate you'll see that that's basically what it is. The prime ministers of the past have always taken the opportunity, prime ministers of the present have always taken the opportunity to present, to appoint their nominees to the Senate. It's interesting that they usually follow the same political lines as that of the prime minister.

In many cases the senators, they do good work. I won't say they don't do good work. I think most of them if not all of them are good, solid, honest people who believe in their roles and take their roles seriously, and they do provide good work. It's just the fact that the Senate itself doesn't really play a major role in the democracy of the great country of ours.

And it could be. I think there's opportunity to reform the Senate. I think there's opportunity to make the Senate be more effective and efficient, but it has to also be accountable. I believe the present system of appointing individuals to the Senate simply takes away that accountability. They're really not accountable to anybody. They're certainly not accountable to the taxpayers of this province and of this country which bear the cost of the operation of that Senate. So I think that there's an opportunity for us collectively across Canada to engage in a meaningful discussion, a meaningful debate about the role of the Senate, about the future of the Senate.

I think that the Senate in its present form serves virtually no use at all to our democratic process. That's why I probably believe that the real alternative to the Senate is to abolish it. It doesn't offer any real purpose in the present form. It doesn't really offer any meaningful dialogue as far as democracy is concerned. And I think there's an opportunity here to either in a meaningful way

...

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

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Wall | 2065 |
| Calvert | 2065 |
| Harpauer | 2065 |
| Junor | 2065 |
| Eagles | 2065 |
| McCall | 2066 |
| The Speaker | 2066 |
| Elhard | 2074 |
| Bjornerud | 2074 |
| Brotten | 2096 |
| LeClerc | 2097 |

PRESENTING PETITIONS

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Higgins | 2066 |
| Forbes | 2066 |
| Taylor | 2066 |
| Wotherspoon | 2066 |

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

| | |
|---|------|
| Hockeyville 2009 | |
| Wall | 2067 |
| Health Sector Leader Remembered | |
| Junor | 2067 |
| Labour Recruiting Drive | |
| Duncan | 2067 |
| Moose Jaw School Celebrates Centennial Kickoff | |
| Higgins | 2068 |
| Second Annual Premier's Ride | |
| Bradshaw | 2068 |
| United Way Spirit Awards | |
| Wotherspoon | 2068 |
| Saskatchewan's Economy | |
| Chisholm | 2069 |

QUESTION PERIOD

| | |
|---|------|
| Property Tax Relief | |
| Wotherspoon | 2069 |
| Krawetz | 2069 |
| Support for the Forestry Industry | |
| Vermette | 2070 |
| Stewart | 2070 |
| Support for Agriculture | |
| Atkinson | 2071 |
| Bjornerud | 2071 |
| Relationship with Federal Government | |
| Calvert | 2072 |
| Wall | 2072 |

POINT OF ORDER

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Gantefoer | 2074 |
| Atkinson | 2074 |

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

| | |
|--|------|
| Bill No. 72 — <i>The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008</i> | |
| Forbes | 2075 |
| Yates | 2076 |
| Belanger | 2081 |
| Harper | 2082 |
| Gantefoer (referral to committee) | 2084 |
| Bill No. 63 — <i>The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Amendment Act, 2008</i> | |
| Wotherspoon | 2084 |

| | |
|---|------|
| Bill No. 67 — <i>The Education Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2/)</i> | |
| <i>Loi n° 2 de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation</i> | |
| Wotherspoon | 2088 |
| Gantefoer (referral to committee) | 2090 |
| Bill No. 69 — <i>The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2008/</i> | |
| <i>Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l'exécution des ordonnances alimentaires</i> | |
| Higgins | 2090 |
| Bill No. 60 — <i>The Senate Nominee Election Act</i> | |
| Quennell | 2092 |
| Harper | 2097 |

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier

Hon. Bob Bjornerud
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Crown Corporations

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Information
Technology Office

Hon. June Draude
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

Hon. Wayne Elhard
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Provincial Secretary

Hon. Rod Gantfoer
Minister of Finance

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Minister of Environment

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of Municipal Affairs
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Education

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice
Attorney General

Hon. Rob Norris
Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Workers'
Compensation Board

Hon. Lyle Stewart
Minister of Enterprise and Innovation

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for Capital City Commission