



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Chartier, Danielle	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi)	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Lingenfelter, Dwain	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
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, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, 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
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 Minister of Agriculture, the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery I'd like to introduce the members to Chad MacPherson, general manager of the stock growers; and Dave Marit, president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. And I want to ask everyone to welcome them to their legislature.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and all the members in the legislature, I'd like to introduce a delegation that's seated in the west gallery. They are the individuals that work at Red Cross, through the Red Cross and through the Red Cross RespectEd program. And perhaps they could stand as I call their names.

We have with us today Mr. Norm Jakubowski, Richard Kies, Rebecca Benko, Dee Friday, Amanda Ulrich, Diane Francoeur, and Brad Hebert. These individuals are here today, of course, to kick off Anti-Bullying Week, national Anti-Bullying Week. And these individuals do a tremendous amount of work within the province on various fronts, and one of them of course is an anti-bullying strategy and campaign.

And I'd like all members of the legislature to welcome them here today to the legislature, as they are here to hear a member's statement being read in the future. Thank you.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition in support of wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that workers in community-based organizations, CBOs, in Saskatchewan have traditionally been underpaid. And many continue to earn poverty-level wages, and these low wages impact workers and result in high staff turnover. And the subsequent lack of caregiver continuity has a negative impact on the quality of care clients receive. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, these folks come from Canora, Yorkton, Saltcoats. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of a new long-term care facility in La Ronge. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately invest in the planning and construction of new long-term care beds in La Ronge.

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

It is signed by the good people of La Ronge and area. I so present.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition in support of fairness for Saskatchewan students through the necessary expansion of the graduate retention program. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately expand the graduate retention program to include master's and Ph.D. graduates.

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

Mr. Speaker, individuals who signed this petition are from communities all over Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present yet another petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind with respect to providing safe and affordable water, and who have yet not had any commitment of assistance. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to financially assist the town of Duck Lake residents for the good of their health and safety due to the exorbitant water rates being forced on them by a government agency, and that this government fulfills its commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the good residents of Duck Lake. I so present.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of maintaining quality health care services. Mr. Speaker, we all hope that the Saskatchewan government commits to adequate funding and the installation of good faith for the provincial bargaining process, Mr. Speaker. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintaining quality health care services and job security for all public health care providers.

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

And the petitions are signed by residents of Outlook, Beechy, Delisle, Mildred, Cudworth, Wakaw, and Rosetown. I so present.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise in support of a petition or to present a petition in support of affordable rents and housing in The Battlefords. Mr. Speaker:

The petitioners humbly pray that the honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to develop an affordable housing program that will result in a greater number of quality and affordable rental units to be made available to a greater number of people throughout The Battlefords, and that will implement a process of rent review or rent control to better protect tenants in a non-competitive housing environment.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are all from the city of North Battleford, the majority of whom reside in Killdeer Apartments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of their finances by the Sask Party. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to start managing our provincial finances responsibly and prudently to ensure that it does not continue its trend of massive budgetary shortfalls, runaway and unsustainable spending, equity stripping from our Crowns, and irresponsible revenue setting.

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

I present these on behalf of concerned residents of Regina. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Northern Drug and Gang Enforcement Unit

Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, in mid-September of this year, our government announced the northern drug and gang enforcement unit. For years now communities in the North have identified a need to establish a dedicated enforcement unit to work with partners to address the problems of illegal drug use and gang activities.

According to the 2007 police-reported crime data, the amount of crime rate in the northern administrative district was about six times higher than the corresponding provincial rate, and overall crime rate was more than four times higher.

After years of being ignored by the previous administration, our government responded to these concerns from northern communities by providing funding to the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and the Prince Albert Police Service to create this enforcement unit. Provincial funding to support this initiative totals \$380,000 in the 2009-10 year and will increase to \$760,000 in the '10-11 year.

Mr. Speaker, although this unit has only been operational for a month now, we are already hearing about the great work being done by them in the northern communities. On October 19th, the unit assisted RCMP in La Loche with the arrest of a 41-year-old man. Members seized marijuana, cash, and rifles. Then on October 27th, officers made another arrest in Buffalo Narrows where, after searching a home, officers discovered cocaine and cash. Finally on October 29th, officers seized marijuana, cash, and a rifle from a home in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating the seven members of this unit on their first arrests. On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, we thank them for their hard work and dedication up north.

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

National Medicare Week

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November 16 to 20 marks National Medicare Week. This week is designed to allow Canadians to pledge their support for public health care. The Canadian Health Coalition has designed an online form where Canadians can sign on, and it reads as follows:

As a Canadian, I believe access to quality health care must be based on need, not ability to pay.

Our public health care reflects those values of equality and fairness.

We must improve our public health care for everyone, instead of expanding private for-profit services that benefit only a few.

I pledge my support for the protection and improvement of public health care in Canada.

So far more than 6,000 people have signed the pledge, including Shirley Douglas, Maude Barlow, and Allan Blakeney. According to a Nanos research poll, 90 per cent of Canadians remain supportive of public health care — 90 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

This pledge and this entire week is a very important initiative. Attacks on medicare are occurring across the country and indeed right here in our province. The Wall government, the Sask Party government, has told us during this session of the legislature that they are willing to pay a premium to ship Saskatchewan citizens out of the province for their surgeries. Instead of investing in the public health care system right here at home, they are willing to finance the surgical tourism industry in BC [British Columbia]. This is a blatant encouragement of a two-tier health care system, ensuring that those who can finance their own trip to BC jump to the front of the line.

In the light of these recent events, it is essential, now more than ever, that we tell this government that the people of Saskatchewan support medicare and its principles.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members and citizens to join me in signing the pledge to support medicare and in celebrating National Medicare Week.

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

Good News for Saskatchewan

Mr. LeClerc: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I got up this morning, I thought to myself, self, it's a great day to be alive. The Riders are going to the Western final. I live in the greatest province in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, it's November 16, and I didn't have to scrape my windshield.

Mr. Speaker, I think Saskatchewan people are feeling the same way. You only have to look as far as the local car dealership to see that, Mr. Speaker. They sold more cars in a single month than any other dealership in Canada. The owner says, in his 20 years of business, he's never seen anything like it.

I even have more good news, Mr. Speaker. In September, Saskatchewan had the highest increase in Canada in manufacturing sales. Now when I look at the grumpy feeling of faces of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and then look at today's sunny skies, I just want to sing:

I can see clearly now the rain has gone.
I can see all obstacles in my way.
Gone are the dark clouds that made me blind.
It's going to be a bright, bright sunny day.

Turn those frowns upside down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day for Tolerance

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, November 16, marks International Day for Tolerance. Fourteen years ago today, UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization] member states, of which Canada is one, adopted the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance.

This declaration provides for the meaning and the practice of tolerance and lays out the following ideas. Tolerance is respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression, and our ways of being human. At one time, tolerance used to refer mainly to ethnic and religious differences, but it can also be applied to gender, sexual orientation, people with physical and intellectual disabilities, and other differences too.

As the UN [United Nations] quite simply puts it, tolerance is harmony in difference. This declaration makes it clear that practicing tolerance does not mean that we tolerate social injustice, nor does it mean we need to abandon or weaken our own convictions. Rather it means we are free to adhere to our own convictions and need to accept that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that we humans, who are naturally diverse in all kinds of ways, have the right to live in peace and to be as we are. One might say tolerance means treating others the way we would like to be treated.

Intolerance comes in many forms and includes outright injustice and violence. But discrimination and marginalization of vulnerable groups are also common forms of intolerance. This declaration points out — with globalization, increasing mobility and communication, large-scale migration, and displacement of populations among other things — practising tolerance today is more important than ever.

In our role as elected members, how can we practice and promote tolerance? We need to think about our words, our actions, and sometimes our inactions, and the legislation we propose.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members today to join with me in celebrating International Day for Tolerance and to consider the role we play as elected members in enhancing tolerance in our province. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Martin Glackin Honoured for Years of Service

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a sunny prairie day, Martin Glackin was honoured by the RM [rural municipality] of Reford which he served not only as a councillor and reeve, but also as an employee.

Martin started working for the RM in 1951 building roads and continued until 1959. Martin became a councillor in 1968, assumed the position of reeve in 1978 which he held until he retired in 2002. He was very proud of the many accomplishments of the RM during his time on council. The one that was most notable was the building of the Tramping Lake causeway.

[13:45]

Martin was a hands-on reeve, making sure everything ran smoothly for the ratepayers and the council. Martin was very dedicated, putting in lots of hours checking out and supervising every project Reford had, whether it was the building of a causeway or putting in an approach. Martin was not only worried about the roads, but also the ditches. He tried to make sure that the ditches remained free of any glass containers or cans that could potentially cause harm.

The RM of Reford wanted a way of recognizing Martin's contribution to the RM which would mean something to Martin, but also something that would last for years to come. On August 10th, the RM erected the sign Martin Glackin Road on the newest road in the RM. Congratulations and thank you to Martin Glackin on the many years of service to the RM of Reford.

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

National Anti-Bullying Week

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, November 15th to the 21st is National Anti-Bullying Week. The Canadian Red Cross, through their RespectEd program, is raising awareness of this critical issue for our youth.

Through education, youth learn that bullying is not normal behaviour, and that no one deserves to be bullied or treated with disrespect. Unfortunately we know that millions of youth suffer in silence because they find themselves without support or the skills needed to handle these situations. The impact of youth bullying harassment ranges from anxiety to missing school, to illness, to a tragic event of suicide. The Red Cross RespectEd program is active in many schools and school divisions across Saskatchewan. Parents, staff, and students learn that bullying is not just a school issue; it's a community issue that comes to school.

Two young women, Brea Lawrenson and Braiden Turner, who were bullied in their youth, are the national spokespersons for the Canadian Red Cross RespectEd program. They are visiting schools across Canada, targeting students in grades 5 to 8. They wrote a song, "Black and Purple," which tells about the pain of both victims and bullies and the emotional and sometimes physical harm bullying does.

Mr. Speaker, it is our obligation to empower our youth to support each other, and in doing so create safer environments for everyone. The outcome we are all looking for is a bully-free province. I would like to commend the efforts of the Red Cross and the provincial RespectEd program in combating youth bullying in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

November

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to inform the Assembly of the worldwide movement of November — the month formerly known as November and "mo" for

moustache. Movember is changing the face of men's health.

You may have noticed the early stages of a fantastic cop 'stache on the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy or the caterpillar warming the upper lip of the Minister of Justice. In fact, if you look close, Mr. Speaker, very close at many members and staff who have joined the Legislative Push Brooms, our Movember team, you will see the start of a moustache — some who have had to shave their mos in order to regrow a new mo, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Movember is all about raising funds for Prostate Cancer Canada. One in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. It is the most common cancer to affect Canadian men. Prostate Cancer Canada uses the funds raised to educate the public about the disease, to support people who have been affected, and to fund research into prevention, detection, and prostate cancer treatment.

Mr. Speaker, the moustache has long been a symbol of a rugged man, from Wyatt Earp to Tom Selleck. Movember sends a message that prostate cancer is a non-discriminating disease that can affect even the manliest of men.

I would like to invite everyone to give generously to any mo out there that they see this month. They are changing the face of men's health, one 'stache at a time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Livestock Producers

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, the agriculture industry in the province, and especially livestock industry, is being hit with a perfect storm: higher input costs, whether it's feed or the fuel needed in the production operation; at the same time, borders are being closed for much of our livestock products; at the same time, prices are low.

My question to the minister who said last Thursday, and I quote, "The potash industry has slowed right down and we also have restraints right now." To the question being asked by many producers: when will this minister come forward with a meaningful program to see that our livestock producers are protected this winter? Or will they, like other members of our society, suffer the consequences of the waste and mismanagement of this government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll maybe do a quick review for the member opposite because he missed a number of years in this province and things have changed here.

The government actually pays some attention to rural Saskatchewan, not like the 16 years previous. He might need to be reminded, Mr. Speaker, that we put a \$70 million cattle and hog support loan program in place. In fact the last of those

cheques went out in July — a short three months ago, Mr. Speaker.

Did it solve all the problems out there in rural Saskatchewan in the livestock sector? Not for a minute. But I'll tell you what it did do. It did a lot more than doing nothing like the NDP [New Democratic Party] did for 16 years.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is correct. Some things have changed. We did have balanced budgets. Cattle production was increasing. It's now reduced, and hog production as well.

My question to the minister, who is a very good friend with Ottawa and the Prime Minister. And I know that this government has run out of money. That's an admission they made last week with the announcement that we're now in deficit and that we now have spent up the \$2.3 billion left. In a quote that the minister made in the Lloydminster newspaper, he said:

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

End of quote. I wonder, while they're shaking in their boots in Ottawa, have you managed to get any money for the producers in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, actually we have got some money. We brought into place a water program last year, and it started out to be \$15 million for the southwest . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Allow the minister to respond to the member's question. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition laughs about the water program. And yet the NDP, for four or five years, did nothing when there was a drought in southwest Saskatchewan.

We designed a water program, Mr. Speaker, \$6 million originally and \$9 million federally. That's where the federal government come to the table. We did a rebate program for gophers. They're also assisting with things like that.

Mr. Speaker, when the uptake for the water program was so great — and actually the applications amounted to \$29 million — what did we do? We went to Ottawa and asked them to cost share it and we put that amount of money in. We didn't cut the program off at the 15 million. We honoured our commitment, give that to the people of southwest Saskatchewan. And you know, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, the farmers and ranchers in southwest Saskatchewan seemed to like that program.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — To the Minister of Agriculture. And as has been indicated, the number of hogs being produced in this province, the breeding herd is down — also for cattle — and that will continue unless there's help for livestock producers this winter.

I understand that in the past year the minister and the Sask Party government, a year ago, gave half a bale per cow to farmers. But he may not know it or the government may not know it, but that half bale has been eaten up by the cows, and people are wondering what is going to happen this winter.

To the minister: the Liberal government of Ontario got billions of dollars for the auto industry; the Liberal government in British Columbia got huge payments for the forest industry. When will this minister come forward with a meaningful program to help support this industry which is in danger of collapsing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, about the education tax issue in the province of Saskatchewan. For many years at SARM convention, the previous government was lobbied for help with the education tax on farm and ranch lands. What did they do about it, Mr. Speaker? They said the status quo isn't on and didn't, long term, address that problem.

Mr. Speaker, as producers, whether you're on the grain side or the cattle side right now, you're going to pay your taxes. And every producer in this province, unless their assessment has gone up dramatically, is finding it far cheaper to pay their education tax on farm land.

Mr. Speaker, there's other areas. The hog TAP [targeted assistance program] program that we brought in place just lately with the blessing of the federal government, who gives hog producers an advance on their AgriStability program. Something not done by the previous government; in fact, I would say not even asked for by the previous government.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is saying we get nothing from Ottawa. How would he know? Him and his former colleague walked out on most meetings when they were actually designing these programs.

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

Severance and Present Employment of Former Public Servant

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, people are now learning how badly the Sask Party has mismanaged our province's finances. We all remember when the Premier brought in Garnet Garven to be his deputy minister. The pattern of the Sask Party is to bring in their friends, find out that they don't like the job they're doing, fire them, and then give them severance. We've

seen this with Tim Korol and Allan Hansen and Terry Coleman.

To the Premier: does he still stand by his statement that he made to this House that Garnet Garven was paid no severance?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Members will realize that if you continue to interfere, you're taking away from your question period time. I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, this government is like no other . . . like every other government in the country. It is unique in many ways, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the previous administration terminated people every single year of their administration — in 1993, 121; 1994, 32; 1996, 176; and so on right up to the present, Mr. Speaker. This government is exactly the same. People will come and people will go. When people are outplaced by this government, they will be treated with dignity, compassion, and grace, Mr. Speaker. We will work within the scope of the law to ensure that they receive an appropriate, fair, and compassionate settlement in a timely manner, Mr. Speaker.

We will not discuss individual cases or individual matters, whether there was or was not just cause, because in most cases in law there is not. But people can see what is paid out. There is no secret what is paid out. We will continue to handle the matters exactly as they should be handled, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — The Sask Party hasn't stopped paying off their friends; they're just getting sneakier about it. Garnet Garven has joined the Public Policy Forum as the person running the Western office — the very same Western office that this government is paying for. Will the Premier just admit that the \$600,000 the Sask Party is spending on this branch office of a think tank is nothing other than a soft landing for Garnet Garven?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity to provide an update on the Public Policy Forum. Mr. Speaker, this is a reputable Public Policy Forum. It was established in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. This organization was looking for a Western office. They looked at places like Vancouver or Calgary and, Mr. Speaker, we're delighted to say that their Western office is located right here in Regina, Mr. Speaker. We think that that demonstrates the leadership that Saskatchewan is now playing, not just in the West, but right across the country.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have come forward with \$600,000. Mr. Speaker, that should come as no surprise to the members opposite because in question 337 that was asked, we responded. They have that information, Mr. Speaker. We're serving the

interests of the people of this province, and that includes taking an aggressive approach on issues of public policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can just imagine how delighted they are. The government was looking for a soft landing for Garnet Garven, and the public policy institute was looking for a Western Canadian office. So we have \$600,000 and the Sask Party can claim no connection between Mr. Garven leaving and this money going to set up a branch office, but that is as unbelievable, or as believable as spending a third of a million dollars on Doug Emsley for additional spam, Mr. Speaker.

So to the Premier: why are two Sask Party insiders like Emsley and Garven getting almost \$1 million between them, when this government is running close to or more than \$1 billion deficit, and it's cutting money and services left, right, and centre, Mr. Speaker?

[14:00]

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that we have a government policy to provide out-of-scope employees receiving notice of termination with an offer of severance based on common law principles. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of good people that have worked for this government and for members opposite. I think from today's perspective the current member from Douglas Park and the Leader of the Opposition should remember what he said in November of 1991. He said government needs “. . . people who better reflect the needs of the government.” Mr. Speaker, we're making sure that we have an opportunity to have people that are . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order. The minister may complete her response.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity now. Our government is committed to strengthening people for . . . the public servants. And we are looking at opportunities through the Transparency International Canada Inc. and the federal accountability initiative and looking for a public integrity commissioner. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased with the work our government is doing with our employees. They're very important to our government as we're going forward, and we value every one of them.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I've asked three questions and I've gotten three ministers: Justice, Advanced Education, and the Public Service Commission. So I'm going to try a fourth question and maybe someone will actually answer the question.

We have a man by the name of Garnet Garven that was hired by the Sask Party as soon as they came to office. That man was later dismissed, severed, whatever, and sent back to the University of Regina, but he didn't have a place to go to. At the time the government said that they were going to set up a Western office for this policy forum.

Can the government confirm . . . Can they just tell us the truth. Just tell us the truth. Is the \$600,000 for the Public Policy Forum a severance pay to Garnet Garven? Just tell us the truth.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I would ask that when members are placing a question that the question be given in a manner that is not implying an individual is not being actually truthful. Members know the rules, not to imply indirectly what they would do directly. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity. The investment, that's a three-year investment in the Public Policy Forum, no, Mr. Speaker, it's in no way as the member opposite would suggest. This is an investment in the future of the people of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Future of Regina and Moose Jaw Casinos

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will soon learn the details of just how badly this government has mismanaged the provincial budget. Unrealistic revenue projections, runaway spending are getting to be the financial hallmark of this government. And in recent weeks the government has seemed so strapped for cash that it appears to be operating out of desperation rather than some good old common sense.

And on that point, Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that the budget situation has become so bad that this government is currently considering the sale of Casino Regina and Moose Jaw?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the government will release its mid-year report on Thursday. And certainly we can report, as we have last week, that challenges in our revenue projections from the lack of sales of potash are significant. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a significant challenge for our government and our administration. And I have to reiterate that while we have a revenue challenge, the province's economy is doing very well, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we heard just over the weekend that Saskatchewan dealer was actually leading the country in the sales of cars. And that's very significant, and I hope that members will take that into account.

Mr. Speaker, we've been leading in manufacturing one month over last — September over August — of 16 per cent, and that

is very good. Mr. Speaker, all of these things point to future opportunities for our administration and the people of this province. And we will have the budgetary capacity to realize that.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, we never said that the economy and the private sector is having problems. It's this government and their mismanagement of the government revenue that's the problem.

Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that Ken Thomas, the First Nations economic development consultant, has been meeting with First Nations leaders around Saskatchewan telling them that the government wants to sell Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw to SIGA [Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority Inc.], and telling them that the government could use the proceeds from such a sale to finance the domed stadium project here in Regina.

So, Mr. Speaker, obviously the minister avoided the answer, talked about their financial problems. So by that I would almost guess that the answer is yes, they have been looking at this.

Is the government in negotiations with this or any other group for the sale of Casino Regina and Casino Moose Jaw?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House and address that question. It's incorrect to assume anything with regard to ongoing negotiations and discussions. While it is true that a number of parties have expressed interest over the years — this year and in years past — in acquiring those properties, no decisions have been made whatsoever, none at all.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are getting concerned because this Premier seems to have a considerable preponderance, I guess, towards big projects — clean coal, nuclear reactors, the CO₂ with the United States, and the domed stadium. People want to know how these projects are going to be financed and paid for.

And when my colleague from Regina Elphinstone asked the other day about this question connected to Casinos Regina and Moose Jaw, the minister said out in the media that we'll look at that, of the casinos picking up the operating or overexpenditure in a domed stadium.

And since its creation, we have to look at the Gaming Corp. And it's returned \$356 million in profits into the coffers of the Government of Saskatchewan that provides benefits for taxpayers.

So, Mr. Speaker, still not a straight answer from the Minister of Finance and not a straight answer from the minister responsible.

Because what the question was is, what negotiations, if any negotiations, are being currently conducted, and why would this government be prepared to trade some strong annual dividends for these profitable operations for a one-time cash injection into their coffers unless they're absolutely desperate for cash?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, we can be a lot briefer in our answer than the member in her question. The casinos are not for sale.

Only the NDP would ask for the results of the feasibility study currently under way before the feasibility study is actually finished. Mr. Speaker, we'll have to wait the outcome, but the casinos are not for sale.

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

Provincial Finances

Mr. Wotherspoon: — A question to the Minister of Finance. It has to do with his March budget, the most irresponsible budget in the history of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, on November 10th in this House, the minister admitted that revenues are down sharply from his budget forecast. He went on to say, and I quote, "And we are coping with the downfall in revenues . . . by using some funds from the Crown sector."

My question is this. When he announced the first quarter financial results, the minister admitted to stripping \$480 million out of the Crowns to help balance his disastrous budget. How much beyond the \$480 million does he plan to drain when the mid-year report gets tabled this week?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday we will release our mid-year report and we will have all the details of the magnitude of the challenge that we face and the solutions that we are going to bring to bear in order to meet that challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly would be remiss if I didn't freely admit that our budget, particularly in the forecast for potash revenues, has been significantly off in the first quarter, and it's going to be off by further numbers in mid-year because we still haven't sold potash. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a significant challenge for the province of Saskatchewan, and we're going to make sure that we meet that challenge.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to meet that challenge to ensure that we have a balanced budget, and we're not going to meet the challenge by the way that government did in the past in 2004. When they faced a challenge, they raised taxes. We said we won't do that, and we intend to keep that.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we should be clear. This

government does not have a revenue problem, with over \$9 billion coming in, flowing in to coffers. It's a simple, simple problem over there and it's one of mismanagement.

Mr. Speaker, the March provincial budget was so irresponsible and has been so discredited that the mid-year financial report will almost be like getting a new provincial budget. The minister is getting a do over, a financial mulligan if you will, Mr. Speaker. So he needs to stop blowing smoke, start spouting the truth, straight answers to straight questions.

Mr. Speaker, every dollar the government strips from the Crowns to help balance its irresponsible budget is a dollar the Crowns don't have to keep rates low for Saskatchewan people and business. The public has a right to know. How much more money does the Minister of Finance plan to strip from the Crown corporations to try to hide for his own . . . [inaudible]?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday all of this information will be laid out in front of the people of Saskatchewan, in front of the members of the opposition. And they will understand completely the challenge that we face and the steps we intend to take in order to meet that challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the members opposite are really seriously asking the people of Saskatchewan to believe that they would have predicted that potash revenues would approach virtually nothing. It is easy to say in hindsight that they would have put a different number in place. In hindsight I would have put a different . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you. But really, Mr. Speaker, there are two stories in the province: the potash challenge that has a significant impact primarily on the revenues of government, but it also has a significant impact on the potash corporations themselves. And in spite of that, they continue to invest on increased infrastructure at record levels, some \$7 billion, and that's a good indication about the belief that this industry has in the future of this province.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — As an article said this weekend, Mr. Speaker, again that minister is being disingenuous. This opposition has been crystal clear from day one that this budget was tabled as it relates to our concerns around potash revenues.

Mr. Speaker, about a year ago the government sold its 49 per cent interest in Saskferco. The sale provided a net profit of \$783 million for Crown Investments Corporation. That was money Crowns like SaskPower and SaskEnergy could have used to help maintain and build their provincial-wide networks while keeping rates low, Mr. Speaker.

Can the minister confirm that by the end of the current budget year virtually all of the \$783 million profit will have been squandered to try to cover up the mistakes of his irresponsible budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, implied in the member's question is that we have introduced a lot of spending that isn't needed or wasn't appropriate or wasn't appreciated by the people of Saskatchewan. And I would like to know which kind of things would the opposition have suggested we not do. Would they suggest that we not raise taxes? Would they suggest that we shouldn't have tax relief for our citizens . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the members of the opposition to give the minister the same opportunity to respond as was given to the member from Regina Rosemont to ask the question. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past, the opposition's answer to any of these challenges was to raise taxes. Mr. Speaker, what we have done is important to the people of Saskatchewan. What we have done is the biggest property tax decrease in the history of the province. What we have done is \$300 million of real savings for people who pay taxes in the province, mostly the most vulnerable. Which of those things would you suggest we not do in order to meet the budget targets?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority Introduces Reusable Bags

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Friday, I had the occasion to visit the South Albert liquor store in Regina where I had the pleasure of encouraging customers to BYOB. That's right, Mr. Speaker. I encourage customers to bring your own bag when shopping at Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority stores in Saskatchewan.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] has launched a new, reusable bag for customers looking for a greener alternative to carry out their purchases. The bag holds from one to six bottles and sells for 97 cents, all taxes included, at all SLGA liquor stores in the province. These new bags, which are made from recycled materials, are a small and simple way SLGA customers can help the environment while also providing a durable, handy tote to carry their purchases.

With the introduction of these new reusable bags, Mr. Speaker, SLGA will eliminate single-use plastic bags at its liquor store once current stocks are depleted. Paper bags, in addition to the reusable bag, will continue to be available. Although the bags

were only announced three days ago, they are proving to be popular amongst customers. I encourage all members to visit their nearest SLGA liquor store and of course purchase one of the reusable bags.

Mr. Speaker, SLGA is happy to provide this option to customers in its liquor stores. The introduction of reusable bags at SLGA stores is another way our government is helping ordinary people help the environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the minister for sending across a copy of her ministerial statement before the House started today. And I have to say this is a good initiative, Mr. Speaker, because we know that there is lots of concerns for the environment, and the more we are using reusable bags, the better for all and the better for everyone in the province.

But Mr. Speaker, I do have some concerns with this. I received a letter in April of this year, and also a copy that had been sent to the Premier for a response. And, Mr. Speaker, instead of the minister saying BYOB, it should be BYOQB — bring your own Quebec bag — Mr. Speaker, because that's who the contract was awarded to. Even though a young group of entrepreneurs who are providing recyclable bags right across Western Canada — very successful at it, very innovative — had put a bid in for this contract, they were denied, and the contract was awarded to a Quebec company.

So in the questions that were raised with me is, why would this government, when the bid that was put in by this company of young entrepreneurs . . . And the question he asked me was, our bid was professional, competitive, and followed the specs required by Liquor and Gaming, but they were notified that the contract had been awarded to a Quebec company. And they went on and said they've dealt in business. They know what to expect that they aren't going to win every contract, but they felt they had done a very good job and were very competitive. And they said they were shocked that this contract was awarded to an out-of-province business.

And if a Saskatchewan company would have been honoured with the bid, it would have created jobs, taxable revenue, and all the money surrounding the product would have stayed in our province, Mr. Speaker.

And his question's not only to me, but to the government when he forwarded the letter to them:

Why are you spending money on marketing and offering tax concessions to entice out-of-province young people like myself to come to Saskatchewan when your own government isn't supporting the idea? While your initiative to enrich Saskatchewan and its people is clear, I must say that Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming has contradicted the efforts by giving its contract to an out-of-province company. Please consider strengthening Saskatchewan and its government by supporting local business first.

Mr. Speaker, these young people have family in Moose Jaw. They were anxious to do business from the city of Moose Jaw. And it's extremely disappointing when the government's own Sask-first policy, which they had made — you know, big media conference; we're supporting Saskatchewan — and then they deny people in our community and young people, Mr. Speaker, to grow and put down roots in their community and build their business here at home in favour of someone from out-of-province. Mr. Speaker, a good initiative with misplaced priorities by this government.

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

New Funding Standard for Day Programs

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to advise the House that there is a new funding standard that has been developed for the province's day programs for people with intellectual disabilities.

As a result of this new funding standard, people with intellectual disabilities will have access to better funded, more personalized supports to meet their needs. The new standard will be tested over the next six months as part of the \$588,000 pilot project involving eight community-based organizations that deliver day program services in Lloydminster, Meadow Lake, North Battleford, Preeceville, Regina, Weyburn, Wilkie, and Yorkton.

Mr. Speaker, the piloting of a new funding standard for day programs demonstrates once again our government's commitment to provide quality supports to people with disabilities. The new funding standard matches day program funding with the assessed needs of people with intellectual disabilities. The old funding model was based on cost per space which did not take into account individual differences in the support needs of clients. Mr. Speaker, full province-wide implementation of the new standard, across all day programs funded by the Ministry of Social Services, is expected to occur in the 2010-11 fiscal year.

It is expected that implementation of this new standard will provide funding to CBOs for up to 170 full- and part-time jobs. The new funding standard is the result of the \$7.7 million investment from the province, part of our government's four-year, \$76.9 million commitment to eliminate the wait-list to people with intellectual disabilities who require residential day and specialized programs that meet their assessed needs.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed new funding model and standard has the potential to be one of the most significant enhancements to day program funding for people with intellectual disabilities in more than a decade. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the statement today. And I appreciate the minister sending a copy over for me. And I know that the people who live with intellectual disabilities and their families will be looking forward to this information with interest, particularly

around the funding standard.

I note that there were seven communities. We were just mentioning Saskatoon wasn't part of it. We're not sure why Saskatoon wasn't part of the pilot because we know people in Saskatoon are very interested in this. And whether it's some of the local MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] on the government side did not see it as an important issue, we think it is important that it's piloted in all the major communities.

We note that there's 170 jobs created in the CBO sector through this. We hope that, as I've raised quite often in the House, that we have concerns about the quality of pay that people in the CBO sector receive. And we hope that this is not off-loading, that in fact these people will be paid a reasonable wage and not poverty wages.

We are also concerned, especially in this week of all weeks, that announcements like this will be sustainable. We know that through a highly irresponsible budget last March, this government is facing major issues. And this announcement that was made in that budget now will have to face scrutiny yet again.

I would also like to point out, Mr. Speaker, this is like a part B. While there is a new funding standard, and we appreciate that technicality and for those who live with it, it's more than a technicality. But in the House, this is a ministerial statement that we've seen many parts of this, prior to, in many ways. And I'm not sure whether we will see part C next spring when the pilot becomes a real program. We saw it as part of the budget and part of some of the announcements. Now we're seeing part B; now we'll see part C.

So with that, we'll watch carefully to make sure that the expectations that has been created by this government to those who are living with intellectual disabilities, that that becomes a reality, and they're not disappointed sorely in the weeks ahead. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 310 and 311.

The Speaker: — Questions 310, 311 tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Answers to questions 312 and 313 are ordered.

The Speaker: — 312 and 313 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answer to questions 314 through 339.

The Speaker: — 314 through 339 tabled. I recognize the Government Whip, question 340.

Mr. Weekes: — Answers to questions 340 and 341 are ordered.

The Speaker: — Questions 340 and 341 are ordered. Order. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answer to questions 342 and 344.

The Speaker: — Questions 342 to 344 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Answer to question 345 is ordered.

The Speaker: — Question 345 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answer to question 346.

The Speaker: — Question 346 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — The answer to question 347 is ordered.

The Speaker: — Question 347 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — I wish to table the answers to questions 348 through 406.

The Speaker: — Questions 348 through 406 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 105 — *The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2009*

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2009*.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill being put forward proposes only one amendment to *The SaskEnergy Act*, the governing legislation for SaskEnergy. The sole amendment is that the debt limit contained in section 42(1) be changed from \$1.3 billion to \$1.7 billion.

SaskEnergy's legislated borrowing limit has not been adjusted since 1992. Taking into account anticipated expenditures for SaskEnergy's growing business and its existing debt, a review of this limit indicates that SaskEnergy could exceed the current debt limit of \$1.3 billion. It is recommended that fixing borrowing limit contained in the Act be increased to accommodate the potential need to access funds beyond what the current Act contemplates.

The proposed new borrowing levels will encompass SaskEnergy's existing debt, as well as provide additional capacity to help support economic development in our province and future growth for the corporation including: \$148 million

for Saskatchewan-based business development with the expectation of leveraging additional project capital from private sector partners; some \$422 million in system expansion, maintenance, and accommodating customer growth; and, Mr. Speaker, \$150 million to finance gas marketing opportunities for SaskEnergy's subsidiary, Bayhurst Gas Ltd.

Mr. Speaker, I would note that SaskEnergy has been very active in supporting our government's agenda of working with the private sector to benefit our province. It has an excellent working relationship with our plumbing and heating community, with contractors, with our producer and industrial community, and with companies like ATCO. This extra capacity will allow them to continue this good work, Mr. Speaker.

No other changes to the Act are proposed at this time. For example, SaskEnergy will still require cabinet approval to borrow the funds.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2009*. Thank you.

[14:30]

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Enterprise has moved second reading of Bill No. 105, the Saskatchewan energy amendment Act, 2009. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to rise and make comments on the amendments to *The SaskEnergy Act*, and especially in light of a number of the questions that were just raised during question period, and of course with the expectation of the mid-term financial report of this week. Now I don't believe the minister has said exactly what day it will be. I could take a guess at that, but I won't do that. We will just suffice to say that it will be this week that the mid-term financial will be released.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear the minister comment on precisely what the dollars would be dedicated towards, but the items that he listed that were priorities for SaskEnergy — there was 148 million for Saskatchewan business opportunity, 422 for business expansion. And I missed the third one; I think it was 138. Also . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . One fifty? The minister corrected me, Mr. Speaker. It's 150 million.

So these are a number of the things that the corporation is looking at, and with expectations that they will exceed their current legislated limit, debt limit, of \$1.3 billion. And what they are doing is looking to increase that by 400 million in this change to the legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things that raises questions. I think first and foremost when we look at the financial reports, when the government has mismanaged the financial situation here in the province, one of their first recourses was to not admit that they had made some mistakes and maybe been spending a little too quickly, little too much. We won't get into priorities here, although there are a number of questions there.

But every time they have run into problems, they have gone to the Crown corporations for more money. And we saw that again just after the first quarter financial report was released, the government went again to the Crown corporations. Now the Crown corporations, they are a business entity. And they have always been expected to operate such as a business entity, in fact with higher scrutiny than many private companies.

Because they are publicly owned and they are a Crown corporation in the province of Saskatchewan, citizens feel that they have a right to know the information. And citizens are entitled to know that information, Mr. Speaker. They're not there to be used as someone's piggy bank.

So when the government keeps going back to the Crown corporation for special dividends, is how they refer to it, it raises a number of concerns. And then when we see this piece of legislation where there's a need to increase the borrowing capability of SaskEnergy, when the government has taken almost 500 million out of the Crown corporations just this year and, Mr. Speaker, you also have to realize we're only accounting for half the year.

And we can go into all kinds of what-ifs, but worst-case scenario, what if there's no potash sold for the rest of the year, which the Minister of Finance has alluded to? That means that there will be more difficulties as we move along through the year. We will get more details on the mid-term financial report. But all in all, Mr. Speaker, it comes right down to the Crown corporations are business entities that need to provide service to the people of Saskatchewan, and they need to have the ability to operate as a business. And that means maintaining retained earnings, maintaining operating capital that's appropriate, and maintaining a debt level that is better than, or a worst-case scenario, meets industry standards.

And I understand there will always be some fairly large outlays of cash because the projects that any of the Crown corporations take on by no means are small, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan, fairly small population over a fairly large geographic area. We're all well aware of that. So when we talk about Crowns having that public policy mandate of providing low-cost, affordable services consistently across the province, it's something that we have always strove to achieve in this province, no matter who is in government. We have done that and, Mr. Speaker, as advances have been made, the Crown corporations have responded to those demands and to those requirements by Saskatchewan citizens.

So when we see this debt limit being increased substantially, 400 million. Well, Mr. Speaker, if CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] has the money, instead of coming into the General Revenue Fund, why could not CIC have supported SaskEnergy with projects that they have on the go? Why is there a need to increase debt?

And there's a number of questions too. If the finances of the provincial government, the Sask Party provincial government, continue to deteriorate the way they have with their really outrageous revenue projections, which many people warned against the day the budget came down . . . And I know the Minister of Finance had some trouble recalling that today when he was up answering questions in question period. But you can

go back into *Hansard*, you can go back into newspapers of the day, you can go back into transcripts of radio newscasts from that day, and you will see many, many people that were surprised by the projections that this government made for revenues in this budget year.

And already, once we've seen the first quarter report, already we were seeing those revenue projections downgraded, but still with some expectations and some feel that we would see a turnaround. Well here we are at the mid-term report expected to be released this week, and again we are looking at a downgrading in projections of revenue for the provincial government.

So instead of making some more conservative — small “c,” Mr. Speaker — projections in the budget, they have just fallen back on hoping and fingers crossed that these \$2 billion in revenue would float in the same as it had last year. And, Mr. Speaker, the potash revenues last year and the projections for this current year were I think referred to as an anomaly by many people because if you look at the five-year average of potash revenues, you will see that we're right around 200, maybe 250 million, Mr. Speaker.

So to all of a sudden do a projection of \$1.9 billion as just being the expected norm — heck, it was a windfall on the Sask Party's first year. And they had a great time spending money. But you know what? That's part of the problem with being reliant on a resource-based economy. You always want to expand that economy. And I know the Premier has talked a number of times about the innovation economy and the CO₂, but these are big projects.

And when the province is running into financial difficulty now and in their normal GRF [General Revenue Fund] budgeting, it raises concerns all the way around because now they have to start making decisions.

So the other thing, Mr. Speaker, is when we've seen this Sask Party government rely so heavily on the Crown corporations, there's always a concern of stripping assets out of the Crown corporations. We have seen them go forward with their Sask-first policy — well for the Crowns, anyway. Now in departments, as I just noted, SLGA, they awarded contracts out of the province, even though there was a contract and a bid internally. Some young people that reside in my community, they were denied for a company. And a company in Quebec was chosen over them.

The government has expressed a strong concern for Crowns focusing purely on the province of Saskatchewan, their Sask-first policy, which is all fine and good. But we have seen them sell off some profitable investments, SaskEnergy included with Heritage Gas. There's been a number of areas where they have cleaned up — just pure, ideological sense. Never mind if it's a good investment. Never mind if it's returning money to the province of Saskatchewan. It falls outside the boundaries of Saskatchewan, so it can't be good for the Crowns anyway, but not for the rest of the government, obviously.

So that raises questions. And as their finances continue to deteriorate, will we see this government continually go back to the piggy bank that's called Crown Investments Corporation,

which is a holding company for all of these Crowns? And if this is purely the reason for the borrowing limit to be increased at SaskEnergy, then there would be many, many people across this province that are dead set against it.

If SaskEnergy has requirements, if SaskEnergy has some large projects coming up, then they need to go about it as a business would with CIC and the Crown corporation — figure out the financing, figure out what's doable and what isn't, and move ahead. Not have the government continually withdrawing money from the Crown corporations. They have to have a certain amount of cash and a certain amount of equity there to be able to operate how the people of Saskatchewan expect them to operate. And they aren't the piggy bank for the Saskatchewan Party government.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that many, many of my colleagues have a number of questions. It's a short Bill. But it raises an awful lot of concern, and it raises a number of questions that will need to be asked. And, Mr. Speaker, with that being said, we will have to do some discussing. But I know my colleagues are anxious to speak to this Bill, and for now I will adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 105. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 106 — *The Labour Market Commission Repeal Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to rise today to present to the House for second reading *The Labour Market Commission Repeal Act*. As the members of this House are aware, our province has been looking at new ways to address labour market issues. With a dynamic economy that has been holding strong in these tough times, and a labour market that is always looking for skilled employees, we decided to address the labour market issue through Enterprise Saskatchewan, our economic development agency.

Enterprise Saskatchewan has established strategic issue councils and sector teams comprised of private sector stakeholders from various sectors of the economy. The council and the teams are providing input to the Enterprise Saskatchewan board on matters affecting their sectors, including labour market issues.

Mr. Speaker, the 2009-2010 provincial budget eliminated funding for the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission, or Sask LMC. This started the process of orderly winding up of the commission's operations and repeal of the legislation that established Sask LMC in 2007. Enterprise Saskatchewan has been leading the windup and the orderly transition of the commission's activities to the other organizations and to Enterprise Saskatchewan. Since July 1, 2009 the Sask LMC no

longer had staff.

Following an agreement between Enterprise Saskatchewan and Sask LMC, annual audits and preparation of tabling of the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 annual reports will be followed through and completed. Any residual assets or liabilities will be transferred to Enterprise Saskatchewan as part of the agreement to complete the Sask LMC obligations.

Mr. Speaker, the key provisions being proposed in the Act are section 3, which deals with the following transitional matters: transfer of assets and liabilities; requirement for an audit by the Provincial Auditor of the Sask LMC's accounts and statements for the fiscal year 2009-2010; and the filing of Sask LMC's financial statements with the Legislative Assembly. And section 4, Mr. Speaker, which sets out the coming into force date upon proclamation. We feel this repeal is in the best interest of the provincial economy and the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move *The Labour Market Commission Repeal Act* for second reading. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Enterprise Saskatchewan has moved second reading of Bill 106, *The Labour Market Commission Repeal Act*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, *The Labour Market Commission Act*, which repeals the commission Act itself, that's what this is doing. This is another short piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and really just does away with the Labour Market Commission.

[14:45]

And I know there are a number of my colleagues who had previously done a great deal of work with the Labour Market Commission and felt very strongly about it. And we just have to go back a few years, Mr. Speaker, where many organizations across the province were dealing really in isolation or in individual sectors having to do with the labour market.

And there was a concerted effort to move towards the Labour Market Commission which would have representatives from various sectors across the province, plus from working people and labour organizations and also from the academic world here in the province of Saskatchewan, to make sure that we had a consistent policy and a consistent look right across the province as what was available, what were we doing well, what were we not doing well, where did improvements need to be made.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I look at this I'm somewhat saddened because this Labour Market Commission did some very good work. They were a very good group of dedicated citizens from across the province who were looking forward to putting together a workable plan, politics aside, Mr. Speaker. There was not politics involved in this. It was purely looking at the landscape in Saskatchewan. What do we need to improve opportunities? What do we need to provide the resources and the direction for young people in this province so they would be able to put down their roots and build their careers here? But purely on an ideological sense.

The Sask Party was never enthusiastic about the Labour Market Commission. They loved to criticize the former government for direction that it had taken. But I have to say to you, Mr. Speaker, this kind of goes parallel with the surgical care centre decision that was made by this government.

The previous government had set aside money and had been doing planning for over a year towards surgical care centres in Regina and Saskatoon. And when this Sask Party government was elected, well it had NDP attached to it. It was an NDP initiative so it had to go. So there went the surgical care centres. They just kind of faded away. The experts who had been brought together on a team, that were working at the development of this project, were just quietly dispersed back to their jobs and it lay dormant for a while.

Then all of a sudden it was reactivated and the government began to talk about it like it was their initiative. This was something they were putting in place. And that's fine, Mr. Speaker. I understand how politics works. But, you know, there are many decisions that need to be made because they are good public policy. They don't need to be political decisions. Good public policy can be good politics also, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that this Labour Market Commission is much like the surgical care centres.

But back to the surgical care centres debate, Mr. Speaker, the discussion and kind of analogy at how it parallels this whole Labour Market Commission. Once the Sask Party had revived the idea of a surgical care centre and moved it along, it was wonderful. It was a great idea — probably the best thing since sliced bread. But when the financial trouble started to hit this province, when we started to see the mismanagement of the provincial budget by this government, we started to see the wild revenue projections and the spending that just went on and on.

A problem would come up. Well gee, best imagination, best initiative. Throw some money at it. Well, Mr. Speaker, that may work for a while but once the money starts to run out then you have to start buckling down, making some difficult decisions and some difficult choices.

And what we saw with the surgical care centres, good idea, just a revived former government idea. But it was wonderful for the Sask Party because they felt that they had removed the NDP initiative that had been attached to it. But when the financial crunch hit, they pulled the money from the surgical care centres.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if you go back to the original decision, the original planning that was done, that surgical care centre here in the city of Regina would have been opening and would have been providing service to people from across this province for day surgeries here in Regina. Would have relieved the wait-list that the minister was up talking about the other day. Instead of shipping people to British Columbia, we could have been doing it here — if this government had have stuck to making decisions as good public policy and not purely based on politics.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we think of that decision and look at *The Labour Market Commission Act*, and it being repealed and it moved over to Enterprise Saskatchewan, it's exactly the same. Mr. Speaker, the Labour Market Commission was doing very

good work. It was representative of sectors right across the province who had put in place a very good working relationship and had done a very . . . Well, I'm told it's a very good final report.

Now that's another thing I'd actually like to ask the minister. Has the report of the Labour Market Commission ever been released publicly? I don't believe it has. I have never saw it. So now when he talks about the assets of the Labour Market Commission moving over to Enterprise Saskatchewan, are we going to see Enterprise Saskatchewan just review this report, put their own cover on it and put their own letter of transmittal on the inside cover and ship it out as theirs?

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely ridiculous that, purely for a political decision, we have dismantled the Labour Market Commission. We have discounted the work that this group of dedicated people have done over the last number of years and we are delaying progress in the province of Saskatchewan purely for a political decision.

But, Mr. Speaker, I know there are a number of my colleagues who have put a great deal of work into this and they would have a number of comments to make. But, Mr. Speaker, just before I end, the minister stood up and he said that he was looking forward to the work Enterprise Saskatchewan was doing because there was many employers across the province looking for skilled workers.

Well you know, maybe he should go talk to his colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour who just cut money from JobStart. You know, you can't talk out of both sides of your mouth, Mr. Speaker. Either you are going support the development of a skilled workforce in the province of Saskatchewan by investing money in JobStart/Future Skills, or you're going to have the minister standing up six months from now and a year from now still saying, well employers are looking for skilled workers in this province and we need to do more. Well you need to do what you started doing and you need to start making decisions based on good public policy, not on purely politics.

Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate but I know many of my members will be looking forward to standing and speaking on this Bill. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 106. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly? Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 108 — *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 108, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009*.

Mr. Speaker, this Act provides the legislative framework for all cities, except Lloydminster which falls under its own charter. Members may recall *The Cities Act* was enacted on 2003 and

refined in 2005 and 2007. Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009* which continues the practice in the municipal sector to periodically refine and update the legislation to ensure it meets local government needs. The amendments are a result of ongoing consultation with the cities as the Act has been implemented.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this draft Bill address the following issues. First, this Bill proposes to enhance city authority by reducing provincial oversight of city street sales, leases and closures, and improving the tools available to a city to collect and enforce property taxes on mobile homes and house trailers.

Second, this Bill proposes to provide the option for city councils to require criminal record checks in the election process.

Third, Mr. Speaker, this Bill introduces amendments in several areas that improve the effectiveness of the Act on technical and administrative matters.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will serve to strengthen the legislation. The proposed amendments support the intention of the legislation to grant cities not only greater flexibility but also greater accountability to deal with local matters. Many of the amendments will help to ensure consistency of intent between *The Cities Act* and other municipal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take just a few moments to highlight the more significant changes that the Bill proposes. The first issue I'd like to raise is the provincial involvement in city street closures, sales, and leases. Cities raised concerns that the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure and cities have overlapping jurisdiction. Mr. Speaker, both are mandated to ensure effective and efficient transportation systems. The proposed amendment eliminates provincial oversight for streets except for provincial highways within cities. Administratively the province remains involved in any title transfer since the streets are Crown lands.

The ministries of Highways and Infrastructure and Justice were highly involved in developing the amendments relating to streets to ensure that the provincial interest, role, and responsibility is appropriate. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say the amendments enhance administrative efficiency for both cities and the province and were considered in the context of the government's responsibility for managing Crown lands.

The second issue I bring forward is proposed to enhance cities' ability to enforce property tax payments on mobile homes. In recent years some cities have had difficulties collecting and enforcing taxes on mobile homes or house trailers. The Act currently allows them to be taxed as improvements under the property tax system, however it can be difficult to assess and collect taxes from house trailers that rent space in a trailer park because they can be more easily removed from the city. The amendment will allow a city to seize or immobilize a house trailer, just as it would with other goods, as an additional tax enforcement option.

The timing is slightly different. A city can seize or immobilize a trailer during the year the taxes are due if, for example, the city

determines the trailer is likely to be moved before the taxes are paid. This may not seem like a significant issue, but it demonstrates a present inequity in our property tax system and a challenge for cities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the next issue I'd like to discuss is described more fully in my second reading speech for the new northern municipalities Act. It relates to optional criminal record checks for municipal elections. Hon. members may recall this issue was raised by our northern stakeholders in the review of that Act, where it is proposed to allow northern municipalities to decide if they would like to include criminal record checks as a part of the nomination process for northern municipal elections.

I'd just like to remind the Assembly, the purpose of allowing such checks is not to prevent someone with a criminal record for running for municipal office. It is to allow municipalities to decide locally if they want to require a higher level of public transparency in the election process.

Mr. Speaker, the government appreciates not all municipalities have this concern. When this proposal was reviewed, it was decided it should be a choice all municipalities should be able to make at the local level.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the remaining amendments will help to ensure consistency of intent between *The Cities Act* and other municipal legislation by improving the effectiveness of the Act on technical and administrative matters. Other proposed amendments do not include any significant broadening of powers or authorities, but clarify existing provisions and assist cities by enabling them to operate more efficiently.

The amendments brought forward today have been proposed after careful consideration to ensure our cities are in strong positions to meet the needs of today and tomorrow. Accordingly I move second reading of Bill No. 108, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009*.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs has moved second reading of Bill No. 108, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the minister for the comments that he made, helps clarify. And we all know, anyone that has been in this House for any length of time — well, I guess, one season — normally *The Municipalities Act*, *The Cities Act*, these usually make a trip, a regular trip through this legislature. And we all know that they are substantially larger than the amendments that were put forward and handed out. So when you take them home on the weekend to do some reading, it's not always the easiest to look back and do some comparison as to what's being removed and what's being added and what changes are being proposed by the minister.

A couple of comments that I would like to add or make on what the minister has said or kind of the three or four main points of the legislation.

Changing the provincial oversight in city street closures. And, Mr. Speaker, it's fairly explicit, lays out what can and cannot be

done, what notification has to be done. And also the portion that deals with the property tax collection on mobile homes and trailers, there's a number of definitions that are changed, and I would hope clarified, for those that are involved.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's much easier to read the piece of legislation when you have the explanatory notes with it than what it is for people in municipalities and cities across the province, when they are reading legislation online maybe, trying to do an interpretation and to make sure they are appropriately interpreting the legislation and applying it appropriately in their community.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's much easier for us. And I hope that when people across the province are looking at the legislation, that they find it much easier also and a little more understandable in the definitions that are contained in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it also makes some changes to third party liability for the action, for that to be limited to one year. And I see that's consistent with the other Acts also that we will be dealing with over the afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

But also the minister talked about the optional criminal record checks. I'm pleased to see that the minister has made this by the legislation optional. And they have included it both in *The Cities Act* and the northern municipalities and the municipal Act to make sure that it's consistent and that it is an option because there had been some rumours last year that there was some consideration to only putting it in *The Northern Municipalities Act*.

[15:00]

And I think that would have sent a very poor signal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to many across the province, that we would single out northern Saskatchewan for this type of an article in their legislation when we have always strove to keep these pieces of legislation consistent in areas where they could be consistent, wording consistent where at all possible. But also each legislation being separate, so it's not as cumbersome dealing all in one piece of legislation, and giving it the ability by being separate into *The Cities Act*, the rural municipalities Act, and *The Northern Municipalities Act* to be able to address the areas that are and issues that are specific to the areas that it represents.

And consistency of intent. I understand that. And I understand a number of areas, we are looking to be consistent and we are looking to make some changes. But there is . . . Well it updates the language and makes sure that we are consistent right across the piece.

But there is one area that the minister didn't mention, and this was section 43, and it's amended. It's subsection 43(7) is amended by striking out "prescribed in regulations made" and substituting "established."

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we flip over to our explanatory notes and we read that the existing provision is in 43(7):

The council may apply for the alteration of the city's boundaries or for amalgamation or restructuring with other

municipalities in the form prescribed in regulations made by the minister.

So what the change does in the Act is just remove "prescribed in regulations" and it will now read:

The council may apply for the alteration of the city's boundaries or for amalgamation or restructuring with other municipalities in the form . . . [established] by the minister.

So, Mr. Speaker, anyone who has had anything to do with the municipalities over the last two years will know that there has been a number of areas where cities have wanted to annex more land to grow their boundaries and expand their city limits and that it has been a fairly hot topic in a number of areas around the province. And I know that there was even some discussion at SARM the other day at the convention. They dealt with a number of emergency resolutions, and I have them here somewhere in my important papers.

But I know there was one councillor who got up and actually spoke to this issue and the whole issue of annexation and what a difficult process it has been and that they truly hope . . . The Saskatchewan Municipal Board needs some changes was what was said at the SARM convention the other day, that many of these communities have exhausted all their options. And that it's a fairly onerous spot to be in for many communities when they have to go through all of the options that are out there, then the Saskatchewan Municipal Board will make a ruling — maybe. And this is what was asked for, was that it may not make a ruling but that it will make a ruling.

I think any of the councillors that have been through this whole process feel that they understand the need for a process. They understand the need for going through all of the options that are there, but at the end of all of that, they would like to have a decision by the Municipal Board, not may have a decision by the Municipal Board.

And I think everyone is more than willing to pay appropriate compensation for any land they are moving or removing out of the RM or adding to the city limits — however you want to talk about it — that there's a feel that appropriate compensation will be paid. That's taken for granted in any of these discussions and dealings, but there has to be a way for final decisions to be made.

So what we're seeing here, and the minister didn't touch on it whatsoever, so I know there's a number of questions because this has been a hot topic. I know in Swift Current this past summer there was still discussions going on and still a number of areas of concern. Yorkton was also going through this. Estevan had come to a reasonable deal. They had come to an unusual deal in the way they had structured their annexation. Weyburn also had gone through this. Moose Jaw, my home community, had gone through this. It had, thank goodness, gone fairly smoothly in the city of Moose Jaw. But I know in a number of communities it hasn't.

And we all know that when you're dealing with issues such as this, they can be quite contentious. And there needs to be some type of a solution or some type of an approach taken either by

the Municipal Board, and that would be at the minister's direction. So I know in the explanatory notes it states that:

The Saskatchewan Municipal Board (SMB) requested a change to streamline the application process for boundary alterations, amalgamations or restructuring for the convenience of municipalities. It suggested the *Cities Act* could provide greater flexibility in the format for these applications. The application form is presently in regulation and changes to it must go through the regulatory review process.

So what this would do, the change, it would allow the forms to exist as a minister's order and would not require the review process. While there's some value to review processes, and I know for expediency's sake, it's always nice for a minister to be able to just sign off on something and send it along its way. But there truly is value in the review process, and we'll see that in a number of instances over this legislative session. We've seen it previously with legislation that was never dealt with appropriately, or in my view or in the official opposition's view was never dealt with appropriately by having a thorough review with stakeholders and people across the community that would have an interest or be affected by the legislation. So it always raises a couple of concerns.

And I know it's quicker and I know it's much easier to do. But there is a great value in communication and making sure that reviews are appropriately done and all of the little issues or a majority of all the issues. You don't catch everything, and things do change over time. But it's always good to have that review, to have the input from others who are knowledgeable and be able to go forward with, whether it's a minister's order or change in regulations, to know that you're putting in place the right thing. And that four months or six months or twelve months down the road, you're not going to be going through the whole process again because on the first run-through you didn't take the time to have the review and make sure you were putting in place the appropriate regulations or however you review the piece. So that's just a word of caution, I guess, for the minister.

But it goes to, allows the forms to exist as a minister's order which would not require this review process. And this would provide the flexibility for the ministry and the Saskatchewan Municipal Board to develop a common form for annexation applications that could be modified in a timely way as the need arises, which is fine, Mr. Speaker. And this will be something that for sure I will look forward to in committee, be able to ask the minister questions.

I know there was a number of options that were being batted around previously last year when this was a very hot topic. And instead of waiting until this is a hot topic — where cities are looking to annex land and expand their city limits — to put a solution in place now that allows for the Municipal Board, if that's the process you choose, or whether it's for some type of mediation through the Department of Justice, whatever it is. But there needs to be something put in place so that we can come to a quicker resolve on these issues and that cities aren't stalled in moving ahead with any projects that they have.

But we also want to make sure that the rural municipalities are

adequately compensated for what is being taken away from them or what is being annexed by the city. So I'm a little disappointed that the minister didn't give us a few more comments on that section and those changes. I hope they are looking to expand the process — not necessarily expand the process but make it a more definite process that really gives some answers to people right across the province — because it's better to deal with it now when it's a little bit quieter, little bit calmed down. And there has been some solution reached in a number of communities, but I think everyone would agree that there has to be a better process in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, for a little short Bill out of a very large piece of legislation, that's my comments for now. I know that there will be a number of comments that will come later as others have worked their way through the Bill and had a chance to do an assessment of some of the changes proposed. But for now I will move adjournment of debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 108, *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 110 — *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 110, *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*. This Bill is the culmination of an extensive review of northern municipal legislative needs.

The Act's review extended a year longer than originally expected due to the complexity of northern issues and an extensive regional public consultation in the winter of 2008. It was extended further for government review of issues that break ground for municipal legislation not only in Saskatchewan but across Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: — Just going on the order paper, the Bill was called — Bill No. 110 — but I think the Bill that is up for discussion is Bill No. 109. Is that correct? I just want to make that correction . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . So are you on 110 then? I just wanted to clarify. Okay. We'll carry on with 110 then.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to thank New North for its partnership, and each of the review committee members. I'll name the committee members: Mary Lou Lavallee, councillor for Timber Bay; Louise Baht, administrator for Air Ronge; Fred Roy, councillor and now mayor of Beauval; Carl Lentowicz, mayor of Denare Beach; Doris MacDonald, councillor for Stony Rapids; Marie Lariviere, clerk for Patuanak; Beverly Wheeler, administrator for Denare Beach; Brenda Janvier, councillor for La Loche; and Joanne Griffith, CEO [chief executive officer] of New North.

Mr. Speaker, you may have noticed committee members came from communities all across the North. They spent a significant amount of volunteer time away from their families to review not only the text of the present Act in detail, but also significant portions of *The Municipalities Act* as well to see if southern concepts would be appropriate for the North. This was an incredible task, Mr. Speaker, and the review committee is to be commended for its dedication and thoroughness. In addition to the committee, I also recognize and appreciate the significant contribution of officials from Municipal Affairs as well as those from the Ministry of Justice in this process.

Mr. Speaker, members may be confused, as *The Northern Municipalities Act* was just amended last year. This was only the first stage of changes to the Acts. Since the entire province entered a new four-year property revaluation cycle, a new assessment process on January 1, 2009, northern municipalities were provided the same tools for property assessment and taxation as southern municipalities.

Further, Mr. Speaker, amendments to the northern revenue sharing trust account, now northern municipal trust account, provisions were passed in spring 2009 to update the account name and parameters to better align with the new municipal operating grant program. No changes to either of these areas are proposed at this time. The remainder of the new Act is largely consistent with the legislation in place for rural and urban municipal governments in the South.

[15:15]

A significant portion of the draft Act proposes greater flexibility and autonomy for municipalities, similar to that found in the South. This includes several key concepts and provisions already found in both *The Cities Act* and *The Municipalities Act*, such as permissive legislation, natural person powers, areas of jurisdiction, broad bylaw powers, voluntary municipal restructuring, municipality liability, and the role of the SMB [Saskatchewan Municipal Board] in certain municipal financial approvals.

For the most part the practical day-to-day provisions regarding council meetings and procedures, bylaw enactment, financial administration and reporting, and assessment, taxation, and tax enforcement can be the same for urban, rural, and northern municipalities. There's a good case for consistency, unless there are specific situations in the North that do not occur in the South, indicating procedures should be different.

Mr. Speaker, there are some provisions that are specific to the North to meet northern needs, and I would just like to take a few moments to highlight some of these differences. Mr. Speaker, members may recall a terrible news story just a few weeks ago about a young child who was mauled by a stray dog in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is not an uncommon situation. One of the top concerns raised by the review committee and consultation participants was about dogs running loose in packs and attacking people in northern communities.

To try to address this, authority was increased in the Bill to allow municipalities to respond to potentially threatening situations more rapidly. Mr. Speaker, this is a situation that has no easy solution. Increased municipal authority will not solve

the problem itself, but we can provide municipalities with the flexibility and support to help as much as they are able.

Next, Mr. Speaker, in the North, the minister has a unique dual role — this is to act as mayor and council for the district and to act as the approving authority for some municipal bylaws. With the inclusion of natural person and broad bylaw powers, many of the previous ministerial approvals are no longer needed. To provide consistency with southern municipalities, where the minister makes the decision equivalent to council making a decision, approval of that decision is transferred to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. This is intended to reduce confusion about the minister's role and increase transparency in decision making.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for us to remember many northern municipalities are remote and isolated. One of the unique roles northern municipalities see for themselves is the degree to which they become involved in economic development. Northern municipalities have had the ability to form municipal development corporations for economic and social development for many years now.

Sometimes the prudence of an Act review is to recognize and retain those existing provisions that work well. Some northern municipalities have used these provisions successfully to create local employment opportunities that might not otherwise exist and bring money back into the community. Municipal development corporations are another way to raise money instead of raising taxes or applying for grants. The review committee recommended these provisions be carried forward, albeit with greater financial accountability.

Throughout the Act review, we heard many northern stakeholders talk about the importance of partnerships and the need to be recognized, not only on an individual municipal basis, but also at a larger, regional scale. Mr. Speaker, regional municipal service district provisions are new to Saskatchewan's municipal legislation and unique to the North. While some similar provisions were considered for the South some years ago, they did not proceed. The northern situation is different.

The review committee looked at a number of options to enable more regional collaboration before making its recommendations. The new provisions will provide a voluntary framework to enable regional service delivery where two or more municipalities choose to share multiple services or provide services to another party.

Mr. Speaker, we already have examples in the North where municipalities and First Nations are sharing services that require a separate agreement to be negotiated and separate volunteer board for each. The new framework being proposed streamlines processes and eliminates the need to have a separate agreement for each shared service. The provisions are modelled on an approach already found in British Columbia and Alberta.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, criminal record checks for people running for municipal council was another of the top concerns raised by the review committee and participants in the consultations. Northerners strongly advocated mandatory criminal record checks for everyone running in northern municipal elections. Mr. Speaker, this position was out of a concern about public

transparency and making information available to the electorate so that people are making informed choices about who they vote for. The rationale is that these checks would help maintain public confidence and respect in those who hold public office.

I must admit, Mr. Speaker, government had not anticipated this request and needed more time to consider the processes and implications. After consideration, the draft Bill before you gives northern municipalities the option of introducing basic criminal record checks in conjunction with northern municipal elections. The purpose is not to disqualify someone from running for office, but to enable people to make more informed choices about who they wish to vote for. We believe each municipality is in the best position to decide if this is something that should become part of their local elections.

Mr. Speaker, the government decided this option should not be unique to the North, but should also be extended to all municipal Acts. The province will not be involved, except to establish parameters about the checks and regulations to ensure consistency across the province. This provision is new, not only to Saskatchewan municipal legislation, but appears to be new across Canada for municipal elections.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as was the case with *The Cities Act* and *The Municipalities Act*, the authority to supplement the Act with regulations has been included in a number of areas so that additional public interests may be accommodated as necessary. The existing regulations will be reviewed over the coming months in consultation with the municipal sector such that new regulations for this Bill will be prepared prior to the Act coming into force.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to take a moment for some final comments. This new legislation modernizes the roles, responsibilities, and authority of northern municipalities. It balances the flexibility and increased authority found in the South, while tailoring many provisions to suit unique circumstances found in the North. The changes are consistent with good government policy and are responsive to requests made by northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the review committee again for its patience, dedication, and innovation to bring forward proposals that will help northern municipalities meet the present and future needs of northern Saskatchewan. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to move second reading of Bill No. 110, *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Municipal Affairs has moved second reading of Bill No. 110, *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think because it's a nice day outside, the government members are waiting for early recess or something. They're groaning every time I, you know . . . And, Mr. Speaker, this just points to, we've complained, I think for the last two years, that they don't like to do consultations on legislation. What they do is just table it in the House and figure everyone's going to be happy.

And I think this just reflects that, Mr. Speaker. They don't even like comments being made by the opposition without hooting and hollering. They want everything just to sail through. It's kind of like, I'm right and why would anyone question me.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a duty of the opposition. And that's the role that we play in this democracy, is that we have an opportunity to review, add comment to any new legislation that's put forward or amendments that's put forward in this House and programs and initiatives on behalf of the government. Oppositions play a very strong role in democracies around this world. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's one we will continue to do, even though the government members would like to be off early this afternoon and don't want to listen to the comments and critique of legislation that they're putting forward. But, Mr. Speaker, that's just the way it is. And they're just going to have to listen to it, and that's all.

Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation, *The Northern Municipalities Act* has been in consultation for many, many years. It's been a work in progress. And we did see part of it that was initiated last year — last year at this time, I guess it was tabled — passed in the spring. And now we are seeing the complete Act as it's been worked on and put forward.

And I, too, want to join with the minister in congratulating the review committee. These are people that have lived in the North, that have put in a great deal of time and energy in their communities, and have taken that dedication to the North a step farther in being involved in this process, and making sure that what they feel is the best piece of legislation and articles and hopefully regulations which we won't see for a while, but put in place that will allow the North to not only grow. But as the minister stated, I think provide that flexibility that really not only accommodates the North and the difference that we see in the northern half of this absolutely beautiful province, but also respects the differences that are evident from southern Saskatchewan to northern Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, often I get in trouble because I will talk about probably the geographical centre of the province. And I think many of us that live in the South, we make a mistake in doing this, will refer to Prince Albert being in the North or even up north in Yorkton. And, Mr. Speaker, quite often people will give you a bit of a look, and they'll give you a bit of a finger pointing and a tongue wagging because that's nowhere near the north of this province.

And for any of us who have had the pleasure . . . I mean there we have the member from Meadow Lake. That's still a little bit farther north, but it's still not north north — not true north, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So for many of us who have had the absolute privilege of being able to travel from the southern border of Saskatchewan to the northern border of Saskatchewan and east and west, it truly is a privilege to, I think, see and understand not only the work that's done, but the people that live in these communities.

The people that have made their home, whether in urban or rural or northern Saskatchewan, they have a real dedication to the province. And it is with a great deal of pride that they invite you into their communities. They always want to show off what is happening in their city or their community or their village or

municipality. They're proud of the work they've done. They're proud of their area, and they're always pleased to have us visit, Mr. Speaker. So it truly is a privilege what each and every one of us are allowed to do here in this Assembly as representatives from across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly lengthy Bill, and while it does bring in line the areas that can be consistent across the province — whether in *The Cities Act* or *The Municipalities Act* — this is unique to northern Saskatchewan. And it does respect the differences that we will find from one area to the next. And it brings, I think, many advantages to the North that they have been waiting a while for — lays out clearly bylaws that can be put forward by the municipalities in the North, also the rights that can be expected, lays out the expectations for financial reporting and accountability which are always needed.

And as the minister had spoken to, this really is timely when you look at the development in northern Saskatchewan. And the growth that is happening there has been building for a number of years, but especially over the last few years, really makes this Act timely. And I think it's something that people in northern Saskatchewan will be very happy once it's passed and put in place because it does a number of things.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I said, to the best of my understanding and the people that I've had discussions with, there has been some very lengthy consultations on this piece of legislation.

The northern Saskatchewan . . . Well the local governments in northern Saskatchewan is how it's referred to — an Act respecting — and it also makes consequential amendments to other Acts that are affected. But, Mr. Speaker, I know that more questions need to be asked by people that we've been in contact with. And as with that, I know there will be a number of my northern colleagues especially who will be anxious to speak to this Act.

But at this point in time, I would adjourn debate on *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 110, *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 109 — *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2009*

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 109, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2009*. Mr. Speaker, this Act provides the legislative framework through which Saskatchewan's southern small urban and rural municipalities exercise their powers and provide services. Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2009* which, as with *The Cities Amendment Act, 2009*, refines and

updates the legislation to ensure it continues to meet its users' needs.

[15:30]

The amendments are a result not only of ongoing consultation with municipalities, but also as a result of recommendations for changes to *The Cities Act* that have been determined to be beneficial to smaller municipalities as well.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this draft Bill address the following issues. First, the amendments implement recommendations from the review committee on road maintenance agreements. Second, as in *The Cities Act*, additional tools are provided for a municipality to collect and enforce property taxes on mobile homes, excluding vacation and recreational trailers. Third, consistent with *The Cities Act* and *The Northern Municipalities Act*, municipal councils are being provided the option of requiring criminal record checks in their elections. Finally, Mr. Speaker, this Bill introduces amendments in several areas, consistent with many of those proposed for *The Cities Act*, that improve the effectiveness of the Act on technical and administrative matters by clarifying existing provisions and improving operational matters.

The proposed amendments will serve to strengthen the legislation. The proposed amendments support the intention of the legislation to grant municipalities not only greater flexibility, but also greater accountability to deal with local matters. Many of the amendments will help to ensure consistency of intent between all the municipal legislation. Although many of the amendments in this draft Bill are the same as those proposed for *The Cities Act*, it is appropriate for me to take a few moments to highlight the more significant changes that the Bill proposes, particularly in the context of small urban and RMs.

The first issue I'd like to raise relates to Saskatchewan's significant economic growth. With rapid growth, there can often be conflict between developers and those who are affected by development. An example of this is the increased pressure on municipal roads from heavy hauling and the escalation of road construction costs.

Approximately 18 months ago, a review was initiated on the existing provisions around road maintenance agreements. The review committee included representatives from government, industry, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. In brief, Mr. Speaker, road maintenance agreements may be entered into with shippers, haulers, or receivers if the movement of goods is likely to damage municipal roads. The agreements are to compensate municipalities for incremental maintenance and loss of road life costs from heavy hauls.

The review committee asked government to introduce a mechanism to ensure disputes between RMs and industries are resolved in a timely fashion. Disagreements may cause industry to shut down or prevent an RM from getting an agreement with short-term haulers while road damage occurs. Stakeholders advise that a legislative process for a third party to rule on disputes in a timely manner would be beneficial for all parties involved. It's recommended that the Saskatchewan Municipal

Board is the best qualified and logical place for this process to occur.

Further, a concern was raised by the municipal sector about vehicles and equipment that use RM roads to service oil and gas wells and other industries. The road maintenance agreements do not currently apply to heavy support vehicles and equipment, even though such vehicles can cause as much or more damage than actual hauling. This Bill proposes to clarify road maintenance agreements also apply to heavy support vehicles and equipment.

The second issue I bring forward is amendments regarding tax collection and enforcement on mobile homes and house trailers. Although cities first raised this issue, it is also applicable to towns and villages. The Act currently allows mobile homes to be taxed as improvements under the property tax system. It is more difficult, however, to collect and enforce taxes on a mobile structure. Some municipalities have experienced difficulties collecting taxes from house trailers that rent space in a trailer park.

Improving the tools available to a municipality to collect and enforce mobile home property taxes is recommended. The amendments exclude vacation and recreational trailers from the taxing provisions. These amendments are proposed for all three municipal Acts to ensure consistency in the property tax system for all municipalities.

The next issue I'd like to discuss relates to the proposal for optional criminal record checks in municipal elections. As I described in my second reading of remarks for both the new *Northern Municipalities Act* and *The Cities Amendment Act*, municipalities will be able to decide locally if they want to require a higher level of public transparency in the election process. The purpose of allowing such checks is not to disqualify someone from running for office, but to inform electors.

I expect some municipalities may choose to implement these checks and some may not. It is the municipalities who are in the best position to decide if these checks are something that would benefit their communities. It's important to remember that municipalities will have the authority to make this choice at the local level. The province is not forcing any particular municipality to undertake this.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring smaller urban and rural municipalities have the tools to govern effectively in a rapidly changing economic climate. Accordingly, I move second reading of Bill No. 109, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2009*.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Municipal Affairs has moved second reading of Bill No. 109, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2009*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's always interesting to listen to the minister's comments of a piece of proposed legislation because there's . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's not always interesting.

Ms. Higgins: — Well, it's not always interesting, Mr. Speaker, but it is always informative because it sometimes raises a number of questions in other areas. And as in the last piece of legislation in *The Cities Act*, when we touched on the whole changes within the forms for the Saskatchewan Municipal Board being able to be changed by minister's order and not be in regulations any longer, that raises a number of questions, and if there's other initiatives that the minister is putting forward.

And much the same as that, when I look at *The Municipalities Act* in section 2(e), there's a clause in here that says:

by adding the following subsection after subsection (1):

So 1(e) I guess, what we have, we had:

“(2) When making a direction pursuant to clause (1)(ee), the minister may direct the use of different means of determining population for different purposes”.

So I know traditionally we have always used Statistics Canada for population numbers, and that has always carried with it a number of frustrations. For one thing, Statistics Canada is always considerably behind times. When you are seeing some changes, you are dealing with numbers often that are a year to two years old, and if you are looking for something more specific in the province, you would have an even more difficult time in some cases being able to pare down the numbers instead of being able to parcel out the numbers that you're actually looking for or the subsection you're actually looking for to work with. So there's a number of cases, but traditionally that's what we've always used.

So when you look at the explanatory notes with this, with *The Municipalities Act*, it will allow a provision that specifically allows the manner of calculation to be defined by regulation, clarifies the authority. It also provides for different ways of calculating population appropriate to the purpose, and giving examples of ward boundaries, petitions that require a referendum, or specific municipalities — RMs and towns.

So I'm curious to ask the minister what other means of determining population for different purposes: how would it be used? How does he see it?

And I guess it raises the question, something that we had last year. When we finally reached a long-term revenue-sharing proposal with the municipalities, it was done using populations. Quite often, while there's pools . . . Mr. Speaker, I won't get into the whole long explanation of the various pools but in a number of cases we use per capita disbursement of the funds from the pools. And there was a number of questions raised with me as to populations in Regina and Saskatoon had gone up considerably, other communities had grown, some were staying the same, some, you know, there's always fluctuations.

So instead of some of the larger cities being compensated or based on a per capita number that was a current calculation through population numbers for the influx of new people that they had seen, they were based on StatsCan numbers and everyone was treated the same as they had in the past. And while there was some new money that went into it — which is always good, Mr. Speaker; the municipalities are always in

need of infrastructure dollars and programming dollars. There was no complaints about the way the calculation was done.

But I'm wondering if the minister has in mind if this would be an option for revenue sharing, to be able to use a different means of determining population, or if it's for other specific cases that he may have in mind or incidents that he's run across. So that's something that we'll be asking, especially when we get into committee, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The minister also spoke, section 22 is amended where clause 22(1)(c) is repealed and the following is substituted. And it really goes into road maintenance agreements, how they're followed through on, interested parties, what happens. And there's also a dispute resolution on the road maintenance agreements.

Mr. Speaker, wherever we start getting into official agreements, there's always some type of disagreement that may come along with it or some type of unusual circumstance which will cause some disagreement, and not necessarily a disagreement but a bit of a dispute on how it's divided or what's compensated, what isn't, what's covered under the agreement. So it's a fairly lengthy piece in the legislation where the dispute resolution is laid out in a fair bit of detail.

And there also, as the minister stated, there is the option that's put in place for optional criminal record checks. And again I'm pleased to see that the minister felt it appropriate to put this into each of the municipal legislation — whether it's northern, whether it's municipalities or whether it's *The Cities Act* — that that option will be there for councils if there is a need to have it in place or a feel that it is an appropriate check to be done.

But there's also a piece that adds a number of options. Section 97 is amended, and it puts in place some expanded options for vacancies to be filled:

“If . . . seats on a council become vacant for any reason or if the remaining members of council do not constitute a quorum, the minister may, by order, do one or more of the following.

So that's been expanded to what it was previously. And I need to do a bit more consultation — and I know my colleagues will — as to whether they feel, councils in our communities feel that this is appropriate and that if it fits in with what's needed in their area.

Another piece I don't believe that the minister touched on, and it's actually in all three pieces of legislation. It's in *The Northern Municipalities Act*. It's in *The Cities Act* and also in *The Municipalities Act*. And it deals with changes to public disclosure.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that each and every one of us in this Assembly has a requirement yearly to disclose publicly any of our assets so that we will move away from any fear that there is a conflict of interest in any of the decisions we are making.

So we declare to the Privacy Commissioner . . . not the Privacy Commissioner. My colleagues aren't helping me. But anyway we have to make a declaration of all of our assets and incomes

and liabilities. And that's all done on the form every year to make sure that there is no conflict of interest in the dealings that we have, either as government members or opposition members, and that we aren't benefiting from the decisions we're making.

Mr. Speaker, what this also does, it makes some changes to every member of council and the public disclosure statements that they are required to submit. And there used to be, if there was changes in your disclosure or in your assets or liabilities, within 30 days you had to declare and update your statement of disclosure. Well what this legislation does, it changes that, more in line what an MLA does, where we provide a yearly update to our statements and we don't have that 30-day requirement.

The 30-day requirement, if you were found not to have declared, previously I guess what the punishment would have been is you could have been removed from office. And there was a feel that the punishment was quite harsh for if someone actually forgot to make a declaration.

[15:45]

So that is something else that is in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, that is being updated and changed. And some people may have concerns with that. They may feel that the disclosure statement needs to be more timely than being done once a year, but we'll see what consultations we have on this legislation and what kind of feedback we get.

Also throughout the legislation there's a number of areas which really gives some clarity to definitions throughout the legislation, and it also updates language, updates some of the explanations.

Mr. Speaker, there's also some changes — and I believe this is what is currently the practice but I'm not positive, so it's something that I'm going to have to ask a couple questions on and see if it is an appropriate move or not — in section 396 it is amended in subsection (2) by adding, instead of inspectors appointing inspectors, “or the Saskatchewan Municipal Board as an inspector” . . .

So I don't know if that's a role that the Municipal Board members and employees are appropriate to be filling, if it causes some problems for them down the road or if it's perfectly fine. Mr. Speaker, that's something that is included in a number of areas that I still need to look more into.

And I know that there are a number of my colleagues that wish to make comments on this piece of legislation. But as of now, I would adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 109, *The Municipalities Amendment Act, 2009*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 111 — *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009/Loi de 2009 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009*. The Act represents changes that are being made to bilingual Acts as a result of the introduction of *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*.

The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act, 1997, The Education Act, 1995, and The Interpretation Act, 1995 are the three Acts amended in this Bill. All other consequential amendments are contained within *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009* itself.

The changes being made to these statutes, as in all the other consequential amendments contained in *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*, primarily do the following: replaces references to *The Northern Municipalities Act* with references to *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*, and updates the various northern municipal definitions and other statutes as defined in *The Interpretation Act, 1995*.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Municipal Affairs has moved second reading of Bill No. 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act* hits on the three Bills that the minister has just spoken to, makes the changes that are appropriate with the implementation of *The Northern Municipalities Act*. *The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act* has changed, also *The Education Act* and *The Interpretation Act, 1995*, just to be brought in line with *The Northern Municipalities Act, 2009*.

Mr. Speaker, as of yet, of course I can't comment on the French interpretation and the French Bills that are being put forward. I will rely on one of my colleagues to check over the amendments that are being made there.

And I can tell almost by the smile on your face, you're glad I'm not making comments en français. Mr. Speaker, with that, I need to have a closer look at the consequential amendments and we will speak again on it soon, I am sure. But with that I will adjourn debate on the consequential amendment Act.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 111, *The Northern Municipalities Consequential Amendments Act, 2009*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 116 — *The Traffic Safety (Drivers' Licences and Hand-held Electronic Communications Equipment) Amendment Act, 2009*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of the traffic safety amendment Act, 2009. The Act administered by Saskatchewan Government Insurance outlines the laws regarding road use in Saskatchewan. The first proposed amendment I'd like to outline is designed to increase safety on Saskatchewan's roads and highways.

Distracting driving is one of today's most serious road safety issues. In Saskatchewan, driver inattention or distraction is the most commonly cited contributory factor in all collisions, accounting for close to 25 per cent of all factors reported. In fatal collisions, it is the second most commonly cited factor.

Cellphones and texting are significant sources of distraction to drivers and have been associated with an elevated risk of involvement in traffic collisions. Mr. Speaker, driver distraction is a very important part of SGI's [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] comprehensive traffic safety strategy.

A recent study from Virginia Tech Transportation Institute on cellphone use while driving found that the risk of involvement in a crash by drivers who are texting is 23 times that of a non-distracted driver. The risk for drivers talking on cellphones is three to six times that of a non-distracted driver.

According to the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, cellphone use has grown rapidly over the past 10 years. It's also expected the tasks related to cellphone use as a source of driver distraction will continue to increase. Given the risks associated with these distractions, there is a potential for an increase in the number of collisions associated with driver distraction.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendment bans the use of hand-held cellphones for talking, texting, email, and surfing the Internet while driving.

Under this new law the penalty for using a cellphone while driving will be a \$280 fine and four demerit points under SGI's Safe Driver Recognition and driver improvement programs. Drivers who are not in Saskatchewan's graduated driver's licensing program will be allowed to use hands-free cellphone devices.

However, new drivers — meaning drivers who are in graduated driver's licensing program — will not be able to use cellphones of any kind while driving. This will allow them to gain valuable driving experience under low-risk conditions which is consistent with the principle of graduating licensing.

Mr. Speaker, we know that cellphones are not the only source

of driver distraction, however the research shows the use of hand-held cellphones for talking and texting is a growing danger. It's important to remember, Mr. Speaker, that law enforcement still has the ability to lay a charge of driving without due care and attention to address situations where driver distraction is putting road users at risk.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that SGI will continue to educate drivers about the dangers of distracted driving and the new legislation. The new legislation will help decrease driver distraction and keep the people of Saskatchewan safe on our roadways.

The second amendment I'd like to discuss is designed to modernize Saskatchewan's driver's licence, making it consistent with standards adopted by other North American jurisdictions. Saskatchewan's existing driver's licence is a two-part annual licence consisting of a photo identification card and a paper driver's licence. This change means Saskatchewan's driver's licence will move from a two-part annual licence to a more secure one-part, five-year licence.

Changing Saskatchewan's licence to a one-part licence will reduce the chance of identity theft and, again, will make it consistent with standards adopted by other North American jurisdictions. This will ensure that Saskatchewan's driver's licence continues to be accepted as valid identification by law enforcement and other agencies outside of our province.

The proposed amendment is also another example of how we're making it easier than ever to do business with SGI. SGI recognizes that its customers are busy. And by increasing the length of the renewal time to five years, customers will no longer have to renew their licence every year.

In addition to the convenience, customers will have the opportunity to save money. Customers who choose to pay \$100 for the licence at the time of renewal will save \$25 from today's cost to renew the two-part licence for the same five-year period.

Customers will also have the option to pay \$25 per year for five years for the new licence for the total cost of \$125, which would be the same as now. With this amendment, Mr. Speaker, SGI will work with potential vendors to elevate the most effective method to offer an improved, secure driver's licence to our customers. That concludes the outline of the proposed amendments found on the traffic safety amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, I move the second reading of the traffic safety amendment Act, 2009.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Crown Investment Corporation has moved second reading of *Bill No. 116, The Traffic Safety (Drivers' Licences and Hand-held Electronic Communications Equipment) Amendment Act, 2009*. Is the Assembly read for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is another one of those Bills where you kind of wonder how much consultation and discussion has happened beforehand.

I was on my way to northern Saskatchewan actually to attend a

ceremony there. And all of a sudden I heard the Premier on the phone saying, oh yes, we think we should do away with cellphones, and we'll be passing it this fall. Well that's all fine and dandy, Mr. Speaker, to make decisions. If you want to make kind of quick decisions like that when you are at home or in your own household, it works fine. It's entirely up to you. But when you're the Premier of the province, you always kind of wonder if you don't have a little more responsibility to people across the province to explain the decisions you're making, to also be sure that the majority of people understand why you're making the decision and be accepting of the decisions that you've made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always remember a former member of this House giving some very good advice one day. And he said, you know, a government can pass any legislation they want. They can sit down and draft and pass any piece of legislation to really do anything they want, if they've got the numbers in the House to push it through.

Well, but the citizens of the province, first and foremost, need to understand why you're making the decision, and why you've taken really the tack to implement whatever your decision is. They need to have an understanding of that.

So when we talk about reviewing or we talk about consultations, it's not so much as it's one or the other. It's kind of a process, a combined process of letting people know what you're thinking of as a government and also receiving from them feedback and an understanding of what they think of what you're doing as a government. And it can be a pretty painful process at times because of course not everyone agrees.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be a pretty boring world if we all thought the same and we all agreed. We wouldn't have to be here the amount of days we are. And we'd be able to just maybe have a legislature over the phone. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not the way it works.

So there is a value in having consultations. And there is value in letting people know what your decisions are, why you're making those decisions, and listening to the feedback. And I think, first and foremost, it respects the citizens of the province and relays to them quite clearly when you take the time to sit and listen to citizens of this province, you let them know that you respect their opinions. You respect their decisions, and you respect the input that they are giving you on a piece of legislation.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, so when I hear the Premier say over the phone, yes, this is the way we're going. We think it's a good thing, and we'll be tabling it in the House. I understand they would like it passed.

So here we are. We're well over halfway through the fall session of the legislature. There's been no consultations done on this legislation — absolutely nothing that I have seen or been privileged to, anyway. Do many people think it's a good idea? Yes, some do; but not all do. And the government is telling the media and telling people that, oh it'll be implemented January 1st. So when we're seeing that they're planning on

implementing this by January 1st, that means they're expecting this piece of legislation to be passed this session.

So we're over halfway through this session. We've got 12 days left of sitting in this legislature. We have other pieces of legislation that we are dealing with and other issues that we are dealing with, but yet the government wants to shove this piece of legislation through in less than 12 days and have it enacted January 1st.

Could be a good piece of legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but my question is, has it been given a thorough review? Do the people of Saskatchewan understand what this piece of legislation does? Is there something that the minister . . . I mean do they have a whole advertising campaign? Do they have some type of initiatives that, if it is pushed through and crammed through this session, how will the people of the province know? Or will they know when they start getting tickets?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of us are on the highway fairly regularly, and you don't have to wait very long before a car passes you by or before you pass someone, and they are hanging on the phone. They've got a phone up to their ear. We've all done it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And if we are going to change the way people have been used to driving over the last number of years — quite a few years in fact, having a phone and speaking on their cellphone, using their cellphone while they're driving — there is going to need to be not only a piece of legislation crammed through in 12 short days, but there needs to be a fairly in-depth and fairly lengthy, I would think, education of the population of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, still what it does, it ignores that basic premise that you have to respect the people of this province, those who have come out to elections and elected each and every one of us as members to sit in this House and represent their views. That when you go out and do those consultations, it's not only for a review but it's also respecting the citizens of this province, that you value their input and you value their opinion and you respect the decision that they made by electing you government of this province. And that's missing. And that, I think, has been the most frustrating part.

So where this legislation is going to go . . . Mr. Speaker, I heard the minister's announcement in the rotunda. Nice big picture. The government is very good at doing flashy announcements and having all of the pictures and the pompoms and the circumstance around all of their announcements, which are all very nice.

When we look at the replacement and going to a one-piece licence . . . And I'm also very pleased that the minister just made the point that a five-year, well not only a one-piece, but also a five-year licence for the residents of the province. Now there's a number of questions that we will need to ask when it comes to if you're disqualified, how you're notified — if there is some type of an issue over the five years, what type of notification will be given. What's acceptable; what isn't.

But I'm very pleased that the minister made the comment that you would be able to pay \$25 a year still for a five-year licence. So you're mailing in your money, I don't know whether it would have to be with a form so they know who's sending it.

There would have to be some kind of notification.

So I'm not sure if the five-year licence is more cost-effective, whether it should be, I guess, better utilizing each and every one of our times that we don't have to go down to renew licences and do the work and the paperwork that goes with it, but it's pretty minimal now. So I'm not sure how this works, and if it is saving money, saving time or if it's just kind of a new idea, I guess. That may be helpful also or may be appealing to many people.

But I am pleased to hear the minister say you don't have to pay your 125 up front for the five-year licence. You pay it yearly so communication still carries on. I guess we're saving the cost of the licence itself for SGI, but I don't know whether that's actually saving any of the rest of us money or if it's being more cost-effective. So that's comments and that's questions that we're going to have to ask as we get into committee and as we get farther along.

I know there's questions otherwise about a number of practices. And I guess for many years we have done things kind of a traditional way. Are they going to look at changing also licence plates? Are they going to be for longer term than what they are now?

And I was looking at someone's vehicle registration the other day, and there's a financial fee on there that is charged monthly. Now I'm going to have to go back and look at some of mine to see if it's previous or if it's something new, but I've never noticed it before. It's one of my family members I was looking at, and I had never noticed the financial fee previously. I know there's basically an interest payment for the carrying of your insurance and your plates. So there's a number of questions and a number of changes I think that have happened through the licensing and at SGI.

Mr. Speaker, the big I think contentious piece, I don't think there's going to be a lot of concern about the five-year licence — some minor questions and just some clarifications of kind of detail and logistics of how the program will operate. I don't see much problem with that, but I do with the whole cellphone piece and restricting use. And like I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Mr. Speaker, sorry, it's not that there's anything wrong with this.

And, Mr. Speaker, I remember clearly I was coming in — this was a few years ago — I was driving into Regina and got a call and answered the phone. And before I knew it, I had driven all the way down Albert Street. And this was right around noon hour. It was very busy. And it was right around Saskatchewan Drive where I hung up my phone, so I'd driven a fair number of blocks on a very busy piece of Albert Street.

And I realized, as I hung up my phone and set it down, hadn't looked to — I could not remember shoulder checking. I know I had changed lanes a number of times, but I couldn't remember if I checked. I could've cut someone off. I had no idea. So to me, that was a very clear example of why talking on your cellphone could cause some accidents — quite easily, it could cause some accidents.

So I have since gone to using an earpiece. And I guess it makes

it a little more difficult for those of us who are of a certain age, Mr. Speaker. You can't read your texting on your BlackBerry anyway when you're driving, so there's no point to even trying. So I mean that's just an aside. But I know for young people texting as they drive, it truly does take away your concentration from the task at hand.

And I often think, when I'm driving back and forth between Moose Jaw and Regina — I commute daily and put on a few miles during the year representing the people of Moose Jaw Wakamow — but I often think, you know, we put an awful lot of faith in these vehicles that we hurtle down the highway at 110 on the double lanes, Mr. Speaker. And it's really . . . Humans are really trusting people, and we make many assumptions. And I think when it comes to public safety, when it comes to our safety, when it comes to the safety of others, we do need to be more aware that our attention isn't fully on the job at hand many, many times.

But that being said, Mr. Speaker, there is a number of questions that I have then. It truly gets back to that basic premise of democracy, that oppositions do have a role to play. And I could give many, many examples of, over the last two years, where there has been no consultation done beforehand of legislation. Stakeholders are expected to just suck it up and take what is being tabled in this legislature and what is being passed by this government. And taking that kind of paternalistic view that government knows better than anyone else is not healthy, I don't think, for the province of Saskatchewan. May this be the best piece of legislation going forward? Maybe. Do the people of Saskatchewan have any opportunity for input or consultation on the piece? Haven't so far.

And if this government expects this legislation, as they've announced, to be in place and in effect on January 1st of 2010, then that means again that it has to pass within the next 12 days. We've just had second reading today — the first opportunity to make any comments towards this Bill. There's been no discussion with the public across the province of Saskatchewan, but we are expecting it just to fly right through the legislature without any type of scrutiny.

Past practice has been that fall session, legislation was tabled. There was a period over the break, when we ended session early in December and went back into the spring session in March, that you would have an opportunity to speak to interested parties. You would have a fair bit of time to sit down in detail and hey, anybody across the province, all they have to do to look at a piece of legislation . . . They're not always the easiest to understand, to look at the implications and what the intent of the legislation is. Then we have to wait to see regulations that will be attached to the legislation. So that's another, well, pretty quick turnaround when you look at the regulations are not supposed to be drafted until the legislation is passed.

But we're looking at, as the minister announced the other day, implementation by January 1st. So we're talking 12 days of session to push through a piece of legislation which no one has seen until very, very recently, and then we are looking at regulations being drafted.

Obviously the minister has not looked at vetting these regulations with stakeholders and with interested parties

because we're going into the Christmas season and we all know, Mr. Speaker, that people are not interested in sitting down and doing reviews of legislation over the Christmas season. They're interested in being at home with family and friends and having an opportunity to enjoy the Christmas season and the holidays. I always say, Mr. Speaker, one of the good things about this job is the last thing that anyone wants to see over the Christmas holidays is a politician. So we, like other people in this province, can go home and we can enjoy our family and spend some quality time at home. And all people need that.

So to expect that we are going to have legislation and regulations that are going to be reviewed and scrutinized over the Christmas holidays, it's not going to work. I mean it just isn't going to work. People are occupied with other things. They are looking forward, like I say, to the holidays. They're not going to come out or going to make an effort.

So what's going to happen January 1st when these, you can't speak on your cellphone, you can't use your text messaging, you can't use any of this electronic gadgets when you're in your car . . . I shouldn't call them gadgets, Mr. Speaker. They are in many cases business tools for many people that travel while they work.

But it's just being pushed through way too quickly. And there has been very little discussion, not only with stakeholders and with the citizens of the province, but also with the opposition. And the time frame for this is not undoable, Mr. Speaker, it's not undoable.

But I'm asking, I guess more clearly, in a democracy when you need to respect the views of citizens, when you need to respect the views of people who are being affected by this legislation, it's not doable in this time frame that the minister has laid out and which the Premier has stated in his telephone interview where he said, yes, this is a good idea and we'll be tabling legislation this fall. You're not respecting anyone with this process, and you're least of all respecting the democracy in which we live and the process that is in place for dealing with legislation and new initiatives. And it's very limited.

[16:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have to see what comments we're getting back as an opposition caucus because it is one of our responsibilities to offer critiques, to ask questions, and to see what comments we are receiving from citizens and people across the province — how they feel they will be affected; what's allowable, what isn't. And there's always unusual circumstances that come along that don't quite fit in the legislation as it's laid out.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is many, many more questions that will need to be asked on this legislation. And we will see how it proceeds through the House, but I know my colleagues have a number of questions that they would also like to ask. And most of this came up and about when we first heard the Premier's comments on the radio saying, yes, we're going ahead with this and it's going to be tabled in the fall — pretty quick turnaround time for a piece of legislation that's going to change many of the habits of many people. Not arguing for or

against, Mr. Speaker, but it's something that we're going to have to move along through the process that we have in the House, and I look forward to a number of questions being asked in committee. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate on this Bill today.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 116. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 104

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 104 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2009 (No. 2)*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise in the Assembly and to join in on the discussion on Bill No. 104, *An Act to amend The Summary Offences Procedure Act, 1990*.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be able to read the legislation, and also to read in *Hansard* the remarks from the minister as well as a member from our side who responded to the second reading, Mr. Speaker, and now I'm pleased to add in my two cents on Bill No. 104. Mr. Speaker, this is an Act, an amendment to an Act that involves a change to the way that tickets can be delivered to individuals here in Saskatchewan.

Now here in Saskatchewan, most people here in the province are good people, are people who respect the laws or people who want to do what's right for themselves and do what's right for their families. But, Mr. Speaker, there is from time to time and perhaps, you know, some members here have found themselves in this situation or perhaps we know people that have been in this situation, Mr. Speaker, where an individual has done something that requires a ticket.

And now a ticket, Mr. Speaker, is one way that we in a democracy and as members of a civil society ensure that we maintain order in our province and assure that the rule of law's applied, ensure that what is written down in the laws is in fact what is carried out on the street, what's written down is how people live their lives and act accordingly. And it's necessary, Mr. Speaker, when there is a law, it's necessary for people to follow it.

And a foundation of our democratic system is that whatever is clearly stated in the laws, that when a law's in place, that there needs to be a consequence. And, Mr. Speaker, that consequence needs to be enforced honestly. It needs to be enforced evenly.

And, in fact, it needs to be carried out so that the consequence is felt by the person. And the purpose of doing that is to ensure that there's a deterrent so that if an individual has broken the law, they won't go back and do that again, and also so that others in society can see the fine or the penalty that an individual has had to pay or serve, and that is a deterrent for them to not do what's wrong and it's an encouragement for them to do what is right.

And, Mr. Speaker, as supporters of our democratic system, we encourage all people in Saskatchewan to know the laws, to examine the laws, and to obey the laws. And that's the way that we want to structure our society and that's the way that we want to have society ordered.

Now it's a problem, Mr. Speaker, when an individual does break the law and when the penalty is not carried out or, Mr. Speaker, when the penalty has been served to that person but for whatever reason, Mr. Speaker, they're not able to or they don't have to pay the consequences. So in less democratic systems, Mr. Speaker, we see this happening with high levels of corruption and weak enforcement and weak laws. And we see a double standard that takes place in society where some individuals can get off the hook because of who they know or what they can pay or where they've been, Mr. Speaker.

And that's not the kind of system that we want here in Saskatchewan. The kind of system we want here is one where laws are clearly stated, individuals know these laws, they respect these laws, and they obey these laws, Mr. Speaker. And when there's a situation where someone does not obey the law, Mr. Speaker, we as supporters of our democratic system, we want judgment to be carried out that is fair, that is balanced, and that is true to the letter of the law, Mr. Speaker.

So those are some introductory comments I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, when looking at an Act which addresses how summary offences are handled. When we look at how the delivery of justice is handled, Mr. Speaker, how the mechanics of that works, it's necessary to keep that in mind, Mr. Speaker. That while what is on paper might seem like housekeeping, what on paper might seem maybe boring to some people or what might seem short and of not great significance, we need to remember how this fits into the bigger picture of law and order and keeping an ordered society that all individuals want to belong in and that have a great respect for.

Because, Mr. Speaker, when individuals lose respect for our system of laws, that's a problem, Mr. Speaker, that we see in many countries with a developing justice system, a system where there's not a great rule of law and systems, Mr. Speaker, where the law of might is right prevails and simply whoever is strongest, whoever has the most money, has the closest family ties, Mr. Speaker, those situations, those individuals get off the hook.

And I think close on Remembrance Day, Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of talk about the work that Canada does around the world in promoting democracy, in promoting civil society, in promoting economic growth, the spread of free markets, Mr. Speaker. And Canada has a great role to play in this and it's important that we as legislators and as Canadians, it's important that we remember that. That in countries like Afghanistan what

seems very simple and what we take for granted here in Canada is in fact something that many people in Afghanistan would dearly love and are pushing for and are fighting for and are dying for. And, Mr. Speaker, it's something that our Canadian soldiers are in fact putting their lives on the line for and many are, sadly, dying, Mr. Speaker, for what is — believe it or not — in this piece of legislation. And that's the idea that when an individual breaks the law, there's a penalty and they pay the consequence. It's a basic rule of law.

And so while we look at Bill 104, *The Summary Offences Procedure Act* — or an Act to amend it — it's important to keep this in mind, that this is part of a big picture issue. It's part of an issue that cuts to the core of our democracy and to the work that we're doing around the world in encouraging other democracies to really take root and to do well.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill 104, what this Act allows for is for a change in the status quo, from where a ticket can now be served by mail. The practice in the past has been that in all situations and all instances a ticket needs to be delivered in person. So it's not enough to simply mail it or to go through some other means, but you had to show up in person. And, Mr. Speaker, a law enforcement officer had to do this. So this is a change now where an individual no longer needs to have that visit face to face, but there are situations now where it can be deemed appropriate where the ticket can be sent by registered mail. So this is an important change and I think it's a change that to me in many ways makes good sense.

I know I think the last time I was on my feet speaking to a Bill, Mr. Speaker, we were looking at an Act to change *The Property Act*. And much of that legislation at that time, Mr. Speaker, was deemed to be housekeeping. It was deemed to be simply a modernization of the legislation. And I think my basic understanding of Bill 104, that this could be viewed in some ways as the same type of procedure, Mr. Speaker. That when there are changes that occur in society, when there's changes in the nature of the law, when there are opportunities where things can be done in a more efficient manner, it is important that we try to do that. And by issuing tickets by mail, no longer insisting that an individual needs to be hand-delivered the ticket, this is one way where, from my understanding at least — I'm speaking for myself here — that this could be a good approach and a good means to save time and energy for law enforcement officers.

Now we might ask ourselves, why not simply take the approach of always insisting that a ticket needs to be delivered in person? What scenarios, what instances might arise here in Saskatchewan where a ticket could be mailed, where it would make good sense to send this ticket by registered mail and not require that the ticket be served in the flesh, Mr. Speaker? So there's a few that come to mind. The minister made a reference to these in his speech and his comments on this, Mr. Speaker.

One area that was mentioned was perhaps where there's a car accident or a collision and, Mr. Speaker, and there needs to be some type of re-enactment. And the charges or the ticket that needs to be delivered, it is not apparent right at the moment what needs to be done. Because if any of us have been involved, Mr. Speaker, in a car accident, sometimes it's a straightforward. Sometimes it's a simple fender-bender, a

rear-end accident or an uncontrolled intersection and you clearly know that you're supposed to yield to the person on the right. Sometimes it is cut and dry. Sometimes law enforcement officers can issue a ticket right there on the spot.

But, Mr. Speaker, sometimes in a car accident, on the scene it can be rather complicated. There can be other considerations. Perhaps weather was a factor. Perhaps what was going on in the car was a factor. Perhaps the experience of the drivers, Mr. Speaker, was a factor. So there's many concerns and issues in giving a ticket, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps an individual can't do it right there on the spot. Perhaps there needs to be somewhat of an investigation. Perhaps they need to bring in professionals and do a re-enactment of the traffic accident. It's only through the re-enactment, Mr. Speaker, that they're able to determine who in fact was at fault; who should pay the fine. So in those situations it's only appropriate that the ticket be given later on.

And Mr. Speaker, in those situations, if the individual, you know, if the same law enforcement officer that was at the scene of the accident is not available to issue the ticket, that takes resources from someone else, Mr. Speaker. Or it takes up the resources of someone else that they have to now go and deliver this ticket to an individual. And perhaps the individual's been sitting at home, expecting that he or she might get the ticket, and receiving it by mail would be completely appropriate. They would respond, admitting their guilt and pay the fine or take a different course of action. So I agree with the minister that in situations where there might be a car accident, there needs to be a re-enactment, that could be appropriate.

Another area that was mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that's important to keep in mind why this type of legislation or this type of amendment to the legislation would be required, is to do with hunting offences. We know, Mr. Speaker, that many people here in Saskatchewan love hunting and fishing and it's a lifestyle choice. It's a recreation choice. It's a great way to build relationships with family. It's a great way to get exercise if they're out tromping through the bush getting the exercise that we all need and want. So that's an important thing, Mr. Speaker, for when people are out fishing or hunting, that that might be a situation . . . There might be instances when someone is out hunting.

Now many people in Saskatchewan like hunting, but we also know there's many people out of province that come to Saskatchewan and hunt and fish. And there's been a major economic force here in the province and our outfitters and other private individuals that are welcoming friends and relatives to go hunting in the province, that's a good thing because those people come in and spend their resources. That helps small communities. And so long as, Mr. Speaker, it's part of an overall strategy for wildlife management, that certainly is a good thing.

And the vast, vast majority of people that hunt in Saskatchewan follow the law and know what the limits are and know what all the regulations and rules are around firearms. And, Mr. Speaker, they respect the law just like most people in society respect all the laws that are in place.

[16:30]

But there are instances, Mr. Speaker, where some of these people who may be travelling to Saskatchewan to go hunting, to go fishing, some of these people don't follow the laws. And we know these stories through speaking with friends and neighbours and we know of these stories by reading them in the news as well; where there have been offences, when there's been times when people have ignored the limits, have ignored the rules, and have broken the law, Mr. Speaker.

It's only appropriate that the integrity of the system is kept in place, that when this occurs, there needs to be fines and penalties for those individuals who break the law. So you can see in these situations where people have broken the law, if they've come to Saskatchewan for a visit and later on through investigation by peace officers it's determined that charges and there should be a ticket, Mr. Speaker, time may have elapsed. And it does make good sense, in my opinion, in these types of situations that instead of making the law enforcement officers deliver that ticket in person, that the ticket could be mailed to them by registered mail.

And I think that's an important aspect that it is registered mail. It's not bulk mail, it's not a flyer, but it's registered mail so they know that the ticket has been delivered. They know the person has received notice that they've broken the law and that there's a penalty to pay, that there is a ticket to deal with, Mr. Speaker.

I know from the minister's remarks, he states that this is legislation that has been requested by the Saskatchewan Association of Police Chiefs. And it is good, Mr. Speaker, that if this is in fact the case what the minister says in his comments. And of course I'm sure it is, because why would he say otherwise?

It's good to see consultation taking place. Too often, Mr. Speaker, we see legislation come forward in this House and this Assembly and the first time anybody hears about it, the first time anyone has a clue that legislation is going to be introduced, is through the introduction of it on first reading, Mr. Speaker. But in this situation it would see that this request and change has been by the Saskatchewan Association of Police Chiefs.

So I certainly want to give credit where credit is due, that when members opposite are actually engaging and dealing with stakeholders, that when they're actually listening to people, when they're actually taking ideas about legislation to groups in the community, in the province, getting feedback, requesting feedback on issues — I want to say that's a good thing. So that's a positive thing.

And I, in guessing what the rationale is by the Saskatchewan Association of Police Chiefs, why they would request this type of change, I'm sure it's because, as my earlier comments indicated, that when there are efficiencies that can be gained and these efficiencies don't undermine the legislation or the program in place, it's appropriate to explore how things could be done in a more efficient manner and it's important to implement that. And my guess would be that the Saskatchewan Association of Police Chiefs saw that there was an opportunity here where they could free up more time for individuals, for police officers and other peace officers to be doing the work that they really need to be doing in the community.

And certainly, as I said earlier, delivering tickets is part of the important work that needs to be done in order to maintain the rule of law and maintain a properly functioning society. But if there's a simpler way to do it in a way that saves time, saves money and effort by individuals, and allows police officers to be doing what I think probably most of them really want to be doing — and that's dealing with crime and the root causes of crime in society — I think that's a positive thing.

I know over the summer, Mr. Speaker, as I had the opportunity to do some door knocking in the community, meeting with constituents and at events, certainly safer streets and safer communities is something that individuals bring up to me on the doorstep in my constituency. It's a concern by many people in, well the whole province — in Saskatoon, and certainly a concern for many people in Saskatoon Massey Place.

There was the very tragic news, Mr. Speaker, I guess a couple of months ago now — if not, maybe just weeks — of a young woman who was murdered and shot to death in an alley right in the heart of Saskatoon Massey Place. A very sad, a very tragic incident, Mr. Speaker. And I know when I spoke to constituents and people in the community about that, they certainly said, well whatever we can do as individuals, as members of the legislature, to ensure that there are law enforcement officers on the street being able to do the work that they really want to do and going after criminals in the way that they really want to go after them, Mr. Speaker, when the law is broken, then that is something that we in the Assembly need to support.

So if this measure frees up time, frees up the legs and the human power to do other types of work instead of simply delivering tickets, then from my perspective at least, Mr. Speaker, I think that's a good thing. And I could see why the Saskatchewan Association of Police Chiefs would like that, would request that type of change, and why we see this now, this change occurring in *The Summary Offences Procedure Act*, Bill 104.

I also in reading the legislation, I see, Mr. Speaker, that there have been some measures to deal with the situation where someone's been given a ticket but they don't fully agree with the ticket. When an individual has been given a ticket in person, Mr. Speaker — whether that's for something like a hunting offence or whether that's for something like a traffic offence — if they don't like the ticket, Mr. Speaker, when it's in person, the opportunity is there for the individual to state their unhappiness with the ticket and how they view the, maybe, the situation and the ticket giving should have gone. They're able to voice that at that time. Now that may not change the outcome, but there's still that opportunity.

I see in this legislation now, Mr. Speaker, that when an individual has received the ticket through registered mail by person, there's a window of opportunity where they're able to appear before a justice and explain themselves and discuss the ticket that they've been given in the offence that they've been determined to have committed.

And so it is good, Mr. Speaker, that even with the mailing, that there is an opportunity in place that that person can go to a justice and say, to plead his or her side of the story and say why they think the ticket is or isn't appropriate. So I'm happy to see

that that change has occurred, Mr. Speaker.

So with this Bill 104, *An Act to amend The Summary Offences Procedure Act, 1990*, when there is legislation coming out of consultation with the community, when there is legislation coming out of a request by an important group in the community, I'm encouraged to see the government actually engaged in that process because very often that's not the case. And we see legislation being introduced here in the Assembly, first time anyone knows about it's in the Assembly. So I'm glad to see the consultation on this one took place.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that if this legislation — if it is passed, this change — if it does free up the opportunity for individuals, law enforcement officers, peace officers to be engaged in the work that's really at the core of their work, really at the heart of why they're doing their jobs, if this does in fact free up time, then I do think that's a good idea. And, Mr. Speaker, by reading the comments by the minister, by him saying that this request is coming from the Association of Police Chiefs, it would lead me to believe that that is in fact the case. So I'm pleased to see that.

Mr. Speaker, also I'm pleased to see that there is a window of opportunity. That now, if tickets are delivered by mail as opposed to in person, there still is within 15 days a chance for individuals to go before a justice and state their side of the situation and state why they think this is or isn't an appropriate ticket, and why they think they may or may not be guilty of the offence that they're charged with, Mr. Speaker.

So it appears there's some consultation, and it appears that this does make good sense. But as with any piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we hear from everyone who might have a say on this. It's important that due process is followed, and that can occur through different ways. It can occur through members opposite here having the opportunity to have phone conversations with people, to talk about this in the community with individuals, to receive feedback through a variety of means, whether that's informally in the community or whether that is through the official work through our constituency offices. Certainly I know I want to do that as an individual, and I'm sure there's many members here also that want the opportunity to do that.

And it's also appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that we have a chance in committee to ask questions about this to ensure that t's are crossed, i's are dotted, and that everything here is well thought out, and that the delivery of the changes can be done properly and be done efficiently, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, it appears to me that this change to the legislation makes sense. But as I said, I wanted to speak to some more individuals. And I know other members here in the Assembly on my side might have a few things to say about it, have a few thoughts. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, on Bill 104, I would move to adjourn debate on 104, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Member from Saskatoon Massey Place has moved adjournment of debate on Bill 104. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 107

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 107 — *The Weed Control Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to comment on this new piece of legislation which will now be referred to as *The Weed Control Act*. I understand that the correct name of the Bill is Bill No. 107, an Act respecting prohibited, noxious and nuisance weeds, and we're also going to make consequential amendment to *The Municipal Board Act*.

I've had a chance to review the minister's remarks and also review the legislation, and I think it's fair to say that there are a number of questions that the minister's very brief speech did not address. And I think the first question that the minister did not address is who has been consulted regarding this major overhaul of *The Noxious Weed Act, 1984*.

Mr. Speaker, it appears as though this legislation is extremely detailed and quite specific in terms of what the expectations will now be when it comes to the control and eradication of weeds in the province of Saskatchewan. What's interesting is that the minister now gets to appoint or designate weed superintendents. And it's also interesting that 10 persons in any municipality can sign a petition and the municipality will now have to appoint a weed inspector, and the weed inspector has to be appointed by the next council meeting. Now what's interesting is that the municipality will be able to appoint any person that the municipality considers to be qualified as a weed inspector.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to have a little further understanding of what qualifications a person would have to have to become a weed inspector. Because that weed inspector is now going to be given some very significant powers to go onto people's land, go into buildings, look at domesticated animals, look at equipment, go to oil and gas sites, go to railroad sites, go into ditches that are the purview of Highways or the municipality and make a determination. And they also have the ability to not only eradicate weeds, but they also have the ability to go onto other people's land who may have some encroachment of those weeds.

And I'm particularly thinking of organic farmers. And we have, I think we have, the largest percentage of organic farmers in Canada in the province of Saskatchewan. And as all members will know, organic farmers become certified because they don't use chemicals and pesticides and fertilizer in the production of their organic crops.

[16:45]

So I think there are a number of questions that the minister is going to have to address, certainly in committee. And maybe if some of the members opposite would like to get up and speak

on this Bill, we need to understand what exactly qualifies someone to become a weed inspector.

And what's also interesting in terms of this Bill is, if an urban municipality does not appoint a weed inspector, a rural municipality that comes up to the urban municipality boundaries, that weed inspector has the ability to go into that urban municipality and eradicate weeds.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are certainly a number of people . . . And I happen to live in a constituency where people are being encouraged not to use chemicals to eradicate weeds and to use natural ways of eradicating weeds because of allergies and asthma and some association of these kind of chemicals to various health issues.

So I find it interesting that in this legislation, if I'm understanding the legislation correctly, that if an urban municipality does not appoint a weed inspector, say 10 people don't petition the town council or the city council, there's no weed inspector appointed. And if some rural municipality that comes up to the boundaries of that urban municipality determines that there might be a weed problem in an urban municipality, they have the legal authority according to this legislation to go into that urban municipality and eradicate weeds. And I'm not sure that we want to go there, given that it's not defined in the legislation what kind of credentials or qualifications a person has to have in order to become a weed inspector in the province of Saskatchewan.

The other interesting piece of legislation that's contained in this Bill is that if someone is . . . It's determined that they have noxious weeds or prohibited weeds on their property. And if they disagree with this weed inspector — where we haven't really clarified what kind of credentials and qualifications a weed inspector has to have — that if they're ordered to eradicate their noxious weeds or prohibited weeds or nuisance weeds, Mr. Speaker, they have the ability to go to the rural municipality and ask for an appeal.

Now what's interesting in this legislation is that the rural municipality, the rural municipal councillors, can be the appeal committee or the rural municipality can appoint an independent appeal committee. And what's not quite clear is what does an independent appeal committee mean when you're being appointed by the rural municipal council?

So, Mr. Speaker, there are, given that different people have different views on what is a noxious weed, what is a prohibited weed, what is a nuisance weed, there's a great deal of power and authority that rests with the minister. The minister can now appoint weed superintendents in the province of Saskatchewan. The minister can designate every weed superintendent to perform duties. And that the rural municipal councillors, at the request of 10 voters in their municipality, appoint a weed inspector. But we don't have any definition of what kind of qualifications one would need in order to become a weed inspector in the province of Saskatchewan. All we know is that a weed inspector can be appointed according to, pursuant to section 6. And we also know that the minister can designate a plant as a noxious weed, a nuisance weed, or a prohibited weed.

Now they're supposed to publish this information in the *Gazette*

as soon as possible. But we note, Mr. Speaker, that the government seems to not always get around to publishing information in the *Gazette*. And we also know that this kind of information is not necessarily made public.

So the minister, as I said earlier, gave a very, very short little speech. The minister told us that this was an outdated Act. He told us that this Act no longer meets the needs of Saskatchewan residents. The minister told us that this is a modern approach to weed and invasive plant control, and this is about applying early detection. And the minister also told us that through regulation they're going to fine people, and they're going to increase the amount of money that the municipality can recover from landowners for costs incurred as a result of the control measures that are being taken during enforcement.

But they haven't told us who gets to be a weed inspector. They haven't told us what kind of qualifications you have to have in order to be a weed inspector in the province of Saskatchewan. Now apparently this is all going to be set out in regulations. Well, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you're talking about going onto people's land and eradicating weeds, and they're even given the ability to farm the land, I think sometimes you might want to put some of this into legislation in order that people have some understanding of what exactly is going to happen when it comes to this new legislation, *The Weed Control Act*, to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, apparently the minister contacted the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Finance says, everything's fine. Well, Mr. Speaker, these days when it comes to the Minister of Finance saying everything's fine, I have to say this: that we're about to find out in the province of Saskatchewan that this government's overspent by billions of dollars, and in fact increased spending by some 33 per cent in the province of Saskatchewan since they came to office, and they have over a \$1 billion deficit. So I'm not sure I'd really be talking to the Minister of Finance who apparently has reviewed and analyzed the legislation and is satisfied with the financial accounting and administrative matters being addressed.

Well I think these days, when it comes to the Minister of Finance, when the Minister of Agriculture is telling us that everything's been addressed in terms of the financial accounting administrative matters in this Bill, I'm not sure we should take that at face value. I think we will want to ask a number of questions in order that we have a very clear understanding of what this legislation means.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the Act is going to define three classes of noxious weeds. We've got nuisance weeds. We've got prohibited weeds. And we have one other set of weeds, which I need to find my Bill: nuisance weeds, noxious weeds, and prohibited weeds.

Now it'll be very interesting which weed is defined as a nuisance weed, which weed will be defined as noxious weeds, and which weeds will be defined as prohibited weeds. And we will want to have that information when the minister goes into committee, so I would suggest that the minister needs to come well-armed so that we know exactly what kind of weeds that they are talking about in the province of Saskatchewan.

We will also want to know what credentials or qualifications do people need to have in order to become a weed inspector. Because the weed inspector has a great deal of power and authority according to this legislation, particularly when it comes to going onto people's land, going into buildings. They can even go into oil drilling platforms or gas platforms and pumping stations and pipeline companies. And they could even look at domestic animals in the province of Saskatchewan. So I will want to know . . . And irrigation companies and drainage associations. So we'll need to know precisely what qualifications these folks have because they're going to have the power to enter buildings and enter land.

Now, they can't enter your personal home. Private homes can't be entered into by the weed inspector, but they will be able to enter onto land, and they will be able to go into buildings, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the one thing that this Bill does do is, if the municipality fails to pay the weed inspector, the minister through his ministry can pay the weed inspector on behalf of the municipality and then get the money back, I guess, from revenue sharing from the municipality.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we're just about at adjournment. I have more things to say, but I would move that we adjourn debate on *The Weed Control Act*.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 107. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:55.]

CORRIGENDUM

On page 3476 of *Hansard*, No. 10A Thursday, November 5, 2009, in the left column, first paragraph spoken by Mr. Broten, the last sentence reads, “He said, I have not said those things about them; I said Tommy the commie, Tommy the commie.”

The sentence should read, “He said, I have not said those things about them; I said Tommy the comic, Tommy the comic.”

Also on page 3476 in the left column, last paragraph spoken by Mr. Broten, the first sentence reads, “Here’s a member on every opportunity — there’s not one member over there who could deny this — on every opportunity has hurled insults like that across the floor, denies it by saying Tommy the commie.”

The sentence should read, “Here’s a member on every opportunity — there’s not one member over there who could deny this — on every opportunity has hurled insults like that across the floor, denies it by saying Tommy the comic.”

The online transcript for November 5, 2009, has been corrected.

We apologize for these errors.

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