



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

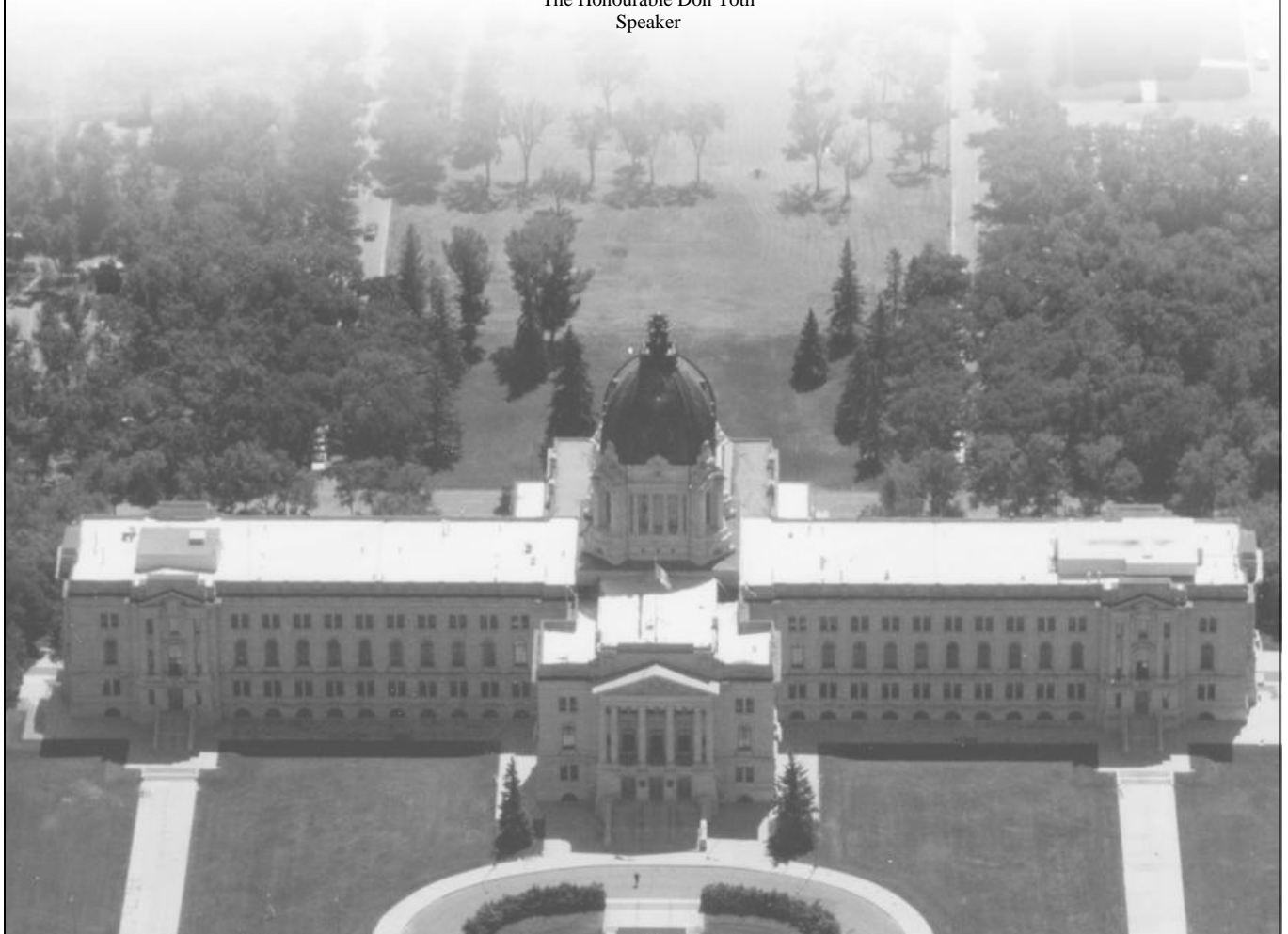
of the

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

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

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Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
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Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 08:00.]

[Prayers]

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before we get to orders of the day, pursuant to section 31 of *The Ombudsman's and Children's Advocate Act*, I lay on the Table the Children's Advocate office's 2009 annual report.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Also, yesterday the Opposition House Leader raised a point of order regarding the responses to written questions 1,552 through 1,554. The member stated that the response given by the Minister of Environment was out of order as a response, and I quote, "As *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* is currently before the Assembly, detailed questions regarding the Bill are better directed to the Minister in the Committee stage as per the regular legislative process" is contrary to the rules.

I find that the point of order is well taken. The deflection of the response to another venue is not in order. I would like to remind members that rule 20 provides that the rules that govern questions during question period also apply to written questions. In addition, on April 14th, 2010, I ruled that ministers must respond to a question even if it is only to decline to answer. This is not a proper response.

Now I would like to detail the options available to ministers when responding to written questions. As outlined in rule 20(5), the government shall either table the response or convert the question by ordering a return or convert the question to a notice of motion for return (debatable). Ordering a return provides the government 180 days to respond to the question, and converting the question provides the opportunity to amend the wording of the question or to debate the matter by amending or defeating the question.

Later today during written questions, the disputed questions 1,552 through 1,554 will be called again, and the government must table a substantive response, order the question, or convert the question to a motion for return (debatable).

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 141— *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act*

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise here today to move second reading of

The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act that will have an incredible impact on the business community in Saskatchewan.

This Bill outlines legislative requirements to transfer responsibility for the administration of corporations branch from the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General to Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan in October 2010. *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act* makes transition-enabling and consequential amendments to certain English-only language business statutes and other legislation administered by corporations branch.

Mr. Speaker, corporations branch is already providing excellent service to the business community in Saskatchewan. It is the primary contact for almost all businesses in Saskatchewan and houses key business information. Corporations branch coordinates, promotes, develops, implements, and enforces policies and programs that relate to the registration and regulation of business corporations, non-profit corporations, co-operatives, and other businesses in Saskatchewan.

The move to transfer corporations branch to ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan] will leverage ISC's significant registry expertise, their core competencies, and infrastructure to enhance and further evolve business service to the business community.

Mr. Speaker, this government values the skills and the knowledge that corporations branch employees will bring to ISC. I am proud to report that no current corporation branch employees will experience job loss as a result of this transfer. Both parties are already working together to ensure the transition is as seamless and easy as possible for employees and for our customers.

ISC's core business is registry services, and corporations branch is a natural fit. Through its experience with land titles, land survey, and vital statistics registries, ISC has gained valuable experience in registry modernization, customer service, online application, and document conversion. In addition, as mentioned in its recently released 2009 annual report, ISC has successfully managed expenses through internal efficiencies and with a focus on improving processes.

This Bill is based on a similar transfer legislation that was used to accomplish transfers to ISC of the land titles and surveys registration functions, personal property registry, and vital statistics registry.

The proposed Bill will have number of functions. It will reflect the transfer of corporations branch to ISC. It will transfer the powers and responsibilities to ISC to carry out and provide the structure for the administration and enforcement of this transfer Bill, the business statutes, and any other legislation directing business statute officials.

It will create a definition for business statutes that describes the collection of key legislation to be administered and enforced by ISC and business statutes officials. These include *The Business Corporations Act*, *The Business Names Registration Act*, *The Co-operatives Act*, *The New Generation Co-operatives Act*, *The*

Non-Profit Corporations Act, 1995, The Partnership Act, and The Companies Act.

It also creates a definition for a business statute official, who are three individuals with responsibilities all under business statutes. That is the director of corporations, the registrar of companies, and the registrar of co-operatives. And it will also provide for the appointment of statutory officials under the business statutes.

Consistent with the current fee setting authority under *The Land Titles Act, 2000, The Land Surveys Act, 2000, The Personal Property Security Act, 1993, and The Vital Statistics Administration Transfer Act*, it will provide authority for ISC to exercise discretion to establish fees and costs for existing, new, or additional services and products provided under the business statute or any other Act that imposes responsibilities on business statute officials.

It will provide for the transfer of corporations branch employees in the public service to ISC. It will provide the transferred employees will continue to participate in the government's superannuation and pension plans. It will provide authority for ISC to retain revenues derived from the delivery of the transfer of corporation branch functions and the responsibility and administration of these pieces of legislation. It will permit ISC to exercise control over the assets, the liabilities, contracts, and legal rights respecting the operations of corporations branch transferred to ISC. It will enshrine in legislation that references in any other legislation to corporations branch in the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General will mean a reference to ISC and business statute officials who administer business statutes or any other legislation directing business statute officials. It will make consequential amendments to a number of Acts to reflect the transfer of the corporations branch to ISC, such as amendments to the various professional associations legislation. These professional associations will be required to file regulatory and administrative bylaws and an annual member list for the director of corporations at ISC.

Mr. Speaker, this transfer is also the first step in an exciting new initiative that will provide a more convenient and a more cost-effective means to deliver government services to business.

To be competing and attracting and supporting the growing private sector, Saskatchewan must improve its online services to businesses in our province. Currently businesses are required to deal with several government ministries in order to conduct business in our province. The transfer of the corporations branch to ISC is the very first step in developing a new online portal that will provide a single point of access to most business services provided by government. This initiative will make it much easier to do business in our province and streamline processes across government. Ultimately it will reduce the cost for business and for government.

Following the transfer of the corporations branch to ISC in October of 2010, an online business registry service will be developed and implemented in 2011 in the early months. The business registry service will allow new businesses to complete the steps required to register a business using an easy to use online application.

The first phase will offer three registration services. The first one will be to register a business through the corporations branch; secondly, register as an employer with the Workers' Compensation Board; and thirdly, register for provincial sales tax with the Ministry of Finance.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is just the beginning. By the end of 2012, ISC will begin to expand the services beyond registration services and will provide business owners with a single point of access to most other government services for business.

Business owners will self-manage their online profiles and work in the online environment to get necessary licences and permits to remit taxes and comply with other government requirements. The transfer of corporations branch to ISC is crucial to the success of the online portal. The corporations branch will serve as the foundation to the new online business registration service, and subsequent business service portals will make it easier to do business in our province.

Mr. Speaker, it therefore gives me great pleasure to move that *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act* will now be read a second time.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Schriemer: — Mr. Speaker, request leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Sutherland has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Schriemer: — Good morning and thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to members of the House, I would like to introduce two people in your gallery, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Peter Carton and Mr. Brent Kennedy. These two gentlemen are involved with Ducks Unlimited, and they've come to the House today to watch the proceedings and hear the argument from opposition. I would like to welcome them and ask that members also welcome them to their House.

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

Mr. Taylor: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has asked for leave to also introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the member from Saskatoon Sutherland in welcoming and acknowledging the guests who are here today from Ducks

Unlimited.

I have been a member of Ducks Unlimited for quite a number of years and actually have a number of ducks memorabilia items in my house and even on my presence, Mr. Speaker, because of the support that I have for the organization. And I'm very pleased to see these individuals here today.

I believe that they do have something to say about the habitat protection lands designation Act, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased to see them here. I join with the members opposite in welcoming them to the Chamber.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 141 — *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act* (continued)

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Crown Investments has moved that Bill No. 141, *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise at second reading to speak on Bill No. 141, *An Act to effect the transfer of the administration of certain Business Statutes to the Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts*.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the minister who just spoke. The minister had an extensive explanation in her second reading speech. I advise anyone who is interested in the Act who has not yet fully understood what the Act might be, I refer them to the minister's speech. I think her explanation hit all of the high points, Mr. Speaker.

This province is certainly very proud of Information Services Corporation. When ISC was set up, Mr. Speaker, it was set up to do a number of things in the province, and it is evolving, Mr. Speaker, through normal processes. And that evolution, Mr. Speaker, is recognizing the work that has gone on in the past, the capacity and the capability of the employees who are there, and the ability, Mr. Speaker, to take advantage of and provide benefit, Mr. Speaker, for evolving trends within the information services area, Mr. Speaker.

It seems on the surface that the transfer of corporations branch activities to ISC is a logical extension of the work that's going on at ISC. Corporations branch has been providing tremendous services to the business community in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, we all want to see the ability of corporations branch, the work that they do continue, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the business community in Saskatchewan is well served by the programs offered by the Government of Saskatchewan.

[08:15]

Mr. Speaker, the members of the New Democratic Party have always been supportive of private sector activity in the province as well as public and co-operatives, Mr. Speaker. So to ensure

that the private, public, and co-operative sectors are able to function well and provide benefits to the people of Saskatchewan — financial and service-oriented, Mr. Speaker — we want to ensure that government's always able to provide services to those sectors in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there will be issues relating to transfer. Those issues, whether they be related to employees and contracts, Mr. Speaker, or whether they have to do with paper, those are issues for which there may be a fair bit of detail, Mr. Speaker. Those issues relating to transfer can be dealt with through the normal committee process here in the legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, given that this Bill seems on the surface to be in order, the minister's speech provided a very reasonable explanation, and our response to the Bill is primarily related to questions we may have about it, as opposed to the philosophy behind the Bill. Mr. Speaker, agreeing generally with the principle of the Bill, we are prepared to see this Bill move quickly into committee and we will have a number of questions for the minister to ensure that the transfer will be done fairly and competently.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that the Bill, I would indicate that we're prepared to move the Bill to committee.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? The question before the Assembly is the question presented by the Minister Responsible for Crown Investments that Bill No. 141, *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act* be now read the second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I designate that Bill No. 141, *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act* be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

Bill No. 142 — *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Consequential Amendments Act, 2010/Loi de 2010 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act*

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again today to move second reading of *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Consequential Amendments Act, 2010* that will have an impact on the business community in Saskatchewan. *The Business Statutes Administration*

Transfer Consequential Amendments Act, 2010 is bilingual legislation that makes consequential amendments to the bilingual legislation affected by *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the corporations branch is already providing excellent service to the business community in our province. It is the primary contact point for almost all the businesses in Saskatchewan and houses key business information. Corporations branch coordinates, promotes, develops, implements, and enforces policies and programs that relate to the registration and regulation of business corporations, non-profit corporations, co-operatives, and other businesses in Saskatchewan.

The move to transfer corporations branch to ISC will leverage ISC's significant registry expertise, its core competencies and infrastructure, and enhance and further evolve service delivery to the business community.

Mr. Speaker, this government values the skills and the knowledge that the corporations branch employees bring to ISC. I am proud to report that no current corporations branch employee will experience job loss as a result of this transfer. Both parties are already working together to ensure the transition is as seamless and easy as possible for both employees and for customers.

ISC core business is registry services, and the corporations branch is a natural fit. Through its experience with the land titles, land surveys, and vital statistics registries, ISC has gained valuable experience in registry modernization, customer service, online applications, and document conversion. In addition, as mentioned in its recently released 2009 annual report, ISC has successfully managed expenses through internal efficiencies with a focus on improving processes.

This Bill will reflect the transfer of the corporations branch to ISC. It will provide for the appointment and recognizes the title of the registrar of co-operatives as the statutory official under *The Co-operatives Act* business statute. It will enshrine in legislation that a reference to the director of corporations means director of corporations under *The Business Corporations Act*. This allows the use of the term "director of corporations" in several consequential amendments in other legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this transfer is also the first step in an exciting new initiative that will mean a more convenient and cost-effective means to deliver government services to business. To be competing and attracting and supporting the growing private sector, Saskatchewan must improve its online service to business.

Currently businesses are required to deal with several government ministries in order to conduct businesses in our province. The transfer of the corporations branch to ISC is the first step in developing a new online portal that will provide the single point of access to most business services provided by government.

This initiative will make it much easier to do business in our province and streamline processes right across government. Ultimately it'll reduce costs for business and for government.

Following the transfer of corporations branch to ISC in October 2010, an online business registry service will be developed and implemented in early 2011. The business registry service will allow new businesses to complete the steps required to register a business using an easy online application.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is just the beginning. By the end of 2012, ISC will begin to expand the services offered beyond registration services and will provide business owners with a single point of access to most other government services for a business. Business owners will self-manage their online profiles and work in the online environment to get the necessary permits and licences to remit taxes and comply with other government requirements.

The transfer of the corporations branch to ISC is crucial to the success of the online portal. The corporations branch will serve as a foundation to the new online business registration service and subsequent business service portal that will make it easier to do business in our province. Mr. Speaker, it therefore gives me pleasure to move that *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Consequential Amendments Act, 2010* be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Crown Investments has moved that Bill No. 142, *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Consequential Amendments Act, 2010* be now read the second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak at second reading on Bill No. 142, the consequential amendments piece to *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Act*. Again I want to thank the minister for her thorough explanation of the Bill. Mr. Speaker, certainly Bill 142 follows Bill 141, not just in number, but of course in consequence, Mr. Speaker. So many of the things that I had to say a few moments ago on Bill 141 apply equally here on 142.

I just want to repeat, first and foremost, the people of the province are very proud of the work that ISC has done, are very pleased to see that the corporation has evolved to the point of being able to manage more of the information and business-related collecting and distribution functions of government, Mr. Speaker.

So we believe that in principle Bill 142 is acceptable. We'll have similar questions to 142 as we do on 141, relating for the transfer, ensuring that we have a fair and competent transfer to ensure that individuals and process are indeed treated fairly.

So, Mr. Speaker, that having been said, I want to indicate to the House that the opposition is prepared to see this Bill go to committee for those questions to be asked. And, Mr. Speaker, I thank the government for bringing this forward and you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 142.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion presented by the Minister Responsible for Crown

Investments that Bill No. 142, *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Consequential Amendments Act, 2010* be now read the second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — I designate that Bill No. 142, *The Business Statutes Administration Transfer Consequential Amendments Act, 2010* be referred to the Crown and Central Agencies committee.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 132

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Heppner that **Bill No. 132 — *The Wildlife Habitat Protection (Land Designation) Amendment Act, 2009*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 132. This is *An Act to amend The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*.

Mr. Speaker, this is an Act that was introduced recently by the Minister of the Environment. Mr. Speaker, it has been circulated throughout the province of Saskatchewan. It has been subject to a number of questions in the Chamber and, Mr. Speaker, it has also been subject of a number of conversations inside and outside the legislature, Mr. Speaker. And as a result, we in the opposition are finding that there are issues inherent in *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* that, Mr. Speaker, are either misunderstood by the public or if they are understood, Mr. Speaker, certainly the messages coming to government are not being heard by the Minister of the Environment and her officials.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, for the simple reason that we have a number of organizations that the minister has said have been thoroughly consulted with, organizations who are now saying that meaningful consultation did not occur. Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, yesterday in question period the member from Regina Walsh Acres, who is the Environment critic for the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, asked that the minister withdraw the Bill until such time as meaningful consultation can occur and, Mr. Speaker, agreements can be reached as to

how to move forward.

I say there's some confusion out there, Mr. Speaker, because the minister says this is about stewardship and about land protection and, Mr. Speaker, we have others who are indicating that there's something more to this. Mr. Speaker, I want to express my own bias before I get into the heart of my remarks. Mr. Speaker, I accept the fact of stewardship. I do not believe this Act is about stewardship. This Act is about legacy and, Mr. Speaker, government is there to ensure and protect legacy, Mr. Speaker. And this Act seems to be interfering with legacy, Mr. Speaker.

So I don't want to see this debate get lost in stewardship. We understand that there are individuals across this province, Mr. Speaker, who care deeply about habitat land and as a result, Mr. Speaker, they are going to be good stewards of the land. I'll say more about this in a couple of minutes.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's a role for government. There's a role for government in ensuring that the collective good, the collective domain, Mr. Speaker, is protected. That's what legacy is all about. That's insurance, Mr. Speaker. That is certainty. And when we are talking about the things that are sharing the Earth with us, whether it's plants or animals, Mr. Speaker, we have a role collectively, not just individually, to ensure that there are protections in place, Mr. Speaker, that everything we do, as they've said in the old tale, everything we do should be to ensure that we leave the Earth a better place than we found it, Mr. Speaker.

I support the argument that we have not been given the Earth to do as we want. It is our responsibility to ensure that our children inherit a better place than we inherited from our parents. So, Mr. Speaker, that is the essence of, I think, what the arguments are with regards to this legislation.

[08:30]

Members of the public who have been watching this Act know that there have been a number of speeches made. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow started debate on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, some time ago and indicated that there were some concerns but we needed to consult further.

The members from Saskatoon Eastview and Saskatoon Fairview both spoke on this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and have indicated that indeed as a province, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that our government understands what it is that we, the people of Saskatchewan, want to see happen with regards to protecting wildlife habitat.

And, Mr. Speaker, the other day the member from Regina Coronation Park gave an impassioned speech that indicated some of the individuals who over their careers have contributed a great deal, Mr. Speaker, to the legislation, not just in Saskatchewan but in Canada and around the world, Mr. Speaker, that have provided protection for various species, floral and fauna.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue. And while the Minister of the Environment would like us to believe it's simply about stewardship, that it is possible to transfer protected lands

to a sole party ownership, Mr. Speaker, away from the Crown because those who will own the land will manage it appropriately, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to argue because I don't want to debate what the Cattlemen's Association or the Stock Growers Association that the minister quotes, Mr. Speaker, because I agree with them that in fact they can be and are good stewards of the land that they currently lease, Mr. Speaker. I don't have an argument with those who wish to own the land that they use for their personal well-being, Mr. Speaker, their personal business.

The Crown or the province has in the past indicated they've been prepared to sell Crown land. In fact they started a program just a year and a half ago to sell Crown land in the province. In fact they were selling it at a discount, Mr. Speaker, a 10 per cent discount, they were so anxious to move some pasture land around the province into the hands of those who had leased that land for, in some cases, several generations.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a different issue. These protected lands currently in legislation, these protected lands, Mr. Speaker, are identified in legislation. They are now Crown owned, Mr. Speaker, and what the government wants to do is be able to sell those Crown lands, but put a certification or a designation on those lands, Mr. Speaker, an easement — perhaps the legal word is better — an easement on those lands to provide what the government says is protection.

But what others are saying, Mr. Speaker — and I'll provide some of that evidence in a few minutes — what others are saying, quite simply, Mr. Speaker, is that the Crown has an obligation to the public as a whole to ensure that for generations to come, not just the current generation or their children, but for generations to come that this land continues to have a legislative protection. And that within that protection, Mr. Speaker, there are ways in which certain obligations can be placed and, in fact, as we've known in the past, designated lands, when good arguments can be made for the removal of those lands from legislation, those good arguments are made, lands can be delisted after public debate, and, Mr. Speaker, additional lands can be identified and moved into the system.

We on this side of the House believe very strongly in no net loss. No net loss simply means, Mr. Speaker, if lands are delisted on one side, a certain number of acres, there's another equal or greater — one would hope greater — number of acres that are added to the list, Mr. Speaker.

We're not opposed to the recognition that at some point in time there may be some change, and with public consultation and public debate, Mr. Speaker, that in fact some land could be delisted. But it's got to be done in a way in which the public fully understands what's happening.

In many cases, Mr. Speaker, the public or the owner of a lease on a particular land doesn't know how that land got designated in the first place. And in many cases, Mr. Speaker, you have families who have, over one or two generations have protected lands, and they have willed those lands to the province, Mr. Speaker, for habitat protection purposes. The Crown has accepted those, has listed those lands. And now, Mr. Speaker, it could be two generations later, somebody wants to see those lands delisted because they want to own rather than lease a

particular piece of land.

I have no concerns, as I said, Mr. Speaker, about landownership in the province. And I have no issue to take with any person raising cattle in the province who wants to use designated lands, Mr. Speaker, but I do have a problem that the province wants to be able to make decisions that could in fact delist land or remove land from designation simply by the stroke of a pen behind closed doors in a cabinet office.

Mr. Speaker, let's just talk about that for a second before I make some comments about the consultation process. Mr. Speaker, there's two ways in which things happen in government. One is a legislative process, and the other is a regulatory process. And there are significant differences between these two things, Mr. Speaker. Legislation provides certainty and public accountability. Regulations allows things to be managed efficiently and quickly, Mr. Speaker, but there's less accountability and less transparency, obviously, Mr. Speaker.

So when a government wants to be able to do things quickly, without the usual scrutiny, they will usually move something from a legislative agenda to a regulatory agenda. Legislation, for the public's benefit, Mr. Speaker, is what we do in this Chamber when laws are passed. And those laws require, to go into effect, introduction of legislation, second reading, debate in principle, a sharing of information. It moves in to a committee where questions are asked, media is present — these are all open meetings — and then there's a third reading in specifics, Mr. Speaker, after legislation might be amended. And then there's also the process of Royal Assent and proclamation, Mr. Speaker, which also puts some public focus on government to see that things get done.

The regulatory process, Mr. Speaker, is very simple. Something gets brought up at a cabinet table, the minister gets the approval from cabinet, and they sign it off. It's done, Mr. Speaker. A decision in cabinet, a regulation can be changed without anybody knowing it was on the table, without anybody knowing it was coming up, without anybody even knowing that it was done until it was done, Mr. Speaker. Very simple. Very efficient. So if you want to keep something from the public, you put it into regulations. If you want to make sure that the public knows what you're doing, that there's full transparency and accountability, and you want certainty on something as important as the designation of habitat lands, Mr. Speaker, you keep it in legislation.

And that seems to be part of the argument that we're hearing from those who care about habitat protection, that in fact we built a legacy in this province — 3 million acres. I'm told that's twice the size of the province of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Speaker. I don't know that, but I'm told. And if we have that amount of land designated by legislation and by legislative authority, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that that protection is there with some certainty, Mr. Speaker. Because for Saskatchewan it's not a large amount of land. I think 5 per cent of our total land area, Mr. Speaker, not a large amount of land. But in terms of the size compared to other parts of the country, a land base that's twice the size of Prince Edward Island is something to be proud of. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, we have organizations, groups and individuals who are proud of that fact

and we have members of this Legislative Chamber who are very proud of the fact that we have designated these lands.

So the idea is legacy, Mr. Speaker, and certainty. And to do that we need transparency, accountability, we need public consultation, and we need public input.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what's happening on the public input side of things? Well the government started on a process of changing environmental legislation a while ago. And, Mr. Speaker, they began believing that we need to have results-based environmental regulatory framework processes in place, Mr. Speaker. So they began a consultation process.

I made reference to this the other day, Mr. Speaker, this consultation process to sort of move to a larger regulatory framework for all the environmental Bills, not just *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. It almost seems that this was kind of added at the end to satisfy the interests of moving some Crown land out of Crown land status and into private ownership, Mr. Speaker. But when this process to move to a results-based environmental regulatory framework, there was a consultation process begun, Mr. Speaker.

We go back prior to November of 2008 when this began, Mr. Speaker, and there were some concerns being raised even at that time. So we're back more than a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker.

I want to quote from the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation's magazine, *The Outdoor Edge*. This is the November-December 2008 issue. And one of the editorials is written by the executive director, Mr. Darrell Crabbe. And Mr. Darrell Crabbe puts this caution on the table, Mr. Speaker, and this is as the consultation process was beginning. Mr. Crabbe writes:

... the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation was recently invited by the Ministry of Environment to participate in a comprehensive review of the Province's environmental legislation with a stated goal of "most effectively protecting the environment and managing resources."

There were just over 20 groups that were consulted. Only two of those groups were conservation or environmental organizations, with the overwhelming majority being made up of industry. The presentation was designed to promote a results based system that would streamline the regulatory review requirements to accommodate resource development and, supposedly, enhance the protection of the environment.

Mr. Crabbe goes on:

I don't think anyone is opposed to the responsible development of our province's resources and the economic benefits that will be enjoyed by the residents of Saskatchewan. But one only has to consider the importance that the environment has had in the last Provincial and recent Federal election to understand that environmental protection is paramount in the long term, sustainable development of our resource rich province.

November-December 2008, Mr. Speaker, as this consultation

process was beginning, the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation sent up a flag that says, watch the protected side of this, Mr. Speaker, because the consultation process is dominated by sectors other than those who care about conservation and the environment.

So, Mr. Speaker, that process carries on. And further discussions are held on this regulatory, the change to a regulatory framework. Mr. Speaker, a number of things happen and *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* is drafted and is presented to this House. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, environmental organizations like the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservancy and Ducks Unlimited were starting to realize that this consultation that they had engaged in, Mr. Speaker, was not exactly, the results of that consultation were not exactly what they were contributing to.

And Mr. Speaker, this is noted by a number of media stories that have appeared, comments that have appeared in just the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker. And this provides some evidence that it appears that the minister does not fully understand why there are concerns being raised about the Bill that's in front of us.

[08:45]

Just the other day, Mr. Crabbe, who I just quoted from a year and a half ago, just the other day, Mr. Speaker, on April the 28th, quoted by CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] News, Mr. Crabbe says, the properties in question, the wildlife lands "... are owned by the people of Saskatchewan, and I just don't think most people would want to see them sold off. He goes on to say, quoted by CBC News, "It's a very sad day when the dollar plays a bigger role than our future generations."

In response to that, the member from Regina Walsh Acres says, in response to that, "Why are the years of hard work by people concerned about wildlife being put in jeopardy by this government's financial mismanagement?"

Mr. Speaker, that argument comes down to the fact that this government appears to be more interested in selling some properties and receiving some other benefit, Mr. Speaker, because they need money. And while the government will argue this isn't about money, the fact of the matter is this government has spent the financial legacy of the province, and now they're interfering with the conservation and environmental legacy of this province to compensate for it.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in the media just the other day also, the *Leader-Post*, the Regina *Leader-Post*, April 28th, a number of people including Brent Kennedy from Ducks Unlimited, who was introduced in this Chamber a little earlier ... Mr. Kennedy is the manager of provincial operations for Ducks Unlimited. He says the government should do more consultation before trying to pass the amendments this spring. His preference, Mr. Speaker, would be that all of the land remain protected under the Act, Mr. Speaker. He also is quoted, he also is quoted as saying, "We're not convinced that they have the means [meaning the Saskatchewan Party government, that they have the means] to be able to accurately define which lands have greater or which lands have lesser ecological value."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the fact that Mr. Kennedy would say this to the *Leader-Post* indicates that the consultation process has in fact not been meaningful, meaningful in the sense that if full consultation had occurred, there would be an understanding about the science behind this definition of lands, this change in the way in which lands are evaluated. So obviously, Mr. Speaker, there has not been a good enough consultation process put in front of those who are most concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the future of the lands in question.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this just goes to the heart of this question about what should happen to this piece of legislation. Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Walsh Acres yesterday in question period asked that the legislation be withdrawn until such time as clarity can be reached on this issue.

Last night in one of the committees, the Economy Committee of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment was there answering questions on other legislation relating to changes in the regulatory format. There was some concerns raised about some of the language in the legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, members of the government became quite concerned that members of the opposition were asking questions to find clarity in the legal language there. And at one point, Mr. Speaker, the member from Thunder Creek, backed up by the member from Cannington, indicated that if the public wasn't happy with the language or the Bill or the directions that this new process was taking, there's an election coming and the public can simply express their unhappiness during the election.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it just goes to show that the members opposite think more highly of themselves than they do about the consequences of the legislation that they're bringing forward. They are simply indicating, we're government; we have the majority. We'll do whatever we want, and if you don't like it, you vote against us in the next election.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation. It's about legacy. It's about the long-term future not this generation or the next generation of stewards but, Mr. Speaker, the stewards who come later — the grandchildren, the great-grandchildren, and the great-great-grandchildren, or the corporations that they own who might want to assume the leases on these pieces of land. This is long-term legacy legislation that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker.

And there are concerns being raised by organizations representing a very large number of people across the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's not good enough to say we're going to pass this legislation. We're going to make this major change. And if you don't like this, you just get rid of us in the next election.

Mr. Speaker, we think there are ways in which this government, through meaningful consultation with the organizations that have expressed some concern, Mr. Speaker, there are ways in which, with meaningful consultation, that we can work our way through this. Now it's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that organizations like Ducks Unlimited are in the city of Regina today, representatives of Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, representatives of the Nature Conservancy are in Regina today, Mr. Speaker, and there's an opportunity for the Minister of the Environment and officials from the ministry to sit down and

review the concerns that exist on this legislation, Mr. Speaker. There are ways in which we can ensure that the issues related previously by the Cattlemen's Association and the Stock Growers Association can be thrown into this mix, Mr. Speaker, and try to understand what it is that the people of Saskatchewan want this government to be doing. This is not a simple matter. It can't be done quickly and easily, Mr. Speaker. When you're dealing with legacy issues, it's not a simple matter.

So, Mr. Speaker, I simply reiterate the fact that there was a call put out that this Bill be withdrawn until meaningful consultation can occur. Mr. Speaker, I want to say I support that call. I don't see that there is a critical need to move this Bill through as quickly as the minister would like it simply because it's not a matter of just asking questions. It's a matter of fully understanding the long-term implications that are put in front of us.

Mr. Speaker, I am not an expert in this field. I do care very much about wildlife habitat protection. I have a huge respect for those who have gone before me who have created the system of protecting wildlife habitat in Saskatchewan, those who were stewards of the land in the past, who have dedicated this land for future generations for long-term sustainability in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I respect that government has a responsibility to ensure there is certainty in this long-term protection, Mr. Speaker. Legacy is not something to be taken lightly. And it's not something that can be brushed off, saying somebody else will take care of it; we don't need to, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask very simply, I ask very simply in my argument today that the Minister of the Environment withdraw this Bill, conduct meaningful consultations, come back to this House with a demonstration that indeed consultation occurred and that those who were consulted feel at the end of the day that they were listened to and that the government understands the argument. That's all that we ask in a very simple way, Mr. Speaker — to ensure that with a stroke of a pen this government is not just giving away a legacy that has been hard fought for, created under many difficult circumstances, and that the majority of those who care about conservation and the environment are saying to us, think about it; make sure those protections exist, and don't try to mislead us in any way by deflecting what the argument is.

This argument is not about stewardship. It's about legacy. Let's keep it there, and let's do the right thing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again it gives me a great deal of pleasure and an honour to be able to enter into the debate in this great Assembly on behalf of the fine people of Regina Northeast.

Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill, as my colleague has already indicated, is I think of interest to everyone in Saskatchewan. And I don't think it matters whether you're a resident of rural Saskatchewan or urban Saskatchewan, whether you're a farmer

or a rancher or a worker in this great province of ours. I think we all have a vested interest in the environment, and we have a vested interest in the protection of the wildlife habitat that is so very important to the very being of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that it doesn't matter what walk of life we may be in. The environment and the protection of our wildlife, for not only our immediate usage and enjoyment but for that of future generations, is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is an issue that has come about over time because of the development of our prairie landscape into an agricultural-based landscape. I think you've seen that some shifting did take place as far as the usage of land and availability of land for wildlife. That probably was more evident in the parkland forest fringe areas of our province than perhaps anywhere else. And having had the privilege of being born and raised in that part of the province and having spent much of my life in the parkland forest fringe areas, I think I have a little bit of knowledge of the situation.

And I think we've seen during the development of the agricultural land in Saskatchewan here over a period of time, I think we've seen the desire by farmers to expand their farming operations and, as a result, we've seen the cultivation of some areas and some lands that perhaps were not best suited for agricultural production. And as time that has worked itself out, and we have seen those cases where land had been plowed, broken up, perhaps even drained in some cases so to facilitate the production of agricultural goods. But simply because the land itself and the area in which it was being developed didn't reflect positively on the production of agricultural grains and oilseeds and therefore has been rethought of its value. And much of it, in some cases, has gone back to a more natural state where it has the ability to fill the role of protecting and providing the opportunity for wildlife to be able to have a habitat where they can continue to be able to reproduce and be able to be a part of our overall natural scene.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that in the parkland area, and I know in the area where my farm is and where we spent much of, many years of our life, there's a number of quarters or sections of land there that was developed after the Second World War primarily with the return of the soldiers or — I should say — military people from the various services and that they took up the agricultural industry and they in some cases developed some of this land that was simply not suitable for agricultural production. And it soon fell back into natural state.

And that land has now been set aside under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, and it is being utilized. It's not just standing there not being utilized. In some cases, I know that some of the good folks up there are grazing that land, using that land for running beef cattle on and being able to graze that land. And it's sort of a co-operation between the agencies that look after and ensure the protection of our wildlife as well as being able to be utilized by the farmers and the ranchers in the area.

Others are using it for hay land. I can think of two or three quarters that are used for hay land, that the hay is harvested off of it each and every year. And it's just not only that being done by government but by private agencies too. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has purchased tracts of land up in our area there which is primarily set aside for elk habitat for the

reproduction and for the growth of the elk herd.

And that land will be utilized by farmers in the area that's leased out for the hay production. Each and every year, the hay is harvested off of that land. The farmers in the area get to use that hay and get to use that hay to support their livestock production. And a regrowth, a fresh growth of good, solid, strong grass is there to nurture the elk, the elk population in the area. So, Mr. Speaker, there has been a long-time, proven ability for the two to work together, the agricultural community to be able to work together hand in hand with those who wish to enhance the wildlife habitat. And I think that it's proven that it works quite well.

[09:00]

Even myself, Mr. Speaker, in years gone by, although I did not lease wildlife land, I did lease, though, land in the forest reserve which was leased as a grazing lease. I would run cattle on that grazing lease, and I had that area leased to be able to support a beef herd. And we would be able to run our cattle there in the summertime and to support that grazing ability. But at the same time, as a multiple use of the area, there was in the wintertime a neighbour of mine who had that same area leased as a trapping lease, and he would be able to trap the fur-bearing animals on that same area. And in conjunction with that, the department was able to ensure that there was no damage done to the area and that it was able to support the wildlife that was within that area.

So there's a history of proven ability to be able to work together to identify ways and means that we can ensure that that area is commercially viable, commercially available to farmers, whether it be through grazing or whether it be through hay production, but at the same time being able to support a wildlife population, and not only support that wildlife population but be able to expand it, able to grow that wildlife population.

So there's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that we have the history, we have the ability to continue to maintain that support. And I think that's very, very important. And I think it's very important that we have the ability to ensure that there are those who will oversee the usage of this land to ensure that it's being used properly, but to be ensured that it's there to be able to support a wildlife population, which is really important because it's not only important for us and today's generation, I think it's important for those into future generations.

We've been quite fortunate, I think to — at least I have — to be able to spend much of my life enjoying the outdoors and enjoying the wildlife that is so prevalent in our province. And I want to be sure that we're able to do the same into the future for not only for my children, but for my grandchildren and for the youngsters and the future leaders of this great province of ours, Mr. Speaker.

There's no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that history will show that the ranchers and those who have utilized wildlife protected lands are good stewards of the land. They work very co-operatively with those who are also interested in ensuring that there is the ability for that land to continue to support a wildlife production. There's no doubt that we have a history, we have a history and a long and a proud history of being able to provide that

co-operation between livestock producers and those who are interested in ensuring that the lands continue to be able to support our wildlife population, Mr. Speaker.

And this didn't come about overnight, Mr. Speaker. This is something that has been going on for some time. I think it started probably soon after the Second World War, after the returnees from the military services were expanding their farming operations and looking at establishing farming operations and expanding them and, in some cases, concentrated their efforts in more marginal areas along the forest fringe.

And that is basically where I had the opportunity of being born and growing up and spending the, you know, first part of my life. And it was along the forest fringe of the Porcupine forest reserve. In fact my farm was only 12 miles from the forest reserve boundaries, so we were right in that forest fringe area. And it was soon recognized that that area was . . . There was areas that were certainly ideal to the production of cereal grains and oilseeds, but there was also areas that the land was less productive, more marginal, better reflected the production of hay or legumes, and in other areas would best reflect the ability to use that land in grazing.

And I'm thinking of some wildlife protected land right now that's just, I don't know, Mr. Speaker, probably three or four miles from where my farm headquarters are. And it's in the edge of, in fact, I guess you'd say it's in the heart of the Swan River Valley. The area of course is in the Swan River hills and it's quite rolly. And it's not really conducive to the agricultural production, so that land has a fair amount of forage on it and it has also the ability . . . And it's been fenced off, Mr. Speaker, and it's been used on occasion by farmers in the area for grazing, and it works quite well. I mean, the farmers who have been able to lease that land and use it year in and year out in their operation, and they have the ability to know that they have access to that land year in and year out so they can plan on their operation to be able to use that land in a manner would suit their purposes. And that is, in this case, a grazing purpose.

And they are able to base their cowherd, build a cowherd based on using that land, and have the knowledge that they have the access to that land each and every year. And that particular land has served quite well for the support, I guess you would say, of cowherds in the area and this one in particular.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, when you have the opportunity to go through there — and I have throughout the summer months, on occasions, do — there's a trail through there that is open to the public. And I, along with many others will use that trail, and really enjoy the time there because we have seen, I have seen elk in that area. I have seen numerous white-tailed deer. This last summer we seen a bear a couple of times, a black bear. And of course there's always the birds and the waterfowl that frequent the area.

So it's really, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to anyone, whether you're an expert or not, it's obvious to anyone that that land is being properly and fully utilized by all involved, whether it be the farmer who was using that land for grazing and he's able to run his cows on it. I don't know how many cows that land will support, but certainly he does. He's used it for many years. He's

been a good steward of that land. And I know that he does because he's able to maintain a cowherd on that and graze that area each and every year, and quite frankly does so with good results. You can see that in the fall time when you see the calves that come off that pasture land.

At the same time, evidence, simply the visual evidence that I have already described, travelling through that area you get to see the wildlife that's there. And the wildlife wouldn't be there if there wasn't the ability to sustain that wildlife. So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is just clear indication that the present system works and works well. And it does so in a way that ensures, ensures that that support will be there for our wildlife community in years to come.

Mr. Speaker, just further down the road from the land I've just described is another quarter section of land that has been purchased I think about a dozen years ago, or maybe 15 or so, under the wildlife protection Act. It has been set aside for wildlife habitat. And again it has, probably of the 160 acres I would think, it probably has somewhere around 80 to 100 acres of open land on there that has been seeded down to alfalfa and brome mixture. And over the years that certainly has supported the wildlife within that area.

But it also supports a gentleman there who has leased that land for hay purposes. And I believe he has leased that land for probably just as many years. And each and every year he's out there, he puts the hay up. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, when I last talked to him about it — now it was a few years ago — he was quite pleased about the interaction between him and the officials that he had to work with and that there was no interference on either party to be able to fulfill their role.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's really a need to, I think, further explore the reasons behind this government's Bill, on this particular Bill, as to what is the real intent of this Bill. Is it really about the preservation of land for wildlife, and is it really about preservation of the wildlife population of our province? Or is it about some other purpose that this government would be looking at, Mr. Speaker?

And I would hope that this government would have done some consultation on this particular Bill. I see no evidence of that, Mr. Speaker. I see no evidence of this government having gone out and carried out reasonable consultations. By that, Mr. Speaker, I mean by talking to and having communications with those people who are on the front lines, who are the most effective — not only the wildlife groups across this great province of ours but also the individuals who have for years, and in some cases maybe even for generation from generation, have leased this land and have used this land as a part of their farming operation. And I think those are the folks that are on the front lines.

And I would like to know, Mr. Speaker — and I believe the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know — whether or not this government has taken the time to have carried out a reasonable consultation process with all of those who are affected on the front lines. But as importantly, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan in general should have the opportunity to have their input, should have the opportunity to have their voice heard on this issue in a meaningful way.

Because as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that this particular issue, an environmental issue — an issue that in regards to the protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat, for the protection and the sustaining of a wildlife species — needs to be of interest to all of us.

And I don't think it's isolated just to rural Saskatchewan. I don't think it's isolated just to urban Saskatchewan, I think, right across the piece. I don't think it's isolated just to sportsmen either, Mr. Speaker. I think that the good folks in this province, whether you be from rural Saskatchewan, urban Saskatchewan, whether you be a sportsman or simply a person who enjoys the opportunity to see wildlife on occasions when you're travelling and enjoys seeing the wildlife in its natural habitat, Mr. Speaker, I think everybody should have the right and have the opportunity to express their opinions on this issue.

Because what's at stake here, Mr. Speaker, is — and I think it's a very important process — there has been a process of setting aside land under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* for the purpose of being able to: (a) that land being able to support a wildlife species, a wildlife species in a manner that will ensure that that species has the ability to continue to survive and thrive in this province, not only for our enjoyment and for those of the past, but also for the enjoyment of those into the future, and, Mr. Speaker, to do so in a manner that ensures that that land is set aside, is utilized to the best of its productive value, whether it be through grazing or whether it be through hay production, Mr. Speaker. That process has been identified and has been developed through experience over time and it has worked very well, Mr. Speaker.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we don't take any initiative by the government and simply allow it to flow through without having a reasonable consultation with the people of this great province, Mr. Speaker.

Because what's at stake here is not only the wildlife — we always focus on the wildlife, and I suppose that's because it's called *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* — but there's more to it than just the wildlife, Mr. Speaker, and also the waterfowl, or the bird species that we so much enjoy in this great province. But there's also the plant life. There's the opportunity in a natural state for natural plants which otherwise are not allowed or don't have the ability to compete in an agricultural atmosphere, certainly have the ability to continue to provide us the enjoyment and the beauty of the natural splendour of those plants as they grow in a natural habitat in the land that had been set aside for wildlife habitat.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is more to it. There's more to it than just simply wildlife, more to it than just thinking about a moose or a deer or an elk. There's certainly more to it as far as the birds are concerned, as far as the plant life is concerned and, Mr. Speaker, the ability to utilize that land in a way that is productive to our society, productive to our economy, but yet provides the ability to support wildlife in a way that will be there for future generations to enjoy.

That, Mr. Speaker, should be, I suppose, the ultimate goal that we want to work towards, being able to ensure that we have a wildlife population that already has been very important to us in the past, and particularly when earlier on when land was being

opened up and the province was being settled. In a lot of cases it was a matter of survival for a lot of the families out there dependent upon having the ability to harvest wild game now and again in order to provide the ability to have something on the table to eat.

[09:15]

But we have moved along, Mr. Speaker, to where now probably the wildlife out there provides a greater enjoyment for sportsmen and as a result of that, of course, there's a commerce built around that. There's a fair amount of commerce spent in this province by sportsmen in the fall time. Particularly when the season is there to harvest the game, you will see that a lot of dollars are spent in harvesting a wild animal. It's the joy of doing it. It's a sportsman joy of being able to capture and bag an animal and to be able to enjoy the ability to have actually been able to get out in mother nature and experience some of that.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we continue to provide the opportunity for wildlife to flourish in this great province of ours and to do so at the same time as being able to support an industry such as the agricultural industry. And recently we've seen the livestock industry under a fair amount of pressure, economic pressure, in Saskatchewan here as a result of market, market turndown. Although I understand there is a bit of relief in that area, but not a whole lot, but a bit of relief.

But nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, a lot of ranchers in Saskatchewan here and I think it's fair to say . . . I'm just working on memory here, but it was . . . I remember reading a few years ago where it was suggested that the bulk of the cow herd in Saskatchewan here was contained in the smaller operations of 50 to 150 head. And that was largely found along the parkland, forest fringe area of this great province. And then we have our larger ranchers in southern and south and southwest corners of the province. But if my memory serves me correct, I was reading an article somewhere back some few years ago, which at that time indicated that the bulk of the cattle population in this great province was found in that forest fringe area running from the Manitoba border right across to the Alberta border.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is simply because it's a transition area in the quality of land or the productive ability of the land from an agricultural, from an oilseed and cereal grain basis to the forest fringe and in between there is land that's probably ideally suited for the production of hay and for the production of pasture land and best utilized for that purposes. And certainly it also supports the wildlife that we enjoy in this great province of ours.

And I think if the wildlife population and the growth in that wildlife population is any indication of the past practices . . . And they have been working. I can remember when I was a youngster, you know, 14, 15 years of age on my father's farm, we very, very, very seldom ever seen an elk in our area. It was really a rarity to see an elk. Never saw a moose. It would be a real rarity to see an elk at that time. Today now I'm considerably older than 15, Mr. Speaker, but today it's commonplace to see elk. We have elk herds in the area.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there's an elk herd, and a large elk herd. I saw it last summer, and it had about . . . I counted 27 head in that particular herd. And I don't think that was the entire herd; it was sort of a part of it. But that herd certainly comes out of the river hills every evening and comes up on to the flatlands and to basically much of my land and some of my neighbours' land who have land seeded into alfalfa. And they'll come up there and they'll graze on the alfalfa in the evenings. And you go out there just at sunset; you get the opportunity to see this large herd and these large animals, and they are a sight to behold.

It's commonplace, Mr. Speaker, for us now to see a moose. It's not at all uncommon for a moose to simply pass through, either through my farmyard out there or near it. And it's just, it's no longer an exciting thing to see because we see it on a regular basis. That was not available to us 15 years ago. That was not available 15 years ago, Mr. Speaker, because simply the population wasn't large enough to be able to have, have the need, I guess you would say, for them to move south from the forest, from the forest itself into the forest fringe areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, obviously, obviously the program has worked. We've seen and I think the evidence is there that the population of the . . . the wildlife population has grown and it's been supported by — what? — a careful management, a good management of the wildlife and the wildlife habitat because it simply can't support life unless you have the habitat to support that life. And this is basically, the wildlife population has grown simply because there has been that habitat's been set aside, been looked after, been providing the support necessary for that population of elk, population of moose, and the wildlife population across the piece simply to grow.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with my colleague who spoke earlier in calling on the government to withdraw this Bill until such time as they have been able to carry out meaningful consultations with the people of Saskatchewan. Not just with individual groups, Mr. Speaker, but giving the opportunity for people in this great province of ours to be able to participate in that discussion, to be able to have their thoughts known, to be able to have their thoughts heard. And I would ask the government to withdraw this Bill and start a meaningful consultation process; after that process, develop a Bill that reflects what it is the people of Saskatchewan want, bring it back to this legislature, and we'll deal with it at that time.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks. Thank you.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well it's a real pleasure in some ways to have the ability to speak in the House about what the government is proposing to do with *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

Mr. Speaker, there is a long history, a 26-year history, of this particular piece of legislation that the Sask Party is now proposing to amend. And this was a piece of legislation that was brought into our province in 1984 by a former Conservative cabinet minister in the Devine era, a guy by the name of Colin Maxwell, who represented an area of the

province around Spiritwood where there is a lot of critical habitat that has been in, has come under this Bill.

And, Mr. Speaker, I notice that the member that represents that part of the province has indicated in some of his comments that he is fully supportive of taking out 3.4 million acres of Crown land that presently is protected by this legislation and putting that land into, I guess, protection or sale in regulation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, maybe that member, and maybe there are some members of the government that have pressure from people who are lessees in their constituency that would like to be able to buy this land. And as a result of that pressure, the government has determined that they are going to, instead of protecting in law, in legislation, 3.4 million acres of wildlife habitat, they're going to take that protection out of legislation. And by regulation, which you know doesn't have to come before this Assembly, doesn't have to come before the Assembly, it's just something that the government gets to do if they determine that a piece of land that is now protected in legislation will be sold.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the experiences that we certainly had when the NDP [New Democratic Party] was in government, that there were times when the Department of the Environment would recommend to the cabinet that certain pieces of habitat be taken out of legislation, and we would come before this House and there would be a discussion. But when we took land out of protection, we also put land back into protection in order that there would be zero loss of protected lands.

Now the minister has said in this House that she believes about 340,000 acres of land that is presently protected will be sold. That's what the minister has said. Now I think one of the things that it's fair to say, and it certainly has been commented today in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, is that this particular piece of legislation is short-sighted. And it's short-sighted of government to sell protected land.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that I read this editorial of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* — which is one of the daily newspapers in our province — into the record because I think it speaks volumes about what this government is presently doing. And it says this, and I'm going to quote this editorial. I think it needs to be put on the public record. And this editorial says this, and I quote:

The provincial government's plan to remove from under the protective umbrella of the Wildlife Protection Act nearly three million acres [Mr. Speaker, it's 3.4 million acres, so I make an editorial comment there] of Crown land smacks of short-term thinking and political expediency that's detrimental to all citizens of Saskatchewan.

And despite [and I'm quoting] Environment Minister Nancy Heppner's claim that the move, which she wants to make by the end of May and would see about 10 per cent of the land sold to ranchers whose families have leased it for generations, "isn't about monetary things," her decision remains puzzling.

Even in a large province that boasts 43 per cent of

Canada's arable land, the removal from wildlife habitat protection chunks of land that amounts to twice the size of Prince Edward Island, is cause of consternation.

At a time when the entire world is becoming increasingly aware of the value of preserving natural habitat for wildlife for the sake of future generations as well as our own, the government demonstrates a breathtakingly short-sighted approach to its duty and obligation to act as a responsible steward of the public interest.

There's no doubt that ranching families who've leased some of these parcels for decades have proven themselves excellent stewards of the land. However, the onus has remained with the government to ensure that its lessees comply with the habitat act, and the loss of leasing rights remained a deterrent to those who might be tempted to contravene the law in order to maximize profits.

However, wildlife protection and conservation groups, First Nations leaders and others are quite right to be concerned that, once private buyers acquire Crown land, there are no restrictions on the further resale of the land or any guarantees that the habitat will remain protected in the long run.

It simply isn't acceptable that Ms. Heppner seems determined to push through changes to three-decade-old legislation without properly discussing them with groups other than the ranchers who have a stake in protected land.

As Darrell Crabbe, executive director of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation aptly notes: "We just think that the future generations of Saskatchewan would be better served if there was full consultation with everybody and the original protection was left in place.

"This is a huge issue for us. We're talking about millions of acres of land that we consider to be a jewel in the crown of Saskatchewan."

For a government that's heading into an election next year in a province whose economy shrank by 6.3 per cent in 2009 . . .

Which, and an editorial comment from me, takes us back to 2005. This is where the economy is at presently, 2005 numbers.

. . . and is struggling to keep its spending in line with its diminished revenues, any source of revenue — especially when it's tied closely to making some of its rural support base happy — might seem attractive.

[09:30]

It's easy to understand why groups such as Ducks Unlimited are concerned about putting in place conservation easements before any protected land is sold, so that subsequent owners are prevented from draining wetlands or breaking it up, and about the mechanisms the government is putting in place to assess the value of property that Ms. Heppner thinks "no longer has to be under wildlife habitat protection."

"We're not convinced [quote] that they have the means to be able to accurately define which lands have greater or which lands have lesser ecological value," suggests Brent Kennedy, Ducks Unlimited's manager of provincial operations.

Given the steady loss of wetlands in Saskatchewan through drainage, with farmers making economically rational decisions that are at odds with the needs of wildlife, it's easy to understand . . . where Mr. Kennedy is coming.

The call by Ducks Unlimited and other conservation groups for the Saskatchewan government to develop a wetland policy to conserve and restore wetlands in the province has gone unheeded. This even though wetlands are crucial to protecting water supplies, reducing effluents from washing into lakes and rivers, and recharging groundwater supplies.

Instead, the Environment minister is acting to further erode the protective legislation already in place. No wonder those who take a longer view of the province beyond its four-year election cycles are concerned.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we have in the province of Saskatchewan a former Conservative government, of which one member of the legislature was part of, in 1984 that brought in a piece of legislation that was considered groundbreaking at the time, considered groundbreaking at the time, which was talked about from one end of the country to the other, which was talked about on the entire continent.

And, Mr. Speaker, and I understand why that groundbreaking piece of legislation came in because in the '70s and early part of the '80s, millions of acres of natural habitat had been basically broken, and it was a real concern for people in the Ministry of the Environment. And obviously it was a concern for the former Conservative government between 1982 and 1991.

And at that time, over 2 billion acres of natural landscape had been cultivated, and there was real concern that we were losing some of our natural landscape. And so the minister at the time, Colin Maxwell, who represented the forest fringe area of our province, decided that he would bring in a piece of legislation called *The Critical Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. And at that time about 1.7 million acres of natural habitat was put into protection by this particular piece of legislation, and since 1991 a further 1.7 million acres of natural habitat has been added to that legislative protection by various Environment ministers.

But you know, it's interesting. We have an Environment minister, for the first time since 1984, that isn't talking about adding more lands, protecting more of our natural landscape. But instead we have an Environment minister that is talking about reducing protection of our natural landscape and selling over 300,000 acres of our natural landscape to some people. Now Mr. Speaker, it'll be very interesting to see who these some people are going to be. And this gets to the point I made yesterday on the forest management Act.

I think as legislators that we have a duty to add to the public interest, in the public interest. And it seems to me if you look at

these pieces of legislation that the minister calls a suite of legislation, when it comes to our environment, it appears to me that we are weakening, weakening many pieces of environmental legislation in order to provide for some private interests.

And I will be interested to see whether or not this “natural habitat” that is going to be sold, that the government will determine which pieces of land will be sold, whether or not it will be available for the entire public or just some people. Will it just be some people, or will all people in the province of Saskatchewan have an opportunity to buy this land because we know that some of this land is presently leased. And so will it be for the lessee only, or will others, all of us, have that access to this? And will it be a competitive process? Or will it just be some people who will be able to buy what is now protected in legislation?

Now Mr. Speaker, I think if the government has identified some private interest that they want to help, one of the things they could have done was taken those pieces of land out of the protection of the Act and put other pieces of land into the protection of the Act. But that’s not what they’re doing. That’s not what they’re doing. What they’re doing is they’re ripping up, ripping up the protection that those 3.4 million acres presently have under this piece of legislation, *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, and they’re going to quote, “protect it in regulation”. Well, Mr. Speaker, regulation doesn’t come to this Assembly. Regulation is done by government.

At the moment, there has to be a debate in this Assembly if they want to remove certain pieces of natural habitat. That’s the law now. But that’s not what they’re doing. And I think the public is starting to catch on that this isn’t necessarily a government that is by and for all of the people, but this is a government that has some people that they want to ensure do very well. That’s what this government’s about. And it’s about private interest. It’s not about the public interest.

Now we know that the Wildlife Federation has thousands, tens of thousands of members. The Wildlife Federation has more members than all the political parties in our province have, Mr. Speaker. And people who belong to the Wildlife Federation come from all walks of life. They come from all parts of Saskatchewan. And you know, they laugh, they laugh . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you might laugh, but the reality is the Wildlife Federation has more members than your party, my party, the Liberal Party, the Green Party, the Conservative Party, all put together.

And the Wildlife Federation is concerned, the Wildlife Federation is concerned about, Mr. Speaker, the Wildlife Federation is concerned about this piece of legislation basically moving out of legislation into regulation 3.4 million acres of land.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister says she has consulted with people. That’s what the minister says. Well I wonder who those people are. Is it certain members of the Sask Party caucus? Is it certain lessee holders that want to be able to buy this land? Because it sounds to me as though they have not consulted adequately, from the letters that we’ve received with the Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, nature conservatory, nor

First Nations people, Mr. Speaker.

So the Government of Saskatchewan believes that they know best. The Government of Saskatchewan believes that there are certain people that should benefit from their pieces of legislation. And I guess those certain people are some lessees. And the real question will be whether or not this Crown land that they will determine will be sold, whether this Crown land can be bought by Nature Conservancy. Can it be bought by other people that are interested in ensuring that this land is kept in its natural state for generations to come?

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the things that has been brought to my attention by individuals who have donated their land to the Crown, that they are concerned that land that is now a Crown asset — they donated it in order to ensure that this land would be protected forever — they’re a bit concerned that this land will now be available for sale.

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Qu’Appelle Valley on her feet?

Ms. Ross: — To ask leave to make an introduction.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Qu’Appelle Valley has asked leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I’d like to introduce to you and through you a group of students — there’s 42 students — from Winston Knoll high school. Now this is . . . we’ve got two high schools in my riding, and Winston Knoll is, I think, one of the champion high schools in Regina, but they also are proudly residing in Regina Qu’Appelle Valley.

The teacher today is Tammy Patterson, and accompanying them is a chaperone, Scott McKillop. We would ask everyone in the House to welcome these fine young students to their Legislative Assembly. And I will be meeting with them later on, and so I hope we will have some lively discussion from the proceedings that they observe today. So please, everyone welcome these fine young students here to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — With leave for introduction of guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I’d

like to join with the member in welcoming guests from Winston Knoll to the legislature here today. I want to single out one young gentleman that is a part of the group there, a nephew of mine, Nolan Klym, whose family farms just north of the city. Nolan's a great young guy. I would count him as my favourite young nephew that's still in school. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming the delegation here today.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 132 — *The Wildlife Habitat Protection (Land Designation) Amendment Act, 2009* (continued)

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that latest introduction could elicit a response but I won't, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying I've been contacted by a number of people who have donated land to the province in order to protect it for future generations. And I'll tell you what they're worried about. They're worried because up until now the Ministry of the Environment, government has been about protecting Crown land. Government has been not about selling it but protecting it for future generations.

And I think what is now causing some consternation for a number of families that have donated land to the province or to the state, they are now very, very concerned that land that they had donated for wildlife refuges will now be available to sale, for sale to cities, town, villages, whatever, for dumps. And this is a real concern that has particularly been brought to my attention around the city of Humboldt, where there is a need to move the present landfill site. There is a refuge in that area close to the city, and I think it's fair to say that the original people who donated that land to the province are worried that that wildlife refuge will be, may become available because it looks at though the government is moving away from this policy of maintaining Crown lands for future generations. They're concerned that this could, this land could be made available for a future location of a dump. And that's certainly not what they had intended when they made arrangements with the province to transfer this land to the province.

And in fact they have some pretty specific correspondence indicating the obligation of the Crown. And the obligation was, of the Crown was, to maintain the property in its natural condition forever. That was the obligation of the Crown. And so they are worried that the province of Saskatchewan may have some other ideas for what in essence was private property, but it was transferred to the Crown with a number of conditions. And certainly one of the conditions was that this land would remain part of a Crown asset forever, Mr. Speaker.

You know, as I said — and I think it's important that this be put on the record as well — that *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* certainly supports agricultural and petroleum activities. Now we know that much of this land is leased to people,

particularly cattle producers used the lands for grazing and haying. And up until now, I think it's fair to say that *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* and the designation of that land, in terms of protection, had no effect on the lessees' ability to continue leasing that land or on the conditions and terms of the leases.

[09:45]

And in fact we know that those lessees are able to use that land as part of their daily operations. There are routine developments on that land, like dugouts and fences, and those kinds of activities can take place without question. We also know that oil and gas companies can explore and drill, but they have to make sure that there's very little damage done to the surface of those lands, Mr. Speaker.

So, you know, given that there are mechanisms in place to make sure the lessees can use that land for grazing and haying, given that the lessees can put dugouts and fences on that land, and given that the oil and gas industry can have access to those lands as long as they don't disturb the surface, I'm not quite sure what the purpose is here. I'm not quite sure, but I suspect the purpose, and because the minister seems to have made this her reason for this piece of legislation, that she wants to be able to sell this land and the Sask Party government wants to be able to sell this land to some people.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . . And the minister talks about the lessees. So some people are people who already have the lease. Well it seems to me that when you have Crown land and it's now going to be available for sale, and given that it's owned by the state or the province, maybe what should happen, given that that seems to be their philosophical bent, is that groups like Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, other people, maybe they should have the opportunity to buy that land, that it should go to, quote, the highest bidder, not just the person who's had the lease. Because I think that the conditions of the lease were that you would lease this land for 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 years and then the terms of the lease get changed.

But the question is, is it in the public interest to have only that lessee have access to purchasing that land or should other people have access? And these are going to be questions that the minister is going to have to answer when this Bill comes before the committee. Because we know that when the Minister of Agriculture determined that they were going to sell off Crown land that presently are leased by ranchers, it was the rancher that has the lease that got to purchase it, not others. And is that necessarily in the public interest, or is that just certain people's private interests?

And we know for instance that there are some farmers that have thousands of acres of Crown land along Lake Diefenbaker — beautiful land. Beautiful land. And as we know, resort villages and people who want to be along lakes, that is growing, Mr. Speaker, as post-war baby boomers are retiring and they're retiring to resort villages or resort areas. So the question is, is that habitat that's presently protected by Crown, by *The Wildlife Protection Act*, is that natural habitat going to be available for sale? And is it only going to be sold to the person who has the lease at the moment, the thousands of acres of land along Lake Diefenbaker? Or will all of us have the opportunity to purchase

this land? That is another question, Mr. Speaker.

Now I know the government is in some financial difficulty. I know that because . . . Here's what's interesting, you know, we just had the gross domestic product by provinces released yesterday by Stats Canada. I also note, today they just released some more statistics today in terms of income. Looks as though income February to February dropped in Saskatchewan. First time in a long . . . many, many, many, many years that income dropped.

But what's interesting about Saskatchewan last year, at a time when that government decided that we were going to see about a 2 per cent increase in our GDP [gross domestic product], in fact we saw a loss of 6.3 per cent and over an 8 per cent off of GDP, Mr. Speaker. So I know they've got problems, economic problems. They took \$2.3 billion in cash that the former NDP government left them. They spend all that money. They've got over a billion three dollars in added debt to the province, and their GDP has fallen. It's not quite sure what's going to happen this year.

And I know they needed the money, but is this how you go about doing it? Is this how you go about doing it? You start selling the land. And farmers — I think many of them are farmers over there — you know, you don't sell off your land and keep the tractor, Mr. Speaker. I mean these are pieces of Crown land that have been preserved into the future. I know they're desperate for money, but I think in terms of the long term, it's wiser to keep this as part of our province's Crown gem.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to go through the legislation, and what the public needs to understand is, right now 3.4 million acres is protected in legislation. The schedule of all of the lands, the descriptions of all of those lands are in legislation. But they're taking a new strategic approach. That's what they say. Their new strategic approach is going to evaluate our ecological, social, and economic values when it comes to Crown land which will enable the sale of land. And:

This new approach includes assessing the ecological attributes of all Crown land with an initial focus on . . . *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. This information [they tell us is going to] . . . be used to determine which lands may be sold, sold with a conservation easement, or retained by the Crown.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a problem with this legislation because we think if they want to take some land out from under the designation, then bring it before the House. Let us know which pieces they want to take out. Replace it with others. Make sure that when you're going to sell the land that everybody has access to, those competitive bids . . . And it's just not a few private interests, Mr. Speaker. I think that would be more, a much more honest approach to how we deal with this issue in the legislature and in the public, Mr. Speaker.

If what they, if they have some friends or some people they know that want to buy the land, take it out from under the legislation. Tell us what they plan on doing; make sure it's open to a competitive bid. If their friends have the most money, they'll get the land. That's how it kind of works, Mr. Speaker.

But that's not what they're doing. They're going to take all of the land out from under the designation. They're going to determine what is environmentally sensitive, what isn't, and then they're going to determine which pieces of land they're going to put up for sale. And if it's any indication of how they did it last time with the agricultural Crown land, it'll be the leaseholders. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's fair when you're talking about a public asset.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it'll be interesting to see what our environment looks like 20 years from now. It'll be very interesting to see. And it will be interesting to see what the Environment minister 20 years from now has to say about this because I suspect that they will say that you know, in 1984 a group of men and women decided that they wanted to protect critical habitat in the province of Saskatchewan. And for 26 years we had 3.4 million acres of land that were protected in legislation. And if there were reasons why land should be taken out from under that designation, it came before this Assembly, the Assembly had the debate, and it was a very public process, Mr. Speaker. And when people wanted to take land out from being designated, they had to put land back in. So it was basically a zero loss.

Now we have a Minister of the Environment and a government that for the first time in 26 years, for the first time in 26 years, is saying, we don't want to do it that way any more. We're going to move this land, this 3.4 million acres of critical habitat, out from under the legislation. It's going to be there in regulation and we'll decide or future governments will decide what's critical, what's not; what's for sale, what's not. And we'll decide who gets the land, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is not, it's certainly not fair and it's certainly not in the public interest. And I think it's all about certain private interests.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I think I've put my comments on the record. We'll have many more questions. We certainly will have more questions for that minister. And I think, Mr. Speaker, there will be a number of people before the committee to ask questions, and I know that the minister's officials will probably be listening to this debate that takes place over the next while.

But I think for my constituents who have donated land to the Crown, land that was in their family since the early 1900s that was in its natural state. They want to make sure that that land will not be sold for development, dumps, or whatever, that that land is here forever and protected forever because that wasn't Crown land, that was private land that was turned over to the state and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, people donate land. They do. And they don't expect that land to be sold. They don't expect that land to be sold or parcelled out for private development.

So we'll want to make sure that that question is answered. Are those refuges still going to be protected? Or is this part of the government's new policy to sell off, sell off pieces of critical habitat that have been protected for the last 26 years, to certain vested interests? And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat because I've other colleagues that would like to participate in this discussion.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a good thing to enter into this debate, and I want to thank the former, the previous speakers who've engaged in this debate. I think they've asked some very important questions, and of course the fundamental one is, what is the legacy that we want to leave for our children, our grandchildren?

I know that the former minister Colin Maxwell spoke eloquently yesterday when he talked about the visionary work that was done in the '80s. And quite often on this side we're not complimentary to the Conservative Party, but we have to say and our hats have to go off in terms of the work that was done about protecting critical lands that supported the ecosystems that were at risk.

And the backgrounders say, and I'll review this more, that at one point during the '70s we saw some 2 million acres of land be removed from its natural state. And of course that would create a situation where people are saying, whoa, are we doing the right thing? And the people of Saskatchewan at that time in the '80s had the vision and the will to do the right thing and create legislation that would protect habitat. Because we know if you don't have the habitat, you don't have the wildlife, you actually don't have a healthy biodiversity. And it's very much a three-dimensional thing.

So I am, in some way, glad to be entering into this debate on Bill No. 132, *An Act to amend The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, and I understand it makes consequential amendments to other Acts. And so we'll go through this discussion today. And I was pleased to see that there are members from different organizations are coming forward. I see that Ducks Unlimited folks were here earlier today, and we'll see more probably come throughout.

[10:00]

But this is, this is a significant piece of legislation. It really does represent a paradigm shift for how we perceive and how we protect the environment in all its complexities in this province. And we see this minister bringing forward many pieces of legislation that we have some real deep concerns about. And of course in opposition we'll see this legislation come to pass, and it's unfortunate that we will, but this is one that we feel really in many ways represent how this government has lost its way and has lost its trust and its moral compass in terms of how it comes to understand the environment.

And in fact you know, overnight we saw a great rain. I was just thinking about how wonderful that was for the people of Saskatchewan, particularly in rural Saskatchewan. We all enjoy a very good rain because it means that it's replenishing the natural state and we can have a great summer ahead. And whether you're in agriculture . . . It's very good for the farmers, it's very good for the ranchers, but it's also very good for the natural habitat, replenishing the wetlands, the things that make our province so unique and special.

Whether it's the 100,000 lakes or the wetlands that have really put us on the map in terms of North America, in fact the world, about how we've come to appreciate and come to protect our natural environment, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we have been recognized internationally. I know that a few short years ago we

did receive an international award, the Blue Heron award, and I know the folks from several NGOs [non-governmental organization] were with us when we received that award recognizing the good work that's been done in terms of protecting the natural habitat in this province.

But this morning I do have to say, and I know my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana referenced this, but I was glad to see the editorial in *The StarPhoenix*. And I don't know if the minister's had a chance to review the editorial — a very significant one, and I think this is one that will go down in the history books as pointing to a concern that we all have in this province. The member from Nutana said, what will this province look like in some 20, 30, 40 years from now after this piece of legislation was passed? We are looking now since '84, some 25, 27 years later. And we saw the fruits of that piece of legislation that was passed in '84 that we now have some 3 million acres of land protected, 3.4 million acres of land protected through *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. And we're reversing that, unfortunately.

I'd like to take a moment and quote from this editorial because I believe it has a lot to say and a lot that we should be reflecting upon today as we move forward. The title of the editorial, "Short-sighted of gov't to sell protected land," and it came out today, the 29th of April 2010. And I quote:

The provincial government's plan to remove from under the protective umbrella of the Wildlife Protection Act nearly three million acres of Crown land smacks of short-term thinking and political expediency that's detrimental to all citizens of Saskatchewan.

And despite Environment Minister Nancy Heppner's claim that the move, which she wants to make by the end of May and would see about 10 per cent of the land sold to ranchers whose families have leased it for generations, [in quotes, her quotes] "isn't about monetary things," her decision remains puzzling.

And clearly we do all have to think about what is driving this forward. Why are you fixing something that isn't broken? Now nobody can disagree and I know many, many of the stock growers are fantastic stewards. That is not the argument before us today. The argument before us is, why is this necessary? Is it just about ownership and what does that mean? And maybe we need to hear more from the minister about why is it that the ownership is key.

Now last night in committee, she went on about how this is not about deregulation. Well if there's ever an example of deregulation, here is an example. Now she will argue that it's not. And I will go into her comments that she's made in her second reading and I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's some real deep, deep concerns about some of the comments she made in her second reading about that. It is puzzling, clearly puzzling.

It's not about the money, she says. I have some real, real concerns about that. It goes on to say, and I quote:

Even in a large province that boasts 43 per cent of Canada's arable land, the removal from wildlife habitat

protection chunks of land that amounts to twice the size of Prince Edward Island, is cause for consternation.

At a time when the entire world is becoming increasingly aware of the value of preserving natural habitat for wildlife for the sake of future generations as well as our own, the government demonstrates a breathtakingly short-sighted approach to its duty and obligation to act as a responsible steward of the public interest.

Now there's an interesting word. Couple of things in there. And last night we had a good debate about what the public interest is and now I'll talk more about this, because this piece of legislation is tied to a piece of legislation that went through committee last night, the conservation easements.

But we talked about, what does it mean about the public interest, especially, especially when she's removing so much of the work out of the public sphere that we've come to know as the Saskatchewan legislature. And we hear people being introduced in the House, where they say, welcome to your legislature or their legislature, really emphasizing that it's the people's legislature. But somehow this government by the same token is saying that, but moving it back this way because they're moving it behind closed doors. So the public interest they're looking after, they're looking after in their own special way, behind closed doors.

So clearly we have to talk about what does this mean, public interest. And we'll talk more about that, but we have some real deep concerns about this government that wraps itself in this flag about being transparent and accountable and looking at the public interest, and they're doing exactly the opposite, exactly the opposite. I think they have a lot of nerve and they will be taken to account when they go back to their communities about this particular Bill because people do have some concerns about how truly accountable and transparent is this government. How truly is it, especially when they talk about the public interest.

And I do have to say, Mr. Speaker, this is only even more ironic and it's painfully sad how ironic that they're doing this in the International Year of Biodiversity. I understand in September that they're going to make a big deal, a big deal in September about biodiversity. Because even though they're a year behind in terms of their biodiversity action plan, and they're going to launch something probably to stakeholders behind some closed doors, not anything that the public will be invited to. I bet the public won't be invited to this, about biodiversity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm amazed at this. I'm amazed at the nerve of this minister, who can step forward and say, trust us; we're doing the right thing.

But this goes on. This goes on and it says, "There's no doubt," and I quote:

There's no doubt that the ranching families who've leased some of these parcels for decades have proven themselves excellent stewards of the land. However, the onus has remained with the government to ensure that its lessees comply with the habitat act, and the loss of leasing rights remained a deterrent to those who might be tempted to contravene the law in order to maximize profits.

You know, I think that's worth reflecting on a minute too. As well we talk about, so what's happening in the Great Sand Hills? What's happening out there? We have worked and there's a great working relationship with the Great Sand Hills Planning Commission. That work has seemed to have stalled on this minister's desk. And the ranchers out there are wondering what's happening with that. We need to see more action. And so she seems to have some that she's working with and others that it's just plain stalled on.

It goes on, and this probably is the most telling of all. But I mean we could read the whole thing and I don't plan on reading the whole thing. I know many others will want to talk about this. But it goes on:

However, wildlife protection and conservation groups, First Nations leaders and others are quite right to be concerned that, once private buyers acquire Crown land, there are no restrictions on further resale of the land or any guarantees that the habitat will remain protected in the long run.

It simply isn't acceptable that Ms. Heppner seems determined to push through changes to three-decade-old legislation without properly discussing them with groups other than the ranchers who have a stake in protected land.

As Darrell Crabbe, executive director of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation aptly notes: [and this is a quote] "We just think that the future generations of Saskatchewan would be better served if there was full consultation with everybody and the . . . [full] protection was left in place.

"This is a huge issue for us. We're talking about millions of acres of land that we consider to be a jewel in the crown of Saskatchewan."

And how true is that? On the end of the quote, ". . . a jewel in the crown of Saskatchewan." He couldn't have said it better. And here we are. We're putting it up, some might say, in the pawn shop.

I have some real deep concerns about this, that there should have been full consultation and in fact and I'll review the minister's second reading speech where she talks about how there was consultation. But some of these folks are saying that there wasn't. There wasn't full consultation. So here we have the executive director for Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation going on record, going on record saying that there wasn't and there should have been, that there should have been.

And it goes on, but, you know, the end of the article really does say, I think, an important quote to reflect on, and I quote:

Instead, the Environment minister is acting to further erode the protective legislation already in place. No wonder those who take a longer view of the province beyond its four-year election cycles are concerned.

And truly they are concerned. They are concerned and they have a lot to be concerned about because we are seeing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a paradigm shift that we are all worried about, we are all deeply concerned about.

Now the government did win the last election and they do have the right to do this, but I don't think they campaigned . . . And I see the members clapping at their desks. I don't think they campaigned on the elimination or the erosion of this Bill. Now maybe I'm wrong. Maybe that's what they were talking about in rural Saskatchewan, that they were going to do this, but it sure wasn't in any public documents.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the minister's second reading speech and this was on March 8th, 2010, and so I'll be quoting from *Hansard*. And it was quite an interesting speech, very short. So I'm sure it's because even what she did say there is questions about, but she goes on and says, right off the bat:

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our government recognizes the need to ensure that areas of ecological value are protected. This Act will allow the government to protect sensitive land more efficiently, more effectively, and more sustainably than ever before.

I think the key word there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is more. This government seems to be operating more means less here, not less means more, but more means less. There's going to be less land protected. Now maybe that land may be protected more efficiently and effectively. I have a big question about the sustainable part, but there is going to be less land.

This is a government that does not see it as a priority, moving more land into protection. And I'd like to hear the minister talk about that. What is their goal? How much more land will be moved into protection? Is there any land being moved into this kind of protection now? This year? Next year? What are their plans for the next 10 years? I bet the answer is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, zero. I bet that's what the answer is.

And if they're not moving more land in and they're taking land out, I think that's less land being protected. Now they may talk about this shiny new thing that they've got going, this RBR [results-based regulation], but I think they've got a problem here because less land is being protected. That's the long and the short of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's a concern for everyone in this province. And that's why you see such things as this editorial coming forward in this paper. Less land will be protected and that's a real problem.

She goes on and talks about, and I quote, "We will also be able to tell which land is the most sensitive and needs stronger protection."

[10:15]

Now I'm curious about what her definition of stronger means. What does stronger means? It looks like, to me, this is actually weakening the protection. She's moving many of the things that we typically do in this House into regulations where only she will know what's happening. Maybe the cabinet might know, but it sounds like only she will know, and we have some real concerns about that.

So how is this actually strengthening protection? This is really weakening protection. And we have some concerns. And there's two, two concerns as I said. The concern about moving

things into regulations — and this is a real emphasis. You see this more and more, that this government, this minister, has bought into things being done at the minister's level. And so how does this strengthen? This is a concern. Moving it to regulations, that can be done, and there's no public scrutiny, no public scrutiny. She loves to throw the word around, public interest, but there is no public scrutiny at all.

But the other one that's really, if she really did want to talk about strengthening the Act and protecting the land in a stronger way, is she could have brought the no net loss policy into the legislation. And in fact, I'm not sure if the minister is aware of what that is. But the idea is, if you're taking land out, that you determine that in fact actually there is land that would be more appropriate to put into the inventory of protected land. You're putting land in; then maybe you can take some land out. So there's no net loss. At the end of the day, we don't see less land being protected.

We are really worried that that policy now is history. That's history. It's part of Colin Maxwell's legacy and many Environment ministers since who ensured that that happened. But is the no net loss policy history? That's what we want to know. Is this minister killing that policy? We don't hear about it. It would have been a great signal that hey, she is actually sincere about this idea of strengthening the protection for sensitive lands and sensitive environments. But we don't get that sense because here is a key element that she is killing, I believe that she is and that it's done, and it's history now.

Now if I'm wrong, I'd like to see this come forward, perhaps as an amendment, when we talk about this Bill in committee. But my hunch is that that won't happen. That won't happen because it probably is history, and that really worries us.

So she goes on. And this is from her second reading speech. She goes on:

This has been developed in consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders such as the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Nature Saskatchewan, Ducks Unlimited Canada, The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Saskatchewan Cattlemen's Association, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you heard me read the editorial from *The StarPhoenix*. I quoted extensively. We had Darrell Crabbe, the executive director from the Wildlife Federation, say we need full consultation. How does this square? How does this square? How does this minister stand up and say to the House in her second reading speech that they've had consultation and yet we have someone like Darrell Crabbe saying something like that?

And I actually, I have a letter as well that I want to read into the record here. But we have some real concerns when this kind of thing can happen. In fact I'll take a moment here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to read. This is April 27th, 2010, and it's to — and I quote — Mr. Lingenfelter, Ms. Morin, and Ms. Higgins. And I'll quote:

We write concerning the government's statement that

conservation stakeholder organizations were consulted about Crown land sale program, in particular the sale of land designated under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. Both the ministers of Agriculture and Food and Environment have publicly stated WHPA lands will not be sold. We can assure you that no meaningful consultation regarding the sale of Crown lands has occurred with Nature Saskatchewan.

On occasion we were told some details of the land sale program, but this is not consultation. Nature Saskatchewan was never asked for an opinion about the sale of Crown lands. The Crown lands stakeholder forum, which did provide an opportunity for discussion about the management of future lands, was abolished by the Minister of Agriculture.

We request you to urge the government to delay the passing of the amendments to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, which would see these lands removed from the Act and placed under regulation where they could be sold at the discretion of the minister. The government has not properly consulted with the public on this very important issue which has the potential to cause significant consequence to biodiversity in Saskatchewan. We look for your assistance in stopping the passage of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Gary Seib, Acting General Manager, Nature Saskatchewan

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what a letter, what a letter, what a letter. I don't know how the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Agriculture can square that with their statement in their second reading speech. How can they square that when they have somebody willing to put it in writing that they were not consulted? We have two groups, two groups. Do we need to get all the groups in here to say whoa, whoa, maybe we should rethink this. Maybe we should rethink this. Is this the best step forward? I have some real concerns.

And I just have to say that how ironic that the Minister of Agriculture abolished the Crown lands stakeholder forum. Unbelievable. On one hand, you say you're consulting. And then on the other . . . or before you do that, you abolish the very forum that you might talk about it in. Unbelievable, unbelievable. So I have some real concerns. We have some real concerns, and we must address this.

And this government and this Premier wonders why people are wondering more and more about the trust factor, the faith factor in this government. You know, you have *The StarPhoenix* writing editorials. You have organizations writing letters as soon as they hear things that are happening like this. Really there is time to do the right thing. And I think, you know, if the minister wants to consider this, we'd be, I'd be very happy to support this. Maybe take it back and let's rethink this. Let's rethink this. We have some real concerns.

So the consultation piece is huge, is huge. Then she goes on. Then she goes on. Then she goes on: "Most importantly this Act will streamline management and enhance the protection of ecologically valuable land. The changes will allow the Crown

to sell land with permanent easements attached."

So the question is, how permanent is this? How permanent is this? *The StarPhoenix* raises this as a legitimate question. These are easements on the title, but once the land is sold, it is sold. It is no longer Crown land. Now the minister can say, well I have some input in this, and I can control that because I can say who can remove easements and who cannot. And that is true. That is true.

But last night as we discovered . . . and I will want to take a minute and talk about the piece of legislation that went through committee. But section 11.42, in section (3)(a):

The minister shall review an application made pursuant to subsection (1) and may:

(a) if the minister is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so, approve the application . . .

So she can. She can approve it. Now the question before us and the question last night that wasn't answered very well is, what is the public interest? And who gets to talk about the public interest? Well we can't here even though we're elected by the public. We're elected by the public, but we can't talk about it because it's not in this sphere. It's not to be talked about in here. It's about to be talked about in her office, in her office. That's not a public forum. That's not a public forum at all. So I don't know how she squares that, how she squares that.

But the worst thing, the worst thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . and I don't know if you were watching TV last night when we talked about this. To continue on with section 11.42 is section (10), section (10): "The minister's decision to approve or reject an application pursuant to this section is final and conclusive and no proceedings by or before the minister may be restrained by injunction, prohibition or other proceedings or . . . removable . . . or otherwise by any court." So she has final say. She gets to decide what the public interest is, and that's the final word and that's it. That is it.

But we had quite a discussion about that, and I think that is shameful. That is shameful because this is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well let's hope. I'm looking forward to that letter, but I don't think it changes this. It clarifies it, but this is what was passed last night. Am I correct? It was passed . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . All right, okay. Well it was with division. I saw that, but division still means it was passed. I believe it was passed in committee last night. And I'm glad that happened. I'm glad that happened because clearly there were some questions that needed to be asked but you know . . . And they can shake their heads. They can shake their heads. But it doesn't change a thing, does it, Mr. Speaker? Doesn't change a thing, does it?

We have an interpretation, but it doesn't change what's in the Act, does it? It does not. And so we have a minister here who can decide what's in the public interest. And the key thing, it's not being decided in this legislature, in the people's legislature or what they like to refer to as their legislature. And we've heard the folks over there say, their legislature many times, but people should know many of the things that we've talked about in this legislature are being removed into the minister's office, being taken to the minister's office and so we have some real

concerns.

Now the other thing the minister likes to talk about and we talked about this last night was that the fines for contravention, so I quote, "Our government believes that land users are great stewards of the land and have a vested interest in its ongoing environmental protection. To ensure that they do so, [the] fines for contraventions of easements will increase from \$2,000 to \$100,000 for individuals and from \$50,000 to \$500,000 for corporations."

Well that does sound impressive. That sounds really impressive. But the key words that are not in her speech is that they cannot be more than that. They can be less than that. They can be \$5. They can be \$100. They can be 20 bucks, but they can't be more than \$100,000 or \$500,000. So we have some real concerns because this is what they call in the industry a little bit of greenwash, a little bit of greenwash. When you're coming under attack, you want to make it look as green as possible. And what does she do? She puts in some big numbers. She puts in some big numbers and then forgets about the words in front of it that say, not more than, not more than.

Well I think a lot of people in Saskatchewan who might be looking at it saying, how can I get around these regulations, are going, wow. That's good. I know what the maximums are. I don't know what the minimums are. I don't know what the minimum fine is. We don't know. We don't know, and that's a problem.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate. It is unfortunate that we take a look back at the legacy that was left from the '80s by the critical wildlife protection Act in the '80s that came forward, and we saw that during the '70s some 2 million acres of land, 2 million acres of land were lost due to agricultural expansion. Many things were changing in . . . actually it was between 1976 and 1981 that these things were happening, over a short period of five years, over 2 million acres of land. So it created the impetus for this kind of work to be done. And so we saw the reason for this to happen, and I think it is a real shame, a real shame that this kind of thing was happening.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have . . . and we know that we've seen and I hope, I hope that this minister has and is willing to put on record, now she has indicated in media that this is not the tip of the iceberg, that lands such as the Great Sand Hills that are protected or the RAN [representative area network], some of the RAN areas, some of the areas are not to . . . that will not be affected by this.

But I'll tell you where the concern comes from, and it comes from her own notes that talk about . . . The explanatory notes for Bill 132, section 3(a), in the explanation when it talks about the schedule, and I will quote from the notes here, I quote:

This new approach includes assessing the ecological attributes of all Crown land with an initial focus on land in The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act (WHPA). This information will be used to determine which lands may be sold, sold with a conservation easement or retained by the Crown.

[10:30]

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's some key pieces, some key phrases in here. I want to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to this phrase, "initial focus" in all Crown lands. So what this note says, "This new approach includes assessing the ecological attributes of all Crown land . . ." so we can assume that that means all lands that are owned by the Crown in Saskatchewan with an initial focus on the land in the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act.

So what they're saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I get the word "initial" right, it's their first look. It's their first go. The first go is at the WHPA lands. What is the next step? Now it doesn't say in here what the next step is, but it does imply that there are next steps. If I understand the word "initial" right, what is the next step?

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have some concerns about, does this mean the Great Sand Hills are at risk? Does it mean Dore Lake is at risk? Now Dore Lake may not, because it's in the North. But the Great Sand Hills are in the South. And some of the other lands that were protected right along the Parkland area, are they at risk? Because this government is taking a look at all Crown lands. And I'm saying that because this is what this note says. I'm not making up the word "all" Crown lands. I'm reading it from this document, which is their document. So I think we have a reason to be concerned about this.

So, with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do think that this is short-sighted. I agree with *The StarPhoenix* on this that this government who wants to sell the protected lands, some 10 per cent right off the get-go, I have some real concerns about that.

But I think that this government could do better, should be doing better at this time when we want to make sure our lands are protected, that when we look around the world and we see biodiversity at risk . . . And we see this year being a very special year. This is not the year to actually move backwards. And I want to take a moment to quote from *Home Place*, Stan Rowe. I did yesterday, just a great writer from the University of Saskatchewan. And I want to quote from page 25 when he talks about the first 100 years:

The opening of the 21st century, new millennium, is an inspiration to change our ways in Western Canada. Even now soils are drifting, valley bottoms are being broken, wet lands are still being drained, aspen bluffs levelled, patches of native prairie land plowed. Hopeful signs are the many recent conservation preservation programs in response to popular demand supported by both non-government and government agencies. After years of inaction, they all sound so good.

Let us, however, remember as we support them, that without parallel changes in how we think and feel about the land, these and all such conservation preservation programs will prove to be only stopgap measures, finger in the dyke exercises, glimmers of hope, but not the new day dawning.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we can have a new day dawning in terms of biodiversity in Saskatchewan. But this piece of legislation is significantly flawed, and I would ask the minister to withdraw it. I'll take my seat now and cede to the

next speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise and join in the debate and thank my colleague from Saskatoon for his kind comments and his very astute comments in relation to Bill No. 132.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important for the people of Saskatchewan to know, and the people that may be listening to this presentation, and the whole notion that they're sitting there wondering, well what's the importance of the Bill. And that's one of the reasons why people should certainly pay attention to what this government is doing because there are a lot of back door deals that they have been undertaking the last number of years.

And this is one example, Mr. Speaker, of how they have now provided, through this Bill, three different ways in which they could delist and in essence sell some of the land that had been set aside for many, many years in relation to trying to provide habitat protection for many of our wildlife species and animals that Saskatchewan has.

So to encapsulate what the Bill is about, this current Minister of the Environment has now provided three different opportunities to take away critical wildlife habitat lands and then sell those lands to anybody that she so wishes. Now what people in Saskatchewan are concerned about is there's many groups out there that want to make sure that Saskatchewan continues remaining a very solid province when it comes to having a healthy ecosystem. And as part of that healthy ecosystem, there's got to be habitat protection for wildlife, Mr. Speaker.

And what we're seeing is that this government has undertaken a process to sell some of that habitat land that had been set aside over centuries and a number of years to make sure that Saskatchewan has that legacy. Now these guys are coming along, and they're providing an opportunity for the minister and themselves and their friends to now purchase that wildlife habitat land. And my message to them is, what the heck are you guys doing here? What are you guys doing here by opening up this particular file? Who are you going to sell this land to, Mr. Speaker?

So people in Saskatchewan ought to know this: that the Saskatchewan Party — the Sask Party, that minister, and that Premier — are now opening up the doors to wildlife habitat lands that have been protected for years, Mr. Speaker. We have often . . . it says right here that 1976 and 1981 we lost almost 2 million acres of natural landscape. And now these folks are coming back and they're going to be selling more, Mr. Speaker. And no matter how you cut it, when you open up the door to the sales of land — and this Bill has provided three avenues to do that — your intent is to sell that land.

And again the people across the country and the people across Saskatchewan in particular are saying, what the heck are you doing here with this Bill? You ought not to do these kind of things because that's not what people of Saskatchewan elected you for.

So not only, Mr. Speaker, are we seeing that this minister will have the authority to sell land, but that authority will be done specifically and through only her office, Mr. Speaker.

And I hear members across the way, Mr. Speaker, chattering from their chair. Why didn't they chatter in caucus when this Bill came forward? Because, Mr. Speaker, they didn't know what they were doing. They sat on their hands while people like the Minister of the Environment and their so-called leader got up and put this Bill forward because they have friends that they've got to satisfy, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to do that at the expense of all of us, Mr. Speaker. And this wildlife habitat protection Act is exactly what we in the opposition are telling people is going to be the net result of some of the mismanagement of that Premier, of that minister, and that party across the way.

So I'll say it again for the third time: what the heck are you doing with an Act of this sort and allowing that to continue? Shame on you. Shame on you folks for doing that and allowing that to happen, Mr. Speaker.

Now what's going to happen is that, as we sit here and we watch, we watch what they do, the people of Saskatchewan are getting madder and madder and madder by the day. And this is further evidence of this particular Bill that they do not know what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. They don't know what they're doing. And the net result is, they're going to sell anything and everything under the sun in Saskatchewan to their particular friends. They're going to sell everything and anything under the sun to try and get money to cover up their fiscal incompetence, Mr. Speaker. And this Bill is one more evidence, one more piece of evidence that we in the opposition are saying to the people of Saskatchewan should prove our case.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Wildlife Federation, which is a very strong federation throughout Saskatchewan, and no doubt there are some people within the federation that support the Sask Party, but I can tell you this right now: as a result of this Bill, as a result of this Bill and some of the lands . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — I would ask the Assembly to come to order. I'm having a little trouble hearing the speaker that has the floor. I recognize the member.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and as a result of their decision to open up three avenues of sale of this wildlife habitat lands, what they're doing is they're starting to piss off the people within the Wildlife Federation.

The Deputy Speaker: — I would ask the member to . . . We've always had a tradition of language. I would ask him to withdraw that one word.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that one word and I'd like to replace it with, they're getting a lot of people extremely angry, Mr. Speaker, as a result of this particular Bill. And this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is quite frankly going to spell the death knell of the Saskatchewan Party, the Sask Party. Because what they have done is they have turned their backs on some of the people that supported them and some of the people that

trusted them, not just on financial management, Mr. Speaker, but even on things as important as protecting the jewel of Saskatchewan, which was really quite frankly *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* that we in Saskatchewan with many solid partners — First Nations, Métis people, with the outfitters, with the Wildlife Federation . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — There are a couple of members that want to carry on a conversation that don't have the floor. I would ask members to take their conversation behind the bar. Recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and what they have done is they've turned their backs on the people that have fought for many years to put the critical wildlife habitat Act in place. They wanted this habitat protected, and this party has turned their backs on this and no, we've got political commitments to our friends to sell some of that land and we are going to sell it. We're hell-bent on selling some of that land and, Mr. Speaker, they will sell that land.

And the people throughout northern and southern, eastern, western, and central Saskatchewan are saying one thing: when it comes to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, when it comes to protecting our wildlife and the habitat they live in, we want a minister with leadership. We don't need a real estate agent, Mr. Speaker.

That's the message they have for this government, this minister, and this Premier. And I'll say it again, that the people throughout Saskatchewan, they want a minister that can provide leadership, a Premier that can provide leadership, not real estate agents that are saying all Saskatchewan lands are now for sale. They're for sale because we are so broke that we managed the economy and the resources and the finances of this province that we have no choice but to have wall-to-wall sale of everything we have of value in Saskatchewan, and that includes the Crowns and now it includes critical wildlife habitat protection areas, Mr. Speaker.

So again I'll point out to the people, as a result of their fiscal incompetence, they are now having a wall-to-wall sale of our Crowns, a wall-to-wall sale of our lands, a wall-to-wall sale of any asset that is of value to the people of Saskatchewan. And shame on them, and shame on them for doing this, Mr. Speaker, because they know and we know that the people that have supported them in the past are now very angry.

They are now very angry, and this is one more piece, one more nail in the coffin of the Sask Party government when it comes to 2011 because they have turned their backs on the people that supported them on this front. They have betrayed that trust. And, Mr. Speaker, as an opposition, we're saying to people, yes it's important that you be angry about this. But there's two things you ought to do. You ought to join us to fight back and fight back hard and get rid of these guys in 2011.

And the second point you can do is, obviously, not support these guys any more. Some people out there within certain areas of Saskatchewan may not vote for the NDP, but I tell them, I tell them you will now teach them a lesson, a lesson. Don't come out in 2011. Protest and don't come out and vote for them — if you choose not to vote for our party — when it comes to

issues of this sort because they have betrayed your trust.

Now, Mr. Speaker, *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, I want to speak for some of the backbench over there, Mr. Speaker, because the backbench I know are upset. They are upset on some of these fronts and they know this is going to hurt them. And I want to say to the Premier and to the Minister of the Environment, the so-called leadership of the Executive Council of the Sask Party, what are you doing with this Act? What are you doing? You are creating a major problem for the backbench of the Sask Party, and the NDP are enjoying every second of that, Mr. Speaker. We're enjoying every second. And it's another gift from this government that has lost their way and quite frankly do not know what they're doing.

[10:45]

Now, Mr. Speaker, today now the Premier is making an announcement . . . or tomorrow at 12:30, on this new TILMA [Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement] or new West partnership. All that is intended to do is to try and change the channel. And when you look at this action, we're going to continue hammering home their points on fiscal mismanagement, their points on selling off our lands, Mr. Speaker, and now they're trying to change the channel on this new West partnership which is once again going to open the doors to Saskatchewan to sell more of our resources. And we're going to transmit control of what we had in our province to Alberta or to BC [British Columbia] because I don't have confidence that this Premier or this Sask Party government can stand up for Saskatchewan people because of evidence that has been attached to this Bill, Mr. Speaker. They have not done their homework and they can't provide leadership and they have betrayed the trust of people that took the opportunity to give them the chance to be government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that if people out there think that this is only a small mistake, the answer to it is, no. We have seen how they've gone to war with labour. We have seen how they have not addressed the rural Saskatchewan health issues. They have not addressed that in one, one bit. They have mismanaged the finances of our province, Mr. Speaker. They have turned their back on students. They have betrayed the trust with the municipality. The list goes on and on and on, Mr. Speaker. The list goes on and on as to what they've done.

And now they're telling the Wildlife Federation, they're telling the rural people, they're telling the people that gave their land to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* — they donated their land — they're now telling them, well that land now is for sale. That land is for sale now. And who is going to speak for these people? And you know the worst thing in the world, Mr. Speaker? And this is what's really bad. What's really bad is many of these people that they have now betrayed with Acts such as this, they are now going to . . . They've turned their back on those people. They have betrayed that trust.

Why did they have anything to do with selling wildlife habitat lands? That is wrong, wrong, wrong, Mr. Speaker. That is wrong, wrong, wrong. And what are they doing? What are they doing? Mr. Speaker, I tell the people that are listening to this, they don't know what they're doing. You gave them the

opportunity, and they betrayed that trust and they turned their backs on you as a result of some of these Acts. And come 2011, your opportunity to turn your back on them is by doing two things.

If you don't, and if you can't bring yourself to vote for the NDP, then don't vote for them. Stay home and protest and tell them that, what you've done to our province, you're going to have a long-lasting effect whether it's a new West partnership or whether it's a Bill like this or how you've mismanaged our economy and how you've destroyed our savings account and now you're killing off our Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have had enough of this show. We've had enough. Now this Act, Mr. Speaker, once again shows that these guys do not know what they're doing. And as I said before, we need two things to happen over there. We want a minister that can provide leadership and not be a real estate agent. And we want the backbench to finally develop a backbone to speak up for their people, to speak up and tell their so-called leadership in the front, you're wrong, wrong, wrong.

And, Mr. Speaker, if that backbench does not have a backbone, then the opposition is going to stand up and we're going to fight for the people of Saskatchewan. We're going to stand up for the people that believe in this. We're going to stand up for the people that have donated their lands. We're going to stand up for the many people that want to see the jewel of Saskatchewan protected, and that's our wildlife habitat lands Act.

And, Mr. Speaker, these guys have sold out. They have sold out, and the backbench ought to be ashamed because they have been led down the garden path one more time. And this has been the last 20 Bills or so that they brought forward, they've been led down the garden path. And I say to them, shame on them. They should stand up and they should speak for the people that voted for them, and they're sitting on their hands. You know why they're sitting on their hands? Because they don't know what they're doing. And they have not been developed. They have not been strengthened. They have not been shown how they can become a strong government because none of them know how to do it.

And now the opposition, the opposition is going to stand up. And every time one of these, the backbenchers go sit down with a Wildlife Federation member, they're going to look those guys in the eye and say, oh no, no. That's not true, and we're not going to do that. Well, Mr. Speaker, I tell every Wildlife Federation member out there, read the Bill, read the Bill. It gives them three avenues in which they could delist and sell that land.

And the reason why they want to delist and sell that land is two reasons we have. Number one is they've got friends that they have to look after, Mr. Speaker. They've got friends in other places — not in Saskatchewan — that they have to look after. And the second reason they want to sell is because they don't have the money. They need money, and that's why I say to people, we're going to see a wall-to-wall sale of everything we value in Saskatchewan, whether it is our health system, whether it's our Crowns. And now they're after the crown jewel in many conservation group, which is of course *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

Now, Mr. Speaker, where in the world, where in the world do you sell something that's been given to you as a gift? There's a lot of families historically, a lot of families that have donated land, a lot of people in rural Saskatchewan and many people even in urban Saskatchewan where they have come along and they said, because we value the conservation of Saskatchewan, because we like Saskatchewan, because it's got such an environmental solid potential, we want to donate our land. We want to donate our land to the wildlife habitat so people know that we have this land available.

And what these guys have done is they've yanked the rug out, out of the many generations of people — not just today but before — that have thought that this land would be protected forever, that this land would be protected for the animals, that this land would be certainly part of the natural system of Saskatchewan. That was their intent, that was their belief, that was their desire, and they did that by donating the land which has an extreme value.

Now what happens? Now these guys are coming along and they're selling that land. They're selling that land. So not only are you going to get the Wildlife Federation members upset, but now you're going to have the many families and the many people before them that had thought at one time that that land would be protected forever, Mr. Speaker, that they thought this land would be protected forever.

So I'm telling the people right across the board from Yorkton to Meadow Lake to Lloydminster and throughout the entire province that that backbench and that government has no leadership and is weak-kneed when it comes to standing up to the big corporate interests that are telling people that they want to protect this land. They are now bowing and giving the big corporate interest ownership of that land that does not belong to them, Mr. Speaker. That land does not belong to them, and they're selling that land right from under the people's feet.

And be darned if the opposition's going to sit here and say, okay, that's fine, Mr. Speaker. We are sitting here because we're going to stand up to these guys. We're going to stand up. We're going to fight for those families that gave that land. We're going to stand up and fight for the many groups and the organizations like the Wildlife Federation that fought to put this Act in place. We're going to stand up for the historical effort of many, many groups, many, many groups that fought for this wildlife habitat protection Act. And many groups, the history of all those groups, we're going to stand up for them. We're going to tell the Sask Party that they're wrong, wrong, wrong, and they're going to pay a price for that, Mr. Speaker. They are going to pay a price for that.

And as I mentioned at the outset, that backbench ought to stand up and have a backbone and tell their so-called leadership in the front, including the Premier, it's time you wake up. This Act is bad. Get rid of it, and get rid of that minister, Mr. Speaker, otherwise the people will get rid of the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker.

And I predict that's going to have a significant impact in 2011 and from our perspective, Mr. Speaker, we just hope, we just hope that they don't they create enough damage to our province, enough damage to our province, and enough damage

to the wildlife protection Act, that it's difficult for us to turn back, and turn all of this back in 2011.

To every backbench member in that Sask Party opposition, I say to them, shame on you. Shame on you for sitting down and not speaking up and shame on you for not taking the time to learn the file and shame on you for transferring your leadership ability, your leadership as the duly elected MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], to stand up and speak for what you think is right. You've sat on that. You sat on your hands. And the people of Saskatchewan in your ridings and your constituencies are going to say, we didn't elect you to become part of a plan that takes away all this stuff. Why aren't you speaking up for your people, Sask Party backbench? Why aren't you fighting back? Why aren't you taking a vote in caucus?

Because I'm assuming that you all have a vote in caucus. So if 15 or 18 of you don't want this Act to go forward and the provisions to go forward, speak up. Speak up and fight back. You know, that's the most effective place you can do and be in the backbench, is don't let the Executive Council dictate things to you. And then you go back home and you have to explain this to the people that elect you. Well I'm sorry, I can't provide that leadership on the wildlife habitat Act because my Premier and my Minister of Energy and Mines and my Minister of Environment say I can't.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's time for that backbench to develop a backbone, and start fighting for the people that sent you here in the first place instead of simply following their Premier and your so-called leader down the garden path, Mr. Speaker. They should be ashamed. They should be fighting back because this Act does nothing except open up three avenues, three avenues, to sell wildlife habitat protection lands. And those three avenues, Mr. Speaker, are something that people in Saskatchewan are saying should never have been put in place, never should have been put in place.

And there's some things that the people of Saskatchewan strongly believe in, Mr. Speaker. They have their politics, they have their religion, and they also have their land. Now what's happening, Mr. Speaker, is there's a lot of confusion now from many people in their corner. And I tell the people in the backbench over there, you ought to go home and you ought to look at the people that you're impacting. And you're going to say to yourself, what am I doing to my own voters? What am I doing to my own voters?

And, Mr. Speaker, this opposition is not going to smile at their misfortune for the lack of leadership. We're not going to smile at that misfortune because we know, because we know that the smile may not last long because of the damage that could be created. Because when we assume government in 2011 and we see what the damage that they have done, Mr. Speaker, is it too late to turn it back? Is it too late to turn it back?

And that's why you see as an opposition, we say my goodness, we're sitting here. We asked them at the start, please don't mess things up. That's what we asked them. Don't mess things up. And what did they do? The economy went into freefall for the last two years. They're finally starting to recover a bit. The finances are gone to hell, Mr. Speaker.

So I go back to my earlier point. Now *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, which is a Crown jewel, well they're not stopping there, Mr. Speaker. They want to sell that land too, Mr. Speaker. They want to sell it and they're going to sell it because they're so broke. They're so broke and, Mr. Speaker, that's the problem we have with this government is that they're doing things that don't make any sense.

So, Mr. Speaker, again I'll point out to the people, as a result of this Bill, as a result of this Bill some of that backbench over there that doesn't have the backbone to speak up, they're going to pay a price. If it doesn't come from the Wildlife Federation people, it's going to come from the conservation groups. It's going to come from the families that donated land. It's going to come from people that want to protect the wildlife in Saskatchewan. It's going to come from the environmental movement. It's going to come from many, many sources, Mr. Speaker.

They made a mistake here. They made a mistake here and we advocate all along, this is a big mistake, but we said they'd make 10, 15 big mistakes. So the people are saying to the . . . We're telling the people of Saskatchewan, you don't have to tolerate these guys. You don't have to tolerate these guys. You give them the opportunity, you give them the opportunity, and now they've squandered the finances, the financial outlook of Saskatchewan. The economy just barely survived under their leadership. And now, Mr. Speaker, the final nail in the coffin to rural Saskatchewan. We can't find you doctors; we can't help in some of these things, but now we're going to give away your wildlife habitat lands. And shame on them. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker — shame, shame, shame.

And as I pointed out, the people of Saskatchewan expected leadership, they expected vision, they expected a change of how people are being treated. And, Mr. Speaker, they got none of those from this government. None of those things whatsoever. So again, as I pointed out to the people of Saskatchewan — and I'll say it loud and clear for the many people that are quite frankly really angry at this, Mr. Speaker — we needed a minister, not a real estate agent, when it comes to things like the wildlife habitat protection lands.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the opposition to continue bringing forward petitions, these letters of concern, and to bring groups here. Because together we can fight back. Because if that backbench doesn't have a backbone to stand up to the so-called leadership of that party, then we will support them. We will stand up for them and we will advocate for them and we will fight for them, Mr. Speaker.

And I like that whole notion of people coming to the legislature to change the government or certainly to get them to change their mind. And if they continue doing things like this, in their arrogance — in their arrogance — then the people of Saskatchewan will do two things in 2011. Those that want to see a new vision for Saskatchewan, they will vote for this party, our party and our leader. And for those that are mad at these people and can't bring themselves to vote for us will stay home and they will protest that way, Mr. Speaker. And that is something that the people of the backbench ought to be warned of.

[11:00]

We are warning them today. You guys stand up for your people. You stand up for things like this sort. And when they try and do things like this, you should stand up and speak up and fight back. And if you don't stand up and speak up and fight back for people that send you here, then you ought not to be here. That's my point. They ought not to be here. It's time for them to send a fighter here to fight what is right, as opposed to a bunch of followers, a bunch of backbenchers that don't have the backbone to tell this minister and this Premier wildlife habitat lands are non-touchable. They're untouchable, Mr. Speaker. Leave it. Leave it as it is because you have no right to do that. We have no right as a government to do that. Why don't you say things like that in your caucus or to the media?

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is it. This is it for them. If they don't sign up and speak up and fight back, then the opposition or the government, the backbench group will be getting a message. They will be getting a message, Mr. Speaker, and that message in 2011 is going to be clear. It's going to be resounding, and it's going to be against them.

So once again, Mr. Speaker, I tell the people of Saskatchewan, be very careful. Be very careful of what these guys are doing because this Bill, in relation to allowing wildlife habitat lands to be sold — to be sold — is but a start of their agenda. And it's a dark agenda, Mr. Speaker. It is a very bad agenda. And I say, and I've said that, let the name Sask Party live in infamy from this day forward when it comes to managing our economy, developing our economy, managing our finances, developing our finances, and now taking away the crown jewel that many people worked hard over the years to build, and that was of course *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker.

Once again they've failed miserably. Once again the backbench has sat on their hands. And once again, this Executive Council, this minister, and this Premier have failed miserably on this front, as they've failed miserably on many, many other fronts, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to get into Bill 132 and to give some input, I guess, and some concerns that are being brought forward by individuals from the northern communities, from the South, from different organizations, groups. It's very clear; they're very unhappy. The duty to consult and . . . Who have they talked to when they want to bring in a piece of legislation that will address *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, to amend it and to look at that?

Some of my colleagues have expressed great concern and are really trying to give a warning and an opportunity to the government to have a serious look, to have a serious look and reconsider this piece of legislation. And I think, you know, the member from Athabasca has said it very well. The backbenchers have an opportunity, and hopefully they will come forward and do what they can and ask their leadership, their Premier, the minister to reconsider, to pull this piece of legislation back before the damage is done. But I guess it's up to those individual members over there on the other side if they want to — to the members opposite — if they want to go ahead

and proceed with this.

Even though they're being given good advice, to speak for the people that they represent, whether they are . . . how this will impact them. Have they talked? Have we gone out and made sure the due diligence is done with community members, with organizations, with First Nations, with Métis, with the trappers, with the fishermen, with people that use the land? Let's make sure that they have been consulted. How will this impact them? What changes are going to impact them? Or did they just go and talk to a few people that want this? And you know, this is good; we want this. Like what is the reason for this? Make it very clear.

The obligation, the onus is on the government: make it very clear. Supreme Court of Canada, again we keep talking about that, made it very clear. First Nations and Métis have a right to be consulted. Were they consulted? And I keep saying this, not consulted in that way. These guys keep insulting rather than consulting, and that is wrong, wrong, wrong. They expect more. They want true communication. They want to have their voice heard, and it has to happen.

And I don't know, at the end of the day, if some of the legislation that's being passed here is going to be challenged, and maybe it's time that it get challenged. They've got a ruling, First Nations and Métis. Supreme Court of Canada made it very clear. Didn't say, you may if you wish to, you know, if you want to. It made it very clear. The obligation is on the Crown to consult and accommodate — very clear — First Nations and Métis.

Now every time this government seems to go off and wanting to change something, they don't consult. Oh they say, oh yes, yes, we've consulted. Oh yes, we've gone out. And I've seen some of the members say that, and they do it in their joking way. I find it appalling. It is not a laughing matter. People back home and people in this province take the stuff that's going on in this House and, I guess, Acts that are being changed very serious. And I think someday, someday they will send the message very clear.

And those that want to laugh and think it's funny, you know, they can answer to the people out there that will be either voting . . . And the member from Athabasca made it very clear, very clear. He gave some options for the backbenchers, and we'll see what they do with that. You know, it isn't that they weren't made aware of. They were consulted by the member from Athabasca. He gave them that information. I find that very interesting. I hope they use that information.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, you look at legislation that's going to make impact and change. There is a change. There is an obligation to make sure people are consulted, that people are shared that information, that they see the whole plan, that there's nothing wrong with sharing with individuals, organizations, First Nations, Métis groups, any other organization that feels like it should have some input. If you invite them and you bring them to the table, it's very clear if they know.

But when you bring legislation like this and you say, oh everybody is happy with it, everybody wants it . . . You know I

just find it very interesting to watch what's going on. And more and more people are saying, how is it that this stuff is being passed? But I can reassure the people back home and the people of the province that the official opposition is holding that government accountable and will.

And as you see, approach the official opposition. You can approach the MLAs on this side, and you can bring your concerns forward. We'll bring them here. We'll ask the questions. And that's happening. People are approaching us. They're making phone calls to our office. They're in touch with the official opposition because they're not happy.

And just see. It's a trust thing. And the trust is here, Mr. Speaker, very clearly. People elect a government, and they trust that they will do the right things. They will consult. They will share pieces of legislation that are coming forward. They will ask for the residents' input, concerns if there are any, on pieces of legislation that are coming forward. It's a process, and I think the people expect that of their government.

Yes, in 2007 the people made it very clear. You know what? We're going to elect the Sask Party. We put the trust . . . and they trusted them, and they did. And they're there. They are on the other side. They are the government. But let's be very clear on that. We're hearing a lot of people that are not so happy any more. The trust issue, they said, you know, we put trust into this government and we voted. But I've had people come up to me and saying, I will not be voting for these members again, whoever they're representing. I will not be renewing my membership. That's interesting to watch. Their own members, their own members are pulling away. So if you see that kind of stuff going on out there, the backbenchers should sit up and take notice of that. And if they don't want to, well that's fine.

But any time we have legislation that's going to impact our province — provincial-wide legislation — I hope that the government does its due diligence to the people out there, and they talk to the different organizations. And there are many different organizations, you know. My colleagues have expressed it very well. There are so many of them that should be consulted and should get input into the legislation, but they're not. And you could spin it the way you want, but I'll be honest, the Sask Party, the government, likes to spin it — spin, spin, spin. Oh it's good for you; it's just great.

Well I think people are starting to wake up, and the spin isn't working anymore. And you know, you know, I want to go on to talk a little bit, Mr. Speaker, about . . . you know, it's very interesting to watch. I guess individuals take this on very personal . . . on the official opposition as well as government. We you know . . . Certain Bills come forward. Some of us are more cautious with it. Some of us are supporting it, and we have our different opinions and we get to debate that. And I think that's very important. But there's an opportunity to have the debate and to join in the debate. And when you really feel like you want to give your input and the people that you represent have views, you share that. That's very important, Mr. Speaker. It's very important.

People just want to feel like they're having an opportunity to be heard to have their input and, when legislation impacts them in anyway, that the invitation was there, an invitation to come

forward and voice their concerns. That's all people want. They're not asking for anything more or don't expect anything less, Mr. Speaker. They just want to feel like they had the opportunity by having — whether it's town hall meetings, whether an invitation — an opportunity to bring concerns forward. They just want to feel like they're getting an opportunity, and that's what we should be doing.

When we bring in legislation, we should make it very clear if it affects people, it affects, you know, I guess the whole province in this situation. This one has the capacity of affecting a lot and probably just about every neck of the province, every area. So when I say that, Mr. Speaker, I think the obligation again is on the government. It shouldn't be on the residents. The government should reach out to make sure as many people get to have input, be consulted — not insulted. I make it very clear because that's gone on enough under that government.

You know, Mr. Speaker, you're having different issues, and you know, you're watching different individuals. You know it's interesting, the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook, very interested. He really gets excited about it. And I talked about this earlier. He really . . . pushing us and he's yelling from his chair; this is good legislation. He's pushing. You can just tell. There's something in it. He really wants to push it. Here's something in his voice and the way he's talking and he's speaking and the Speaker asked, I can barely hear. So I mean, there's some reason he's really pushing.

I talked about the different members. Members opposite are excited about certain Bills come forward, but he's really excited about it. He's pushing this, and it's good, and you really see the excitement. I don't know what it is. I'm trying to find it, but maybe he'll share that with me at some point or maybe he'll share with it his voters and his constituents, what it is. And he can explain that.

But at this point, you know, Mr. Speaker, everything else we're seeing going on and the legislation and Bills that are coming forward, it's very concerning that individuals are not getting an opportunity, organizations are not getting an opportunity to express how this will impact them.

We look at the trappers. Trappers are truly the stewards of the land, whether they're northern trappers, whether they're southern trappers. But I want to talk about trappers for a minute, how this will impact them. I'm very concerned that they were not consulted, and they were not given an opportunity to give their input with this. Would this legislation, would this legislation affect them in any way? Is it good? Is it bad? How will it . . . Is there anything we can do better that would give you an opportunity? So to the minister, to the government: have you talked to the trappers? There's many of them in this province.

The trapping industry has done a lot of good things and creates a lot of wealth for this province. You know at the end of the day when you go and talk to the trappers . . . and they want to feel like they're being heard, and they have a right to be heard. They are stewards of the land. They know a lot about the wildlife. They are a truly amazing tool. The government can use them. They are. They monitor what's going on in a lot of the traditional lands. And when they're on their traplines, they have

a lot of input and a lot of knowledge, experience, and they can tell when things are truly happening, when there's changes going on. But the government has to go out and approach them. The government has to make an invitation to them to bring their concerns forward.

When legislation . . . This shouldn't be rammed down anybody's throat. When you start ramming stuff down people's throat like that and legislation like this Bill 132, you have to ask, why? Why?

There again goes back to the trust thing. People trust that the government will do the right things. But it's very clear that people's trust . . . And the people are losing their patience with this government, the Premier and the Sask Party government under their Premier and his leadership. The people are just about very clear, from what I'm getting, from the people I talk to, are very concerned. And they've had enough.

They're tired of the government turning their back on them, saying one thing, doing another. That's very clear. Oh no, we did that. And then you find out nobody knows what's going on. So it's very concerning to me when we see a Bill like 132, and they claim, Mr. Speaker, that people have been consulted. Oh yes, we've gone out to them. Why are those people not . . . why are we hearing a different message then, if that's happened?

[11:15]

And I ask, were all these organizations, were they truly consulted? Did they get called to meetings? Were they invited to the table to have input into Bill 132? Very clearly, under the Sask Party leadership, people are very concerned, Mr. Speaker. And there's alarm bells going off all over. People are very concerned that this legislation and others that are being brought forward are nothing but somebody pushing their idea on what they want and what they think is best. And they don't want to talk to anybody. They just want to push, push, push. This is good for you. Well people in this province have had enough of that. They don't have to hear the push, push, push. And you know, you can go off and say, oh this deal's good for them and spin it the way you want.

And I have to admit, I have been here a very short period of time, Mr. Speaker, and I have seen, I give credit to some of the government MLAs. And I'll give credit this way: they can spin things the way they want. And they're good at it. I've witnessed it; I've watched it. It's a tool. It's amazing. I'll learn, Mr. Speaker. There's ways of doing things.

And some of them . . . [inaudible] . . . but I have to admit, I like the official opposition. And some of our members truly counter some of the spins. And the people are seeing it, and the people will make up their minds exactly which way it's spinning. And you know, we all have a job to do here. There's two sides. But let's be very clear. The people out there have to have two sides, but right now they're getting only one view, and it's the government's view: here's what's good for you.

And now they're starting to get a different view. And this official opposition will give them that opportunity to know that there is a second view. It isn't all cut and dried one way because this is what's good for you. So the Sask Party government

needs to make its mind up. It better involve the people, or it will get its message.

And those members can laugh and think it's funny, which they like to do. They think it's funny when you say stuff like that. The people will speak. I believe that. There's hope out there. The people have hope. I've watched people, and they're very clear. They have hope. They hope the government will do the right thing. And I hope that the government will do the right thing and the members and the backbenchers will do the right thing. And they'll start speaking up for the people of this province and the push, push, push.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear: at some point they may laugh and they may think it's funny, but when you start turning your back on the people of our province, and you take our finances and you make a mess of them, and the people put their trust in you, and they truly trust you and you don't deliver, they will send you a message. That's very clear. And I'm sure that message is going to come very clear. I want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that that message will come.

This is an opportunity for the official opposition to debate, to give input for stuff we've heard from our community members. But I was talking about trappers, how this will impact them. I think it's very clear — the government has an obligation to talk with not only the trappers, fishermen . . . There's so many other organizations out there that should have a right to have their say, some input. And it is the government's obligation.

Like I've said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada has made some rulings that are very clear. Didn't say, may. Didn't say, well if you want to. Didn't say, if on a good day you feel like it. It made it very clear. And I think the government needs to take that Supreme Court of Canada decision seriously. I think it needs to act on it.

So we've seen some of the stuff that's gone on under the Sask Party government, Bills that have come forward with no one having any input. That just shows a pattern, Mr. Speaker, of what the Sask Party government is willing to do. They pass legislation. They don't talk to anybody. They don't consult people that are impacted. They just ram it down — this is what's good for you. They play the bully tactics. And they've done that.

And they will argue and they'll try to spin why we're here, the hours we're here. I don't think the people and the media and everybody else out there are going to buy it. I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I think it's going to get out there very clear. They can try to spin it the way they want. It's not going to work. I think the people will make it very clear.

The legislation that comes here, when we make it very clear that the organizations, First Nations organizations, Métis, all different organizations in our beautiful province have a right. They want good legislation, they want the law that's going to give the government or organizations the tools that they need to make sure we're doing what's best. And that's for environment, and wildlife protection is huge. A lot of people, First Nations, if you look at the way their treaty rights to hunt, fish, gather food for sustenance, it's very clear they have that right; the Métis as well.

So as we go through this, Mr. Speaker, we see some of the challenges that are going to be there, that they were not consulted. And you better make sure you consult all groups and organizations that this legislation will impact, whether that's one resident, five residents, five people that belong to an organization. You better make sure you've done all you can because those individuals will come back and make it very clear.

But, Mr. Speaker, you know there are many challenges out there and in the North and the Cumberland constituency. You know the trappers make it very clear they are the stewards of the land. They know that land. They live there, and they want to feel like they have their input. And they want to make sure that the government that makes legislation or makes changes to rules or regulations that will impact them, that they are consulted, not insulted. We've had enough of that. It has to change, Mr. Speaker.

We cannot continue to disrespect the people out there the way this government makes it very clear. If you don't like it, they ram it down. The bully tactics . . . And we've seen some of the stuff that they're willing to do, the government is willing to do. Whether people bring forward concerns to critics and about the departments, well they go on a manhunt. And they will go looking after these individuals, trying to find who released that information. And I find that very hard, very appalling.

But that just shows, Mr. Speaker . . . And I'm using comparisons to stuff that are going on right now. And that is so unfortunate that people have to be scared, and they shouldn't ever be scared of their government. If there are concerns, they should be able to bring them forth. So if anyone has concern with Bill 132, they should be able to come forward here and not feel like there's going to be any, any measure on behalf of the government towards them in any negative way. That should not happen. It should be very clear. People should speak and be able to speak and get their message, their input, their views on this Bill or on any Bill or anything the government is doing that's impacting individuals. People should have the right to come forward.

But we still see some of the Bills that have already passed with this government and going forward and ones that are being considered. It's right through Bill 5, Bill 6, 43. We see these Bills coming forward. It's very concerning. The people are coming forward. The movement is happening. There are people speaking out more, and more joining. Every day more people unhappy.

So Bill 132, the wildlife protection, is very clear. But I think the onus was on the government to make sure that they reach out to all people that would be impacted on legislation. But it's very clear and it's starting to be very clear; I don't think that has happened at all. And by the people that are coming forward, it's very concerning.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to get a chance to talk about some of the organizations that are impacted by this. And I think I've got an opportunity to talk for northern people in Cumberland — the commercial fishermen's views, the trappers, whether they're in the North, the South, they've got a message. The leadership, organizations very clearly have to have that opportunity —

individuals — to speak their mind, to give input, and to make sure that they hold the government accountable. And this official opposition will do that. With our leader and our 20 members, we will make sure we hold the government accountable.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to share a few thoughts from people back home and some of the concern. And I wanted to make it very clear, I said there are individuals who want to push this legislation. There are individuals who want to make sure the debate happens. That's the process. And at the end of the day, the government has the obligation and it will make a decision. But sometimes I think the decision is not an informed one because they haven't talked to all the people out there — stakeholders — and that's the unfortunate thing.

But I think some day the people will say, you did not make an informed decision. And some of those people may stay home, like the member from Athabasca said, and not vote. They are protesting. Or they may vote for the NDP because we will meet with them, we will talk. We'll make sure that their feelings, their input, and their views how legislation will impact them is heard.

I could say that. But at this time, Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues would like to get in on the debate, and I'm going to let them get in on debate. I think it's time to hear some different views. Thank you.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and talk about *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* and the amendments that are being proposed at this stage. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to start with a little bit of a description of why this legislation and the other pieces of legislation that we have here in Saskatchewan are important for this province.

Many times when we travel out of Saskatchewan to other places, we end up having to explain what our province is like. And one of the ways that I describe our province is that it's a green space on Earth where we as citizens of Saskatchewan are stewards of that green space for the Earth. And the reason that I say that is that, much as our land here has been altered by human activity, and in some ways maybe the most altered land on Earth, we also have large areas that are preserved in close to their natural state. And these areas are seen as an asset not of Saskatchewan, not of Canada, but an asset of the whole world. And so we as stewards have a job to make sure we take care of that asset.

And so I guess what I would say is when we have legislation like this particular Bill coming forward today which threatens some of the protections that we have slowly and surely put into our province, then we have to look at it very carefully because we're not doing this just for the local residents in one area of the province or just for the people of Saskatchewan. We're actually doing this for all of the citizens on our planet.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the history of this legislation I think is quite interesting. And it officially starts in this Chamber, I think in 1984, when Mr. Colin Maxwell ended up bringing support

for this in his role as the minister at that stage. But I would say, Mr. Speaker, that he was able to build on a long history of many people in our province who have been concerned about the habitat, about the biodiversity, about how our province preserves natural spaces. And he was able to bring forward a piece of legislation which has had a very good effect.

And what did that legislation do? I think at that time he was able to go and designate somewhere around 1.7, 1.8 million acres that would go into habitat. This was Crown land that was owned by the province in the southern part of the province . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'd just ask the member from Regina Lakeview, we've just been informed that we're having some problems with the mike directly on your desk. Just wondering if you would speak into the mike of your colleague's, Saskatoon Nutana. That would be greatly appreciated for audio. Thank you.

[11:30]

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I knew that normally people in this House listened very carefully when I talk and there were a lot of people who weren't listening. So that's a good explanation and I appreciate the Speaker clarifying that for me.

But I guess what my point here is that this particular legislation comes out of a long tradition in Saskatchewan of people who are concerned about our habitat and concerned about wildlife, and many of those factors came together in the 1980s that allowed for this legislation to go forward. Now what we also know is that in the late 1990s when my friend, Mr. Lorne Scott, was the minister, he was able to I think almost double the number of acres that are in this particular wildlife . . . under the protection of this particular legislation. And so we're talking about substantially more acres of land.

But once again, what is the purpose of this? Well the purpose obviously is to provide an extra layer of protection to the land. And we have to always remember it's the land in the southern part of Saskatchewan which is the traditional agriculture land. In a few minutes I'll get to some of the issues around that boundary between southern Saskatchewan and the mixed forests and then moving into the northern forests, and there are a number of issues that arise in that particular area.

But what we have in southern Saskatchewan is, as I said earlier, some of the most altered landscape on earth. And it's directly a result of our ancestors, grandparents, great-grandparents who were enticed or lured to come to Saskatchewan because of the land and the ability to create farms, and I also say because of the Crow rate in 1898 which was a guarantee in a way that people would have a method of getting their products from this land to market. Well that huge influx of people in the first part of the 20th century did dramatically alter the land. And we all know when we go out to the communities that we're from, we know the virtual geography, I often call it. We can drive along 10 miles and not see anything. But if you're from that area you can tell a story about every quarter and every family that lived on that quarter because it's been told to you by parents or grandparents.

So we have this land and it's been dramatically altered. What happened in the '80s and in the '90s and even now as we add more land to this particular protection is that there was a recognition that perhaps we didn't preserve enough of this southern Saskatchewan habitat — starting kind of at the forest fringe area — for wildlife and for wildlife habitat. And that's what the consternation is about changing this and trying to do something in this particular legislation.

So let's look at the legislation. I think, you know, it's actually fairly simple because it's amendment legislation. But what's being added here is both the term "wildlife habitat" and "ecological lands." And I think that's a recognition that things have changed in how we describe these lands.

But I think what's raising the concern for everybody is that there appears to be a method of loosening the control on this land and freeing up land in ways that will not have the public scrutiny that it should. There's also a section in here which is the new substituted section 6(4) and 6(5) which allow for the granting or transferring of all these lands to a Crown corporation or to some other agency. And part of the concern here is that as long as these lands remain in the title of the province, there ends up being a sense of more of the long-term control of the use of the land.

Now when you look at it, there's not too much more in this particular legislation, other than obviously expanding the regulatory powers, but the net effect is to move the control or the use of this land from the legislature, which was clearly the intent of Mr. Maxwell in the '80s and clearly the intent of Mr. Scott and all of the previous and subsequent Environment ministers, to make sure that this land was protected by this place, this legislature.

And one of the reasons that this becomes so crucial or so difficult in our province directly relates to another issue which has been part of the discussion over many decades, and it's being dealt with in some other parts of Canada but not here, and that relates to the whole issue of land use and land use planning.

In Saskatchewan the method of land use planning or zoning or however you might want to describe that, the ways we have of controlling that are through this legislature and through things like *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. How we in fact control development in northern Saskatchewan is done through effectively the ownership by the Crown or ownership by the Crown in the right of Saskatchewan of all of that land in the North.

In southern Saskatchewan there's a lot less land that is owned by the Crown, but what the effect of legislation like this is, is to provide a bit of a zoning or land use scheme as well because we do not have broader land use legislation like one might have in an individual municipality. And so in many ways this kind of legislation is difficult for everybody who's concerned about wildlife or wildlife habitat and ecological land because there doesn't seem, appear to be a backstop or a place where some of the issues around preserving land in a particular area are dealt with or how land use issues are dealt with.

Now what we, what we have in this whole area is also a question about trust in what government might or might not do

with land.

And I guess I want to tell a little bit about my own family history as it relates to land. And it bears on this because it relates to some of the kinds of concerns that the public are raising. In the '60s when the Gardiner dam was built and Lake Diefenbaker then was created behind the dam, my family farm, my mother's farm was in the Saskatchewan Valley. So when I was young, up to about the age of 12, I spent all my summers on the sand beaches of the South Saskatchewan River just about 5 or 6 miles south of Outlook.

In that time period when the dam was completed and then the water was starting to rise behind the dam, the government came along and purchased land in the valley below the dam to replace all of the community pastures that had been flooded or were going to be flooded by new Lake Diefenbaker. So we had our family farm — approximately two, two and a half sections of land along the river — along with my mother's sister. There were two sisters. They owned this land. And the land was purchased by the government and a big community pasture was created, which was a positive thing for all the people in that immediate area. But also it was a place for cattle that had been oh, 10, 20, 30 miles south to be pastured in a community pasture.

Now in our family we weren't totally at ease with this because it meant quite a disruption to our normal summer routine, which was doing some of the farming and enjoying the recreational aspects of living along the river. But we accepted that.

Now what happened though was about 20 years later, in the '80s, all of a sudden we heard that the land that had been in our family was sold by the provincial government to somebody to build a hog barn and a whole big operation. There was no consideration in that structure, because of the way the obviously the documentation had gone, of coming back to our family and saying, well would you like it back now that we don't want to use it as a community pasture?

Well a certain level of trust around how decisions are made by the government, you know, is reflected in sort of how I approach some of these issues because I understand now, when we go out to that area and we see the area that was part of our family and we thought was going to be into a long-term kind of a situation with the provincial government, and it's not that way any more. And it brings home the kinds of questions and issues that are raised around this, but also the issues that were raised with me when I was the minister of the Environment about, well how long is the protection that's available when lands are in *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*? And I think that goes to the heart of what this is about.

People in the province have understood that certain lands have been designated, and they've been designated with a fair degree of accuracy. We actually heard last night that even using all of the existing data from many, many decades in the Department of Environment and predecessor departments, that when they assess the land that's under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, it looks like easily in excess of 90 per cent — there's no issue that it should be there.

So what happens with this particular legislation is it appears to

open up the whole thing in a way that's unnecessary? So why, why is this happening? Now when I was first elected in 1995, we had very many discussions about the expansion of the wildlife habitat lands.

And I know that the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook is one of the strongest proponents of the changes that we see here, and I would have to say that the predecessor member from that area also had some very strong views about wildlife habitat protection. And I know I've visited up in that area, and actually I'm not sure if I lived quite in that constituency when I was born, my first residence was in Medstead, which is pretty close to where the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook lives himself.

[11:45]

The discussions that were taking place in the '90s around how we would expand the numbers of acres of wildlife habitat protection under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* related to this use of this land by many of the local ranchers and farmers. And so one of the issues comes down to, well if I own it, I can kind of do it the way I want to do it without worrying about some of the other broader values, the broader issues that are there. Whereas if I have this land, and I have a lease that's governed by *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, then there's a substantial change in how I can use that. And I think that is really the fundamental question.

And it's those people in the forest fringe that are most affected because they have more acres that are Crown owned and in this legislation than some other parts of our community. Now I've worked with lots of ranchers. I've had my own cattle over the years. I have some land that's been used that way. I can't say that I'm a rancher, but I know and I understand and have cousins and uncles and many who are involved in the particular business.

And I guess that what this legislation's purpose was — and the reason that it came out of a member from up in that northwest part of Saskatchewan, Mr. Maxwell — was that there needed to be some kind of a balance between protection of habitat, which has all of its own values, and then the use by some of the local people in their cattle operations primarily. And I guess, after almost 30 years, I would say a rather good balance was struck in that particular legislation that we have.

Now we have a proposal by the government to unbalance that particular situation without knowing what the new balance is going to be. And I think it's that uncertainty and that lack of trust in a way in the present administration that becomes the issue of why it shows up in the newspapers. So we have an editorial in *The StarPhoenix* this morning that is very direct about the government's activities, the Premier's activities in changing this legislation. And it says, hold on you guys; take some more time on this. Think it through. Understand what it is that you are doing because this is part of our legacy. This is part of who we are as a province.

And we've had clearly strong articles in other newspapers, in the *Leader-Post* that also say, okay, it doesn't look like the consultation on this particular legislation has been particularly robust. Slow down. Take some time, if it takes another year or two just to get a better balance.

Or my proposal would be, if it takes another few years to go down the track they have in Alberta and look at broader land use planning which then allows for more of these values to be part of every piece of land, no matter who owns it, then maybe we need to do that. But to unhinge or unbalance some of the things that have happened over the last almost 30 years with this particular legislation without a clear plan of where we're going is wrong.

And, Mr. Speaker, this kind of sounds to me similar to what I've said previously about the government and letting the public know what their plan is. Part of the difficulty we have in this legislature is that we don't seem to have a clear idea of where we're going. And that shows up in the budgeting. That shows up in the legislation. It shows up in kind of how this legislature is organized. And so, Mr. Speaker, my sense is that this particular legislation hasn't had the thorough vetting in the community and amongst the various groups that are involved.

Now what we know is that these ideas have been out there, but we're going to change this. And clearly many of the groups that are now coming forward . . . And I'm sure we'll see lots of them around here this week and next week because they didn't totally understand what kinds of dramatic changes appear to be proposed here. Now part of the problem there is the lack of communication as to what the next steps are, what effect this is going to have, what is going to happen. Now if in fact what is being proposed is moving the whole thing over to the perspective of some of the people who come from the forest fringe without thinking about the whole broader aspect, then that causes quite a number of issues. And that's where the discussion and consultation needs to take place.

Now we have some fairly clear statements from the Nature Saskatchewan, from Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, other groups like this who say consultation has not been the way it should be for legislation like this.

I guess when that happens, it's always a possibility for the government to step back and take another look. Now I understand that last week I got up and spoke about a Bill that has now been pulled because of the things that I identified when I read some very detailed letters in from the optometrists and the opticians that the homework hadn't been done by the minister and by the officials in the department, and that Bill was not ready to come forward. Mr. Speaker, I think there are similar problems with this particular Bill in light of the fact that so many people are getting increasingly upset when they understand what appears to be the intent of this.

And once again as I say, when you don't have a plan or you don't lay out what you're going to do, you create a situation where people will be upset. I think that's happening here, and it's happening for a good reason because I don't think there necessarily is a plan other than to maybe respond to some people in certain small areas of the whole province.

And so once again I go back to my original comments about our role as Saskatchewan citizens, as stewards of a green space for the earth because every time we end up jeopardizing some of these things or doing things in ways that are going to cause difficulties for the ultimate purpose of habitat protection, we then also are causing difficulties around the perception of how

we operate.

Now I know and I know that our party strongly believes that a strong economy is the basis of a strong society. It allows you to build your educational system. It allows you to have a health system. It allows you to provide for those members in the community. But it also allows for us to protect the values and the habitat that we know will be of huge value as the years go on. And so when the message comes, oh well you're somehow against economic activity, that's exactly the opposite of what we are. And I think it shows in how the management of the province is done when the New Democrats are in charge. And I think, you know, obvious example always that everybody talks about is the oil revenue structures and how basically those have not been touched, and I don't think they will be touched by the present government.

Now another curious part of this particular legislation — and it struck me earlier this week — was that we strongly criticize the government, the Sask Party government, when they take up the accounting practices and some of the other management practices that get us into huge debt, when they take those practices from the Devine government of the 1980s.

But what's really curious is that two things in the last month that have been actually really proud moments for the Devine government are being dismantled, changed, destroyed by this government. And one of them is this wildlife habitat protection Act, which is being damaged in a way that we don't know. This was clearly I think a proud legacy of the Devine government and especially Mr. Colin Maxwell. But the second one is the proud legacy of Mr. Gary Lane and Premier Devine, and that's SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network], the television station. And we hear this morning that Manitoba has been envious of our having our own educational television station for decades, and so now they're trying hard to get something which we seem to be on a track to destroy.

So here we have a government, Sask Party government, with strong roots in the Devine Conservatives who pick up all of their bad habits and then throw away the good stuff that they do. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not very helpful for the people of Saskatchewan. So the things that people like about the '80s are being destroyed. Some of the things that we don't like about the '80s are coming back as more than just spectres in the background and ghosts. They're coming back as the core of the government's financial policy. And we're all going to pay for that. We took a long time to pay for the last mess. We're going to pay for this next one over the next couple of decades. And that's, that's sad.

But when we're talking about wildlife habitat, we're not talking about 10 years or 20 years. We're talking about centuries, hundreds of years that we're messing around with. And, Mr. Speaker, when you're going to do that kind of amendment or change to legislation which has those very long legacy issues, then you better have spent the time consulting with the groups that are concerned, consulting with everybody, making sure that you have a plan in place to deal with the important values and concerns that people have.

Mr. Speaker, I don't see that in this particular legislation, and it's kind of been lying there on the order paper for a while. But

it's starting to come up, and people are starting to say . . . in the coffee shops, getting calls from aunts and mothers and others saying, what are they doing to the wildlife habitat that we have in this province?

Mr. Speaker, the goal always is to make change but make change for the better and make change with a plan. Mr. Speaker, I don't think that we have that in this legislation. And I'm very sad . . .

The Speaker: — According to order, this Assembly will recess until 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 13:30.]

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