



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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

The Speaker: — Debate will continue. The session will resume but I should just make mention to members that just before 5 p.m., when the member from Saskatoon Fairview moved adjournment of the Assembly, the motion was defeated on a voice vote.

The member was inadvertently allowed to continue in debate. And in the past it would have proceeded but changes to the rules in rule 62(3) classifies a motion to adjourn the Assembly as a dilatory motion. Rule 62(5) states, “A Member who has moved a dilatory motion that is defeated is precluded from continuing in the debate on the question presently before the Assembly.” Consequently the member may not continue his remarks on this debate and I advised the Opposition House Leader of this oversight earlier today.

I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased this evening to enter into debate on a very important Bill before the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, over the next three and a half hours or so, we'll have the opportunity to share a viewpoint that many of the members opposite, I'm sure, do support. But their leader and some of their members of the cabinet won't allow their members to truly share and voice their own opinion, Mr. Speaker, on how they feel about this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, the issue before us is *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker. And a piece of legislation that in fact, Mr. Speaker, allows for the sell-off of over 3 million acres of protected land, Mr. Speaker, without having it debated in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Now the minister can say, well that isn't going to happen, Mr. Speaker, but if she truly wanted to have an open, consultative process, Mr. Speaker, she would have consulted with the wildlife agencies and others prior to implementing this Bill. Mr. Speaker, that didn't occur. So many, many groups are upset. Many, many groups have voiced their opposition to the opposition party. They've voiced their opposition to this Bill to us, Mr. Speaker, and so it becomes incumbent upon us to take that groundswell of opposition out there in the public and bring it to this Assembly for debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have the Wildlife Federation saying they don't support the Bill. We have Nature Saskatchewan saying they don't support the Bill. And we have various other wildlife protection groups, Mr. Speaker. The FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] as well, Mr. Speaker, don't

support this Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of the province of Saskatchewan are saying why, why do we have to have this Bill, and why now?

Mr. Speaker, there's been the ability for the last 30 or more years for land to be sold when it's deemed appropriate by the government through a very open process debated in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, where the land removed from the protection was brought here and debated in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, prior to it being removed from protection.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister so wanted to sell a portion of wildlife habitat protected land, she could do just that by bringing a Bill to this Assembly, detailing what that land is, Mr. Speaker, allow this Assembly to debate it openly and honestly, and then put the question, put the question to this Assembly and giving the people of the province of Saskatchewan a real opportunity to debate whether those specific pieces of land should in fact be sold. Now, Mr. Speaker, we don't see that Bill, that before us, Mr. Speaker. What we see before us is a removal of about 3.5 million acres of land from protection, Mr. Speaker, and being put solely in the responsibility of the minister to determine whether or not it will in fact remain protected.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan and the official opposition don't feel that this Bill is necessary. If the minister truly wants to sell off land that landholders today want to buy, there is a mechanism today in which she can do just that. That mechanism is to bring a Bill with those specific, detailed pieces of land or parcels of land to this Assembly for debate.

Mr. Speaker, had the minister done that, I think both the people of Saskatchewan, the FSIN, the Wildlife Federation, and many other groups would have been much more comfortable. But with the Bill before us, Mr. Speaker, those groups aren't comfortable. And nor are we, the official opposition, comfortable with the fact that what was once the purview of the Legislative Assembly, the rights and responsibility of the people of Saskatchewan would have been upheld in this Assembly is now unilaterally being given to the minister.

And, Mr. Speaker, our principle of democracy would say that major policy decisions, major legislative changes should in fact be debated in this House. And, Mr. Speaker, those 3.5 million acres of land belong to the people of Saskatchewan. It's owned land. It's owned by every single citizen of this province. And those citizens, through their elected Assembly, should have the say whether or not it's sold, Mr. Speaker. It should not be left in the hands of a single minister. That is a mistake. It is a tragedy in the making, Mr. Speaker, and it is something that the people of Saskatchewan have indicated they don't favour.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we examine this Bill in detail, and the changes that are being proposed, Mr. Speaker, it leaves a great deal of questions that the people of the province have. Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated many times, when asked very direct and pointed questions, that there weren't meaningful, proper consultations prior to the Bill coming in to the House. And, Mr. Speaker, those meaningful consultations may have alleviated concerns that the people of this province have. And, Mr. Speaker, they can't be alleviated if those consultations don't occur.

Mr. Speaker, since the Bill has been in the House, I will say that there has been consultations, but those groups are not any less concerned today than they were prior to those consultations, Mr. Speaker, because, Mr. Speaker, they frankly have difficulty understanding why the minister insists on the change that's before the House. If the minister wanted to sell off some of the habitat to protect the land, Mr. Speaker, there's a mechanism to do so today. Why didn't the minister simply avail herself of that mechanism and bring forward the changes that she wished to make?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read into the record a letter from . . . or portions of a letter from a gentleman by the name of George O'Bertos who was responsible for the program that protected much of this wildlife land over the last number of years. And I'm going to read the first portion of the letter, Mr. Speaker. And it says, I am writing . . . and it's to the minister. It says:

Dear Madam,

I am writing you in regards to my deep concern over your proposed changes to the critical wildlife protection Act. I was the land resources management specialist for the Department of Agriculture lands branch at the time these lands were being determined for designation under this Act. Because of my experience in this field, I was chosen to work directly with the provincial wildlife biologist in determining which lands were designated as wildlife habitat protection under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

My area of responsibility was mainly in the parklands and northern grain belt of Saskatchewan where many of these lands are located. My submission to you is therefore based on this area only.

Mr. Speaker, this individual goes on to weigh out a very compelling case, a very compelling case that this legislation should not move forward. Mr. Speaker, a very compelling case. And, Mr. Speaker, there are literally dozens of letters that have been brought forward by citizens on behalf of themselves or organizations that share an opinion that this legislation simply is not in the best, best interest of the province of Saskatchewan and/or the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have a letter from the Wildlife Federation, Mr. Speaker, and they share a common view as well that this Act should not — I repeat, Mr. Speaker, should not — be implemented, and it should not pass in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, and in fact the government should withdraw this legislation and take the time to properly consult with the people of Saskatchewan, consult with the various stakeholder groups in the province, Mr. Speaker, and if they still believe after those meaningful consultations that a piece of legislation is required, to come back next fall with a piece of legislation that meets the needs both of the stakeholders, the people of Saskatchewan, and the government, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all share a common view that the ranchers, many of whom would like to purchase portions of this land, are good stewards of the land. That's not the issue before us. We're not saying that those ranchers are not good stewards

of the land because we believe they are, but that's not the issue. This is land that's has been designated and set aside to be protected for all the people of Saskatchewan, for future generations, for our children and grandchildren, Mr. Speaker, and for their children and their grandchildren as well, Mr. Speaker.

These lands are protected because they're pristine land in our province, Mr. Speaker, that have unique values, either biological value in their plant life, Mr. Speaker, or biological value for the animals which inhabit specific parts of the province, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people feel a need to be consulted. And that's all they're asking for when they're asking for this Bill to be set aside, for it not to be proceeded with, Mr. Speaker, and for the opportunity to be consulted in a meaningful way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are many members on the other side that share that view. I think there are members that share the view that there should be meaningful public consultations. I think the member from Thunder Creek probably shares that view that there should be meaningful consultations and this Bill set aside, Mr. Speaker. I believe there are many members who actually believe that this Bill should be reconsidered, Mr. Speaker. But of course the government won't allow them to speak openly about what their constituents want and what they truly believe themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the Wildlife Federation in their letter, they very clearly appreciate the magnitude of the controversy that has developed as a result of the proposed sale and changes in protected status to wildlife habitat under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* lands. "And accordingly our federation and the 30,000 members we represent continue to have grave . . ." Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that. Their members — all 30,000 members — continue to have grave concerns about the long-term implications of the proposals contained in that legislation, Mr. Speaker.

So those are 30,000 Saskatchewan residents represented by the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation that are saying they have grave concerns, Mr. Speaker. That alone should give members concern on the others in the government, Mr. Speaker. The fact that an organization representing 30,000 Saskatchewan residents have grave concerns about this legislation, Mr. Speaker, should give the members opposite the opportunity to take a step back and say, maybe, just maybe we aren't doing the right thing and maybe, just maybe we should review the legislation and reconsult, commit to meaningful consultations with the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, reconsult those groups that feel they weren't adequately consulted, redraft the Bill if they think a Bill's necessary, but even more importantly, Mr. Speaker, take a step back and say, do we really want to do this? Do we really need to do this?

If there are ranchers out there that want to purchase land, Mr. Speaker, there's a current mechanism for it, so why is this Bill needed? Why would we want to take the protection and security of the legislature of Saskatchewan away from these lands and put it in the sole hands of a minister? Mr. Speaker, that's what many people cannot understand. There is currently a mechanism to do just what the government would like to do. So why would we want to take away a protective mechanism

where there's a counterbalance and a check-and-balance system and put it in the hands of a minister? I don't know.

Without that, without these changes, Mr. Speaker, the minister could do exactly what she wants to do, but she's not identifying for this legislature or for anybody why she needs the changes she needs in order to do what she wants to do. Mr. Speaker, we don't know why. We don't know why these changes are proposed. And the minister hasn't taken the time to articulate them. And when the minister hasn't taken the time to articulate these changes, Mr. Speaker, then why, why should we move forward without giving it careful consideration and due diligence, Mr. Speaker? And I would argue we shouldn't.

[19:15]

Mr. Speaker, I have before me here now a press release from the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation media release dated Tuesday, May 11, 2010, just a few short days ago. And I'm going to read it into the record, Mr. Speaker. It says:

The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF) continues to have grave concerns surrounding the recent Legislation aimed at dismantling the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act (WHPA), the legislation that was created almost 30 years ago and is still considered to be one of the most visionary conservation programs ever developed in North America.

That's talking about the current legislation, Mr. Speaker, the legislation that now is in existence in the province of Saskatchewan. It's considered to be one of the most visionary pieces of legislation in North America.

The over 3 million acres presently protected in the Act would now be controlled under regulation and would be able to be sold or changed at the discretion of the Minister. Under WHPA, any lands that were removed or changed were required to be debated in the Legislature . . .

Currently, it would have to be debated here, Mr. Speaker, which is the appropriate place for the protection of special land in our province, Mr. Speaker.

. . . be debated in the Legislature and allowed for public scrutiny. Under the new legislation there would be no transparency. In addition, to the newly passed Conservation Easement Legislation that the Saskatchewan Government would place on most of the sold parcels gives the Minister the power to remove or change the easement without public knowledge or recourse.

So, Mr. Speaker, it takes away the power of the legislature and the members of this legislature and puts it in the hands of a single minister, Mr. Speaker. That is a very, very grave concern. Mr. Speaker:

"The combination of a lack of consultation and the aggressive time line on this Bill has effectively made it impossible to address our concerns and left many important questions unanswered," states Darrell Crabbe, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF). "We need the Minister to table this

Legislation until all the variables can be properly addressed."

Mr. Speaker, so we have one of the most significant wildlife stakeholders in the province, Mr. Speaker, saying table this legislation, shelve it, and let's move onto meaningful consultations:

The SWF sees a "no net loss" agreement, as has been the policy of every Provincial Government since the WHPA was introduced; changes to create public transparency; the establishment of a Conservation Lands Fund and the continuation of protection of properties under WHPA legislation; as the most pressing issues and is prepared to work with the Government towards this goal.

"The SWF is a predominately rural organization. A recent poll of our member base indicates that we have over 7,000 landowners and over 3,000 livestock producers in our membership. We recognize that the present operators that lease many of these properties have and continue to be excellent stewards of these lands. We want to work with all [Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that, we want to work with all] stakeholders to hopefully create a win-win scenario for all involved. We need the cooperation and commitment of the Provincial Government to make that happen," states SWF President Ray Wild.

The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation has over 30,000 members in 121 branches across Saskatchewan and is, per capita, the largest wildlife conservation organization of its kind in the world.

So, Mr. Speaker, the representatives of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, who represent more than 30,000 members, have indicated they have grave concerns about this legislation. They're asking their government, Mr. Speaker, their government — because the government represents all the people of the province of Saskatchewan — to take a step back and re-examine its course to table this legislation, to set it aside, and in fact deal with the issue at a later date.

Now, Mr. Speaker, some of the members are talking about the language used by the Wildlife Federation saying . . . [inaudible] . . . the legislation. Mr. Speaker, they don't understand the legislation, don't understand the terminology in the legislature like the members opposite do or I do, Mr. Speaker, but what they really want is this legislation withdrawn. They want it withdrawn, and they want it withdrawn so that they can take a step back and have those meaningful consultations.

And members opposite may laugh about that, but this is a government who the people of the province of Saskatchewan are saying quite frankly now don't consult, a government that promised in its election platform to be open and transparent that isn't open and transparent. Now, Mr. Speaker, they have an opportunity here to do the right thing, the right thing for the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, the right thing for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, the right thing for their children and my children and our grandchildren, Mr. Speaker, by simply withdrawing this legislation and taking the opportunity to review whether or not in the long run this is what should be done.

And, Mr. Speaker, in the meantime, in the meantime if the minister wants to deal with some specific areas in which individuals would like to purchase land, she has a mechanism to do that. In fact as early as tomorrow, she could bring forward legislation, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the specific problem if there is one. But we haven't seen that. We haven't had the minister articulate for us what the problem is. All we've seen is a minister bring forward a piece of legislation that gives her total control.

Mr. Speaker, whose interest is this legislation in? Is it in the interest of the schoolchildren in our province who'd like to have these lands for future generations to be able to explore and, Mr. Speaker, have the opportunity to learn about our biodiversity, Mr. Speaker, learn about our wildlife in our province? No, Mr. Speaker. Today those children, just like all of us in this Assembly, own that land because we as Saskatchewan citizens all own that land. And, Mr. Speaker, it's shameful to think that maybe some children in future generations wouldn't have those opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, what is wrong with admitting this may not be the correct course of action, taking a step back, withdrawing the legislation and doing some meaningful consultation? I think there's many members over there who probably share that view.

I think the Minister of Highways probably agrees with it. I think the Minister of Highways probably does agree that this isn't the right course of action, Mr. Speaker, but can he say otherwise? He can't. He can't . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Highways is talking about agreeing to everything. I don't know what's wrong over there.

Mr. Speaker, there are members opposite, I'm sure, that do agree with the number of people who have serious concerns with this legislation, serious concerns that there should be a re-examination of the legislation before us.

Mr. Speaker, we're not saying don't bring it back next year if you do the meaningful consultations and work with the groups to improve the situation, Mr. Speaker. The government has the ability to do that, Mr. Speaker. But to ram through ill-thought-through, poor legislation, it's not in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan. It's not in the interest of their constituents. It's not in the interest of my constituents. It's not in the interest of future generations, Mr. Speaker, and it's certainly not in the interest of stakeholder groups who have spent many, many years insuring that Saskatchewan had among the best, if not the very best, conservation program in all of North America.

Mr. Speaker, that program is talked about with a lot of pride, a lot of pride by some of these stakeholder groups, Mr. Speaker, whether it's the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, Nature Saskatchewan or any one of another half a dozen organizations that have a great deal of interest in the future of our protected lands.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a little bit of the history as to why this was brought in. In 1984 the provincial government initiated a conservation process by passing *The Critical Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. So this Act's been in place for now about 30 years, Mr. Speaker.

Now known as *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, this legislation protects 3.4 million acres of uplands and wetlands or one-third of all wildlife habitat in the agricultural region in its natural state. Protection of these lands makes the Act the most cost-effective wildlife habitat conservation program in Saskatchewan. The Act prevents the government from selling designated Crown lands, and lessees require permission before any clearing, breaking, or drainage occurs. The philosophy of this Act is to conserve wildlife habitat while enabling compatible traditional use to coexist.

Mr. Speaker, the 3.4 million acres amounts to about 5 per cent of Saskatchewan's agricultural region and about 80 per cent of the region's total protected natural areas, which also include areas such as parks or protected wildlife and ecological areas. Protecting these lands has been found to be the best preventative medicine to ensure habitat for the survival of endangered species and spaces for those species, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, a great deal of time was spent in designing this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and putting in particular protections that were in the interest of all of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — in the interest of all the people of the province of Saskatchewan not just a few, Mr. Speaker. And we should all strive to, in all that we do in this Assembly, to ensure that our actions are in the best interest of all the people of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the members opposite told me this was about selling land to ranchers, and they were going to do it. Well, Mr. Speaker, there may well be a good case to sell some land to ranchers, but under the existing legislation they can do that. So why haven't they tried to do it under the existing legislation rather than taking the control of the legislature from the legislature, the control of this legislation and the sales of these lands from these legislature and putting it in the hands of a minister? Mr. Speaker, that question's never been, never been answered. And, Mr. Speaker, that's an important question that needs to be answered.

The Wildlife Federation wants that answer. Ducks Unlimited want that answer. Many school children across the province want that answer, Mr. Speaker. And they need that answer before they can understand why this legislation, why this legislation, Mr. Speaker is moving forward. Mr. Speaker, why is this going forward? That's the fundamental question. Who wants this? Who's demanding it? And in whose interest is this legislation?

Well somebody tells me it's in the interest of ranchers. I don't disagree that there may be ranchers who want to buy their land. But, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated just a few minutes ago, that can be done under the existing legislation in a very open and transparent way by the government bringing forward a Bill, dealing with the specific pieces of land they want to move out of protection and dealing with it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read into the record a letter from Gary Seib, acting general manager of Nature Saskatchewan, that says:

We write concerning the government's statements that conservation stakeholders organizations were consulted

about the Crown land sale program, in particular the sale of land designated under the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act (WHPA).

Both the Ministers of Agriculture & Food and Environment have publicly stated WHPA lands will not be sold.

Well, Mr. Speaker, these ministers have said to these organizations in the past that these lands would not be sold, Mr. Speaker. And then they turn around after telling the very stakeholders who have issues and concerns about these lands that they won't be sold and they introduce a Bill saying they will be. Mr. Speaker, how can these organizations trust a government that will tell them one thing and then move to do another?

"We can assure you that no meaningful consultation regarding the sale of Crown lands has occurred with Nature Saskatchewan." Mr. Speaker, we heard the minister repeatedly in the House say consultations had occurred. Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the major organizations, Nature Saskatchewan is saying:

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.

[19:30]

They were told, Mr. Speaker. They were told. They were not asked, they were not consulted, they were not able to put meaningful input in, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, we heard in this House those consultations had occurred. But the very organizations that were supposed to have been consulted, Mr. Speaker, are saying, no we weren't. No, we were not consulted, Mr. Speaker.

That raises grave concerns for the rest of the population of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because they rely on these organizations to look after the interests and needs of the people of Saskatchewan in conserving those lands, Mr. Speaker. And if the very organizations the people buy memberships to and that they trust to look after these very important issues are not consulted, Mr. Speaker, that does leave grave concerns, the people of Saskatchewan.

It goes on to say:

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 and future of Crown lands, was abolished by the Minister of Agriculture.

So, Mr. Speaker, not only was there no consultation. The forum in which they could have done consultation, Mr. Speaker, the Crown Lands Stakeholder Forum, was abolished by the Minister of Agriculture, Nature Saskatchewan is saying. Now, Mr. Speaker, why wouldn't the people of Saskatchewan be concerned if the Minister of Agriculture is abolishing the very forum in which groups and organizations would have the ability

to voice an opinion? I'd be concerned, as I would think members opposite should be concerned.

It goes on to say:

We request you to urge the government to delay the passing of these 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.

Mr. Speaker, Nature Saskatchewan is asking the government to withdraw the legislation. Mr. Speaker, do the honourable thing, withdraw this legislation, hold meaningful consultations, and then, and then, Mr. Speaker, decide whether or not it's appropriate, if it's even appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say the 20 members on our side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that have all spent numerous hours talking about this Bill, feel very strongly that people of Saskatchewan should have been consulted. And these organizations should have been consulted, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, nobody that we have talked to — and I mean nobody — believes that the minister should have the sole discretion and power.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're not saying that ranchers who'd want to purchase the land are not good stewards. We're not even saying they shouldn't be able to purchase the land. What we're saying is, there's a process that should be carried out. There's a process which the government has at its disposal to deal with the sale of Crown lands, Mr. Speaker. And if the government wants to sell Crown land, they should follow the current process.

Mr. Speaker, "The Government has not properly consulted with the public on this very important issue [the letter goes on to say] which has the potential to cause significant consequence to [the] biodiversity in Saskatchewan." And this letter's written to the official opposition looking for their assistance in stopping the passage of this legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we live in a democracy where the minority have their say and the majority get their way, Mr. Speaker. So we're asking the government, we're asking the government to do the right thing because, Mr. Speaker, we know many members, many members on the government side share the values of the people of Saskatchewan that have concerns about this legislation ... [inaudible interjection] ... And, Mr. Speaker, they can laugh.

There's members laughing today who clearly are indicating they don't care about what the people of Saskatchewan say. They don't care what these groups say, Mr. Speaker, who would like this legislation withdrawn and the opportunity to have meaningful consultation. But, Mr. Speaker, I hope they think about it. Because, Mr. Speaker, they are here to represent all the people of Saskatchewan, not just a few ranchers who want to buy land. They're here to represent all the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say and I want to stress that we have nothing against those ranchers and we believe they've

been great stewards of the land. But if there's parcels of land that should be sold and taken out from under protection, there's a mechanism to do it now. And let the government use the appropriate mechanisms and not take away the accountability and the transparency of this legislature so that a minister can do it unilaterally when she wants to.

Mr. Speaker, that is not appropriate. I want to repeat that. That is not appropriate, Mr. Speaker. This legislation was put in place with its current protections for a reason — to prevent from going on exactly what is being proposed by this government, Mr. Speaker. The people of this province and past governments have worked very hard and diligently to ensure that any changes were debated in this House and that any sale of land went through the transparency and scrutiny of this legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is changing today, changing with this legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a shame because the people of this province don't want those changes. The people of Saskatchewan care about their wildlife habitat protected lands. Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite put this legislation forward without consulting the people of Saskatchewan. And now the people of Saskatchewan are saying, we want to be consulted; we want to have a say; and we don't want this legislation passed.

Mr. Speaker, is the government listening, Mr. Speaker? Is the government listening? Do they care about what the people of Saskatchewan say? Mr. Speaker, is the government listening?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping they are. I'm hoping that there are members opposite there, I'm hoping the Deputy Premier, who is in the House tonight, Mr. Speaker, listening to this speech . . . My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Deputy Premier is listening to this speech and cares, and cares, Mr. Speaker, and cares about what the people of Saskatchewan want. Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier should in fact care a great deal about this legislation. Many of his neighbours and friends are individuals who participate in these organizations, and they care. So that means the Deputy Premier should care because he represents those people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I have an article in my hand from *The StarPhoenix* that says, "Short-sighted of gov't to sell protected land." And in this article it says, *StarPhoenix* article of April 29th, 2010, Mr. Speaker, it says:

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.

And, Mr. Speaker, these aren't my words. They're the words of *The StarPhoenix*, Mr. Speaker, an editorial, I believe. And, Mr. Speaker, they're saying it's short-sighted. And that's what I've been saying for the last about 45 minutes, Mr. Speaker. And all we're asking of that government is, if they made a short-sighted choice, Mr. Speaker — and that's what it is; it's a choice; governing is about choices — they have the opportunity because they haven't implemented it, they haven't voted on it,

Mr. Speaker, to change their choice. They have the opportunity to withdraw this legislation. They have the opportunity to do the honourable thing, Mr. Speaker, to do the right thing for future generations, as this article says, and withdraw this legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are members opposite who care enough to do it. I think the Government House Leader cares, Mr. Speaker. He might be afraid to stand up to some of his colleagues, Mr. Speaker. He might not have the will to tell the Deputy Premier or the Minister of Advanced Education that they're wrong. Or he might be afraid of the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Speaker. But he should have, he should have the courage, Mr. Speaker, to tell his colleagues they're wrong. He should have enough conviction, Mr. Speaker, to tell them that what they're proposing is wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And I think the Deputy Premier would listen if the Government House Leader told him that because, Mr. Speaker, it only takes a few to stand up and say, no, it's the wrong thing; it's the wrong thing to do. And this legislation wouldn't pass. So have the courage of your own convictions, Mr. Speaker. Stand up and do the right thing.

That's all we ask of the members opposite, those who don't agree with this. And I know there's a few. You know, we're not going to identify who they all are. Along with the Deputy Premier there's got to be one or two others, maybe three, four, Mr. Speaker. But the Deputy Premier should lead by example and tell his colleagues, no, I don't want this legislation. Table it; withdraw it. After all, that's leadership and he is the leader of the class . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now, Mr. Speaker, they're more concerned about the baseball scores and what's going on in the Blue Jays game than they are about dealing with the very important issue in front of us, Mr. Speaker.

It goes on to say in this article, Mr. Speaker, "It simply isn't . . ." and I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker, because I will be using a proper name here but it's a quote:

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.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are concerns being brought forward repeatedly by citizens of the province, by editorials, Mr. Speaker. The news media of our province have very, have very serious concerns about this legislation, Mr. Speaker. And they want, they all want the government to do the same thing — just withdraw the legislation. Take a step back, Mr. Speaker, withdraw the legislation. Take a step back, and let's have some meaningful consultations and try to find a solution to this issue that in fact meets the people of the province of Saskatchewan's interests and needs, as well as the government's needs, Mr. Speaker.

It goes on in the final sentence, Mr. Speaker, to say:

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 [our] Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these are, this is an editorial talking about the importance of these lands to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have in front of me now a letter to the minister from the FSIN, signed by Mr. Whitefish, Mr. Speaker. I've not had the opportunity to talk about this letter in my few minutes of debate here, Mr. Speaker. In the next two, three hours or so, I will have the opportunity to probably deal with some of these issues in great detail.

Mr. Speaker, it starts by saying:

In 1984 the provincial government of the day initiated the wildlife conservation process by enacting *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. This legislation protects about 1.2 million hectares of Crown lands throughout the agricultural region of the province for the purpose of protecting natural habitats that are important to sustaining wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say about the issue of consultation and the meaningful consultation that they would expect, that it didn't occur:

It has come to my attention that you are informing your government colleagues and members of the Saskatchewan Legislature that your Ministry consulted and accommodated the First Nations people prior to initiating this program. I find these statements extremely troubling since no such undertakings have occurred. There has been no attempt by your Ministry to enter into a consultation process with First Nations people regarding the expansion of the sale of Crown lands protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say, and this is Vice-chief Lyle Whitefish:

Judging from past experience I can only ascertain that your deliberate refusal to consult and accommodate First Nations people on your Ministry's initiatives, including the sale of Crown lands protected under the WHPA, as well as your Ministry's "Results-based Regulatory Review," is a reflection of the policy position that your government has taken with regard to the First Nations people in Saskatchewan. The province has no regard or respect for the interests, concerns and the Inherent and Treaty rights of the First Nations people in Saskatchewan. Furthermore, it appears your government views the Inherent and Treaty rights of First Nations people as a hindrance to Premier Wall's "growth agenda" and that the government will proceed by attempting to ignore the provincial Crown's constitutional and legal obligations to the First Nations people in Saskatchewan.

[19:45]

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

Since the FSIN was not involved in any consultations, I am requesting a detailed explanation of how your Ministry purportedly undertook to consult with First Nations prior

to the decision being made to expand the sale of Crown land protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. Rather than a vague reference, I am seeking a response that includes a listing of all the meetings your Ministry held with the First Nations and the dates such were held, which First Nations and their leaders or representatives who attended such meetings, what their responses were, how these were incorporated into the report your Ministry used to make the decision, and how your Ministry reported back to the First Nations on your decision. I also request a copy of such report.

I trust that the report will be forwarded to my office given that this sale of Crown lands gravely affects the Inherent and Treaty rights of First Nations people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that is signed by Lyle Whitefish, Office of the Fourth Vice Chief of the Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations.

Mr. Speaker, I share the grave concerns that have been brought forward by the Wildlife Federation, Nature Saskatchewan, Ducks Unlimited, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Mr. Speaker. School children in the city of Regina have phoned. They have left messages, Mr. Speaker, concerned about the fact that these lands, these pristine lands that belong to them and every other citizen of the province of Saskatchewan will and can be sold, will and can be sold, Mr. Speaker, without them having a meaningful say.

Mr. Speaker, the current Act that we have in Saskatchewan was brought forward because it provided a level of transparency and protection that was the envy, the envy of environmental and conservation groups in North America. Mr. Speaker, it was the envy because it required a meaningful debate in this Legislative Assembly prior to any land being sold.

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't an NDP [New Democratic Party] government that brought this legislation into place, it was the Conservative government of the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. But that very piece of legislation was protected and upheld by 16 years of NDP government, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it is a piece of legislation that is the envy, the envy of wildlife conservationists and protection organizations across North America.

And why is it? It's because any changes get open and transparent debate in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and the people of the province of Saskatchewan through their representatives have the ability to have a say each and every time a piece of land is being considered for sale.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very serious issue to many people in this province. And I don't think the government is taking this issue as serious as the people of Saskatchewan are. Mr. Speaker, what's really occurred here is the back door has been opened to sell protected lands at any time the government so wishes to do it. It can easily change a regulation, it then gets gazetted, Mr. Speaker, but at that point it's already done. There's no ability for anybody to raise an issue or complaint prior to its implementation.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the government, there are a

number of very senior members of the government sitting over there that know full well what this change means. And, Mr. Speaker, this very change has dire consequences for the future of protected lands in our province, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, people have a right to be concerned. People have a right to be concerned, and they have a right, Mr. Speaker, they have a right to care because currently this land is owned by every citizen of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there are pieces of land that are protected that are very meaningful to some individuals and to some groups because they were donated for the sole purpose, Mr. Speaker, of protection. They were donated by landowners to the Crown — meaningful pieces of legislation donated to landowners or by landowners to the Crown in exchange for a promise that that land would be protected by their government for future generations. And, Mr. Speaker, this change takes that away. This change allows the government without meaningful debate, without their relatives or their representatives to have a debate in this house about whether that land should change hands.

Well, Mr. Speaker, why is that fair? Why would anybody think that is fair? If I donated a piece of land for protection to the Crown with an undertaking it would be protected, I would expect it to be protected. Mr. Speaker, we've had individuals contact us with that very concern. They donated land that they spent their own money to buy, land that may have been in their family for generations, but because of its unique value, they wanted it protected. And why wouldn't they want it protected, Mr. Speaker? They gave it to the Crown. They gave it to the Crown for the sole purpose of future generations, for their children's children.

And, Mr. Speaker, to sell that land off is a betrayal of a trust between that landowner who gave the land and the rest of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. When the government betrays a trust like that, Mr. Speaker, why would people trust them? Why would people believe what the government tells them when they won't even live by promises that their government made?

Now you can say those promises were made by past governments but, Mr. Speaker, the government is the government. It is the people's representative. It doesn't matter the flavour of the government or the stripe of the government or who the government is, the government is there to represent the people of Saskatchewan. In all that it does, it should always put the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan first. And, Mr. Speaker, that is what people are concerned about.

I have a letter here, Mr. Speaker, to one of my colleagues, and it says:

Dear Pat,

Peter and I emailed to protest earlier to Premier Wall and the Minister of the Environment as a result of the reading of *The StarPhoenix* today. Then as a member of Nature Saskatchewan, I was horrified to receive this email. And I urge you and all opposition members to please do your utmost to stop this legislation which would allow the sale

of designated wildlife habitat protection . . . land to be sold at the discretion of the minister.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

We write concerning the government's statements that the conservation stakeholder organizations were consulted about the Crown land sale program, in particular the sale of land designated under the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act.

Both the Ministers of Agriculture & Food and Environment have publicly stated wildlife habitat protection lands will not be sold.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the second individual who is in a letter saying that they were promised by the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of the Environment that these lands wouldn't be sold, that they wouldn't sell these lands. Now, Mr. Speaker, we see these very lands being transferred from a transparent, publicly held and controlled piece of legislation to regulations so the minister can sell the land at her discretion, after verbal promises had been made that no such sales would occur. Mr. Speaker, that's a serious issue. It is always a very serious issue when a minister of the Crown tells the people of the province of Saskatchewan one thing, then undertakes to do something else.

Mr. Speaker, that is a serious concern and the people of this province deserve better. They deserve better, they're entitled to better and, Mr. Speaker, for those reasons alone this government should withdraw this legislation. Mr. Speaker, how do you have two ministers of the Crown go about the province, travel about the province and tell people, no we won't sell this very land under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, then go and change the legislation to do that very thing? Mr. Speaker, how can a government say they won't do something then change legislation to do that very thing, ever have any integrity, Mr. Speaker, ever have any credibility. Mr. Speaker, and why wouldn't the people of this province be concerned?

Mr. Speaker, I want to read that again:

Both the Ministers of Agriculture & Food and Environment have publicly stated wildlife habitat protection Act lands will not be sold. We can assure you [it goes on to say in this letter] 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.

So, Mr. Speaker, again we have another individual from Nature Saskatchewan writing a letter saying that there was no consultation even though, even though, Mr. Speaker, they said there was.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes talking about what is the driving force behind this legislation. Why does the government feel so compelled to pass this legislation in this session? Well I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. Because they know it's not good legislation. They know it's poorly thought through legislation. They know it's not good public policy, Mr.

Speaker. And they want to do it well in advance of a provincial election, hoping most people will forget about it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if you know it's not good public policy, you know it's not good legislation, and you know it's not in the interest of the majority of Saskatchewan people, well then, Mr. Speaker, if a government does it, they're acting in their own self-interest and not in the interest of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that in itself is shameful. That in itself is shameful.

So why is the Premier so intent in pushing this Bill through in this session, Mr. Speaker? We have but three days left, Mr. Speaker, and he is absolutely determined this Bill will pass. We are told he's told wildlife organizations that he's going to ram it through regardless what. He's going to ram it through regardless what.

And, Mr. Speaker, we see that. We're sitting here tonight when over three months ago — well over three months ago — the official opposition asked that we not sit this evening. That's fine that we're sitting. This is an evening we normally sit, Mr. Speaker. But it shows the level of co-operation this government expresses with the official opposition and with the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. There's no regard for anybody's interest but their own, Mr. Speaker. And that's fine. They can do that. The majority has the right to govern, Mr. Speaker. And we'll be here every hour we need to be. And we'll be here happily and proudly representing the people of Saskatchewan.

But why does the Premier feel so compelled to ram this through? Well I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you why. Because they have gone and promised to a few of their friends that they will get land that they have for years leased in a sale. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not necessarily a bad thing, but there's a process that can be done today in the current legislation.

Why would everybody be suspicious when you feel you have to change the legislation in order to do what you could do today? Well I'll tell you why. I'll tell you why. Because people care about these lands. They weren't consulted and they care. And people care about being consulted as well.

If they're not consulted, they're suspicious. And why wouldn't they be? Why wouldn't they be suspicious, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, they should be suspicious because we heard they were consulted, and then we hear group after group — it's Nature Saskatchewan, Wildlife Federation, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Ducks Unlimited, and it goes on and on and on — who said they weren't consulted.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, there's a pattern forming here that we hear in this Assembly about the great consultations that have gone on, and then after pushed and after we check, those consultations never occurred. There's a vast difference from sending a letter telling people what's going to happen than consulting them and asking them what should happen.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier of this province today, the

Premier of today promised the people of Saskatchewan that his government would be more open, honest, and accountable than any government before it. Yet the people of the province of Saskatchewan are feeling they're getting far less than what was promised. There is no transparency. There is no consultation. There is no accountability. And Mr. Speaker, that means they made a promise they simply didn't keep and, Mr. Speaker, they had no intent to keep. It's getting worse every single day. It's getting worse every single day.

The proposed changes to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* will allow the Premier and his Environment minister to sell off protected lands without consulting anybody. They don't have to consult anybody before they can sell off land that have been put under protection by the people's representatives for future generations. They can just go and sell it without any consultation at all.

The Premier and his minister say, well trust my judgment. But why would they trust their judgment, Mr. Speaker? Why would they trust their judgment on this issue when they haven't consulted people when they said they would? Now, Mr. Speaker, what guarantees do the people of Saskatchewan have that the Premier will not break that promise as well? Well they don't, Mr. Speaker. They don't have any promises, Mr. Speaker. They don't have any guarantees that the Premier will not, will not break his promise.

There are close to 3 million acres of land that are currently protected by this legislation. Mr. Speaker, that's land owned by all the people of this province. People care about that land and they care about it for a number of reasons. And, Mr. Speaker, we know the ranchers who currently lease the land care about that land too. We're not saying they're not good stewards of the land. We're not saying they haven't looked after the land. And we're not saying they don't care about the land.

The only person that says these people haven't been good stewards of the land is the Minister of the Environment in trying to create a false fight, trying to create a fight where there isn't a fight to be had, Mr. Speaker, because we all agree that they have been great stewards of the land. That's not the issue.

What this does is takes total accountability away from the government. It allows a minister to unilaterally and individually decide what's in the best interests of the province of Saskatchewan without bringing it before the House, Mr. Speaker. Is this the unprecedented accountability the Premier promised the people of Saskatchewan? I doubt it. I doubt it, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think that it lacks significant accountability. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of the province of Saskatchewan deserve better.

You have a Premier who goes before the people of Saskatchewan on November the 7th, 2007, and says, I'm going to provide the most open, transparent, and accountable government in the history of this province. And what do we get in exchange? We get a government that passes legislation and takes away transparency and accountability and leaves the sole decision on the sale of important, environmentally protected lands to a single minister.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have grave

concerns about the government's ability to manage anything these days, Mr. Speaker. They've seen the deficit increase beyond belief. Debt is rising more rapid than it did under the Devine administration in the 1980s. Mr. Speaker, they can't settle collective agreements with their employees. They can't, Mr. Speaker . . . They put forward legislation to interfere in the construction industry in a way that significantly hurts many workers in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Who does it help? It helps out-of-Saskatchewan construction companies, Mr. Speaker. That's who it helps: people that don't pay their taxes in the province of Saskatchewan.

But that's what the government's all about, Mr. Speaker. It's about helping those who have been their supporters and provided significant financial resources to their campaigns in the past, Mr. Speaker. And that's shameful. You should govern for all the people of the province of Saskatchewan all the time. You should consider the interests of all the people in everything that you do.

And, Mr. Speaker, it requires meaningful consultation to do that. And we haven't seen those consultations from this government, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Keep talking. Get it on the record.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the members say, get it on the record. There's a key point here, Mr. Speaker. The outcome's always determined by the majority but there should have been meaningful consultations prior to promises being made, promises being made that the people of Saskatchewan were not aware of when they elected a government.

Mr. Speaker, they should have known the agenda of the government when they elected them. And the government said one thing before an election and another after the election, Mr. Speaker. And that's the problem here. They talk about being the most open, transparent, accountable government, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

Mr. Yates: — They're anything but. They're absolutely anything but. And, Mr. Speaker, they can cheer as they didn't consult in Bill 80. They can cheer as they didn't consult on *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker. They can cheer as they didn't consult on numerous things, on the chiropractors, Mr. Speaker, on the cancellation of the kidney transplant, on the cancellation of the children's hospital in Saskatoon. Many, many things this government has said they would do, they haven't done.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite made many promises they're not keeping. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, they need to step forward on this piece of legislation today, take a step back, withdraw this legislation. They can do it right now, Mr. Speaker, and we can all go home within a half an hour. Just withdraw this legislation right now and you can all go home tonight. You can take the night off. I think it's in your best interests to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if you want to be open and transparent and accountable, Mr. Speaker, you don't bring forward bad legislation. When organizations and the people of

Saskatchewan say, withdraw it, you withdraw it. Mr. Speaker, they had that opportunity tonight. Just admit you made a mistake. Withdraw the legislation. The Government House Leader can stand up right now and say, Mr. Speaker, we're going to withdraw this legislation. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour has done that. It doesn't hurt that bad. He's done it. He survived.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this legislation isn't good for the people of Saskatchewan. It doesn't live up to the government's commitment to be open, transparent, and accountable.

Mr. Speaker, a letter campaign has been started entitled, "Brad Wall government passing a bill to sell off Crown wildlife habitat lands — express your opposition!" Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that groups spontaneously have started a letter writing campaign and literally thousands of people have participated in this letter writing campaign should tell the government that the legislation they have before the House that's going to sell off Crown protected land, wildlife habitat protected land that is owned by every single man, woman, and child in this province, land that they care about, Mr. Speaker, and the land that should not be sold off.

This government can do the honourable thing now and withdraw the legislation. Mr. Speaker, they can do the honourable thing. But will they? I don't believe they will because, Mr. Speaker, they can talk about nice terms like being open, transparent, and accountable, Mr. Speaker, but that doesn't mean they are. It's simply words, simply words. They're simply words, Mr. Speaker, and they're not meaningful words unless the government lives up to them. Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — With leave to introduce guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the legislature, I'd like to introduce someone very special in my life — my partner, Ann Riley, seated in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, my first wife died of cancer when she was 42 and left me with daughters of 15 and 18. And this year my eldest daughter is getting married, and that's always a special time in every father's life. But it's not quite the same. Mr. Speaker. I had to go shopping for a wedding dress the other day, and that was good. But you know dads just don't have the same sort of impact as they do, and Ann has been there helping out, and I wanted to publicly thank her for that.

And I know we always talk about support, and our partners or wives supporting us, and I want to thank Ann for being there, special support. And particularly tonight . . . I know Mr. Yates is a great speaker, and we would all come to listen . . . The member from Dewdney is a great speaker — sorry, Mr. Speaker — but I think she might be here for me and supporting me. So I want to thank her for that and all that she does on a daily basis. And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to join with the member and welcome Ann Riley to her Legislative Assembly. And it's always great to see any time, on either side of the House, when you see one of the partners here, and the special meaning it has for that member.

Mr. Speaker, the letter that I was talking about goes on to say:

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.

If we do nothing as citizens, the legislation will pass, and we'll have to explain to our children and our grandchildren how we how we collectively let this happen.

Mr. Speaker, people in this province are concerned. And it really is about our children and grandchildren. The choices we make today changes the opportunities of our children and it changes the opportunities of our grandchildren. And, Mr. Speaker, before we make choices that change the opportunities and futures of our children and grandchildren, we need to be very careful in our consideration, very thoughtful and, Mr. Speaker, we need to care. We need to care that they have the same opportunities that you and I had when we younger, Mr. Speaker, that our children have today and, I think many of us in this room, our grandchildren.

But, Mr. Speaker, most importantly is their children and their grandchildren. Future generations, their opportunities are determined by many of the decisions we make today. So we need to make those decisions carefully. We need to think them through. We need to think about them from a point of view of what opportunities does it take away from those future generations, not about what our immediate need is today, but what we need to care about and consider for those children and our children's children.

And, Mr. Speaker, the easiest path is the one of least resistance and that's one to deal with the obstacle in front of you today. Just make the quick and easy choice, make somebody happy

without considering what the implications are beyond the immediate. Mr. Speaker, good decisions and good public policy look far beyond the immediate to what the big picture, the future is and what the implications are, not today and tomorrow, but 10 and 20, 40 and 50 years from now as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is why public policy has always been developed through meaningful consultation, discussion, and debate. And, Mr. Speaker, when that path is not followed, when meaningful consultation and debate does not occur, then we often end up with what I call poor public policy, and poor public policy also includes poor legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there's a reason why the legislation we have in place today called *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* has remained largely unchanged for more than 30 years and why conservation groups see it as the envy of North America. It's because a lot of time, effort, and thought went into the development of the current wildlife habitat protection Act.

[20:15]

Mr. Speaker, 30 years this legislation has stood the test of time, governments of many stripes, the evaluation of conservation groups. It has stood the test of protecting the interests of our children and grandchildren and future generations, Mr. Speaker. So why do we want to change what has been seen as great public policy and the envy of conservation and ecologists across North America? That question has never been answered, Mr. Speaker. And why would we want today to move forward on a piece of legislation that significantly changes the future, the future of protecting lands in Saskatchewan?

Now, Mr. Speaker, if it's the simple problem that members opposite have said about wanting to sell some land to ranchers, well then let's do it under the current legislation that has the protection of the debate in this Assembly. Let's not change the rules and give unilateral control to an individual. Why would we, why would any of the 58 of us that are tasked with the responsibility of representing the people of Saskatchewan want to do that? Why would we want to do that?

I don't hear a logical answer. I don't hear a practical answer. In fact quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't hear an answer at all. Mr. Speaker, the government has failed to make a meaningful case as to why they'd want to change this legislation. And until they can make that meaningful case and they can sell it to the people of Saskatchewan then, Mr. Speaker, these changes should not be made.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to talk about, on April the 28th, CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news reported that, "Wildlife groups and environmentalists in Saskatchewan are upset with the government plan to remove more than 1.2 million hectares of land from the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act," according to Darrell Crabbe, the executive director of Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, an organization that represents more than 30,000 people across Saskatchewan.

He stated that "Those properties are owned by the people of Saskatchewan . . ." by every man, woman, and child in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So when were they consulted in this process prior to the government determining

that they would remove these lands from protection and sell them off at the whim of the government?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I happen to be privileged to be a grandfather of a wonderful young man, the absolute envy of my life. My grandson, Liam, is probably the most meaningful person in my life. There's nothing more important than being a grandparent. I can tell you I became a grandparent at 40, and I wasn't excited about being a grandparent at 40, thought I was too young to be a grandparent. And I thought, you know, many things would not work out for my daughter, was going to be a single parent and raising a child when she was just a child herself, right?

But, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, my daughter went on to finish university and has multiple degrees now, and a wonderful opportunity in our province, Mr. Speaker. But she cares and my grandson care about this Act. And they care about the protection of land, Mr. Speaker, because they want those pristine lands there for my grandson, his children, Mr. Speaker, and for all the children of this province, Mr. Speaker.

If we don't take the steps to protect those sensitive lands, Mr. Speaker, who will? Nobody. That's why people elect a government. They elect a government to represent all the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, if we don't take the steps to protect those lands, who will? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I hope Bill would try because maybe it would mean he's considered his position on this legislation and will actually vote with his conscience, Mr. Speaker, not the way he's told to vote.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Darrell Crabbe says that these lands ". . . are owned by [all] the people of Saskatchewan, and I just don't think most people . . . want to see them sold off." Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Crabbe, as indicated, represents the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, more than 30,000 people in the province. And he goes on to say, Mr. Speaker: "It's a very sad day when the dollar plays a bigger role than our future generations [do]." Mr. Speaker, that's reported on CBC news, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that: "It's a very sad day when the dollar plays a bigger role than our future generations." Mr. Speaker, that says a great deal — a sad day when the dollar plays a bigger role than our future generations. That says a great deal about this government and about the importance they put on something as significant to the people of Saskatchewan as wildlife habitat protection.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

Despite the minister's tepid responses that the decision to sell off wildlife habitat protection lands isn't about monetary things, [Mr. Speaker] the unprecedented financial mismanagement by the Premier's Saskatchewan Party government is exactly why the people of Saskatchewan don't trust anything the Wall government tells them.

Mr. Speaker, that's reported on CBC. Mr. Speaker, those are direct quotes from April 28, 2010. Mr. Speaker, I want to just reiterate that, say it one more time for the record:

The unprecedented financial mismanagement by the

Premier's Saskatchewan Party government is exactly why the people of Saskatchewan don't trust anything the Wall government tells them.

That's as reported by CBC on April 28, 2010.

Mr. Speaker, on May 10th, 2010, just a week ago today, a week ago today, Mr. Speaker, a letter was written to the Minister of Environment and copied to the Premier from George O'Bertos, formerly the land resource management specialist for the Department of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, I read a few quotes from that letter, Mr. Speaker. But that letter told us and explained for us why these lands were put into protection.

Mr. O'Bertos has over 30 years of expertise in land administration, and he felt compelled to write the Premier and the minister urging the Wall government to reconsider what he sees as a very harmful Bill to the environment of Saskatchewan, to the protection of land in our province, to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and not in the interest of future generations. This was a career civil servant who spent 30 years working on the protection of the land of our province.

He goes on to say that one of the main criteria used in this determination was that any lands with this designation would have little suitability for agricultural use. Well, Mr. Speaker, most of the Crown lands that fall under this Act have either unproductive soils, excessive stones or topography, have extensive wetlands or are subject to flooding, etc., and therefore have minimal agricultural value. What's the value of selling land that is largely unsuitable for agriculture?

He goes on to say, it's a backwards step. "It's a backwards step at this critical time and the loss, the hard battles that many of us along the numerous conservation organizations have fought to gain legislation to protect these very lands."

Mr. Speaker, this is an individual who cares a great deal about the protection of our lands, but not for himself, Mr. Speaker, but for future generations, for our children, Mr. Speaker. He cares about a program that is viewed by conservation groups across North America as being the very best there is.

Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say:

We saw how short-sighted the Premier's decisions were to eliminate funding for the West Nile mosquito program, the municipal partnership, Dutch elm disease program in the province. It was not until after the opposition grilled the Sask Party government that the minister admitted she had not consulted with municipalities prior to doing and removing their funding to control the diseases from spreading, nor had she given any intelligent thought as to how the buffer zones would be monitored.

It's no wonder the people of Saskatchewan are concerned. The Premier and his ministers have not thought through the very programs that they're bringing forward, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the same with this piece of legislation. The consequences have not been thought through. And, Mr. Speaker, we still have the opportunity for the government to do the right thing, to take a step back, Mr. Speaker, take a step back and withdraw this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the letter goes on to say many things but it has an overarching and compelling theme. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that's important if you're going to have a program dealing with wildlife habitat protection is you have an ability to have compliance and enforcement, monitoring, Mr. Speaker. There's no discussion at all about how these things would be undertaken in the new legislation, Mr. Speaker. It's virtually impossible to do it if you don't own the land.

He goes on to say that:

There's little doubt that the majority of wildlife habitat protection land sold in the parkland and northern agriculture areas will be quickly resold to another owner. There are already large blocks of wildlife habitat protection Act lands that outfitters have attempted to obtain for their own exclusive use.

How would you restrict this when the land is privately owned?

Mr. Speaker, his third point concerns the natural ability of these lands to help alleviate inherent flooding problems downstream:

A few years ago there was \$1 million in damage caused by flooding in the RMs of Arborfield, Bjorkdale, Porcupine Plain, and Hudson Bay where heavy rains caused many of the bridges and culverts to be washed out. The same damage occurred along the lake, Lenore-Fishing Lake watershed area, which ended up being a huge cost to our provincial coffers. Much of the problems are a result of the loss of natural upland retention areas and wetland drainage. By losing control over the natural habitat on our Crown lands, we run the risk of only adding to these flooding problems.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. O'Bertos's fourth point is that many of these wildlife habitat protected lands are not developed for agricultural use because they are still covered by bush. He said:

These lands provide valuable habitat for wildlife, especially large ungulates which require winter thermal cover, browse, calving areas, and migration corridors between their winter and summer ranges such as between the Pasquia/Porcupine provincial forest. How would you retain the necessary protection of these valuable habitats when they are in private hands?

Mr. Speaker, the fifth point is a shared concern of both the public, the opposition. And it relates to the so-called ecological assessment tool as described by the minister which she says will help her ministers determine how the lands would be reclassified for sale.

What field staff in either lands branch or Saskatchewan Environment has the personnel and specific qualifications and experience in lands resource management to override the previous decisions made by highly qualified and experienced staff?"

Mr. Speaker, they're questioning the very ability of current staff to make decisions that override the previous assessments that have been made. It goes on to say:

No one is questioning the merits of private ownership, but the public is right to question that both the motives and the implications of the proposed changes.

Mr. Speaker, nobody's against private ownership of the lands, Mr. Speaker. These lands are currently owned. They're owned by all of the people of Saskatchewan. It's not an issue of ownership or private ownership, Mr. Speaker. It's an issue about what's right and what's in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan, and should the broader public interest override individual interests.

Mr. Speaker, instead of greater accountability from the Wall government, the Minister of Environment has accused members of the official opposition, environmental groups, and concerned citizens from across the province that we aren't for the changes, that we must be against private ownership.

But we're not against private ownership, Mr. Speaker. That's just a bogus issue and has nothing to do with what the real issue is for the people.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a minute now about the failed consultations with First Nations and Métis people in the province of Saskatchewan. The minister's comments to the media have proven to be misleading, as groups such as the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation and the FSIN have publicly come forward and very publicly spoken out against this Premier and the Saskatchewan Party government on this issue, Mr. Speaker. The sad reality is that the Premier and his minister have stonewalled any attempts by environmental groups to meet with ministry officials to discuss Bill 132.

Mr. Speaker, we don't have open, transparent consultations. We don't have any meaningful consultation, Mr. Speaker. And for that very reason, we should take the opportunity to take a step backwards, withdraw the Bill, and start over. Start over with meaningful consultations on behalf of all the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, only when that occurs, can we move forward with a Bill that would be supported by all the people of our province, Mr. Speaker, be supported without, without the negativity that now exists in many, many corners of this province about this very Bill, Mr. Speaker.

It was not until the eleventh hour that the minister was forced to apologize for saying consultations had taken place when they in fact had not, and they hadn't consulted with anyone whom she suspected might disagree with the Premier's philosophy.

Mr. Speaker, in a special to *The StarPhoenix* on May the 6th, 2010, Joan Soggie writes:

Thanks to the foresight of previous governments, we can live in a place that still has room for wild animals. Even 20 or 30 years ago, we understood that small sanctuaries were not enough, that plants and animals need some undisturbed space to thrive.

The letter also says:

It is not likely that my grandchildren will ever see a

burrowing owl in this area, for instance. Other species are just hanging on by a thread. With each passing year, sightings of long-billed curlew, loggerhead shrike, and even badgers become rarer. Meadowlarks are dwindling in numbers as overgrazing or cultivation destroys their nesting ground.

Given the beleaguered state of wildlife, and our growing awareness of the benefits that . . . [occur] from biodiversity, it is hard to understand the current government's proposal to sell millions of acres of protected Crown land.

Joan Soggie is not alone in her conviction that her Premier has a responsibility to keep these lands in public hands and protect it for future generations and to preserve the biodiversity in our province. Mrs. Soggie said it perfectly when she wrote:

I had hoped that the Saskatchewan Party would manage to strike a balance between individual and community rights, between social responsibility and economic freedom. The proposal to sell our Crown lands fails on all counts.

It puts expedience ahead of necessity, exchanging short-term gain for long-term pain. We all need to contact the premier, the environment minister and our MLAs, and urge them to act on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and drop this plan.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one of many, many, many letters that have come forward from Saskatchewan people about this issue. And Mr. Speaker, these people are not . . . These are ordinary people who care. These are people who elected a government and believe their government should act in their interest. And, Mr. Speaker, why is the government not acting in their interest? That's the question they have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, an article on NewsTalk CJME website from May 6th, 2010 reads, "The province is trying to sell off some environmentally protected land in the next couple of weeks. But wildlife groups are wondering why the government is in such a hurry."

Why is the government in such a hurry? Good question. Can the Environment minister tell us? Well she hasn't attempted to tell us so far. Why is the Premier in such a hurry to ram this legislation through? Why won't they take the meaningful step of withdrawing this legislation, going back and undertaking meaningful consultations on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan and then determine what their future course of action is?

Mr. Speaker, a simple question. It doesn't mean a great deal. It doesn't mean you fail. It doesn't mean you fail if you in fact take a few minutes and take a step back and decide that you're going to do some meaningful consultation and bring in a Bill that makes sense, a Bill that makes sense, Mr. Speaker, next year. Mr. Speaker, what's wrong with that?

This government doesn't have to be so insecure. It doesn't have to be so insecure that it's afraid to say we didn't do what we should have done and we need to do it. And we're going to,

we're going to be brave. We're going to step forward, and we're going to do what we should have done to start with. We're going to scrap this Bill, and we're going to start afresh with new consultations.

Mr. Speaker, they don't have to be afraid of that. In fact we'd applaud them if they did it. They don't have to worry. We wouldn't beat up on them for that. We wouldn't give them a rough time. We'd simply say thank you for doing the right thing for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. That's what any good opposition would do. We'd say thank you for listening to the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you for acting in their best interest and thank you for doing the right thing. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank them if they did the right thing. But first, Mr. Speaker, they have to do the right thing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we don't have any indications at all the government's going to do the right thing. In fact every indication we have is contrary to that, Mr. Speaker, that they're going to do just what they want to do regardless of what the people of Saskatchewan have indicated; regardless of what the various stakeholder groups have talked about and indicated, Mr. Speaker; regardless that we have today environmental protection legislation, conservation programs, Mr. Speaker, that are the envy of every jurisdiction in North America, Mr. Speaker.

Despite that, this government's just deciding they're going to unilaterally change all that. And for what reason, Mr. Speaker? For what reason? They haven't consulted people. They haven't been told that it's necessary to do, Mr. Speaker. So why are they moving ahead like this? Well that's a question that many of the people in this province, Mr. Speaker, are asking about and they care about, Mr. Speaker. They care. Mr. Speaker, the CJME website goes on to say why the government is in such a hurry. People are wondering — right? — why the government's in such a hurry:

. . . opponents like Darryl Crabbe, executive director of Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation want more time to talk about the plan. "I can without reservation tell you that the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation was never consulted prior to its showing up at the legislature," he says.

The Premier's actions have threatened the democratic process in this province when genuinely concerned individuals and stakeholders are forced to march down to the legislature to get some answers and accountability from this Premier. Mr. Speaker, what this says very clearly is the people of this province have grave concerns. Their representatives in conservation groups have grave concerns. By the letters that have been sent in, Mr. Speaker, many people in this province have grave concerns.

So then why, Mr. Speaker, is the government deciding to plow ahead with this without any thinking through the processes, without any regard to what, with any regard to what the people of Saskatchewan were saying, Mr. Speaker. Why would the government decide that they want to do this?

Mr. Speaker, I have an article from the *R Town News*, Mr. Speaker, that appears in thousands of copies of newspapers

across rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This particular one is from the community of Wolseley. But, Mr. Speaker, this article is again from Darrell Crabbe, the executive director of Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. And, Mr. Speaker, this is printed in literally thousands of newspapers across the province. And its headline is “Dismantling the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act.”

Mr. Speaker, it again goes in great detail to outline the concerns the people of the province of Saskatchewan, through their wildlife conservation groups, are bringing forward. They care deeply about the protection of these lands, Mr. Speaker, and they see absolutely no need for the government to rush forward. Mr. Speaker, these organizations are taking the time and effort to try to convince their government, Mr. Speaker — and I want to say that very loudly and very strongly, Mr. Speaker — to convince their government that they should in fact reconsider their position.

Mr. Speaker, this government has over the last several weeks not paid a lot of attention to the concerns raised by others about this legislation. Rather they’ve been very dogmatic in their approach to . . . we’re going to ram this through — good, bad, or ugly. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that this legislation is both bad and ugly. It’s bad in many ways for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, and its consequences over the long-term can be very ugly for the well-being of protected lands.

Mr. Speaker, why won’t the government take the time to take a step back? That’s the real question that we all need to examine.

And, Mr. Speaker, the government’s failed to consult on this Bill as it did with many, many other important issues in the last two and a half years. It failed to consult on changes to chiropractic funding, failed to consult on the closure of the kidney transplant unit, University of Saskatchewan Hospital, Mr. Speaker. It failed to consult on many issues, Mr. Speaker, said many things before an election, did many different things after the election.

Mr. Speaker, before the election, the Provincial Building Trades Construction Council were told that there would be no changes if they were elected government. Lo and behold, just weeks after, Mr. Speaker, we see the introduction of Bill 80. We see the introduction of legislation that dismantles the construction industry and the construction trades unions in the province, Mr. Speaker. And who benefits from that? Well not Saskatchewan contractors because they weren’t consulted either, we’re told. But who benefited, Mr. Speaker? Well out-of-province contractors can and maybe many others, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to read into the record an article, now that I have my glasses and can actually read this article. Again it’s written by Darrell Crabbe, and it’s entitled “Dismantling the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act”:

The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation continues to have [grave] concerns surrounding the recent Legislation aimed at dismantling *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, the legislation that was created almost 30 years ago and is still considered to be one of the most visionary conservation programs ever developed in North America.

The over 3 million acres presently protected in the Act would now be controlled under regulation and would be able to be sold or changed at the discretion of the . . . minister. Under WHPA, any lands that were removed or changed were required to be debated in the Legislature and allowed for public scrutiny.

Under the new legislation there would be no transparency. In addition, the newly passed Conservation Easement Legislation that the Saskatchewan Government would place on most of the . . . [unsold] parcels gives the Minister the power to remove or change the easement without public knowledge or recourse.

“The combination of a lack of consultation and the aggressive time line on this bill has effectively made it impossible to address our concerns and left many important questions unanswered,” states Darrell Crabbe, executive director of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. “We need the minister to table this Legislation until all the variables can be properly addressed.”

Saskatchewan Wildlife . . . sees a “no net loss” agreement, as has been the policy of every Provincial Government since WHPA was introduced; changes to create public transparency; the establishment of a Conservation Lands Fund and the continuation of protection of properties under wildlife habitat protection . . . legislation; as the most pressing issues and is prepared to work with the Government towards this goal.

Mr. Speaker, this is an organization, again, that represents more than 30,000 members and 121 branches across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there are numerous concerns, numerous concerns about this legislation, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan need answered. And without those answers, Mr. Speaker, there will be concerns about this legislation for many, many years to come.

[20:45]

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to read an article from the *Leader-Post* of April 26, 2010. It says:

Proposed changes to Saskatchewan’s Wildlife Habitat Protection Act (WHPA) clear the way for some parcels of land to be sold.

But Saskatchewan Environment Minister Nancy Heppner said the “vast majority” of land under the act would continue to be protected.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that’s easy to say. That’s very easy to say, Mr. Speaker, but it doesn’t mean a thing because today under the current Act it’s all protected, Mr. Speaker, and any changes need to be debated. In the future, the minister can unilaterally change whatever she wants without debate, without consultation, and not . . . with no interest, Mr. Speaker, to what the people of Saskatchewan care. And they don’t have a mechanism to have a say.

Mr. Speaker, the article goes on to say:

WHPA covers about three million acres of Crown land — some of which is leased by ranchers who use it for grazing or haying.

As part of the Saskatchewan Party government's new approach, Heppner said all of the land protected by WHPA is to be assessed to determine its "ecological value."

Heppner said that a "very large chunk of land" will be retained by the Crown and remain under the protection of the act.

But, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't remain under the protection of the Act. It's in regulation now. Mr. Speaker, that's a misleading statement because no longer is it protected by the Act and no longer do we get to debate it in the House and no longer is it transparent and no longer can we force a meaningful consultation before land is sold, Mr. Speaker. So there isn't the opportunity to hold the government accountable because they can simply, by regulations, sell any land they want to sell, and the opposition doesn't even find out about it till after it's already been sold, Mr. Speaker. So how is that transparent and open?

Now, Mr. Speaker, it also goes on to say:

But if the amendments proceed, the government will be able to sell off parcels of WHPA land deemed to have a "low" ecological value.

Further tracts of land will also be cleared for sale, but there will be conservation easements attached. Easements will stipulate that the land must be used in a specific way.

But, Mr. Speaker, as a former land specialist for the government says, you can put any easement you want on it because if there's no enforceability of it, it means nothing. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a very serious concern by an individual, to spend his life evaluating this land, assessing this land for its ecological value and fighting to have it protected on behalf of all the people of Saskatchewan both now and into the future. Mr. Speaker, these are grave concerns that people of Saskatchewan share and that viewpoint is important today and tomorrow and for many generations to come that this land is properly protected and properly shared with future generations, with our children and grandchildren.

It goes on to say:

"When you look at a rancher who has been leasing Crown land for generations in some cases, for decades, they want to be able to buy the land but it's under wildlife habitat protection. They . . . [shouldn't] be changing the use of that land, they just want to be able to purchase it," Heppner said Monday.

Mr. Speaker, the current legislation gives a mechanism for that land to be purchased. So why is the minister afraid to use current procedures and policies in order to see that land purchased? What is she afraid of? Why wouldn't she simply bring a Bill that designated that land for sale and, Mr. Speaker, land of equivalent ecological value to put back into the wildlife habitat protection lands? Mr. Speaker, it's been the practice for the last 30 years. And sell the land. Why wouldn't she just do

what every other government for the last 30 years has had to do? Well, Mr. Speaker, that's because this government is ideologically driven, different than every other government in the past. And, Mr. Speaker, the right to future generations in the protection of wildlife habitat protection is not as important to this government as it has been for past governments.

For more than 30 years these lands have been protected in an appropriate and caring manner in the province. And, Mr. Speaker, people of Saskatchewan would like it to be continued to be protected that way. And they're telling their government that. But their government isn't listening, Mr. Speaker. And it's time their government started to listen to the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the article goes on to say:

"In a situation like that, (it depends) on where that piece of land falls within our modelling. If it falls under the category of sell with conservation easement, we would be able to sell it to that rancher."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that could be done today. So why do we need new legislation to do that? Only because the minister doesn't want to have the scrutiny of this Assembly every time a piece of land is sold. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly has the right to that scrutiny. We're elected by the people of Saskatchewan to represent the people of Saskatchewan. We have the right to have that consultation, that scrutiny before any of the people's land is sold.

For more than 30 years, subsequent governments have upheld that principle despite and regardless of their stripe, Mr. Speaker, for more than 30 years.

Mr. Speaker, "But Environment critic Sandra Morin said the NDP opposition is concerned that land could be sold or removed from the habitat protection Act with little public scrutiny." Of course I've repeated that many times tonight. Mr. Speaker, it goes on to talk about the fact that it can be done by regulation and be completed prior to us even having knowledge of it.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation has significant implications for the future. Mr. Speaker, there is significant protected land in the province of Saskatchewan. I have a list of the hectares protected, Mr. Speaker, and it is a significant, significant amount of land. Mr. Speaker, this is land that Saskatchewan people, through their representatives, for more than 30 years believed should be protected.

Mr. Speaker, there was a program put in place called the Saskatchewan representative areas network, Mr. Speaker. And it was put in place in 1997, Mr. Speaker, and it was put in place as a policy framework to move forward with protecting lands in our province, Mr. Speaker. It talks about the Saskatchewan representative area network program was launched in 1997 with approval of the area network final action plan. The plan sought to conserve representative and unique examples of Saskatchewan's varied and diverse landscape.

Mr. Speaker, it targeted a 12 per cent target. It is a commitment included in Saskatchewan's biodiversity action plan. Now, Mr.

Speaker, it's a laudable target, Mr. Speaker, to protect 12 per cent of the land for future generations, for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. It's a well-thought-out plan. Mr. Speaker, it's all for naught if you just have a government come in and decide they're going to sell off land without a reason, Mr. Speaker. It is all for naught.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Bill we have before us has one purpose and one purpose only, and that's to sell off wildlife habitat protected land. But it doesn't have the courage of the convictions it should have, Mr. Speaker, to bring the debate to this legislature each and every time you're going to sell land.

Mr. Speaker, it can be done today. It can be done appropriately with debate in this House. But why is the government afraid to debate the issue in this Assembly? Why is the government afraid to make its decisions or choices publicly available for debate by the elected representatives of this Assembly? That is what our democracy is about, Mr. Speaker. And a government that hides or runs from its obligations to be open, transparent, and debate the issues in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, a government that does that, Mr. Speaker, doesn't deserve to be the government.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think in 2011, the people of this province are going to say just that. And it's not going to be about this issue alone, Mr. Speaker, but this issue contributes to it, contributes to it. Any government that doesn't want to consult, that runs from consultations, hides from the people who they are responsible to govern, and doesn't undertake meaningful consultations is not going to be a government very long.

Mr. Speaker, we have a government that promised to be the most open, transparent, and accountable government in Saskatchewan's history. Instead we get a government who isn't consulting, who's running from its decisions, doesn't want to debate things in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And why is that? Why is that? Is this a government that's so insecure in itself that it's afraid it can't win an open and accountable debate, Mr. Speaker? Or is it afraid that it may have to be accountable to the people of the province of Saskatchewan? Well, Mr. Speaker, either one of those issues is primary to our democratic system. So why aren't we going to have that meaningful debate every time a piece of land is sold?

Now, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I have shared a great deal of concern about this Bill, and we have a great deal more concern to share, Mr. Speaker, but we haven't seen one iota of concern or debate or sharing of information by the government. They have been as unwilling to debate this legislation as they have been unwilling, Mr. Speaker, to consult with the public about this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, they don't want to consult with the public. They don't debate this legislation in this House. They just want to bring forward a Bill and say, we're going to ram it through regardless, regardless, Mr. Speaker, of what any potential outcome is.

Mr. Speaker, that is not what we would like to see. It's not what the people of Saskatchewan would like to see. It's certainly not what environmental and conservation groups in our province would like to see, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly not what the

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations would like to see, Mr. Speaker. It's not what the Wildlife Federation would like to see, Mr. Speaker. It's not what the future generations would like to see.

But, Mr. Speaker, future generations aren't going to get to see the opportunities we have today to experience these pristine lands, Mr. Speaker, because they're going to be privately owned, Mr. Speaker. They're going to be sold off, Mr. Speaker, and not going to be owned by the people of Saskatchewan as they are today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we would like to see this legislation withdrawn. We'd like to see an agenda to move forward in co-operation with the people of Saskatchewan, my colleagues in the legislature, and we'd like to be able to have a meaningful, open debate and consultation prior to a Bill that the government is locked into in such a way that they're not able or not willing to debate it, amend it, change it. Mr. Speaker, even with all of the issues that have been brought forward by many, many environmental groups, Mr. Speaker, by many, many citizens of the province, Mr. Speaker, they're still not prepared to change it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that over the next couple of hours we'll have the opportunity to examine in detail some more of the concerns of the people of Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely, absolutely important to understand that group after group has come forward and said there have been no consultations. Mr. Speaker, it's Nature Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. It's the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. It's Ducks Unlimited, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they've all said the exact same thing. The statements made by the minister in the House that meaningful consultations had occurred, or any consultations for that matter had occurred, are absolutely, absolutely misleading, Mr. Speaker, because they have said categorically one after another that no consultations had occurred. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's very disappointing, very, very disappointing to hear that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to just read into the record the minister's comments on consultation in the House, Mr. Speaker. "This Act also creates . . ." and this is a quote from the Minister of Environment on March 8, 2010, when she was speaking to this Bill, Mr. Speaker. It says:

This Act also creates a Crown land ecological assessment. This will allow government to evaluate and identify important ecological values and know how best to protect them. 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. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, then group after group writes us letters and say, that didn't happen.

[21:00]

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about first about amendments to *The*

Wildlife Habitat Protection Act and *The Conservation Easements Act* from a letter written by Fourth Vice-chief Lyle Whitefish from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. But she just said that they were consulted, and he says this:

It has come to my attention that you are informing your government colleagues and members of the Saskatchewan Legislature that your Ministry consulted and accommodated the First Nations people prior to initiating this program. I find these statements extremely troubling since no such undertakings have occurred.

To repeat, Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that. "I find these statements extremely troubling since no such undertakings have occurred." Mr. Speaker, I have the minister saying they consulted with a wide variety of stakeholders such as the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservatory of Canada, Nature Saskatchewan, Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. Mr. Speaker, the representative of the FSIN said no such consultations occurred. Mr. Speaker, that is of grave concern.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the same thing from other organizations. Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Mr. Speaker, said the exact same thing, that they weren't consulted. Nature Saskatchewan said the exact same thing, Mr. Speaker, that they weren't consulted. Well, Mr. Speaker, if all these groups weren't consulted, why were we told in this Assembly that they were? Why were we told as members of this legislature that consultations had occurred that Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation say didn't occur; Saskatchewan Federation of Indian Nations say didn't occur; Nature Saskatchewan say didn't occur; Ducks Unlimited say didn't occur?

Now, Mr. Speaker, we were told in this Assembly that they had occurred. And, Mr. Speaker, that's probably the gravest concern of all, that as members of this Assembly we need to be factually told information by the government and by the ministers of the Crown. Not to do so, Mr. Speaker, is a matter of privilege. A matter of privilege, Mr. Speaker. A matter of privilege we could raise in this House because we have a minister saying she did it and then we have letters from each of the groups saying it wasn't done.

Mr. Speaker, that's a matter of privilege and it's of very grave concern to this Assembly. A very grave concern to the people of the province of Saskatchewan because we need to be told the truth, Mr. Speaker. We need to be told the truth. We base our decisions, the people of Saskatchewan base their decisions on what their government tells the people. We need to know the facts. We need to know the reality of what we're dealing with. And, Mr. Speaker, we have the right to know because we're elected by the people to represent them and to hold the government accountable. There is a role for the official opposition, a meaningful role.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we need to have a meaningful debate as to why we were, why we were told one thing and the reality is another. And, Mr. Speaker, that debate needs to occur in this Assembly. It's important to the people of Saskatchewan to know that if a minister tells them something that it in fact represents the facts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we move forward on this legislation with all these groups saying they weren't consulted and the minister is saying they were, that alone should be sufficient reason for the government to take a step back, withdraw this legislation, have the debate, have the consultation that they said they had and they obviously didn't have with the various stakeholders, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues in their expression of concern on this debate, on this issue, on this legislation, Mr. Speaker, have raised these concerns. And there's a reason we're all raising them. Because as members of the legislature, as the people's representatives in this Assembly, we have a right to be told the facts. And when we ask a question, Mr. Speaker, we have a right to know that what we're being told is the truth, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, if we can't have confidence that it is, Mr. Speaker, then we have to question everything we're told. Every single thing we're told, we have to question. Mr. Speaker, we don't want to do that. We don't want to do that. We would rather have some reliability in what we're being told.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we need to have confidence in what we're being told, and the people of Saskatchewan have to have that confidence. But we've heard from the Wildlife Federation, the FSIN, Nature Saskatchewan, Ducks Unlimited that they don't. They were told not . . . They weren't consulted, even though we were told they were.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is about as serious a concern as a member of this legislature ever can have. And, Mr. Speaker, at some point we would expect the minister to stand in this House and to apologize to all members of this Assembly. We would expect that from a minister. A minister of the Crown should say, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. And in saying that she's sorry, Mr. Speaker, we can accept that, we can . . . People make mistakes. People make mistakes, Mr. Speaker, but you should own up to them and you should move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that we will have many, many questions about in committee. We have many hours of debate before we're going to get to committee, Mr. Speaker, but we will have many hours of questions in committee as well because, Mr. Speaker, we haven't yet heard an explanation as to why.

Why does the Premier want to ram this through? Why doesn't he want to take a step back and do meaningful consultations? Why doesn't he want to gain the confidence of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations; the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation; conservation Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker; Ducks Unlimited? Why doesn't the Premier want to gain their confidence by taking a step back, do the meaningful consultations he should've done prior to bringing this legislation in, and act in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, what's the rush? The land will be here next year and the year after and for many, many years to come. So what's the rush?

Mr. Speaker, if particular landowners want to buy particular parcels of land, as I've indicated many times, there's an avenue to deal with that. There's a meaningful way to deal with that in this Assembly by simply bringing forward a piece of legislation dealing with that particular issue, Mr. Speaker. It's a very

simple process, been used many times by many previous governments.

But there's also a reason why this government or this legislation has, for more than 30 years, protected, protected wildlife habitat lands in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and why it's important to continue to protect that land, Mr. Speaker. And it's why conservation groups have said that this legislation and its protection has been the envy of conservation organizations right across North America, Mr. Speaker. We should be, we should be proud of the fact that we in Saskatchewan worked very hard to put in place a protection regime of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that protected pristine wildlife habitat lands in our province, Mr. Speaker. We should be very proud of that.

And we should be very proud of the fact that we also have worked very hard to continue that protection for many, many years, regardless of the stripe of government, Mr. Speaker. In fact this was brought in originally in 1984 by a Conservative government, Mr. Speaker, who had the foresight and forethought, Mr. Speaker, to understand that the protection of this land for future generations was of all of our concern, Mr. Speaker. And you know in 1984, the Conservative government took the time to say these important lands needed to be protected for future generations, for our children. And, Mr. Speaker, it was a good decision then, and subsequent governments have made the same decisions, Mr. Speaker, and worked very hard to protect the land for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the clock ticks on here, I have yet to hear a single member opposite show any real concern for the fact that meaningful consultations weren't done, for the fact that we were told that the consultation have occurred but they haven't.

Mr. Speaker, all we need to do is do the honourable thing, take a step back, withdraw the legislation, start all over. Now the Government House Leader could stand in his place right now and say, on behalf of the government, I withdraw that legislation. He could. We're waiting for him to do just that. Now, Mr. Speaker, we know he doesn't agree with this legislation because, Mr. Speaker, he himself values this land. Now, Mr. Speaker, all he needs to do is do the honourable thing and stand up and speak.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have several hours in which to continue this debate and discussion. We have yet to see a member of the government express an opinion, other than the minister, other than the minister who told us she consulted with everybody and consulted with nobody. And, Mr. Speaker, we're disappointed with that. And disappointment's probably a weak word because, Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely wrong that we as members of this legislature are told one thing and find it not to be true.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have one of my colleagues who wants to speak very badly to this legislation prior to making a decision about moving it to committee and asking specific questions. I believe the critic for the Environment would like to spend a couple or three hours asking or discussing this issue. Unfortunately we have only about an hour and 15 minutes left this evening.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as soon as my colleague would indicate

she's ready, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat and allow the Environment critic the opportunity to share her concerns and the views that have been expressed to her by many of the people across the province of Saskatchewan as to why this legislation should be withdrawn, why the government should do the right thing, why the government should put the people of Saskatchewan first, Mr. Speaker, and not their own self-interest on this particular issue. So, Mr. Speaker, with that I will take my seat and allow my colleague to enter the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Hickie): — The Chair recognizes Ms. Morin, the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a delight for me to be able to enter in the debate about *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, not because I'm enjoying the fact that I get to speak about an Act that is going to be making such substantive changes to the province with respect to protection of wildlife in the province, but because I'm really pleased to be able to share the concerns that have been brought forward to me as the opposition critic for Environment with respect to this Act and many other things. But given that we're specifically talking about this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I'll keep my comments narrow to the Act at hand.

Mr. Speaker, as has been alluded to in many other speakers that have spoken before me, the lands that were protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* were protected in the '80s. And you know, Mr. Speaker, every government of every term wants to ensure that they are leaving a legacy, Mr. Speaker, and that legacy of course that they want to leave is of a positive nature.

Now some governments are successful in leaving positive legacies. Some unfortunately are not. This was definitely one of those positive legacies that was left to the people of Saskatchewan by the then Conservative government under Grant Devine and under the portfolio of the Environment critic at that time, which was Colin Maxwell. They certainly had the foresight to know that if one didn't protect these lands under the Act in the manner that it is currently protected, that those lands would then become vulnerable to the habitat that exists on those lands and/or destroyed, Mr. Speaker. So there was a foresight at that time already to know that that was something that was going to be a very important thing to do.

Now Colin Maxwell, who was the Environment Minister at that time, said that . . . and unfortunately I don't have the quote in front of me, but he said that it's very important for the environment to be protected. It's something that's bigger than politics, Mr. Speaker. It's something that is a responsibility of government to do. And they saw that as their responsibility and therefore did that. And as I said, it was definitely a positive legacy from the Conservative government at that time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what are we seeing from the current Sask Party government? Mr. Speaker, it's quite different. We are seeing a legacy of potential ruin in terms of various wildlife species in the province, Mr. Speaker, because their habitat lands will become vulnerable or can potentially become vulnerable through the sale of these lands, if not properly scrutinized.

[21:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, no one is saying that the current stewards of those leased lands are not going to continue on with the good stewardship that they are currently undertaking, Mr. Speaker; that's certainly not the case whatsoever.

But what is of concern, Mr. Speaker, is by removing these lands out of the Act itself and simply putting them into regulations, which means then that those lands do not have to follow a serious scrutiny before they are sold, Mr. Speaker, causes it to become then the decision making, quite frankly, only of one person necessary, and that would be the Minister of Environment. But it becomes a decision-making process of a very, very, very narrow set of eyes, Mr. Speaker. And that's of great concern to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, and that's certainly of great concern to the members of the opposition.

We favour the legislation, the lands to remain protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* because therefore it would undergo a greater scrutiny. There would be more debate on whether those lands should be sold. You will have more opinions, Mr. Speaker, more input. And anytime there's important decision-making processes that happen within the province — whether it's these lands to be sold or any other important decision-making processes that happen in Saskatchewan — the more scrutiny that is done, the more sets of eyes that look at that, that process and what is being undertaken, the better the decision-making outcome usually should be, Mr. Speaker.

So the fact that it wouldn't go through the same scrutiny that it would currently go through under legislation is of deep concern to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, as I can attest to from the amazing, enormous amount of correspondence, emails, phone calls, not to mention people stopping me on the street or various events I attend around the province. Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable how many people are concerned about this particular Bill and are concerned about the fact that these lands will no longer be protected under legislation. People are fully aware of the fact that these lands can be sold at minister's discretion, at the Minister of Environment's discretion.

People are aware of the fact also that there's another Bill that's going through the legislature at the same time that the Sask Party government is wanting to ram this Bill through, and that of course is *The Conservation Easements Amendment Act* as well, Mr. Speaker. And what that Bill does is, if someone wants to purchase some land and the minister decides to okay that land purchase — but wants to attach a conservation easement to that land purchase in order to say that the lands must remain protected in a certain manner with respect to what that conservation easement spells out, Mr. Speaker — that purchaser of that land with a conservation easement attached to it can then make application to the Minister of Environment yet again to have that conservation easement removed under *The Conservation Easements Amendment Act* that is being rammed through the legislature right now as well, Mr. Speaker.

So what in effect can happen is, someone can purchase a piece of land with a conservation easement attached it, make an application to have that conservation easement removed. It again falls to the purview of the Minister of Environment. And here's the kicker, Mr. Speaker.

The kicker is that when the Minister of Environment decides to remove that conservation easement, it is not court challengeable. That's what it says in the Bill that the Sask Party government is putting through right now as we speak, Mr. Speaker. The Bill states that it is not court challengeable. And, Mr. Speaker, needless to say that is of great concern, great concern in conjunction with the fact that the Sask Party government right now wants to put through a Bill that will remove the 3.5 million acres of land that is currently protected under the wildlife habitat amendment Act into regulations where it, yet again, becomes the minister's discretion.

So we have two Bills right now, Mr. Speaker, that coincide with each other that are of great concern. We have *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* which takes all the land that is currently protected in legislation and puts it into regulations. And then we also have *The Conservation Easements Amendment Act* which again allows the minister to make a decision to remove a conservation easement. And once her decision is made that she is removing that conservation easement, it is not court challengeable according to the language that's in the Act put forward by the Sask Party government. And, Mr. Speaker, this is of great concern, of great concern.

And I just want to read you the language that's in the Act because it was so shocking quite frankly to myself and others that discovered this, that it caused the whole issue of wanting to remove the protected lands under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. It caused that desire by the Sask Party government to become more nefarious than it was originally, Mr. Speaker, because if at least there was a conservation easement attached to the land that's being sold, then at least you'd know that the land is still going to undergo the same level of stewardship that it would have previously. But once it was discovered that the minister again had discretion to remove that conservation easement and then it not being court challengeable, that's when the original notion of removing the lands under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* became even more nefarious, Mr. Speaker. So I just want to read to you from Bill No. 131, which is *The Conservation Easements Amendment Act* where it says, "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 are removable by *certiorari* or otherwise by any court."

Mr. Speaker, so as I said, this is of great concern in conjunction with *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker. And of course it is being reflected in the correspondence that I'm receiving, the correspondence the Premier's receiving, and the correspondence the Minister of Environment is receiving because a lot of the correspondence that I'm receiving, of course, Mr. Speaker, is being carbon copied to me from the correspondence that's being sent to the Premier and to the Minister of Environment.

So I want to just acknowledge some of the concerns that have been raised with me from the various stakeholder organizations, many of which, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, were named by the Minister of Environment in her second reading on this Bill. In her second reading on *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, she said that she had contacted various stakeholders and then began to name off some of them, Mr. Speaker. And some of them

where . . . For instance she said she contacted Nature Sask. She said she contacted the Nature Conservancy of Canada. She said she contacted the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. She said she contacted Ducks Unlimited, and then she named a few others.

So, Mr. Speaker, I decided to go through the list. I decided to phone all the organizations and find out if they were contacted, Mr. Speaker. And interestingly enough, from the entire list that she gave, and I believe that it was approximately seven different organizations or seven or eight different organizations there was only one, Mr. Speaker, there was one organization, one organization that she had named in her second reading speech on Bill 132 that said that they had been contacted and consulted. The other organizations said that they were not consulted and were deeply distressed by the fact that this Bill was moving forward in the format that it is because they were not consulted. And had they been consulted, Mr. Speaker, they would have told the minister quite a different opinion than what the minister believed is to be the case.

Now one of those organizations that she said she contacted, interestingly enough, was for instance the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. So, Mr. Speaker, on April 29th, the FSIN wrote a letter to Minister Heppner and I believe, yes, the federation also cc'd Premier Brad Wall and also cc'd many others in this letter, Mr. Speaker, including myself.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the letter from the FSIN says it's speaking to the amendments to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* and *The Conservation Easements Act*, and I'm going to quote from this letter:

In 1984 the provincial government of the day initiated the wildlife conservation process by enacting *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* . . .

In November 2008, the Ministry of Agriculture introduced the Agricultural Crown Land Sale program that provided financial incentives for lessees to purchase their leased land from the provincial Crown . . . Delbert Wapass, responded to this program through correspondence to the Minister of Agriculture Bjornrud on November 19, 2008. This letter detailed the concerns that the First Nations people have with regard to the Crown Land Sale Program . . .

The program will reduce the amount of accessible lands available to the First Nations people who possess Treaty rights to such available land through Treaty Land Entitlement and Specific Clams agreements. I wish to sternly express that such program hinders the First Nations people in Saskatchewan to exercise their Treaty and constitutional right to hunt, fish, trap and gather on such lands. What is more perplexing, is that such program excludes First Nations who possess such rights to these lands, from purchasing such, which is contrary to the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement (NRTA), 1930.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say:

It has come to my attention that you are informing your government colleagues and members of the Saskatchewan

Legislature that your Ministry consulted and accommodated the First Nations people prior to initiating this program. I find these statements extremely troubling since no such undertakings have occurred. There has been no attempt by your Ministry to enter into a consultation process with First Nations people regarding the expansion of the sale of Crown lands protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

Mr. Speaker, that's fairly clear. The FSIN has been unwavering in their position that they have not been appropriately consulted with respect to this Bill, Mr. Speaker. He goes on, Mr. Speaker:

Judging from past experience I can only ascertain that your deliberate refusal to consult and accommodate First Nations people on your Ministry's initiatives, including the sale of Crown lands protected under the WHPA, as well as your Ministry's "Results-based Regulatory Review", is a reflection of the policy position that your government has taken with regard to the First Nations people in Saskatchewan. The province has no regard or respect for the interests, concerns and the Inherent and Treaty rights of the First Nations people of Saskatchewan. Furthermore, it appears your government views the Inherent and Treaty Rights of First Nations people as a hindrance to Premier Wall's "growth agenda" and that the government will proceed by attempting to ignore the provincial Crown's constitutional and legal obligations to the First Nations people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this couldn't have been worded any clearer than that. It is absolutely crystal clear how the 74 First Nations who were represented through this letter by the FSIN feel about this piece of legislation and as to whether or not they were appropriately consulted, Mr. Speaker. It couldn't be clearer. He goes on to say:

Rather than a vague reference, I am seeking a response that includes a listing of all the meetings your Ministry held with the First Nations and the dates such were held, which First Nations and their leaders or representatives who attended such meetings, what their responses were, how these were incorporated into the report your Ministry used to make the decision, and how your Ministry reported back to the First Nations of your decision.

Mr. Speaker, it was only a few days ago when I asked the Minister of Environment to table the invitation that was sent out to the stakeholders, when the minister says that she originally started consulting people on this Bill in June of 2009. I asked the minister to table the list of stakeholders that were invited. I asked the minister to table the agenda for that meeting. I asked the minister to table other important documents that came from that meeting, Mr. Speaker.

And what have I heard from, what have I heard from the Minister of Environment so far, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing. Nothing, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister of Environment is being truthful about the fact that these consultations took place and about the fact that there were numerous stakeholders invited who were given appropriate information about the legislation that we're seeing in front of the legislature right now, why is the minister not going to table that information

when it's requested of her, Mr. Speaker? Why is she not coming clean with the people of Saskatchewan as to who was invited, what the agenda was, and how it was worded in terms of the invitation, as to what was going to take place at that meeting from that invitation in June of 2009? Why won't she table that, Mr. Speaker? Do you know why?

[21:30]

I'll tell you why I think she won't do it, Mr. Speaker. Because from all of the correspondence I have, from all of the letters I've received, from all of the emails I've received, and from all of the phone calls I've received, I've not heard many people say that they're going to substantiate what she says, Mr. Speaker. And it's quite the opposite. I'm hearing quite the opposite. They're telling me that yes, they received a letter.

Matter of fact, I have it in my possession, Mr. Speaker. And I've read the letter numerous times because I keep thinking, well maybe I missed something, Mr. Speaker. But guess what? I didn't miss anything and neither did the stakeholders who received that invitation, Mr. Speaker.

There was no notion of those lands, the 3.5 million acres, there was no notion of those lands coming out of the protection of legislation and ending up in regulations so they can be at the discretion of the Minister of Environment to do so at she sees fit. There was no notion of that in that invitation, Mr. Speaker, no matter how many times I read it and no matter how many times the stakeholder organizations that received that letter read it, Mr. Speaker. There was no notion of it.

So the minister is not being truthful when she says that the people who were invited knew about the content that was going to be discussed at those meetings and what was discussed at those meetings. And if she wants us to believe otherwise, then she should do what I requested. As the opposition critic of the Environment for the province of Saskatchewan, I have the right to ask the minister to table documents, and she has not complied with that request, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order. Order. I understand that in the heat of discussion and debate sometimes language is used that's inappropriate. And the member referred to the untruthfulness of the minister. That is unparliamentary language, and I would encourage the member to be very careful about using that kind of language and apologize for the previous use.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're right. In the heated debate it's difficult sometimes to bite one's tongue, but I promise to make a better attempt at doing so going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to refer to a press release, a media release, from May 11th, Mr. Speaker. And this one is from the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Mr. Speaker, another one of those organizations that the minister claims had full knowledge of what the Sask Party government was going to do and that minister also claims was appropriately consulted.

Now, Mr. Speaker, from their press release, I'm just going to

read a few of the excerpts as well:

"The combination of a lack of consultation and the aggressive time line on this Bill has effectively made it impossible to address our concerns and left many important questions unanswered," states Darrell Crabbe, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF). "We need the Minister to table this Legislation until all the variables can be properly addressed."

Then the news release goes on to say, "The SWF sees a 'no net loss' agreement, as has been the policy of every Provincial Government since the WHPA was introduced . . ."

Mr. Speaker, this speaks volumes. This speaks volumes. These lands were protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* in '84, in 1984, under the Conservative government of the Devine Tories at the time.

Any changes that have been made to those lands in terms of sales have been subject to a no net loss policy, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's an important feature that the Sask Party government seems to not want to talk about when the minister gets up and rails about the fact there were lands sold previously, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there were lands sold previously, but there's two major differences. The lands that were sold previously were under legislation and had to be consulted in terms of those land sales before they happened. And the second one, Mr. Speaker, is a no net loss policy. Any lands that were sold were then equally replaced, Mr. Speaker, if not increased. Those are two major differences compared to what the Sask Party government wants to do now.

They are not talking about a no net loss policy. They are not talking about replacing any of the lands that they intend on selling. And, Mr. Speaker, there will be no scrutiny to those lands that they want to sell. There will be no scrutiny to lands that the Sask Party government want to sell because it will be simply at the discretion of the minister because the lands are being removed from the legislation and are being put into regulation. And so therefore people won't find out about the lands being sold until after they've been sold, Mr. Speaker.

So when the Sask Party wants to rail on about the fact that there were lands sold under previous governments, Mr. Speaker, I suggest they check the facts, Mr. Speaker, because the facts are quite different from the story that they want to spin on this, Mr. Speaker. Quite different.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at Nature Saskatchewan and what Nature Saskatchewan had to say. By the way, Mr. Speaker, Nature Saskatchewan was yet another one of the organizations that the Minister of Environment claims to have contacted when she says that they were all consulted with respect to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. And, Mr. Speaker, this letter was written on April 27th and it states:

We can assure you that no meaningful consultation regarding the sale of Crown lands has occurred with Nature Saskatchewan.

It goes on to say:

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.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the author of this letter is Gary Seib, who is the general manager of Nature Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again I ask you, does this sound like a stakeholder organization that feels that it was appropriately consulted, that feels like it was consulted at all, given that he says that we can assure you that no meaningful consultation has taken place? Yet again, Mr. Speaker, we see the minister saying one thing and we're seeing something quite different from the stakeholder organization that the minister claims to have contacted, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are other letters that I want to quote from as well, Mr. Speaker. And one of them is addressed to the Minister of Environment. And it talks about again the proposed changes to *The Critical Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

An Hon. Member: — They don't know what they're doing.

Ms. Morin: — You're right.

I am writing you in regards to my deep concern over your proposed changes to the critical wildlife protection act. I was the land resource management specialist for the Department of Agriculture lands branch at the time these lands were being determined for designation under this Act.

Mr. Speaker, this is an individual who has a depth of knowledge on this subject far greater than many of us have, Mr. Speaker, far greater than many of us. And this is an individual who is taking the time to write to the Minister of Environment expressing his concern. He goes on to say:

Because of my expertise in this field, I was chosen to work directly with the provincial wildlife biologist in determining which lands were designated as wildlife habitat protection Act lands.

My area of responsibility was mainly in the parklands and northern grain belts of Saskatchewan where many of these lands are located. My submission to you is therefore based on this area only.

He goes on to say:

Your ministry must surely be aware the value of preserving natural habitat and wetlands, and how the loss of these is extremely detrimental to our environment. For the sake of the citizens of our great province and for our future generations, we're asking you to rethink your position on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, this gentleman is writing passionately from the experience that he has as an expert in the field, in terms of how those designations were reached for the lands that are currently protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. But, Mr. Speaker, one can see through his writings that he is not just speaking for himself, Mr. Speaker. He is speaking for the sake of the citizens of the province and for future generations, Mr. Speaker.

And that unfortunately is something that the Sask Party government has absolutely no regard for. It's where can we make a quick buck today to balance off our fiscal mismanagement and let the chips fall where they may for the future generations, Mr. Speaker. That seems to be the attitude of the Sask Party government.

And why do I think that, Mr. Speaker? Because there have been more than enough people that have either written letters, sent emails, and phoned the Sask Party members opposite or have taken the time to come to the legislature and express their concern. Mr. Speaker, and the Sask Party government has done nothing, nothing to change this proposed legislation. We're not seeing any amendments come forward. We're not seeing any acknowledgement that there should be changes made, Mr. Speaker. What we're seeing from the Sask Party government is, that we're going to ram through this legislation. We don't care who's complaining . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd ask members to, if they want to continue their debate, private debate, to go behind the bar, allow the member from Regina Walsh Acres to speak. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just heard a comment from across the way that, that they would like me to keep it down. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to keep it down when they don't want to listen to what's being said in terms of the people of Saskatchewan and what the people of Saskatchewan are telling me and asking me to do on their behalf, Mr. Speaker. I will not, I will not be quiet, and I will not lower my voice when it comes to protecting the interests of the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that. So he goes on to say:

Let us not take a backwards step at this critical time and lose the hard battles that many of us, along with the numerous conservation organizations, have fought to gain legislation for the protection of these lands. I admonish you not to take for granted that what you see today will be here tomorrow if your proposed legislation passes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a lengthy letter; it's three pages. And I'm certainly not going to take the time of the House to read everything he has in his letter, but I do want to pull out a few key points, Mr. Speaker. And some of those key points are simply this. And this, Mr. Speaker, is a key point that is raised many, many other times, Mr. Speaker, from a lot of the other correspondence I'm getting, and that is simply how . . . This is what he says, "How would you monitor and inventory the status of the lands in the future years after the purchase so it complies with the conservation easement?"

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the concern that has been raised over and over and over again. The government currently is not doing a good job in terms of monitoring the lands that currently have conservation easements attached to them, Mr. Speaker. I've now been presented with a few examples, very sad examples, Mr. Speaker, where lands with conservation easements attached to them have not been appropriately monitored, and by the time someone makes a complaint, Mr. Speaker, the damage has already been done. The wildlife that existed there or the biodiversity that existed there is no longer available because the land has been so badly damaged.

So at that point then, what is the decision? Well we may as well sell the land because it's no longer useful in terms of retaining the protection of the habitat that existed there previously, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, clearly this is not in all the cases where conservation easements are attached to lands that lessees have. But there are some examples, Mr. Speaker. And these are the examples, Mr. Speaker, that one has to ensure are protected. So he asks a very valid question about how these lands will be monitored when they have conservation easements attached to them.

He also goes on to say:

What field staff in either lands branch or Sask Environment has the personnel and specific qualifications and experience in land resource management to override the previous decisions made by highly qualified and experienced staff? How would the field staff of today determine or accurately define which lands have greater or which have lesser ecological value than what we originally placed on those lands when they were designated wildlife habitat protected lands?

[21:45]

He asks another question, Mr. Speaker:

The assignment of Crown leases to qualified purchasers of the private land associated with these leases, as well as assignments to family members wanting to continue farming, has never posed a problem. What is the reason that this transaction is no longer suitable?

Mr. Speaker, again another extremely valid question to ask. There has never been an issue with the lessees of land. There has never been an issue with generational transfers of those leases, Mr. Speaker. So why is it that the Sask Party government is in such a desperate hurry, such a desperate hurry to ram this legislation through this session?

Why is the Sask Party government in such a desperate hurry to ram this legislation through despite the numerous organizations and individuals that have contacted them expressing the fact that they do not feel that this is appropriate to take those lands that are currently protected under the Act out of that protection and put it into regulation? Why is the Sask Party government so determined to push this legislation through despite the fact it is clearly not in the best interests of the majority of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker?

And furthermore, why is the Sask Party government so desperate to push this undesirable and contentious legislation through when this land, the 3.5 million acres that are currently protected under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, belongs to the people of Saskatchewan? That's who the owners are. The owners of this land is every man, woman, and child in this province, Mr. Speaker. They are the current owners of the land. They have a right to know which lands might potentially be sold. And they have a right to know why those lands are desired to be purchased and by whom, Mr. Speaker, before the land purchase takes place, Mr. Speaker.

So why is the Sask Party government so bent on pushing this legislation through when the landowners, who are the people of Saskatchewan, are expressing their concern and don't want this legislation to proceed?

So he goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

The WHPA lands include some of the best wildlife and conservation land in the province which helps protect our environment and provides a valuable source of recreation to the people of Saskatchewan. Allowing these lands to be sold is, in my view, the most regressive step your government could make. I strongly urge you to reconsider your position.

Now this letter, Mr. Speaker, is signed by George O'Bertos who is a professional agrologist, Mr. Speaker. So I submit to you, this letter is something that the Minister of Environment should be heeding and that the Minister of Environment should take under careful consideration, and therefore should not proceed with the legislation that is currently before the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members, two guests. Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is Beverley Ross, who is a constituent of Saskatoon Centre, and Jan Harty, who is a constituent of Saskatoon Massey Place.

Both Beverley and Jan are very active in the community. I know Beverley volunteers with a number of organizations and is involved with many different activities. Jan operates a small business in Saskatoon throughout the city and both are great people, good friends, and very pleased that they can be here this evening.

Believe it or not, it's Beverley's first visit to the legislature and she's enjoying her time here taking in the sights and listening to the speeches. So it's great that she's able to be here this evening. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Jan and Beverley to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to now move forward to another news release that was submitted on May 17th, and this one comes from the National Farmers Union. And it goes on to say, and it quotes:

“The National Farmers Union is concerned with the government's haste, lack of consultation, and inadequate concern for the future of both wildlife habitat and generations of farmers and ranchers,” said NFU president Terry Boehm.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the National Farmers Union has a unique perspective on their concern with respect to the changes to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker, and I want to, I want to elaborate on some of those concerns that the National Farmers Union has, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Environment, Hon. Nancy Heppner has apologized for the lack of public consultation. A few follow-up meetings is woefully inadequate when the future habitat of 3.5 million acres is at stake. The Government's proposed solution of conservation easements that can be removed at the whim of the Minister of Environment, introduces the potential for abuse.

Goes on to say:

“Citizens of Saskatchewan need to know who wants to buy, at what price, and for what purpose, before any Crown land sales are allowed,” he added.

Now this is a quote again from the NFU [National Farmers Union] president, Terry Boehm. Now he's saying exactly what many others are saying in their correspondence to me, and that is that because the land belongs to every man, woman, and child in Saskatchewan, because the land belongs to the people of Saskatchewan, not to the Sask Party government, they want to know who wants to buy the land, what price they're getting the land for, and for what purpose they want to purchase the land, Mr. Speaker. Now you know what? That does not seem like an unreasonable request, Mr. Speaker. The owners of the land want to know what those three factors are before they take into account whether or not they want to see permission for that land sale to proceed, Mr. Speaker.

So and as I said, that doesn't seem unreasonable, Mr. Speaker, given that the land is serving a specific purpose and that purpose is to protect the wildlife and the ecodiversity that exists on that land, Mr. Speaker. Now the release goes on to say:

Crown land sales must stipulate that when the land is resold, it must remain in the sole hands of Saskatchewan farmers and ranchers, or be repurchased by the Crown.

Again we see an organization that is expressing its concerns, but its concerns of course are about how are those land sales potentially going to affect the farmers and ranchers of the future, Mr. Speaker. So what I found even more interesting, Mr. Speaker, is the next quote. And the next quote really drew my attention for a simple reason. It's because the next quote is by the National Farmers Union youth president, Kalissa Regier.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm of the firm opinion that when our youth speak, we should stand up and listen, Mr. Speaker, because they are the future of Saskatchewan. They are the ones who are going to be directly impacted by any decision-making processes that happen in this legislature, Mr. Speaker. The changes to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, we may not see the detriment that that may cause in the next few years, Mr. Speaker. We may not even see that in my lifetime, Mr. Speaker. But you know what? It will certainly come to fruition in terms of what our youth are going to experience, Mr. Speaker.

So when our youth speak, Mr. Speaker, this is something we should be paying incredible attention to, especially when our youth is actually paying attention to what's happening here in the legislature of Saskatchewan and to the Bills that are coming forward in this legislature. I'm impressed enough by the fact that we have youth in this province that have concern for what is going on in this building because obviously they have many other things that they can be distracted by, Mr. Speaker. And speaking from my own youth, I was duly distracted.

But, Mr. Speaker, the quote that we have in this release from NFU youth president Kalissa Regier is this:

“Access to land is seen as one of the largest barriers for young farmers and ranchers today. With farm debt over a staggering \$60 billion, Crown land leases offer one of the only affordable options for new farmers. Changes to this Act could represent yet another obstacle for future farmers” . . .

Mr. Speaker, yet another perspective and yet another concern, another real concern about why this Act is so problematic and why this Bill should be pulled, Mr. Speaker, and why the Sask Party government should not continue ramming this legislation through in this session, Mr. Speaker.

Now the news release goes on to say:

“For the sake of our wildlife habitat, the environment, rural communities, and future young farmers and ranchers, the Minister of the Environment must withdraw this hastily conceived legislation,” concluded Boehm.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that was, that's fairly clear as to what the position is of the National Farmers Union, which is interesting

because now we've heard from a number of different organizations. We're hearing from these organizations that are expressing great concern and saying, we want to see this Bill tabled or we want to see this Bill go away. We want to see this Bill killed, in other words.

So, Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that when I was reading a quote by the Minister of Environment in another newspaper publication, and in this one the minister says, "We actually didn't have any calls yesterday for the legislation to be pulled, and so we're going to be carrying on with our time line . . ." This is from the Minister of Environment. This is her quote, Mr. Speaker.

So at the time that she was interviewed in this particular weekly in Saskatchewan, this newspaper weekly, she said that they hadn't had any calls or she hadn't had any calls with respect to the legislation, the desire for the legislation to be pulled. So she says we're going to continue on with our timeline.

Well you know what's interesting about that, Mr. Speaker, is that since this interview — unless of course this interview happened at a later date — but since this interview the minister has been told on numerous occasions in emails and correspondence, she's been told over and over and over again that people want to see the legislation pulled or tabled, Mr. Speaker, until full and comprehensive consultations take place.

But what has the minister decided to do? Well let me tell you what the minister has decided to do. Because only on Saturday, May 15th in the *Leader-Post*, the spokesperson for this Bill on Saturday — I don't know if the Minister of Environment is no longer allowed to speak for herself or wasn't available at the time; I'm not sure — but the spokesperson for the Sask Party government, when asked about the demand by the FSIN to halt Crown land sales on First Nations traditional territory, what did the government respond? We don't agree with that approach. We will continue to move in this direction. And that was the natural resources minister, who was the one responding to the request by the FSIN.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can see that this Sask Party government has absolutely no desire to table legislation or pull the legislation or even make any type of amendments whatsoever to the legislation. We're going to ram this legislation through and it just doesn't matter. The Sask Party government is just absolutely bent on ramming this legislation through.

Which brings me to another situation, Mr. Speaker. And that is that when the Minister of Environment realized that, oops, you know, there seem to be a lot of people that are not very happy with this legislation, don't seem to be very happy with the Minister of Environment as a lot of the letters and emails are harshly worded as to how they feel the minister has been handling the situation, Mr. Speaker, so what happens then? Well the Minister of Environment decides to call together a very hasty workshop on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. It was within a week that the workshop was organized by the Minister of Environment.

And you know what the Minister of Environment, what she said at that point? The Minister of Environment said at that point that, you know, they appreciate everything they heard, but they

will be moving forward with the Bill. But they're open to talking about it afterwards. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a little like me telling my daughter, don't walk around with a full bowl of milk for, you know, your cereal in the morning, and then her telling me — you know what? — we'll discuss this after I've spilled the milk all over my carpet, Mr. Speaker. That's akin to the same thing.

[22:00]

Why would you want to talk about something after the negative effect has taken place? Why would you not want to talk to the stakeholders and the people that are raising those concerns and take those suggestions and make those changes prior to the negative effect of the legislation that you're wanting to ram through taking effect, Mr. Speaker? It makes no sense whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, another stakeholder group that has obviously an incredible reputation in terms of their level of expertise and the work they're doing in the province of Saskatchewan with respect to all issues of concern with respect to the environment is, of course, the Saskatchewan Environmental Society.

And, Mr. Speaker, on May 13th, the Saskatchewan Environmental Society wrote a letter to the Minister of Environment. And, Mr. Speaker, this letter was also cc'd to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, so no one on the Sask Party government side can claim that they're not being appropriately informed or being appropriately contacted with respect to the concerns that they are wanting to raise because the Minister of Environment is receiving this correspondence. The Premier himself is receiving this correspondence, and yet there are no changes being made, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, the organizations that met with the Minister of Environment on May 8th when they came to the workshop, I've been told, were told by the Premier himself that . . . The Premier said that the Sask Party government is not backing down and will consult afterwards. So not only is the Minister of Environment saying that they're not backing down and that they'll talk about it afterwards, but obviously this comes at the direction of the Premier himself because the Premier himself is saying that they're not going to pull the legislation but they're willing to talk about it afterward, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this speaks to the incredible lack of judgment, lack of good judgment that the Premier of this province possesses, Mr. Speaker. And we're seeing countless examples of the decision-making processes as the Sask Party government is making that are questionable. We see countless examples of the decision-making processes that the Sask Party government is making that have not had due process or consultation, Mr. Speaker. And we're also seeing that all of these things tie back to the office of the Premier himself, Mr. Speaker, and his absolute lack of good judgment when it comes to doing things on behalf of the people of the province and not just a few select people, Mr. Speaker.

He is supposed to be governing for the entire province, Mr. Speaker. He is supposed to be governing for the good of the majority of the province, Mr. Speaker, and we are not seeing that, Mr. Speaker. We are not seeing that in the short time, in

the three years that this government has been elected, Mr. Speaker. We see poor judgment — bad judgment after bad judgment after bad judgment. And now, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis we're hearing of more and more nefarious ongoingings with respect to the decision-making processes that are happening on the Sask Party government side.

And, Mr. Speaker, we'll stay tuned because, as I said, we can't keep up with the amount of contact that we're receiving from the people of Saskatchewan right now, but we vow to do our very best to make sure that everything is investigated thoroughly and that we do due diligence as the opposition members representing the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and their best interests, Mr. Speaker. We'll ensure that we can do the very best job that we can, Mr. Speaker.

Now in the letter from the Saskatchewan Environmental Society to Minister of Environment on May 13th, I want to quote again:

Your government's plan to sell off portions of this land is, in the judgment of our non-profit organization, not in the public interest. These areas of native grassland, aspen parkland and wetland need to be preserved.

And they go on to talk about the amount of lands that are currently protected and the fragmentation of those lands potentially if there is sales of those lands happening, Mr. Speaker. And then they go on, to quote: "More importantly, conservation easements are only as effective as the quality of the programs under which they are monitored and enforced."

Mr. Speaker, here we see yet again another stakeholder organization that has expertise to be able to speak on the issue, Mr. Speaker, and again expressing concern about the fact that the Sask Party government is saying don't worry folks; any of the land that is sold outside of the lands that are going to be sold without a conservation easement attached, those lands, you know, they're still going to have a conservation easement attached to them, so you know the wildlife and the land — how should I say? — the environmental concerns for that land will be maintained under conservation easement. But as is expressed here again, those conservation easements are only as effective as the quality of the programs under which they are monitored and enforced, Mr. Speaker.

And we've not heard anything from the Minister of the Environment that she is going to make any improvements whatsoever or increase staffing in the Ministry of Environment or even has the budget to do so, Mr. Speaker, in terms of effectively monitoring and enforcing the lands that will then have conservation easements attached to them, Mr. Speaker. Now right now, Mr. Speaker, those lands are at least protected because they're under legislation. Once the minister has sold them with a conservation easement attached to them, it becomes that much more difficult in terms of ensuring that those lands are protected the way they should be with the entity, the person, or the group that has purchased them.

Now they go to say:

Given the value of wildlife habitat lands, we prefer to see an approach taken that requires the passage of a bill in the

provincial legislature, whenever lands are being removed from protected status. We also support a policy of no net loss. In other words, if crown lands are removed from protected status, they should be replaced with other crown lands with high ecological value that are protected, so that the total of 3.5 million acres is not diminished, but in fact over time is increased.

Mr. Speaker, so again we see the whole issue of when there is a decision for lands to be sold . . . Of course they would like to see those lands remain in legislation so the proper scrutiny could be done before the lands are sold instead of being told after the fact that the land has been sold, and you can come and talk to us now but it's too late anyways. But so what they're saying is, is that if any of the lands are sold that are currently under *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, that there should be a policy of no net loss . . . which again, Mr. Speaker, we're not hearing anything, anything of the sort from the Premier of Saskatchewan or the Minister of Environment with respect to a no net loss policy. It's non-existent, Mr. Speaker. It's non-existent. They are simply going to sell whatever lands they want to sell, without a conservation easement attached to it, with a conservation easement attached to it, with absolutely no notion of replacing those lands through a no net loss policy.

Now he goes on to say, in this letter . . . Sorry, not he, they go on to say in this letter:

In closing, we urge you to table your current amendments to the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. The changes you are embarking upon, once instituted, will largely be irreversible, and should thus be more carefully considered.

And again, Mr. Speaker: "In closing, our strong preference continues to be to see the current legislation before the Assembly tabled while further consultations are undertaken." Mr. Speaker, this letter by the Saskatchewan Environmental Society was written by Jocelyn Orb, who is the president, and by Allyson Brady, who is the executive director. And, Mr. Speaker, again there is no vagueness about this letter, Mr. Speaker. They are very clear as to what their concerns are. They're very clear as to what they want to see the Premier of the province and the Minister of Environment do with this legislation.

And yet again we see neither one, the Premier nor the Minister of Environment, heeding what an organization that has expertise on the issue is saying, Mr. Speaker. Once again we see it being dismissed and being further ridiculed by being told — you know what? — well you can talk to us afterwards. Well you know what, Mr. Speaker? That's too little too late.

Now I have another letter here, Mr. Speaker, and this is again to the Minister of Environment. And I was cc'd on this email, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to quote a few lines from this letter as well. So it says:

Dear Ms. Heppner,

I reside in Martensville and have written you in this regard previously although I have not been favoured with your response.

So, Mr. Speaker, we see that even when people are contacting the Minister of Environment that they're not even granted the respect by receiving a response, Mr. Speaker. Now that in itself is very shameful, extremely shameful. She goes on to say:

It is my understanding that by removing these protected areas from WHPA, these lands could be sold and their protection classification changed without any public consultation or debate in the legislature. Further, I understand that you have confirmed that over 300,000 acres out of the 3 million acres taken out of the Act's protection may be sold once you ram Bill 132 through by the end of May as you have indicated is your intention.

In fact, although your May 5th, 2010, release speaks extensively of the protection of conservation easements, I am horrified to learn that wildlife habitat lands may be sold without conservation easements attached and that subsequent changes made to *The Conservation Easements Act* put forward by your government makes it impossible to challenge you on any decisions made respecting easements.

This speaks exactly to what I spoke to at the beginning of my comments on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, that the concern of having the protected lands removed out of legislation and moved into regulations is concerning enough, but when you combine that with the other piece of legislation before the Assembly which is *The Conservation Easements Amendment Act* where the minister has sole discretion to remove a conservation easement and it's not court challengeable, makes this much, much more nefarious than previously, Mr. Speaker. She goes on to say:

I am certain that you will agree that conducting a series of workshops after the introduction of Bill 132 cannot in any way be constituted as legitimate and respectful consultation. In fact on this serious and far-reaching issue, you and your government have displayed complete disregard for any genuine public consultation efforts, providing instead the usual and predictable knee-jerk reactions to any bad press that might arise.

This is a huge decision that should not be taken lightly, quickly, or in secrecy, all of which seem to be the case here. She goes on to say:

The land that is protected under WHPA is not yours to sell. I will remind you again that this land in its entirety is owned by the people of the province of which myself and my two adult children are three. We are all the owners of this land, and we must all be provided the opportunity and in fact be encouraged to share in the determination of whether this land should be sold and the conditions that might be attached to this sale. I am asking you to withdraw Bill 132 . . .

Pretty clear request again, Mr. Speaker.

I'm asking you withdraw Bill 132 until proper and full public consultations with all interested groups and parties have been satisfactorily concluded. The land isn't going anywhere. What is your rush? The decision of whether or not to sell this land is not yours to make without the

benefit of that input from the over 1 million people who own it.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, this letter was written by a woman from Martensville which is actually in the constituency of the Minister of Environment. And the author of the letter, Ann Smith, is very clear in what she is asking the minister to do, and that is not to proceed with the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I see that . . . Well let's put it this way. Every day in the newspaper there is something about *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*. Either it's a report being done on a news press release that's gone out or it's a letter to the editor or it's a write-up about something to do with *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*.

[22:15]

But one of the most interesting things I've found in the newspaper recently, Mr. Speaker, is the PR [public relations] campaign that has now been launched by the Ministry of Environment, obviously at the direction of the Premier and the Minister of Environment. And it's an ad that shows a couple of cute, little deer and it says, for now and for the future. And it talks about, our goal is to protect conservation ecological values in Saskatchewan's southern Crown land. Amendments to *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act* and *The Conservation Easements Act* will — and then it goes on to say — ensure the continued protection of over 90 per cent of WHPA land, either through continued ownership by the Crown or by the use of a conservation tool called a Crown conservation easement.

It talks about introducing penalties for breaking the terms of a conservation easement. And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because they talk about that, you know that there are still going to be lands that are going to be protected either through the Crown ownership or through conservation easements. Nowhere in here does it talk about the fact that the minister can remove those conservation easements and that it's not court challengeable.

Nowhere does it talk about the fact that, despite the fact that they've increased penalties for breaking the terms of a conservation easement, that there is likely not going to be someone to monitor and enforce the increase of the penalty that the Sask Party is now touting in their PR campaign to try and sell this to the public, despite the fact the public knows exactly what's going on, and it's quite contrary to the spin that's being put in this ad that's in the paper, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said, if the government wasn't in trouble, the Sask Party government wasn't in trouble with this piece of legislation in terms of the amount of feedback it's received from the people of Saskatchewan, they would not be resorting to taking out ads in newspapers as a public relations campaign to try and sell their legislation and make it sound much less nefarious than it actually is, Mr. Speaker. They're trying to cast a positive light on the issue, when clearly people in Saskatchewan have educated themselves and know full well that that's not the case.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also want to quote from another email I should say, that was sent out — no, letter, sorry — a letter that was sent to Saskatchewan First Nations tribal councils. And this

letter, Mr. Speaker, is sent by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Fourth Vice Chief, Vice-chief Lyle Whitefish. And what he says here is:

In a letter dated April 22, 2010, the Minister of Environment invited the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations as representative to a briefing on *The Conservation Easement Amendments Act*, *The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*, and the Crown land ecological assessment tool which is otherwise known as CLEAT. There was no attempt to send the same invitation to the 74 Saskatchewan First Nations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason I want to read from this particular letter to the First Nations tribal councils is because when we were in committee the other evening with respect to budget estimates, I asked the minister about a cut that was made on the budget line and asked her about the fact that it's now hindering the FSIN from doing the work that they were doing on behalf of the First Nations with respect to issues with the Ministry of Environment and furthering discussions with the Ministry of Environment in representing the 74 First Nations.

And I thought it was very interesting that the minister said a number of times in budget estimates that when she had organized this workshop that the FSIN was invited. Now she wanted to make sure that I understood that, she was very clear on the issue that this did not cover off the obligation for the Sask Party government with respect to duty to consult. What was even more interesting, Mr. Speaker, was the minister's dismissive tone about the fact that she claims that the FSIN chose not to attend the meeting. And that's exactly the word that she used, Mr. Speaker, that the FSIN chose not to attend, and was very dismissive about the fact that it was the FSIN's decision that they chose not to attend.

Well what this is going to show you, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what took place when the FSIN received that invitation and why they were not able to attend. And there's a big difference between the word chose not to attend and were not able to attend with proper authority, Mr. Speaker. So I'm going to go on to read here:

As you're aware, on March 8, 2010, the Chiefs of Saskatchewan adopted a model consultation and accommodation procedure and law that prescribes the manner that the Saskatchewan First Nations are to be consulted and accommodated with respect to any government activity that impacts on the inherent and treaty rights. The procedure and law state that the Chief and council are the point of engagement and possess a right and authority to participate in any consultation and accommodation activity on behalf of their First Nation.

Furthermore, in accordance with this procedure, any attempt to bypass the Chief and council members will not be deemed to be consultation or accommodation as pronounced by the courts. According to the model procedure and law, the FSIN may only engage in consultation and accommodation discussions when the leadership of First Nations agree to delegate that responsibility to the FSIN. The FSIN has not been delegated this responsibility, therefore the Ministry of Environment must engage the 74

Saskatchewan First Nations directly on this matter. It is for this reason that the FSIN did not participate in this briefing session on May 6, 2010.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see that it had nothing to do with choice, that the FSIN didn't simply choose not to attend the workshop that occurred on May 6th with the other stakeholder groups, some of the other stakeholder groups that attended. But they did not have the mandate to represent the 74 First Nations at this meeting, Mr. Speaker. Because the meeting was so hastily called, they were not able to get that mandate from the 74 First Nations in order to speak on their behalf as the representative organization for the 74 First Nations.

So what has to happen now, Mr. Speaker, is the Sask Party government is, they are bound to in terms of proper consultation, they are now bound to contacting each and every one of the 74 First Nations to ensure that the proper consultative process has taken place, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, the news flash for the Premier and the Minister of Environment is this: that consultation is supposed to take place prior to the legislation being passed, not after the fact which is something that we've seen previously, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen Bills 5 and 6 rammed through by this government. And what happened when it was taken to the United Nations for the concerns by the individuals that are directly impacted by those Bills, Mr. Speaker? The ILO [International Labour Organization] under the United Nations said that those Bills were not properly consulted in terms of the stakeholders that it would most directly affect, therefore both of those Bills should be set aside and the process should be started over again, Mr. Speaker. That's what the United Nations is saying about the changes to *The Trade Union Act* and the changes to the essential services Act, Mr. Speaker, or the essential services legislation. They're saying that both of those pieces of legislation should be scrapped, and the whole process should be started over because the consultation did not occur before the Bills were passed.

Well I cannot believe for the life of me, Mr. Speaker, that the Sask Party government is not heeding what the United Nations said about those two pieces of legislation and are willing to repeat the same mistake all over again with this piece of legislation. They have not done proper consultations with stakeholder organizations, and moreover, Mr. Speaker, they have not yet contacted the 74 First Nations that they are bound by law to do, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we can see yet again that despite the fact that it is being verbalized, it's being written to the minister, it's being written to the Premier of the province, they are not heeding the good advice that they are receiving, and they are just maintaining the course of going ahead with the legislation, whether it's something that is in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan or not, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to also read from another email that was sent. And this email was sent after this couple had sent a letter to the Premier. So the letter that was sent to the Premier, they did receive a response from the Premier, and this was on March 15th of 2010. The response from the Premier says that the letter has been forwarded to the Minister of Agriculture and

the Minister of Environment to make them aware of your concerns. I'm sorry, I'm quoting from the letter, Mr. Speaker, "... to make them aware of your concerns, and Minister Heppner will be responding to you further on our government's efforts to protect our province's biodiversity."

[Interjections]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Elhard): — Order. The time having reached 10:30 p.m., this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, so at least, at least there's a change in this situation, Mr. Speaker, as I read in the previous email where the Minister of Environment's own constituent said that she had written to her in this regard previously and had not been favoured with a response. We're seeing that this couple from Estevan that wrote to the Premier were at least given a response and that the Premier said that he's going to forward the concerns to the Minister of Environment to ensure that she has that information.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

So what is the email that was sent to me? The email that was sent to me, with the Premier's response letter attached to it, from this couple from Estevan says this, "We do not feel that he has addressed our concerns," being the Premier:

We do not feel that he has addressed our concerns or done any consultations with interest groups by the way he has responded to our letter. There was approximately 240 letters that were sent to him that are Saskatchewan Wildlife members, a group that should be consulted for input.

Mr. Speaker, I can't even claim to have received the 240 letters from the Saskatchewan Wildlife members myself. But I don't doubt for a minute that this couple would not be claiming that they know of 240 letters that were sent to the Premier from Saskatchewan Wildlife members. And again we're seeing that even that doesn't have any impact on the Premier's decision-making process or that of the Minister of Environment.

They go on to say in the email:

We do not want land sold, then finding out after the fact. We want to be notified and have the government accountable to Saskatchewan residents for this valuable resource.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, thank goodness the hour is moving on here because I'm having to talk louder and louder because the members opposite honestly don't want to hear what the people of Saskatchewan have to say on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. They want to, they want to shout me down, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to hear what people from Saskatchewan have to say. Because why? Because they're going to go through with this legislation anyway, Mr. Speaker.

They don't care what the people of Saskatchewan have to say. They don't care what the First Nations of Saskatchewan have to say. They don't care what the environmental organizations of Saskatchewan have to say, Mr. Speaker, because they've already made it clear. The Premier has already articulated that, the Minister of Environment has already articulated that, that they are proceeding with this legislation no matter what anyone says, Mr. Speaker, no matter what anyone says.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again when we look at . . .

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**EVENING SITTING
ADJOURNED DEBATES
SECOND READINGS**

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

Yates.....5575
Morin5593

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Iwanchuk5584
Brotten5598

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier of Saskatchewan
President of the Executive Council

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

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for Uranium
Development Partnership
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Research Council

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Enterprise
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. June Draude
Minister Responsible for Crown Investments
Corporation
Provincial Secretary
Minister Responsible for Information Technology Office
Minister Responsible for Information
Services Corporation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial Capital
Commission

Hon. Rod Gantfoer
Minister of Finance

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Municipal Affairs

Hon. Nancy Heppner
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. D.F. (Yogi) Huyghebaert
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Education

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

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

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Liquor and Gaming Authority