



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

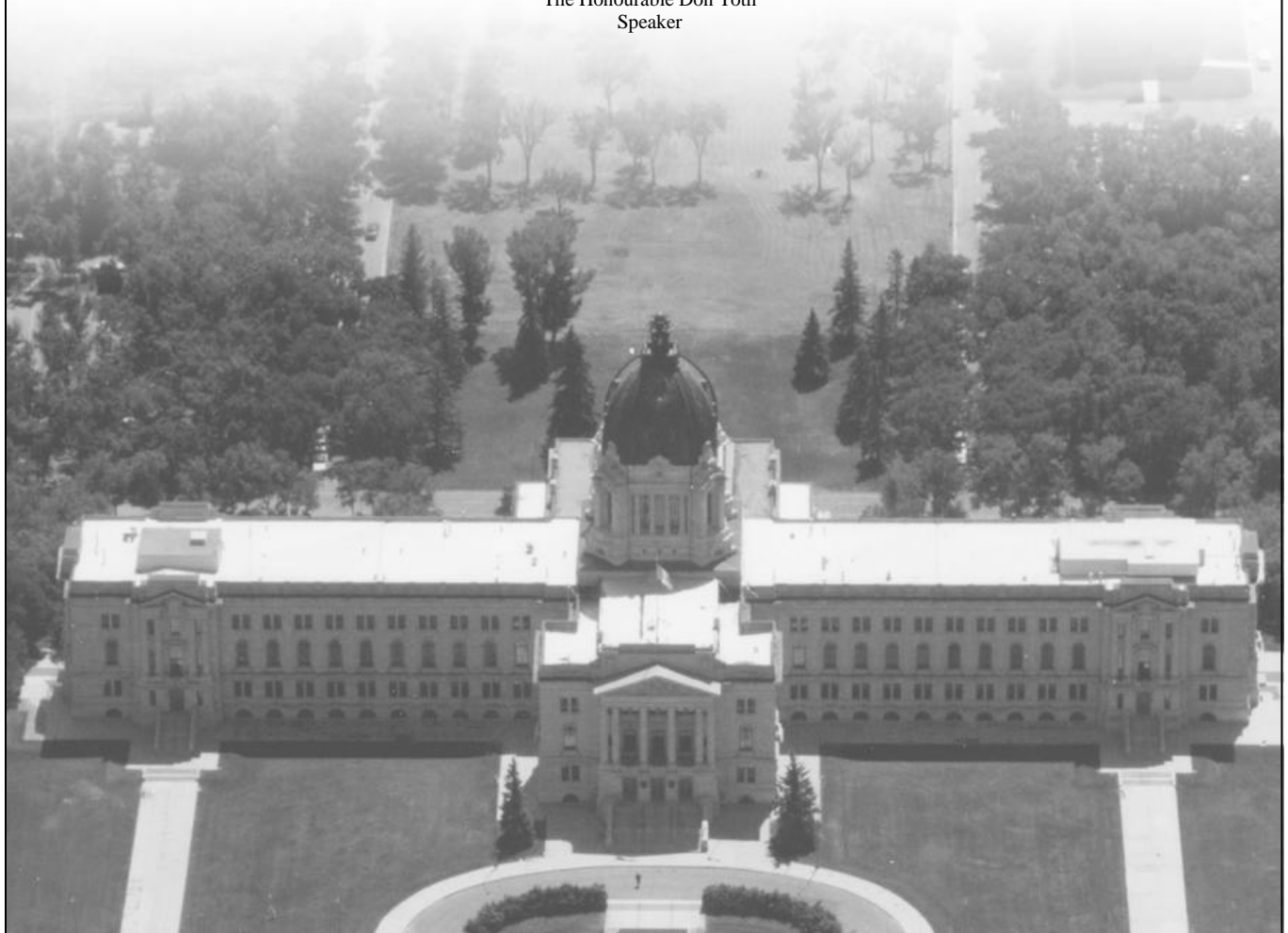
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
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, 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, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. 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
Lingenfelter, Dwain	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. 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, Hon. Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, 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
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's a pleasure for me to be able to introduce to all members of this Assembly some very important guests who have joined us in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They were here in the province for a very important announcement that occurred earlier this day in a hangar at the Regina airport.

Mr. Speaker, many, many years ago it was the dream of Dr. Greg Powell, now the president and CEO [chief executive officer] of the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, it was the dream of Dr. Powell to have helicopter rescue and emergency care for the people of Alberta.

It was also a few years after that the dream of the current member for Melfort in this Legislative Assembly to bring that service to the province of Saskatchewan years ago. And today we signed an agreement, the Government of Saskatchewan and STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society] did, to deliver this service to the province. We were there with a founding sponsor, partners of Mosaic and Crescent Point Energy, and also other sponsors that include Husky and Enbridge and Rawlco.

So joining us in your gallery today, they were there for the announcement, and it helped us mark and celebrate this event: Dr. Greg Powell, president and CEO of STARS; Linda Powell, vice-president governance and external affairs; Jeff Quick, chief financial officer; Phil Levson, vice-president STARS foundation.

And there are some of the STARS air medical crew that were also at the announcement today. I'd like to introduce them to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, if I can, including Ken King, Mike Lamacchia, Cam Bell, and Daniel Kolbylak, who, Mr. Speaker, Daniel's from Sonningdale not far from Biggar, Saskatchewan. He has been working with STARS for some time. There'll be about 90-plus STARS personnel in the province when it's operational, and we're hoping Daniel will be one of them. He's had to cheer for the Riders from Calgary. It's time we bring him home, and he'll help us build STARS here and be able to be that much closer for games.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that all members of the Assembly would welcome these special guests to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the opposition I'd like to welcome Dr. Powell and his executive and the medical staff from the STARS ambulance service to Saskatchewan and look forward to hearing more about this

adventure and welcome them too to the Legislative Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs, the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery today, I have the pleasure of introducing Ms. Twyla Meredith, the president and CEO of the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation. Twyla joined Sask Gaming in 1995 and served as the senior vice-president of finance and administration prior to her appointment as president and CEO. Along with her responsibilities at Sask Gaming, Twyla's a dedicated volunteer, serving as a board member for the Saskatchewan Roughriders and the Hospitals of Regina Foundation.

Joining Twyla in the gallery today is Jan Carter. Jan has been with Sask Gaming for the past year and is the director of communications. I ask all members to join me in thanking Jan and Twyla for being here today as we will be tabling the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation 2010 annual report.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, it also is a great pleasure to see a constituent of Saskatoon Silver Springs in your gallery, the Chair of the public school board and a good friend, Mr. Ray Morrison. Ray has been involved in various activities in the community. He also, during his day job, is employed by SaskTel who had a great announcement yesterday. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Ray Morrison, public school board Chair, to his Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Silver Springs in welcoming Mr. Morrison to the Assembly today. These are certainly interesting times for education in the province, and it's good to see him here today. So on behalf of the opposition, welcome to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone, the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'll just give a warning. I have two introductions, so we are aware of that before I get started. My first introduction, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly 17 grade 6, 7, and 8 students from St. Augustine Elementary School in Wilcox, Saskatchewan. They've made the trek in and are going to watch the proceedings today. I will have an opportunity to meet with them for a little while after and chat with them.

Accompanying the 17 students are Loretta Ryan and also Bill Sherven. Hi, Bill, good to see you again. And also chaperone and bus driver, Sandi Weisshaar. Sandi, good to see you again as well. So I'd like all members to welcome these grade 6, 7, and 8 students to their Legislative Assembly.

This will be my second introduction, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to again introduce to you and all members of this

Assembly someone seated in the west gallery. No stranger, I don't think, to the political discourse in this province for sure. She has served this province extremely well. It's Marg Moran McQuinn, who is seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Marg is just recently retired. She was the executive director of communications for the Ministry of Health for the past 10 years. I can tell you that in three and a half of those years or about three of those years, I was the minister. And she did an absolutely amazing job for us as a government, a new government especially, Mr. Speaker. Having her experience guide us through probably one of the tougher portfolios, some would say — although I'm enjoying it — one of the tougher portfolios in the government, Mr. Speaker, Marg has done a marvellous job.

And it was always interesting, each meeting, Mr. Speaker. She has a flair for fashion, and that always, you know, on a Monday morning briefing certainly got me aware and ready for the briefing. Thank you. And I'd ask all members to welcome Marg to her Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to thank Marg Moran McQuinn for very many years of service to the provincial government. The five years that I was Health minister, I worked very closely with her on many different events, but I think the one that stands out in the years that we worked together relates to the rollout of the action plan for Saskatchewan Health. And I know that the wise counsel that she gave through that whole process meant that it is something that is part of our history here in Saskatchewan and it's of good use for the long-term. So thank you very much, Marg. And I also want to say thank you for many years worth of tomatoes too because Marg's a great gardener, and she would always share the wealth. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Greystone, the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce Brenda Barootes who's here on behalf of the University of Regina. She serves through hard work and diligence on behalf of the university on the university's board of governors. And we're very, very pleased to welcome her back to this building and back to the province for the work that she does on behalf of the students and scholars at that institution. I'll ask all members to join me in welcoming Brenda to her Assembly.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the Minister of Advanced Education in welcoming Brenda Barootes to the legislature.

Many, many, many, many, many years ago, let's go back to 1986 when I was a freshly minted member of the legislature, I got to know Ms. Barootes. And I think she was at that time

working at the Crown Investments Corporation as the corporate secretary to a number of boards, I'm going from memory here. But Brenda was a young woman as well, and I think she did a terrific job on behalf of the people of the province. I'm pleased that she's been appointed to the board of governors of the University of Regina. She's an accomplished woman, and I want to recognize her today and welcome her to the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 27 wonderful students from W.F. Ready School in my riding in Regina, Mr. Speaker. And they are accompanied by one of my colleague's favourite teachers, Mr. Speaker. This teacher has had a very difficult job trying to instruct this individual but has done a very good job, Mr. Speaker. That would be Stephanie Wotherspoon.

And, Mr. Speaker, you have the responsibility of keeping him in line for a few hours a day. You will get the opportunity to meet the person who has to look after it the rest of the year, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to welcome the 27 students from W.F. Ready School here this afternoon and of course our good friend Stephanie Wotherspoon.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery, to you and through you it's my honour to introduce very special guests here today celebrating and recognizing Tartan Day. Mr. Speaker. And I recognize some of the members of Sons of Scotland, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome to their Assembly Mr. Iain Mentiplay, Ms. Dorene Mentiplay, Mr. Len Spence, Ms. Jean Clive. And I'd also like to recognize somebody who couldn't be here today but certainly is a leader, and that would be Chief Ms. Marg Willette.

We had a special celebration before proceedings here today, and it's an honour to have them in their Assembly. I ask all members to offer them a warm welcome.

And while still on my feet, Mr. Speaker, and already referenced to, it's a pleasure to welcome Stephanie and a wonderful class of grade 6 and 7's to their Assembly. Good to see you.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions calling for protection for renters from unreasonable rent increases. And we know that Saskatchewan renters are facing a combination of rising rents and low vacancy rates in many communities throughout our province. And we know that the majority of Canadians now live in provinces with rent control guidelines, including Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, and that the argument that the private market would deliver sufficient affordable rental spaces in the absence of rent control

has been proven false many times. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to consider enacting some form of rent control with a view to protecting Saskatchewan renters from unreasonable rent increases.

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

I do so present. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who live in the neighbourhood of Hampton Village, and it's about the need for a new school for their children.

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that Hampton Village is a rapidly growing community in Saskatoon with many young families; that Hampton Village residents pay a significant amount of taxes including education property taxes; that children in Hampton Village deserve to be able to attend school in their own community instead of travelling to neighbouring communities to attend schools that are typically already reaching capacity.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to devote the necessary resources for the construction of an elementary school in Hampton Village so that children in this rapidly growing neighbourhood in Saskatoon can attend school in their own community.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition live in the neighbourhood of Hampton Village. I so present.

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

**Mr. Furber:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure again today to rise in support of a petition with respect to a potash royalty review. Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed because Saskatchewan people are the owners of a 1,000-year strategic resource that is our potash and that the owners of the potash deserve to receive the maximum benefit from that potash. Additionally the CEO of the Potash Corporation has said that there's a new norm for the industry in the world. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to begin a comprehensive, transparent, and public review of Saskatchewan's potash royalty system with a view to maximizing the return on this strategic resource for its owners, the people of Saskatchewan, who wish to use these additional potash royalty revenues for needed

investments in health care, child care, education, affordable housing, infrastructure, and other social programs, as well as public initiatives such as debt repayment.

Mr. Speaker, today's petition is signed by good folks from Craven, Lumsden, and Regina. I so present.

[13:45]

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

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise yet again to present a petition calling on the government to restore funding equity to Regina Catholic schools. Regina Catholic schools received \$275 less per pupil than Regina public schools, amounting to a funding inequity of \$2.7 million in total. That funding inequity places program delivery and staffing levels at risk. The Government of Saskatchewan has denied Catholic school boards in the province representation on the government-appointed committee mandated to develop a long-term funding formula for Saskatchewan school boards. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to address the funding inequity between Regina Catholic schools and Regina public schools that provides \$275 less per pupil funding for Regina Catholic school students, totalling \$2.7 million, and make known that the continuation for another school year of funding inequity places program delivery and staffing levels at risk in Regina Catholic schools; and in so doing, immediately restore funding equity to ensure that every student in Saskatchewan, whether enrolled in a Catholic or a public school, receives equitable resources to ensure every student in Saskatchewan has access to a quality education.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the residents of Saskatoon. I so present.

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

**Mr. Quennell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the detrimental effects on human rights law that Bill 160 will have if enacted. And the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan withdraw Bill 160 from consideration by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and hold extensive public consultations informed by a public policy paper before any amendments to the Human Rights Code, the law that supersedes all others in our province, are even considered.

Today the petition is signed by residents of Swift Current, Humboldt, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Mildred, and Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, once again it's my pleasure to rise and present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude specifically to a record that includes the running of deficits and the increasing of debt at a time of record highs in revenues, recognizing that this is both unacceptable and it comes at a consequence to future generations. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party government for its damaging financial mismanagement since taking office, a reckless fiscal record that is denying Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses the responsible and trustworthy fiscal management that they so deserve.

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Redvers and La Ronge. I so submit.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### National Tartan Day

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise in this House today to announce that today marks National Tartan Day. The date of April 6th was chosen to celebrate the role of the independent Scots who helped to discover, conquer, explore, settle, and build the country now called Canada.

The Scots had been travelling the world for hundreds of years. While the population of Scotland is around 5 million, there are many more millions of people with Scottish ancestry worldwide. Wherever they went, the Scots adapted to their new country but seldom forgot their heritage. This morning the lobby resonated with the familiar sounds of the pipes and drums.

My grandfather emigrated from Scotland when he was a wee lad at 15 years of age. From there, he founded what is to this day operating as Chisholm Farms.

Scottish people aim to be fiscally prudent. Mr. Speaker, this is a goal that is shared by my family and our government. We have introduced four consecutive balanced budgets, with this last budget reducing debt by some \$325 million while posting a surplus of \$115 million. Mr. Speaker, I know this is a budget and government my grandfather would be proud of. And I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing National Tartan Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, I believe that member thought it was April Fool's Day here today. But in fact today it's Tartan Day, Mr. Speaker, a day that's recognized in Saskatchewan and across our country.

Earlier today I had the honour of bringing greetings to the Tartan Day ceremony, and it was my pleasure to observe a fine bit of piping and drumming. It was most appropriate that the Sons of Scotland took the lead in celebrating this day, providing pride through the Scottish diaspora and in our city and across our province. I want to take this day to thank the Regina Sons of Scotland, their leadership and membership for keeping alive the great traditions, literature, and music of Scotland. It is their leadership that preserves and shares proudly Scottish heritage and culture in Canada.

Our modern history as a province is a story of immigration. Descendants of Scotland are a significant part of this modern history with large contributions socially, economically, and culturally. Scottish descendants have been an integral part of this modern history every step of the way, from the early days of the fur trade, to homesteading and farming, to serving in this very legislature, to waves of immigration that continue to this day. I proudly wear our tartan here today.

Much like the tartan, our province is a weave of many different threads. Just like the tartan, that is what makes us both strong and beautiful. This is represented in our provincial motto that states "from many peoples, strength," and represented here today through the ceremony. To the Sons of Scotland, I simply say, thank you. I ask all of us in this Assembly to enjoy and recognize Tartan Day in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### 2011 SaskPower Legacy Award Recipient

**Hon. Mr. Hickie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening I had the pleasure of attending the Samuel McLeod Business Awards in Prince Albert. The Samuel McLeod Business Awards identify success in businesses throughout the Prince Albert area.

The SaskPower Legacy Award is a lifetime achievement award for outstanding performance in business. Last evening I had the honour to help present the SaskPower Legacy Award which recognizes a lifetime commitment to outstanding performance to Mr. Malcolm Jenkins, the owner of the local Canadian Tire store.

Moving to Prince Albert 21 years ago, Mr. Jenkins built not just a business but helped rebuild our community. His generosity has extended past business. His visions have helped create the E.A. Rawlinson Centre, the Performing Arts Warehouse, the Kinsmen Skateboard Park, the Broadway North Theatre Company, and the Alfred Jenkins Field House.

His strong leadership engages people to give back to the community and become involved. Malcolm will say that he isn't reflecting on his achievements but the vision of growth and success for future accomplishments, continuing to help

Prince Albert grow and succeed. Mr. Speaker, this is what the Saskatchewan advantage is all about. It's focusing on our future and our children's future.

Malcolm Jenkins is a true friend of mine, and I am honoured to know such a respectable, admirable man; a man who deserves to be recognized not only as the 2011 Legacy Award recipient but as a generous, noble, and highly regarded member of the Prince Albert community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### 2011 Provincial Debating Championships

**Ms. Chartier:** — Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to join you recently in presenting awards at the 2011 E.C. Leslie Provincial Championships, the annual championships of the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association, or SEDA, this year hosted by Campbell Collegiate in Regina. 102 students from around the province, ranging from grade 5 to grade 12 participated in the tournament.

The motion the students debated read as follows: "This House would allocate seats in parliament for Aboriginal peoples." This is a particularly relevant debate to have today here in Saskatchewan with a growing First Nations and Métis population and limited descriptive Aboriginal representation here in this legislature. The students brought well-researched and thoughtful points forward on both sides of the debate.

The high school open final featured Nicholas Carver-Hill and Stefan Belev from Walter Murray Collegiate in Saskatoon and Julia Peng and Brandon Powell from Campbell Collegiate, with Carver-Hill and Belev prevailing.

Carver-Hill, a grade 11 student, has been involved in parliamentary debate since 2006 — far longer, I might add, than I have, Mr. Speaker. He is a member of the national debate team and has debated in Germany, New Zealand, and Czechoslovakia this winter and will compete in the world debate championships in Scotland this summer. He is the most accomplished SEDA debater in this province's history.

Saskatchewan will be sending nine teams to the Senior National Debate Championships in Halifax next week, and we will be hosting the Junior National Debate Championships in Estevan in May.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in congratulating the participants in the recent provincial tournament and in wishing the best of luck to our representatives at nationals.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Batoche.

### Opening of Child Care Centre

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday our government announced the opening of a new 15-space child care centre at Lake Lenore School. I was joined by parents,

community members, and representatives from the Horizon School Division to celebrate the opening of this new facility. Mr. Speaker, since becoming government we have made significant progress in increasing the number of licensed child care spaces in Saskatchewan. These 15 new spaces in Lake Lenore are an important part of our commitment to create more child care spaces for busy Saskatchewan families.

Our government has provided more than \$530,000 to support the development of the child care centre, which will become a long-term community and school division asset. This includes 475,000 for capital renovations to the school; 50,000 in space development, grant funding; and more than 12,000 to assist the purchasing equipment, furnishing, and materials that enhance early learning.

Mr. Speaker, over the past three and a half years, our Saskatchewan Party government has made a record investment in licensed child care, allocating funds for 3,435 new child care spaces to communities across this province. This represents a more than 30 per cent increase in child care spaces since November. Mr. Speaker, new child care spaces and centres are what the Saskatchewan advantage is all about.

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

### Leasing of Office Space

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, maybe it's because the Government House Leader wasn't giving advice yesterday, but we had trouble getting straightforward answers from the Minister of Government Services. I don't believe we brought that number with us, or we'll get that was a common refrain, Mr. Speaker.

Finally though we did get some interesting numbers on a premium real estate deal in downtown Regina. Get this. This government is committed to lease for 20 years some 50 to 60,000 square feet in the Hill Tower no. III, or about 30 per cent of the entire building, and all without even knowing which ministries will be moving on over, Mr. Speaker. And they're negotiating this deal at the same time they claimed to be in the middle of reducing the total amount of space government uses and reducing the number of public employees.

Mr. Speaker, something doesn't add up, or maybe it does. We've heard this number before. It's an old tune from the Devine years: lock the taxpayers into decades of high-cost leases. And who's humming along, Mr. Speaker? Well when we asked whether a condition for Tower III to proceed was that the government would be a tenant, we heard that developers always preferred to know they can count on a full building before they start construction. I'm sure they do, Mr. Speaker.

After all, why should entrepreneurs, with the Sask Party in power, assume any risk when they've got a Sask Party government that's given Grant Devine's management style a new lease on life, getting ready to do a number on the taxpayers so developers can sing happy days are here again? And I say, same old tune, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Melfort.

### Helicopter Emergency Medical Services Agreement

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this Assembly to announce that Saskatchewan is moving forward to introduce helicopter emergency medical services. Today our government signed a 10-year agreement with STARS, Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society. We're very pleased to have the opportunity to partner with such a wonderful not-for-profit organization that has 25 years of helicopter medical service experience under their belt.

Mr. Speaker this agreement will bring faster, more responsive emergency medical care to patients, particularly in rural and remote areas of the province. This initiative is all about putting the patient first, and an opportunity for patients to receive more timely medical care during the golden hours after a tragedy. The STARS program can truly make the difference between life and death for many people.

These helicopters, essentially flying emergency rooms, will be based in Saskatoon and Regina. They'll be coordinated with our current fixed wing air ambulance and ground ambulance services. This would not be possible without significant corporate sector support. We thank Saskatchewan's business community for recognizing the value of this project and getting on board, in particular Crescent Point Energy and Mosaic. Their generous financial support will better equip our health system for the chain of survival to save lives.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone involved in bringing helicopter air medical services to our province and for improving the quality of medical care in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### QUESTION PERIOD

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

### Arrangements for Office Space

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, on one hand the Minister of Government Services is talking about a space change initiative and better utilization of office space. And on the other hand, she signed a 20-year deal to lease 50 to 60,000 square feet or 30 per cent of a new office tower going up in downtown Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the 2007 election platform of the Saskatchewan Party says, and I quote, they "will provide Saskatchewan people with more transparency and accountability than any previous government." In the interest of fulfilling that promise, will the minister make the 20-year lease agreement public so that Saskatchewan taxpayers know what they are on the hook for?

[14:00]

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As has been the practice in downtown Regina and in Saskatchewan, government is negotiating project space. I would remind the

member, the last major downtown development in Regina was the rehabilitation of the former Hudson Bay building at 12th and Rose Street. The Government Services under the NDP [New Democratic Party] entered into an agreement to be part of that redevelopment without tendering for the additional space. Government Services occupies two-thirds of that space in the old building. This is approximately 50,000 square feet of space. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, I happened to be the minister in charge of SPM [Saskatchewan Property Management] when that deal was made. So if she wants to debate the detail, we can.

But right now, right now we're talking about that minister's accountability. People in this province have a right to know how much money this . . . or how their government is spending their money. They have committed to a 20-year deal to lease 50 to 60,000 square feet of what's arguably some of the most expensive property in downtown Regina at a time, Mr. Speaker, when they have also committed to reduce the civil service by 16 per cent.

So to the minister: which departments will be occupying the space, and how much will the government be paying per month?

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been a long-standing practice of the provincial government that lease information is not made public, and the basis of this was set forward by the previous government. In fact they ensured that they entered into an agreement with a law firm that strengthened this clause. So for us to be able to reveal that . . . We do not negotiate in public. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't know which departments will be occupying over 30 per cent of this new tower. She doesn't know what the cost of the lease will be, but she's sure it's going to be a 20-year lease. To the minister: will she admit that she has done nothing but sign a blank cheque on behalf of taxpayers as a guarantee for this deal to go ahead?

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much for the question. As the cost for employees, the new space development standard is quite competitive with the existing space. And government is committed to reducing the amount of space it occupies and it will do this in a number of ways, including a revised space standard and reorganizing existing space.

The continued growth of existing and new businesses around



the province and in Regina has created a limited supply of available office space and that affects both government and private industry. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, downtown Regina and businesses remained stagnant under the NDP, causing an exodus of private sector from downtown core Regina. And, Mr. Speaker, under the new Saskatchewan government, we have a strong belief that more head offices will be attracted to Regina. And, Mr. Speaker, that means more head offices, more new jobs. Thank you very much.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, this government is not willing to adequately staff the neonatal unit at Regina General; they're not willing to properly fund teachers' bargaining; and they're not willing to adequately fund affordable housing. But they're willing to enter into a 20-year lease for 60,000 square feet of some of the most expensive property in downtown Regina, price unknown, Mr. Speaker. So to the minister: why is she willing to write a blank cheque for a 20-year project with unknown costs instead of addressing some of the most important issues for Saskatchewan families?

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I thank that member opposite for that question. When she says we have not addressed people's issues in Saskatchewan, I think the budget that was just brought down in fact does address the needs. We have . . .

[Interjections]

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are paying attention. We are addressing people's needs. We are providing more low-income housing than ever before. And, Mr. Speaker, what have we done? We have made sure that our schools are adequate, that there's adequate provisions for new schools. And, Mr. Speaker, this was all brought down under a balanced budget. Thank you very much.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, could this minister please explain the rationale behind this? We're reducing the civil service by 16 per cent, 16 per cent, but yet we are acquiring space under the minister's new space initiative for 300 civil servants in some of the highest priced downtown Regina space, probably, Mr. Speaker, renting 30 per cent as a guaranteed income for that building so the project would actually go ahead.

Mr. Speaker, when is this minister going to be accountable to Saskatchewan taxpayers and release the information?

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Mr. Speaker, we are accountable to the provincial taxpayers. That's why they elected us.

[Interjections]

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

**Hon. Ms. Ross:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are accountable and we do intend to be very open and transparent because we are, Mr. Speaker. However, when the member opposite stands and says that she was the minister of SPMC [Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation] and then turns around and asks me to reveal information that she knows they put in place, that there is a privacy concern to it, for her to stand up and say that is a little bit — I don't know; I have to question it — disingenuous. Thank you very much.

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

### Maternity Care

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday, after it was made public that the Sask Party has transferred 78 mothers and babies out of the city since August, the minister came forward and said that he would be working to staff up the neonatal intensive care unit. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: where has he been for the last eight months? Why did 78 mothers and babies have to be transferred out of the city before he would step up and increase staffing levels?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned over the last couple of days, that the mother, baby safety and their care is priority number one for our government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and I can tell you that those mothers and babies have received excellent care, whether it's here in Regina or in Saskatoon or for some of them that have had to go out of province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the census in the neonatal unit has been around 18. The staffing complement through the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region has been at full staffing level for that amount of beds, Mr. Speaker. Once the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region sees a trend that maybe there'll be an increased usage, Mr. Speaker, of the neonatal intensive care unit, the health region and the ministry are working closely to increase the staffing levels once we know those staffing levels need to be increased.

Mr. Speaker, it is evident now with the census in the neonatal unit that the staffing level will be increased. In fact, the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region has just recently — as a matter of five or ten minutes ago — put out a news release saying that very same thing.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — That's quick response, Mr. Speaker. Five or 10 minutes ago the minister got on something. Mr. Speaker, according to a CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]

story, at least four women with high-risk pregnancies have recently been sent out of the province to have their babies: three to Alberta and one to North Dakota.

We have spoken with Claire Kreuger who was sent to Medicine Hat, and she is frustrated because, I quote, “There is a new facility in Regina with space but no staff. How can they be saving money by sending women out of province and not staffing the NICU?”

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how much did it cost to send 78 mothers and babies out of the city, some of them out of the province, and at least two of them out of the country?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, that member just . . . I mean stands there and says there is no staff in the neonatal intensive care unit. That could be no further from the truth. Mr. Speaker, it is totally staffed for the census that we had been anticipating for the last number of years. For the last six or seven months, we’ve seen an increase of usage of the neonatal unit, Mr. Speaker.

But I can tell you that I understand that, you know, if you would ever go back to the NDP days, I’m sure 18 beds would do under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, because all we saw for 16 years is population decline, Mr. Speaker. Under a Sask Party government, we’re seeing an increase in population, hence an increase and utilization of all of our health services. That’s why health regions have seen a significant increase, \$250 million increase in this year’s budget, Mr. Speaker, to address the very pressures that member’s talking about.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — I’m sure Ms. Kreuger and her family were very reassured by that answer. Claire went on to tell us that she’s very frustrated because, “Nothing was clear as to what they [the government] would pay and what we have to pay. I know the air ambulance is paid to Medicine Hat, but I’m not sure how I get home.”

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is Claire and her baby’s transportation home from Medicine Hat covered, or is he making them pay their own way home?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the policy that has been in place for many, many years . . . Because this is not a new phenomenon, Mr. Speaker. Under the NDP, people were sent out of the province, Mr. Speaker, when we were over capacity. She’s a former minister. I would hope she would still remember what the policy was, because the policy today is to pay both ways, the same as it was when they were in power, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, it’s also unclear to Claire and her

husband, Dan, if the cost of the ambulance she took from the hospital in Regina to the airport and then from the airport to the hospital in Medicine Hat is covered, or if they’ll have to pay for that.

They know they have to pay Dan’s travel expenses and his meals. Once the baby is born, they’ve been told that Dan can’t stay in the hospital and will have to stay in a motel. Little, if anything, has been explained to this family.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: who is paying for Claire’s ambulance costs to get from the hospital to the airport and the airport to the hospital, and who pays for Dan’s hotel and meals?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to respond to the individual case. Mr. Speaker. I don’t have all the details of the individual case. But what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that under the former government, people were sent out of the province, Mr. Speaker. The policy that cover expenses for to and fro, for example, of the mother, is the same under the NDP.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if they don’t like that policy, then they governed for a very long time with policies that they couldn’t stand, Mr. Speaker. Finally in 2007, there was a lot of people in Saskatchewan couldn’t stand those policies either, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the mother is covered both ways, Mr. Speaker, but it is a rarity that mothers . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of cases are handled here in Saskatchewan. It is a rarity that people are sent out. We’ve seen an increase. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region will be increasing their staff to accommodate the increase in census in the neonatal intensive care unit.

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

### Support for Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people want their provincial government to deliver excellence in education. But we have seen a pattern of behaviour from the Sask Party government that does the exact opposite of that.

One of the key ways in which they are undermining our education system is by disrespecting education professionals. They eliminated hundreds of educational assistants. They have botched negotiations with elementary and high school teachers so badly that those teachers are forced to take a strike vote. And they have left staff and instructors at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] without a contract for almost two years.

To the minister: why is the government so intent on showing educational professionals, including those at SIAST, that they are simply not valued by the Sask Party?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much. Nothing could be further from the truth. We know that educators are profoundly important, Mr. Speaker, as are students. And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the post-secondary educational system, we see that more than \$2.8 billion has been invested. That's a record investment, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just use one example. When we think about student housing, we can look at communities like Meadow Lake, like La Ronge, like Prince Albert, and in Saskatoon for the first time, at the University of Saskatchewan, in 30 years. As well we know there are other discussions that are under way, Mr. Speaker. We know how important educators are and also our students, and that's why we're making these kind of investments in institutions and in the support systems like residence, so that our students can succeed — succeed and stay, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, one of the fastest growing provinces in the country.

[14:15]

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the academic and professional services staff at SIAST ensure that students receive a high-quality education. But the Sask Party government steadfastly refuses to ensure that those SIAST staff members receive a fair, reasonable, and competitive offer. After nearly two years without a contract, what message does that send to those education professionals, Mr. Speaker? It says, the work you do is not valued by the Sask Party government. And what does it say to SIAST students, Mr. Speaker? It says, your education is not a priority for the Sask Party government. My question to the minister: why is he sending that message?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, again nothing could be further from the truth. In fact what we've seen in SIAST, Mr. Speaker, is since the 2007 election, what we've seen is an 18.5 per cent increase, an 18.5 per cent increase in operating funding for SIAST, Mr. Speaker. And as I made reference to, we also see that expanding services for SIAST is increasingly important. So in Prince Albert, what we did for the first time in history is actually allow SIAST to move forward with its own student housing initiative — more dollars for SIAST, more supports for students, Mr. Speaker.

We know how important SIAST is today and into the future, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we're ensuring that this investment and these investments continue, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our students can succeed, that they stay in Saskatchewan and help to contribute to one of the fastest growing provinces in the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, the facts of how this minister is treating SIAST tell a very different story. There is no doubt that we are seeing a pattern of behaviour in which the Sask Party government disrespects education professionals and undermines our education system.

But we're also seeing a pattern of behaviour with this particular minister when it comes to disrespecting SIAST, Mr. Speaker. This is the same minister who ensured that over \$60,000 per student in federal and provincial infrastructure funding flowed directly to St. Peter's College for his pet merger project. But what did he deliver to SIAST, Mr. Speaker? Just \$1,300 per student. For this minister, SIAST students are worth just 2 per cent of what St. Peter's students are worth. My question to the minister: what does he have against SIAST?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, it's a very interesting kind of turn of phrase that the member opposite . . . He just attributed federal funding, that is \$6 million in KIP [knowledge infrastructure program], what he said, Mr. Speaker, he made specific reference to KIP, Mr. Speaker. Let me make specific and very, very certain, Mr. Speaker, that he understands. Regarding KIP and SIAST, \$12.9 million for the health technologies project at the Kelsey Campus, \$4.6 million for the nursing project here at the Wascana Campus, 2.3 million for the electrical expansion project at Woodland Campus and, Mr. Speaker, an additional \$500,000 to ensure that the plumbing program was able to expand here in Regina.

We made sure, Mr. Speaker, that through the KIP initiative, which was a federal initiative where there needed to be provincial matching funding, we ensured that SIAST fully participated, that the students were able to benefit from this and, Mr. Speaker, as a result the people of Saskatchewan were able to benefit from this program.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, here's what Saskatchewan people need to know about the minister's spending decisions: \$60,000 per student at St. Peter's College; \$1,300 per student at SIAST institutions. His story does not add up.

Perhaps the minister needs to be reminded that it's because of his neglect of SIAST that the SIAST board went rogue and illegally purchased property without the minister's approval last year. That's how badly they needed space, Mr. Speaker, and that's how badly the Sask Party government has neglected SIAST. And the staff and students at SIAST are well aware of the fact of how little this government places value on them.

To the minister: now that his pet merger project has been shelved, will he finally turn his attention to the needs at SIAST and will he finally ensure that the academic and professional staff at SIAST are valued and respected?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased to talk about the progress that SIAST is making, Mr. Speaker. What we see, enrolments increasing, Mr. Speaker. We also see increased investments under this government, Mr. Speaker. That includes KIP, Mr. Speaker, as I've just read, in Saskatoon and Regina and Prince Albert previously. We also made investments in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. There's always more to do because, Mr. Speaker, we inherited a post-secondary system that had significant, significant and sustained inattention, especially on the capital side, Mr. Speaker. That's a sad legacy of the members opposite.

What we're doing, Mr. Speaker, working with the federal government and others to ensure that we continue to invest not simply in infrastructure, but in the students themselves, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've made sure that the apprenticeship program has expanded. We've put new dollars into SIAST, Mr. Speaker. We know how important it is not just for today, but into the future. And we're going to continue to make those kind of investments to ensure that the growth of Saskatchewan is sustained and that students can stay and succeed here in the province.

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

#### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minimum wage report the government was supposed to have back in December is finally available. Now they've had time to read it, and the recommendation is they consider a 19-cent increase in the minimum wage. They further said they would but no firm date has been announced yet.

To the minister: rents, food, utilities, gas, everything is on the rise. When will the minimum wage earners, who've already gone almost two years without a raise, see a response from this government to the recommendations in the report?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Justice and Labour.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. We received the report from the minimum wage review panel. It was received very late February, and we've had a chance to briefly look at it. We are going to do some further consultation and review. We'd like to have some discussion and see what is taking place in other jurisdictions so that we don't do something that would put our businesses at competitive disadvantages.

Mr. Speaker, we feel very strongly that we want to protect low-income earners. As a government, we have seen to it that we've made changes to *The Income Tax Act* that have taken some 120,000 low-income earners off of the tax rolls in their entirety. We've made a variety of other changes to ensure that we've done everything that we can to make sure that people have a reasonable opportunity to stay and earn money and stay in the workforce, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — I know that renters would like to use that answer when they get their rent increased. But the recommendations from the review state that following a notice to businesses in April, the minimum wage increase, suggested at 19 cents for this year, should be indexed annually to the consumer price index.

To the minister: with respect to the families in Saskatchewan in desperate need of this increase to the minimum wage, will he work with the opposition to legislate the minimum wage increase, complete with annual indexation, this session?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Justice and Labour.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, in January of this year, the average weekly earnings were \$862.86. This is up 3.6 per cent year over year from January 2010. We have the third highest earnings in Canada, behind Alberta and Ontario. Our minimum wage is something that needs to be looked at. The report that was provided, Mr. Speaker, is something that was requested by our government. So we've received the report. We want to go through the process.

We do not like or do not appreciate the effect . . . [inaudible] . . . the ratcheting up and down that took place under the previous administration. We think it's appropriate to consider something that provides better stability for both workers and for employers. And we have indicated, Mr. Speaker, that we have keen interest in looking at that type of system, Mr. Speaker, and that is one of the things that we will take under careful advisement. This is a major change, Mr. Speaker, and we will proceed with it.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you'll have to pardon me if I wonder out loud about the government's motives here. The board they appointed is telling them that they should raise the minimum wage this year, and yet they waffle at the very idea of doing it, promising or hinting at perhaps after the next election.

Well to the minister: considering the history of broken promises for this government to working people, particularly around the essential services legislation, why should working people believe that this government will carry through with their promise to look at minimum wage and do an increase when it's obvious that they don't have the needs of hard-working people? It's the furthest thing from this government's mind.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, under the previous administration, we saw the steep ups and downs caused by an ad hoc policy. We're the ones that asked for a review and a report so that we could consider something that was done on a more regular and a more carefully calibrated basis.

Mr. Speaker, under our administration, the minimum wage has increased some 16 per cent. It is now one of the highest in the country. In the last two years, it has increased 2 . . . We have doubled the low-income tax credit. We've reduced provincial income tax, removed 130,000 people from the tax rolls. We've increased funding for housing programs by 45 per cent. We've increased shelter rates. We've increased the number of affordable housing units. Mr. Speaker, we are the government that has taken substantial steps, Mr. Speaker, to try and do this. Mr. Speaker, under the previous administration, they did nothing.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. I'm not sure if the minister heard the Bill being . . . that was read. Could we do introduction of Bills again, please.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 169 — *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011*

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 169, *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of Bill 169, *The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

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

**The Speaker:** — When shall this Bill be considered again?

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 166 — *The Renewable Diesel Act*

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

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give second reading to *The Renewable Diesel Act*. In this year's budget, our government announced a new five-year, \$26 million renewable diesel program. One of

the steps related to the program is to establish legislation so that the industry can operate here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is stepping up to the mark in developing a renewable diesel industry in the province. Biodiesel industries are already up and running in the rest of Western Canada. The federal government has also introduced a national mandate. Saskatchewan will now be on par with other Western provinces, and we'll be in concert with the federal requirement.

Mr. Speaker, renewable diesel produced in the province will initially come from canola. As a canola-growing region, this initiative will provide Saskatchewan farmers opportunities to sell off-grade canola for use in renewable diesel-blended fuel. In the future, renewable diesel might include other products, including biomass from agriculture and forest waste.

One of the most important aspects of this legislation is to formally set out a mandate. As of July 1, 2012, diesel fuel sold in Saskatchewan will be required to be blended with 2 per cent renewable diesel that is calculated by volume on an annual basis. You will also see that we have budgeted \$2.6 million for this program for 2011-12, which is noted on page 56 of the budget estimates.

This Bill establishes the renewable diesel program to move forward, and that is something that biodiesel producers in Saskatchewan have been waiting for as it puts them on an equal footing as producers with neighbouring provinces. When this legislation passes, the incentive program will be in place for Saskatchewan producers to gear up to meet our mandate so Saskatchewan fuel distributors can get their biodiesel domestically instead of importing it from neighbouring provinces and the United States. By passing this legislation this spring, Saskatchewan producers will have the lead time they require to be ready to meet the provincial mandate in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, aside from the legislation, we will also need regulations. It's our plan to continue consulting with industry and stakeholders in the coming months before the mandate comes into effect. Currently there's only one commercial-scale renewable diesel producer in Saskatchewan, Milligan Bio-Tech in Foam Lake. There's the potential for expansion at Milligan and the possibility for new plants and jobs down the line.

The economic opportunities are real and so are the benefits for the environment. The addition of renewable diesel in the diesel pool will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and is the equivalent of taking 5,000 cars off the road. Mr. Speaker, alternative fuels are the way of the future. Global demand, coupled with consumer demand for cleaner fuels that are more environmentally friendly, have a great deal of potential. Developing renewable diesel in Saskatchewan is one step into that market and will create opportunities for businesses who want to participate.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of *The Renewable Diesel Act*.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Enterprise has moved second reading of Bill No. 166, *The Renewable Diesel Act*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from

Moose Jaw Wakamow.

[14:30]

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and make comments on the Bill No. 166, *An Act respecting Renewable Diesel Fuel*.

Mr. Speaker, after the mention in the budget of this, I took time to go through the legislation and really have a look at it. And I think the minister's comments really pointed to the fact that this is enabling legislation that allows the establishment of the industry and will allow the government to move forward, and that a majority of the information or detail pertaining to an industry or the future of the industry as the government sees it will really be laid out in regulations. And it speaks to a fair bit of detail in the legislation that will all be referred to in regulations.

And I know this government seems to be quite fond of regulation instead of having anything enshrined in legislation, that it's much easier to make changes at cabinet instead of bringing issues and initiatives to the floor of this legislature. So while the minister said that there will be consultations that will go forward from this legislation, that's good to hear.

Mr. Speaker, I know there are some consultations that my members and I need to do and to look at more closely when it comes to biodiesel. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate on 166.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 166. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to . . . Should we call the question?

**An Hon. Member:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Question. The question before the Assembly is second reading of Bill No. 166, *The Renewable Diesel Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — It's agreed. When shall the Bill be considered in committee? To which committee shall the Bill stand referred? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise.

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — The Standing Committee on the Economy.

**The Speaker:** — The Bill stands referred to the Economy.

**Bill No. 167 — *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011***

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Highways.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 167, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011*.

This Bill will give the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation the legislative authority to undertake the short-line sustainability grant program, develop other initiatives in the future, and better position the corporation to respond to the needs of rural Saskatchewan. With these legislative amendments, we are proposing to broaden the authority of the Grain Car commission to allow it to become more active in assisting the short-line railway industry in the province.

As a first step in this new direction, in this year's budget the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation will administer responsibility for the short-line railway sustainability grant program. Without this amendment, the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation will not have the legislative authority to administer this program.

Mr. Speaker, this can be seen on page 94 of the 2011-12 Estimates book. This is a line item that shows an expense under vote 16 of Highways and Infrastructure and can be found under allocations, Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, short-line railway sustainability program, \$700,000. This is an additional \$200,000 funding increase to the program of 40 per cent to \$700,000 a year . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. The minister's trying to make a ministerial statement. I'd ask the members to allow the minister to respond. I recognize the Minister of Highways.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — The changes to *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act* are clearly driven by responsibilities and funding changes introduced in the 2011 budget document. The Bill is without question a budget Bill, under the understanding of that term. This grant program assists short-lines in maintaining their infrastructure.

I've directed the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation to use its resources and expertise to look at new and innovative ways of providing assistance to the Saskatchewan short-line rail industry. This Bill is yet another step in this direction. As part of this process, we've been very conscious of consulting with those stakeholders that play an important role in rural Saskatchewan, such as the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan Shortline Railroad Association. All those that responded have expressed overwhelming support for this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to read some parts of the letters of consultation for the House today. Mr. Speaker, the first letter is from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and it says in part:

We expect that the legislative changes proposed will go a long way to assist the short-line railway industry in Saskatchewan. The short-line railways have always been a benefit to the success of rural Saskatchewan, and these changes will allow the Grain Car Corporation to better meet the needs of rural stakeholders.

Please accept this letter as formal recognition of the value of the recommended legislative updates. We appreciate the opportunity to provide continued input into this matter and ask that we be kept apprised of any future

amendments.

That's signed by Dave Marit, the president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], Mr. Speaker.

The next letter in part says:

The Saskatchewan Shortline Railway Association would welcome changes to the existing legislation that controls the mandate with the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. Changes to the legislation that would allow for guarantees, grants and loans would be a huge benefit for the short-line network. Possibilities for projects in shortlines are absolutely endless, but finding financing is always hard and time consuming. The network of shortlines is constantly expanding in our province. Changing the legislation of the Grain Car Corporation to facilitate this expansion and develop new and innovative projects within this expansion would be very beneficial to the province.

And that's signed by Conrad Johnson, the vice-chairman of the Saskatchewan Shortline Railway Association.

And the last letter, Mr. Speaker, from the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan says in part:

First we thank you for your efforts in consultation on this important matter. As you will recall, last fall the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan board of directors passed a resolution supporting in principle the Grain Car Corporation plan to lease hopper cars to Saskatchewan shortline railways. We were very much in support of your efforts to support the shortline rail industry in Saskatchewan. We also support the legislative amendments which you are proposing to provide you with flexibility in responding to the needs of Saskatchewan stakeholders. Rural economic development is very important to agriculture and rural Saskatchewan. Support to shortlines and other rural economic development initiatives by Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation benefits farmers and rural communities. We commend you for your proactive approach in support of short-lines in rural economic development.

As I've just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, short-line railways play an important role in rural Saskatchewan. There are currently 11 short-lines in Saskatchewan with more considering start-up. Since 2008, four new short-lines have started. This is an increase of 500 kilometres of short-line rail to bring the total kilometres to 1,900.

In November of last year, we announced the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation would be leasing some of its hopper cars to short-line railways in Saskatchewan. By leasing directly to Saskatchewan short-lines, the corporation will focus the benefit directly to producers within the province. The short-lines will realize cost savings and efficiencies by having a dedicated fleet of hopper cars.

Mr. Speaker, with more product moving on rail, that means less wear and tear on provincial highways. Therefore, Mr. Speaker,

I move that *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011* be read a second time. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Highways has moved second reading of Bill No. 167, *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Amendment Act, 2011*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it's a pleasure to rise and offer comments on *The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act*. Mr. Speaker, this is a very short Act, and it actually has quite a history behind it though when we look back at grain handling in Canada, in the Prairies, and more specifically here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I was doing a bit of research. And I know this was a topic for the previous government on numerous occasions, looking at the grain cars — what should be done with them, if it was profitable, what had to be done. I know in early 2000s there had to be major repairs done to the cars to make sure that they were up to current Canadian standards for hauling the products that they do and also international standards for . . . You know, the rail lines in North America travel across boundaries quite often or across borders.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think when you go to the government website there is a little note on the side panel when we speak about the Grain Car Corporation, and it says, "SGCC has saved Saskatchewan producers in excess of \$50 million in freight costs since the Corporation's inception." And, Mr. Speaker, through good times and bad times, \$50 million is a lot of money when it comes to anyone. And for producers during some very difficult years, the Grain Car Corporation was most definitely an asset, and one that I think producers in the province of Saskatchewan jealously guarded, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I went back and did a bit of research on the history of the Grain Car Corporation. And it's interesting to read comments about the Crow's Nest Pass freight rate, how long it was in play in rail transportation for transportation rates of western grains. I think many of us of a certain age can remember many of the debates went on when the Crow was done away with. And we can debate the whys and what fors and what the effects have been, but the fact is, Mr. Speaker, it's gone.

And when we look at the history of grain transportation, in western grains especially, some of the history talks about:

The system remained virtually unchanged until the 1960's. In 1961, the MacPherson Royal Commission reported that railways were losing money in grain handling. The small return to the railways led to deferred maintenance of Prairie branchlines and reduced investment in rolling stock and infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I would think that in many coffee shops across the province we could get into a debate about branch lines and the transportation of western grains. And I think as a result, this is what we have seen. We have seen the short-lines in communities and producers across the province in various regions pick up those abandoned branch lines and come

forward with the short-line railways.

Mr. Speaker, but back into the '60s, the rail lines in Western Canada became less and less able to support the increasing grain exports, and the railcar fleet largely composed of boxcars, was not being renewed by its owners with modern hopper cars that were quickly becoming the norm in the industry. So, Mr. Speaker, what we've seen in the 1970s was lost, that Canada lost major international grain sales because of the country's grain car fleet was obsolete and didn't have the capacity to get producers' grain to export positions. So that causes huge problems, and I mean it's surprising how isolated we can feel here in Saskatchewan when these problems used to arise on a continual basis.

But, Mr. Speaker, at that time the Government of Canada along with the Government of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the Canadian Wheat Board began to purchase hopper cars for use in grain handling and transportation system in Western Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, thus was born the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation. And I'm hopping up here a little bit. But in 1980 the Government of Saskatchewan made what was considered a strategic investment of approximately 55 million into Canada's grain transportation system by purchasing 1,000 covered hopper cars for the movement of export grain grown by western producers. And, Mr. Speaker, the Grain Car Corporation has served producers well, right across this province. And while it comes up for debate now and again, it still continues to be an asset.

So, Mr. Speaker, now what we do, we look at the legislation and the changes that are being proposed. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Grain Car Corporation has always been profitable also. Not huge dollars, but it has paid for maintenance such as metal fatigue that had to be addressed. Right around 2005, 2006 there was a fair bit of maintenance that was done. The cars were repainted, which is important to the maintenance and the long-term viability of these cars. And, Mr. Speaker, the Grain Car Corporation has been self-sustaining, which is important.

So now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the legislation that's tabled here in the House, and the minister speaks about the short-line initiative providing the Grain Car Corporation broader authority, the allocation of resources, Mr. Speaker. I'll have to look at that more.

[14:45]

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, but there are a number of questions. I know when it looks at the powers of the corporation, I believe that's been expanded. Because it says that:

The corporation may:

(a) acquire, by purchase, lease or otherwise, railway rolling stock suitable for the transportation of grain, commodities and other products.

So, Mr. Speaker, obviously there is some issue with moving outside of agricultural products. I'm not sure. But, Mr. Speaker, that was one thing that came to mind for me when I read the

new legislation.

There was another of other changes that were announced in the legislation. Well it's totally rewritten. I believe that the initial "***The Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation Act is repealed and the following substituted . . .***" So, Mr. Speaker, you need to go through and do a word-by-word comparison of what the changes are and how the wording has changed to get a better understanding of what the intent is.

Mr. Speaker, there's also a process here, and it provides for:

(ii) the provision of consulting, management or administrative services to persons who are involved with the railway industry; or

(iii) any other purposes that the corporation considers advisable.

So I don't know if that was there before. It seems to be an expanded authority within the Grain Car Corporation.

Then there are a number of areas that seem to be the same. But there also is under powers of the corporation, Mr. Speaker, the corporation may, and under (d):

construct or acquire, by purchase, lease or otherwise, any plant, equipment or other assets that the corporation considers beneficial for the railway industry.

So we have to look at how that applies, what areas that will apply in, and what is the best case and, Mr. Speaker, what the worst case scenario may be.

And it also offers, the corporation may, under (e):

transfer, sell or otherwise dispose of any railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets acquired by the corporation.

So ". . . sell or otherwise dispose of any railway rolling stock . . ." So, Mr. Speaker, I wonder, and that brings to mind, is there any need to sell stock? Are we looking at hopper cars? Are we looking at . . . What exactly are we looking at? And what circumstance are we looking to accommodate with the change in this piece of legislation?

Mr. Speaker, again it goes on to:

(f) provide the means by which grain, commodities or other products produced in Saskatchewan or elsewhere may be transported.

So it looks like we're expanding quite widely on what the opportunities are for the Grain Car Corporation. And, Mr. Speaker, the whole investment, the initial investment in the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation was to be advantageous for Saskatchewan producers.

So, Mr. Speaker, when the minister talks about short-lines around the province, it's wonderful to see those branch lines in use. It's great to see that traffic and those commodities taken off the highways because we know how difficult it is for



highways just to sustain . . . for the government to sustain highways that are hauling some of these commodities on a regular basis, lots of wear and tear on the highways. So short-lines remove that, Mr. Speaker. So for the short-lines to have access . . . And I mean that was done previously, where the short-lines have access to the Grain Car Corporation cars, hopper cars.

Mr. Speaker, there is one area when we talk about changes that are being proposed under:

#### **Powers of corporation**

The corporation may [under]:

(g) subject to any orders or directives of Treasury Board, provide financial assistance by way of grant, loan, guarantee or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets that will benefit the railway industry.

Not benefit Saskatchewan producers, not benefit the Grain Car Corporation, but benefit the railway industry. So, Mr. Speaker, that's pretty broad. And there is a number of areas or a number of reasons that this raises concern.

And, Mr. Speaker, just today I was going through a report that was issued in November 10th, 1992. And it was the Financial Management Review Commission, and it was a progress report. And this had to do with the straightening out of the finances of the province of Saskatchewan. It was a report that was recommended by the Donald Gass report that my colleague had spoken of a few days ago. This was a report that was recommended that Saskatchewan Property Management or the new Government Services undertake and make sure that everything was addressed. The issues were addressed, and there was a fair bit of debt floating around the government in those days.

And, Mr. Speaker, we can all talk about the horror stories. But I know for Saskatchewan residents right across the province, they all know the difficult time restoring the financial balance to the province of Saskatchewan. And every citizen in this province contributed to restoring the financial balance and well-being of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because everyone contributed to that.

But in this book, in this report there are a number of recommendations, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of recommendations that talk about the Crown corporations, accounting changes, public accountability, the Crown sector, studies and reviews, financial condition. And, Mr. Speaker, if you look in one of the appendix, page 3, it talks about a recommendation. And it says:

**The Commission recommends that transactions involving loans, which can only be repaid through future budgetary appropriations by the Government, should be treated as expenditures, rather than assets (i.e. loans receivable), in the Government's financial statements.**

Now, Mr. Speaker, accounting practices change over the years. And while specifically that may not be applicable in today's accounting rules that are followed by the Legislative Assembly and the Government of Saskatchewan, there is one loan that really stands out when we are talking about the Grain Car Corporation. And this is, the government will implement this change for 1992 to '93 budgetary year. The loans that fell into this category at March 31st, 1992, were written off against the accumulated deficit, included the following: 713 million from Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, 182 million from Saskatchewan Water Corporation. And there was loans outstanding. Thirty-six million were written off for the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we are, \$36 million in 1991-92 was written off for the Grain Car Corporation. That was money that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan had put out. So, Mr. Speaker, when I see this whole piece in 12(g) where it talks about the corporation may:

subject to any orders or directives of Treasury Board, provide financial assistance by way of a grant, loan, guarantee or other similar means to persons for the purpose of allowing those persons to acquire railway rolling stock, plant, equipment or other assets that will benefit the railway industry.

Mr. Speaker, I would feel more comfortable if it said Saskatchewan producers, if it was talking about the Grain Car Corporation itself. But it's pretty open-ended, Mr. Speaker. And with that, I know there is a number of my colleagues that would like to make comments on the Grain Car Corporation, and I'm sure maybe even the minister might not have thought that this would have raised any questions.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, from my days sitting on Treasury Board, we had a fair bit of discussion about the Grain Car Corporation because we knew it needed to have a number of improvements and updates to its rolling stock. And it had to do with stress fractures in the metal in the hopper cars. And, Mr. Speaker, we had fairly lengthy debates as to what should be done and how we needed to maintain the Grain Car Corporation and this benefit for Saskatchewan producers. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the whole point of the Grain Car Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, now the member from Cypress, he figures it's kind of funny, I guess. He's chirping from his seat. But I'm sure there are others across Saskatchewan that have concerns and would like to be able to voice opinions on the changes or the Act as it's being proposed.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time I would adjourn debate on Bill No. 167.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow that debate on Bill No. 167 now be adjourned.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Bill No. 168 — *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011***

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*.

*The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act* is a negotiable item under the provincial collective bargaining agreement. In October 2007, boards of education, the Government of Saskatchewan, and the Teachers' Federation of Saskatchewan signed a collective agreement. This agreement expired August 31st 2010. And during recent collective bargaining for a new agreement, it was discovered that one of the required amendments to *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act* was overlooked. The changes that reflect the other superannuation provisions agreed to in the provincial collective bargaining agreement of 2007 received Royal Assent on May 14th of 2008.

I'm bringing forward this amendment now as a budget Bill because doing so will provide the correct statutory authority for the payment of the item contained in the estimates. This budget line can be found under vote 5 subvote (ED04) on page 49 of the Government of Saskatchewan's 2011-12 Estimates. As this Bill relates to the budget line contained in the estimates for the government's contributions towards the Saskatchewan teachers' retirement plan and is necessary to ensure authority for the appropriation, it meets the requirements set out for a budget Bill in rule 33 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*.

The Ministry of Education has been remitting the increased government contributions to the Saskatchewan teachers' retirement plan as agreed to in the collective bargaining agreement since July of 2009. Discussions have taken place with the Teachers' Federation, and they are aware government is moving promptly to make this amendment, and they are supportive.

I am pleased to move that Bill No. 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011* be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Education has moved second reading of Bill 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011* Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I want to thank the minister for her explanation and for the comments that she made. Because I think most of us when we'd first seen this Bill we were wondering, why so late? This is normally done right after bargaining is completed that these changes are made to the Act. So, Mr. Speaker, the minister's explanation was helpful. I have to tell you though when we were looking at it initially and wondered why are we so slow, we thought, we were hoping, that bargaining in this round wouldn't be this slow to come to completion, that we wouldn't be waiting until after the fact. But, Mr. Speaker, this actually,

the minister did provide a good explanation, and I know we appreciate that. I know there are a couple of my colleagues that want to have a look at the legislation and be able to make comments on it.

Mr. Speaker, often when we are in the House we can see these Bills, and we have a tendency to kind of shuffle them off as just the normal. And I guess the minister's explanations about how one piece of the negotiated settlement from 2007 had been left out of, or maybe the adjustments had not been made, should make all of us in this Assembly aware that we need to be diligent in looking at these agreements and making sure that they are appropriate and proper and should be put in place.

So Mr. Speaker, I know there are often times when people question what we do in the Assembly. Well I guess that's a good way to put it; they do question it. And what's accomplished? Well I think this piece of legislation, and it's not the only one, Mr. Speaker, and I think every government has done it, and every ministry or department has done it, where we have missed a change or not put in the appropriate numbers and had to come back with some adjustments to the legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know there are other colleagues that are willing to or looking forward to making some comments on this piece of legislation at the time on *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act*. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment on Bill No. 168.

[15:00]

**The Speaker:** — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved adjournment of Bill No. 168, *The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 161

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 161 — *The Election Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 161, which is primarily a Bill that's attached to the whole notion of photo ID [identification] for the purposes of voting. And while it's connected to the municipal file, Mr. Speaker, and it talks about four-year terms, it talks about a few other things. I want to pay particular attention to the whole notion of this photo ID scheme that the Sask Party government has come up with. This Bill certainly also adds that particular component to it, as the other Bill in voting in the provincial election. They put both those points in both of the Bills. And again the question that I have of the Sask

Party is: why are you putting those particular measures in?

Now I look at some of the points that are raised, Mr. Speaker, and the comment of making the system more responsive, making the system more accountable, and also the whole notion of even the Premier saying, well there was some discrepancies. Well, Mr. Speaker, we need to find out, beyond what the Sask Party interpreted as discrepancies, what other organization that may be non-political, say for example the Chief Electoral Officer, how did he feel about the voter or photo ID that was required to vote in provincial elections or in this case, in Bill 161, in the municipal elections?

Now, Mr. Speaker, again we can't find anywhere in any organization from any newspaper or from any article or from any radio show where there's been a huge outcry for the demand to have photo ID to vote. And, Mr. Speaker, we don't see any of that particular evidence out there in the population, that people are saying yes, we need that to make the system more accountable.

So this is purely and simply a Sask Party plot, Mr. Speaker. They have done this time and time again to deny people the right to vote. Everybody has the right to vote. Absolutely everybody has the right to vote, Mr. Speaker. And what happens, you start putting in barriers there, Mr. Speaker, you start putting rules to have photo ID, and what happens is people will become discouraged to vote, Mr. Speaker.

And who are some of the people that would be discouraged to vote in this particular . . . attached to this Bill and the other Bill for the provincial elections? I'll tell you who it's going to be, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be the homeless people. It's going to be the older people, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be the immigrant community, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to be the Aboriginal community. And it's going to be those people that don't have a licence, those people that may be moving from couch to couch and from home to home in terms of trying to find a place permanently to live. Those are the people that will be disempowered as a result of the Sask Party's rule that you have to have photo ID.

And I mentioned at the outset, Mr. Speaker, I still can't figure where this is coming from. And, Mr. Speaker, we had no response from the Sask Party except to say, oh we want to make the system more accountable. We want to make it more reflective of what's happening out there, to make sure there's no discrepancies, as the Premier has put it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that in the northern communities absolutely everybody knows everybody that lives in a certain town. I'll use my home community of Ile-a-la-Crosse, 1,700 people — 16, 1,700 people — and they pretty much know who's who and who lives where and whether somebody moved out or somebody is gone for school and so on and so forth. So they have a fair idea of who is from the community and who is allowed to vote.

Now if you have some problems, there's always people that can vouch for you. And that's one of the things I noticed in the Bill, that was no consideration attached to the Bill to have local leaders that might have the . . . might want to take the extra responsibility to recognize some of the people that should be

and would be allowed to vote because they're from that particular community. And, Mr. Speaker, some of the local leaders that could be doing some of this work — for example the chief, the local mayor, perhaps the local Métis Nation president — they have a fairly good idea as to who their members are in the community and whether they live in the community and have lived so for the three or six months that is identified in some of these Acts as to how long you have to live in that particular location to vote locally and provincially as well.

So why aren't they consulted? Where is the MNS [Métis Nation of Saskatchewan] and where is the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations]? Where is the mayors' association, SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]? Where do they sit in all this, Mr. Speaker? Very, very silent because they were never asked. They were never consulted. Because I'll tell you what they would have said: this has got to be the most brain-dead amendment to any electoral process to try and get people come out and vote.

And time and time again, we hear the Sask Party saying it's important to get people out to vote. But, Mr. Speaker, they're putting in so many rules, so many roadblocks, that at the end of the day a lot of people that typically don't vote for them will not have the opportunity to vote, not only in provincial elections but municipal elections as well, Mr. Speaker.

So again, the consultations with the municipalities, with the MNS, with the FSIN, with many of these groups and organizations that represent the immigrant community or the elders community, none of them were consulted. Now along comes this rule, you've got to have photo ID to vote, and there's going to be a lot of groups and organizations that are not going to be happy about that whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Now I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in the process of elections, and particularly the provincial election, they have the enumeration process where people go from house to house and see who's allowed, who lives there and who's allowed to vote. And they usually hire local enumerators to do all that, so it's pretty much a pretty good system. And a lot of the challenges of seeing who should vote and who can't vote and who is not living in the community any more is met through the enumeration process. So these enumerators go out and they certainly identify who should vote and who lives in the community and again, as I pointed out, they know pretty much everyone else in the community and they're a pretty good source of information.

So again, you look at that process, the enumeration process, where they identify who's able to vote, who's able to participate, and that's a good process. It certainly shows exactly the accountability that should be in these systems when you have local people identifying who is allowed to vote or not. That process has been there for a long time. Is that now saying, is this Bill now saying that process doesn't work? No, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is putting another roadblock for people to vote. And that's a shame. That's a crying shame.

And as identified to a number of organizations, and in particular when you look at the other parts of the Bill, whether it's talking about the length of office in terms of your stay in the office, I

think the vast majority of people seem to like that idea. Looking at the criminal records check, Mr. Speaker, that's something that people have also said that they want to support. Some people think it's a bit onerous, but they certainly want to continue looking at that particular standard.

But, Mr. Speaker, the key point that I want to raise again is this whole notion of the silliness of requiring people to have a photo ID to be able to vote.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members opposite may not know that as a First Nations people that may be in the process of getting their photo ID, it takes a fairly long time to get that done. Many Indian bands don't have the capacity to arrange for photo ID. And I believe that on one occasion I was told that they sometimes only do four allocations in a given two- or three-week period, primarily because the process is onerous. It takes a long time to get things in place, and many bands only proceed to have four to six photo IDs issued at a time. Now does that prevent a lot of the Aboriginal people from voting? You bet it does, Mr. Speaker, you bet it does. And that's what those guys are counting on, Mr. Speaker, it's exactly what they're counting on.

Now the other point is that even with the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, you look at how they have been going through to try and identify who the Métis people are. That is also an onerous process, Mr. Speaker. They put a lot of money into identifying the Métis community and there is to-and-fros in terms of who should qualify, what's the definition of Métis, and the list kind of goes on and on as to how difficult it is to identify who's a Métis. So right there again they're having that particular challenge. Now because they have that challenge, they can't issue photo ID. Now is that going to prevent a lot of people from voting in the Métis community? The answer is, you bet it is, Mr. Speaker.

The immigrant community has a lot of work to try and get themselves established, to have a challenge with housing, to have a challenge with meeting some of the education needs of their children, if they have children. And now they want to participate in the democracy in Canada and once again, their process through Immigration Canada is fairly rigorous and they have certainly a lot of hoops that they have to jump through. They're also impacted by the decision to have photo ID.

The other fact of the matter as well, Mr. Speaker, the elderly people. Many of them, because of their age, they don't get out much. Many of them because of their age may have lost their licence. Many of them because of their age may not have the necessary supports to go out and vote. And if you can see many of the older people coming out to vote and they're told at the polling station, oh no, we need a photo ID; you can't vote. Imagine the anger that these pioneers will have when they go to cast their vote and they're denied the right to vote, Mr. Speaker.

Now I spoke a lot about some of the groups and the organizations that are going to be affected by that. And then I turn around and I ask the people, have you talked to SUMA? Have you talked to FSIN? Have you spoken to your elder support group? Have you spoken to your local MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] how bad this law is going to affect you? And many of them have said they did.

And the point is, those same groups that I mentioned — FSIN, Métis Nation, SUMA, the northern mayors, and other organizations — they never brought up this concern at all. It wasn't a concern by anybody. And if the Chief Electoral Officer wasn't concerned about this in terms of the challenge it would create . . . He wasn't happy with that challenge, but he looked at it to the point saying, well it was their problems. Well the Chief Electoral Officer didn't think there was problems, but all of a sudden the Sask Party in their way to kill democracy said, no, no, we'll put in this law. We'll put in this rule. And all those groups and organizations that I've identified, whether it's a municipal election that's designed in Bill 161 or the provincial election, that's all meant to deter people from voting. And that's a shame, Mr. Speaker. That is an absolute shame.

And I'll point out that to people that are listening, that when we asked what is the Sask Party going to do to help mitigate that problem by helping people get the proper ID, to making sure the enumeration process is strengthened so that there isn't that kind of abuse that they've made up, Mr. Speaker, there is no response. They have no desire to try and rectify the problem or mitigate the potential for people being turned away at the polling stations. They have no answer to that.

So if they don't have an answer to trying to strengthen the system as some of their members have alluded to in earlier comments, then why did they put the rule in to begin with? Generally you put a rule in to try and make sure that things are followed and that things are proper. And everybody has rules; I appreciate that. But the fact of the matter is, is that if you have rules, you know that there's certain areas that are weak, you should also try and mitigate those areas that are weak with proper supports, a good system where you don't disenfranchise voters. And the Sask Party didn't do that, Mr. Speaker.

So not only are they denying people the right to vote in the municipal elections, as it's defined in 161, but also the provincial elections. And not only did they not allow them to vote, they're not going to help them try and get the right identification to make sure that this is, this is not a problem for many people that may want to come out to cast their ballot.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again I go back to my earlier comment: who asked for this rule for photo ID? Which organization, which civil liberties group, which accountability group, any group besides the Sask Party? You tell me anyone, any group that asked for this, Mr. Speaker. I challenge every single one of those members across the way, including the Premier, show me one group that asked for this photo ID. Show me one letter of support from any organization that I've spoken about earlier today, one letter saying it's a good idea. And, Mr. Speaker, they will not provide it because nobody supported it. This is one of their little brain trust to try and deny many organizations and people throughout the land the right to vote.

And the right to vote and the right to participate in a democracy was granted to us by the pioneers, was granted to us by our veterans, was granted to us by many people that worked years before to try and build up this country and afford us freedom. And yet you have this party saying, well we are now a government and we are now taking your right to vote. We're going to put more rules and more regulation, make it more onerous for you to come along, despite your age or your

immigrant status or your Aboriginal status, that despite all that problem, we kind of like you guys. But you're not allowed to vote yet unless you get photo ID. So the groups say, well can we get some help to get the proper ID in place? Oh no, that's your responsibility. That's your responsibility.

[15:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, the amazing, the most amazing thing is they're ignoring that particular aspect as well. Now what I tell the people out in Saskatchewan land right now that are listening is, number one, don't let them deny you that vote. Do the necessary work to get your ID in place. Work closely with the enumerators, Mr. Speaker. If you have trouble, get a hold of your MLA. And if it's their MLA, voice your displeasure and say, I want your help to get me that photo ID, and I'm not paying you; I don't have the money for it.

If you're a senior citizen living on fixed income, you don't have that extra 20 or 30 bucks to get your photo ID. If you're a Métis nation, a Métis person living in the North, and you don't have the resources to get your photo ID, then you should get that support. If you're a First Nations living in southwestern Saskatchewan, you don't have the resources to get your photo ID in time, you should be able to phone somebody and say, I need help getting that photo ID.

And, Mr. Speaker, they will not do that because they don't want some of these organizations and people to vote anyway. That's the whole objective here. This photo ID, this whole scenario, like I said, this brain-dead plan that the Sask Party has to deny people the right to vote, is absolutely ludicrous. And it's an affront to democracy, and the people of Saskatchewan can see right through this, Mr. Speaker.

Now what's kind of worrisome, Mr. Speaker, is that the last election when I looked at some of the people that were speaking about this election in general and all throughout the process, I never heard once on the radio or on TV that there's irregularities, Mr. Speaker. And only that party across the way that won the election, won more seats than the NDP, after they won the election, they said, well there's some irregularities. Now I'm sitting there saying, well you guys won and how is the irregularities that you've identified a problem for you? Shouldn't you not say anything if there's such a major problem? You know, you shouldn't say anything because you won. But they said it anyway, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the confusing part about the right wingers is they claim a lot of credit for things that they don't do. But they're confusing the people because they're confusing to themselves. So if you won the election but there's some irregularities, then you had no way to support people to fix it, nobody's asking you to put in any rules or any process in place. You do it anyway. Again it confuses people saying, what's all this about?

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot to say about this particular Bill, a lot to say about it. And the biggest thing is that I've told a lot of folks wherever I go, and I mention the Sask Party and I mention their leader. I mention their Justice minister, and I tell people, let those names burn in your mind as the people that denied you the right to vote by putting in extra rules such as photo ID which they know many of you don't have. They're

going to keep on doing that. They're going to keep on putting the roadblocks in front of you. But it's important to blow them roadblocks off your way and tell people, we're going to be here to vote.

Participate in the enumeration process. Work closely with your enumerator. Contact your MLA. Contact your MP [Member of Parliament]. Contact your mayor. Contact your reeve and say, look, I don't have photo ID. Is there any way I can get some help to get photo ID? Because I want to go vote, because I'm being denied the right to vote by that Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to certainly commend the northern mayors and the northern leaders who have also said in many ways, shapes and forms, that they don't like this notion of photo ID. And one of the examples I'll give you is that . . . It's kind of a really awkward, awkward situation. And I want to explain to the Assembly my own experience when I tried to vote in a Métis election a number of years ago.

And I've always been a very proud Métis, Mr. Speaker. I have many First Nations family members. They're also proud of their heritage. But I'm proud of my Métis heritage. And my wife is also Métis and my children are Métis. So five of us go to vote at the Métis election in Ile-a-la-Crosse, and we present our Métis cards. And they know who we are. They know we're Métis. And we voted. And at the time the ballot box in Ile-a-la-Crosse was discounted in a Métis election saying, no we can't have this ballot box. The votes in that ballot box can't count. And the reason why they said the ballots couldn't be counted is because there's 10 people that should not have voted, that voted that day. And of those 10, Mr. Speaker, five of them were me and my wife and my three girls.

And now who had the authority and who had the right to deny those particular, I'm not sure about the other five, but our family's right to vote? Somewhere down the road some person said this is not right. The ballot box doesn't count, so that the results are out. And what happened was the candidate that we were voting for ended up losing, and he lost because that ballot box was not counted. Now that's exactly what I think is going to happen with these guys. That's exactly what they want to do in many places.

As you know, we look at the apartments that are in many of those communities, and in those apartments are Aboriginal people and immigrant communities and elders and many others live in those apartments. Well they move around a lot, Mr. Speaker. They move around a lot. And now if they want to come and vote and you go to their apartment block and say, well how long have you been here? I've been here three months. I want to vote and I want to do this. Do you have photo ID? No, we don't. Well I'm sorry, you can't vote. That is intended to discourage democracy.

And I told a lot of my people, remember those names, in particular the minister that first introduced this thing, the member from Meadow Lake, and the Minister of Justice that supported that notion, Mr. Speaker. Those two names are going to live in infamy for many of the Aboriginal communities, Mr. Speaker. Because they done this deliberately, Mr. Speaker. They done this deliberately to deny many of those groups that

right to vote.

And, Mr. Speaker, why? Why? Who asked for this and why would they do that? Well, Mr. Speaker, we have the answers why. Because they don't want these people to vote. Because these people will not vote the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly why they're putting forward those kind of rules and regulations, Mr. Speaker.

Now if you want to talk about irregularities, Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about irregularities, let me do this analogy. When the party that's supposed to be promoting democracy, as they like to call themselves . . . We know how they formed their party, Mr. Speaker — in the dead of night. In the dead of night when there's nobody around, four of the Liberals and four of the Conservatives got together and they formed this new Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker — in the dead of night. Nobody was around.

In the dead of night they sat there, said let's get this process going. We will form this new party. We're going to give up on our old parties. We're going to let them die a slow death, and then we'll form this new party. And we'll take taxpayers' money. We'll take taxpayers' money to get this new party going. And furthermore, we will make sure we deny the other party that we come from the right to organize and the right to put forward candidates by holding back the PC [Progressive Conservative] trust fund. We'll put that baby in hibernation. That was the party right across the way, Mr. Speaker. They done that.

And it's one thing to leave a party and join another, Mr. Speaker, but it's another thing to circumvent the electoral process by killing a party by putting their PC trust fund into hibernation, not letting anybody touch it. It's one thing to lead; it's another thing to sabotage.

So, Mr. Speaker, that issue is going to be coming up and it's going to be coming up time and time again. And I go back to my earlier point — if you want to promote democracy, you sure aren't practising it, Mr. Speaker. And this whole notion of having photo ID is one stop, and the second thing is, certainly is in the dead of night creating your Saskatchewan Party caucus using taxpayers' funds to operate your offices and denying the PC trust fund, the access to the PC trust fund by many of the Conservatives.

So if you want to give up on your old party, go right ahead. But don't try and stop them from accessing their money. And that's what you guys did. So this whole notion of, oh this is good for the system . . . We know based on your experience that nothing in democracy's good for you, and that's why you keep putting up all these road blocks, Mr. Speaker.

Now again I go back to my earlier point — if they're serious about helping a lot of the people that we're talking about, we're talking to in relation to the photo ID, then, Mr. Speaker, they should put measures in place to help them out. And there's nothing in this Bill that identifies that — nothing in this Bill. And as they hit the campaign trail, they will know from a lot of people this photo ID was somebody's idea back there to stifle democracy.

And when you stifle democracy, then guess what? That doesn't hurt them. It hurts a lot of the groups that they're trying to stifle. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to reach out to those groups. We're going to reach out to the immigrant community. We're going to reach out to the Aboriginal community. We're going to reach out to the elder constituency. We're going to reach out to many of the groups and organizations that may not have a photo ID and saying, come on board. Let's send these guys a message. Let's get up and fight and say, never again will we allow somebody to stop our right to vote.

The photo idea, the whole photo ID concept in this Bill and the provincial Bill, to amend it to have that photo ID requirement to vote, is asinine. It is absolutely ludicrous and it hurts democracy, Mr. Speaker. It hurts democracy. And I'll always say, Mr. Speaker, as we leave this Assembly in our due time, that the names of that leader, of that Justice minister, and the minister that introduced it, Mr. Speaker, are going to live in infamy with a lot of groups and organizations, Mr. Speaker. Their names will live in infamy.

And as long as we have breath in this life, I'm going to tell the people from where I'm from, those are the ones that were the architects, were the architects of this whole concept of stopping people from voting if they don't have photo ID, Mr. Speaker. They have an enumeration process. They have all kinds of options to make sure there's no voter fraud. Nobody asked for it. The Chief Electoral Officer said it's great. And, Mr. Speaker, it's important to know that the system from the Chief Electoral Officer didn't identify any major discrepancy. These guys made it up to stop people from voting, Mr. Speaker. And that's why it's important that, as an MLA from northern areas and many MLAs from my caucus, they're hearing this time and time again. They're hearing this time and time again — why did we trust these guys? Because it's the same old same old, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say in my closing comments that I'm telling the people of the North, the people of the South or the cities or rural Saskatchewan to not, not stop the effort to go and vote. Go to the polling stations. All you guys that may not have photo ID, go to the polling stations and say, I want to vote. I want to vote. And see how many of you are denied. See how many of you are denied. Don't stop. Go there and say, I want to vote. I have a right to vote. I live here. I want to vote. You go there and you say, I want to vote, and you say that as loud as you can.

Well I'm sorry, you don't have photo ID. Stand there and say you want to vote. Don't give up. Stand there and say you want to vote. And when you vote and when you argue and when you stand there and say you want to vote, the last, last people that you want to vote for is the Saskatchewan Party. That's the last group that you want to vote for, Mr. Speaker. Because they're the ones that are trying to stop you to begin with.

So all you people out there that are homeless, all you people that may not have a fixed address, all the Aboriginal communities that may not have photo ID, the immigrant communities, the elders — go to your polling stations and see if they can stop you from voting. See if they can stop you from voting. Test the system, Mr. Speaker. Because you have a right to vote, and no silly rule that's made up to help them politically is going to stop the people's right to vote and their demand to

vote. So on election day, go out and vote, and don't vote for those guys, Mr. Speaker.

Don't vote for those guys. Because it's exactly what they want to do. They want to manipulate the process. And those are the same guys, Mr. Speaker, same guys that in the dead of night set up the Saskatchewan Party, in the dead of night set up the Saskatchewan Party. And they talk about democracy and that, Mr. Speaker, is hypocritical. It's absolutely. And I tell the people of the province, once again, if you don't have photo ID, go and vote anyway. Go and vote.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] asked me if I was a Liberal once. And the answer is yes. But what I didn't do after I left the Liberals, Mr. Speaker, I didn't sabotage the party I left. I didn't sabotage the party I left. I didn't stop them from accessing any of their members, Mr. Speaker. Those guys done that, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what they've done. They stopped them from accessing the PC trust fund. That's exactly what you did. So, Mr. Speaker, if you want to call a spade a spade, I'm ready to rock and roll. I'm ready to rock and roll, Mr. Speaker.

So the point I've made to all the voters who look at the Saskatchewan Party and their hypocritical stance on trying to stop people from voting, go to the polling stations and vote. If you don't have photo ID, it don't matter. Show up and vote, and see them deny you the right to vote, Mr. Speaker. Test the system. See if they deny you the right to vote because they have no right, Mr. Speaker. They have no right to deny anybody the right to vote.

[15:30]

The only people that have the . . . that can deny the people the right to vote, Mr. Speaker, is probably the veterans that served our country, and they won't do that — too much sacrifice to promote democracy and freedom that we enjoy. But these guys come along, and they want to fix that system to their political advantage. And I say shame on you. I say shame on you. Shame on you, and I say shame on you again.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we will always stand opposed to anything these guys are trying to do to fix the democratic system. The fix is in for them. It's not on for accountability or transparency or fairness or freedom, Mr. Speaker. The fix is for them.

So all those that don't have photo ID, show up and vote and say, I'm not following your rules. I've got a right to vote. I'm going to vote. And the reason why I'm not going to follow your rules is because you guys didn't follow the rules when you set up the Saskatchewan Party in the dead of night. Nobody held you to account on the democratic principles that you had that night. Nobody challenged you guys. And then four of you took taxpayers' money instead of the Saskatchewan Party caucus. And all of a sudden, that's it. It's done.

So, Mr. Speaker, if they're not going to follow the rule and the democratic rules in any way, shape, or form, why should the people follow their silly notion of having photo ID at these polling booths in these polling stations? So today I tell them, go and vote. And I dare the Saskatchewan Party to stop them.

Mr. Speaker, I adjourn debate on Bill 161.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Athabasca has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 161. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 162

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hickie that **Bill No. 162 — *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the fundamental rights of citizenship in this country we call Canada is the right to exercise your vote. Mr. Speaker, if you look at what's happening across the globe today, there are people — particularly in northern Africa, the Middle East — that are protesting in the streets of their country at great risk to themselves to ensure that they have a democratic government. They want the right to vote.

And, Mr. Speaker, we just witnessed a few weeks ago millions of people in Egypt for the first time lining up to change their constitution to exercise their right to vote, Mr. Speaker. It's a fundamental tenet of a democratic society that we have the right to vote as citizens in our country, in our province, and at our municipal and school board level.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 162 is *An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act*. And when I listen carefully to what the Minister of Municipal Government had to say, he informed the House that after extensive consultations with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association that we were going to go to four-year terms for municipal councillors and mayors. Mr. Speaker, that request came from municipal councillors and mayors from across the province, and hence we see this contained in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I am not aware that there was a great surge of requests to change the way we as citizens vote in municipal elections, let alone provincial elections. I'm not aware of that. I've not heard people complaining. And I have to say I have been, sat as a scrutineer. I've sat as someone in the vote, you know, where people came in to vote, long before I ever became a member of the legislature. And people went and they voted.

Mr. Speaker, this is quite different. What the government is proposing is that people will have to have a piece of photo identification or something else — it's up to the municipalities — to vote. Mr. Speaker, day after day, I think most members of the legislature who represent urban areas meet constituents that do not have photo identification. They don't have a driver's licence. They don't have their SIN card or their social insurance number. Day after day, we have people that come to our offices who don't have a birth certificate. They have nothing really to

inform the public who they are other than they might have a relative with them.

I'm thinking of a guy that just came to my office last fall who came with his 83-year-old mother. He's HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] positive. He was looking to get into some form of housing, of which there is nothing that he could get into. And he had nothing, Mr. Speaker. He had no identification. He did have his mother that could attest to the fact that he was her 52-year-old son. She could attest to the fact that she'd given birth to him, but he had no identification. And yet if he wanted to exercise his right as a citizen in this country, to go into a provincial polling booth or go into a municipal polling booth or to go to a school board polling booth, he could not have his mother attest to the fact, this is my son.

Mr. Speaker, this is simply wrong. This is simply wrong because there are many, many, many people that are not the comfortable, they are not the privileged, they are not the well-to-do. And yet what we're saying to them is that you do not have the right to exercise your right as a citizen because you don't have the necessary photo ID or whatever. And I think that's wrong, Mr. Speaker. It's not only wrong in terms of this Bill 162, but it's wrong in terms of *The Elections Act* that this government opposite has foisted upon us.

Now what are we coming to? What are we coming to? Are we coming to a society that you have to be well-heeled, the privileged, the comfortable, the upper crust in order to exercise what really is a fundamental right of citizenship, the right to vote? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. And so I would say to the members opposite that there are many, many citizens, many citizens, even young people. Young people lose their identification. They don't necessarily have the money to go and get their birth certificate. Or I think now you have to send in money to get your social insurance number replaced, your driver's licence replaced. I mean it is a costly thing if your identification is lost or stolen. It is costly.

And when you're trying to balance — you know, do I have money for rent, do I have money for food? — sort of the basic necessities of life, you don't necessarily have the money to get your birth certificate or your driver's licence or your social insurance number. And, Mr. Speaker, you know there have been times when I have gone online and put in my own credit card number to assist people to get some form of identification in order that they could try and rent a home because they simply didn't have any identification. They might have their parent there or a relative there or a friend, but they didn't have the money, Mr. Speaker.

And so I would say to the government opposite that really what this legislation does is that it impinges upon a person's right of citizenship, the right to vote. And, Mr. Speaker, if we want to, I can understand that the government may want to assure that there is no voter corruption or whatever. But I think if you have someone along with you to identify you, to attest to your character — we do that at times when people are applying for a passport — I think that that should be good enough, Mr. Speaker, someone to say they know you.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is very problematic. We know that people come and go. They might move from one area of the province

to another area of province. I'm thinking of students who move into urban centres in the fall to attend school. Both our municipal and provincial elections are in the fall. They may not have all of their . . . They may not have something to show that they're actually residing at a particular address, and we're saying to them that you don't have the right to vote unless you can provide some sort of identification.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, that there are literally thousands of people that are homeless in this province, yet they're couch surfing or staying with relatives. We know that there are places in our cities and in our rural areas, on First Nations reserves, where there are, you know, 10, 15 people living in places. We know that there are newcomers in Saskatchewan who may . . . or who have citizenship, but they're sort of bunking in together in order to reduce the costs of living. And so we have homes where traditionally we may have had five or six people living in those homes; we now have 10 to 15 to 20 people living in those homes.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the history of this government — and we need to look at the history since they were elected in November of 2007 — this is a government that vetoed the selection of a bipartisan committee for the Chief Electoral Officer in the province, an independent member, an independent officer of the legislature. This is a government that has prevented another political party of accessing its own funds in order that that political party, the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan could compete on a level playing field. They've made it harder for people to exercise their democratic right to free speech and hold protests because of changes . . . What was it? Bill 43.

This is a government that is trying to harmonize the rules with the federal government when it comes to voter identification. And we know that that legislation is being challenged in the Supreme Court of British Columbia by a coalition of organizations including seniors, renters, and people who are homeless.

Mr. Speaker, the government also claims that people will not be disenfranchised by pointing to measures included in the legislation to give people alternatives. But all of us in the Assembly have seen instances where a deputy returning officer can be overzealous in their interpretation of the rules. And you might have campaign managers running around, trying to contact Regina on voting day in order to clarify the rules with the Chief Electoral Officer and then have the Chief Electoral Officer respond to the returning officer. So, Mr. Speaker, this is problematic.

We also know that many renters at the moment are having to change places because of escalating rent increases. They can't afford the rents that are being charged by some landlords in the province of Saskatchewan. It's difficult maybe to prove that I live in this place when I used to live here a month or two ago. And so we see a lot of recycling going through various rental facilities in the province of Saskatchewan.

We also know that there's lots of senior citizens that no longer drive, so they don't have a photo ID, a driver's licence. And of course as I said earlier, we know of people who are couch surfing or people who are otherwise homeless . . . [inaudible]



interjection] ... and it's not likely they will have documentation that includes their current address.

Now the member opposite says I'm defeating myself. I say to the member opposite that as a right of citizenship in this country, each of us has the right to vote. And it shouldn't be dependent upon providing documentation that I am who I am because I may not have that documentation. I may not be able to afford to get that documentation. It could be dependent upon another citizen vouching for you, Mr. Speaker. And I think that would be a fairer approach to this issue of photo identification when it comes to voting.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are aspects of this legislation that I have no difficulty with. Four-year terms for mayors and councillors, I have no difficulty with. I do have difficulty, grave difficulty, with what I consider to be a fundamental democratic right of citizenship, and that is the right to vote. And in this case it's my view, it's my perspective that this particular piece of legislation, along with changes to *The Election Act*, take away certain individuals who are citizens in this country, it takes away their right to exercise a right of citizenship. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn the debate.

[15:45]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Nutana has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 162, *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 160

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 160** — *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2010* be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to weigh in on debate here. I'm certainly not pleased with this Bill being before us, Mr. Speaker, but I weigh in on debate on Bill No. 160 with great importance and with great passion, Mr. Speaker.

It is fair to say that the Bill we see before us is a massive step backwards in human rights within Saskatchewan and a shameful piece of legislation that should not be before us, that should be withdrawn, and a Bill that has brought a very negative spotlight to our province — a province that has a proud record as it relates to human rights, putting forward as a province a Bill of Rights in 1947, a proud feat for this province to hold up to the rest of our nation and to the world. Of course, that was brought forward by Tommy Douglas within their first term, Mr. Speaker.

What we see is that in many ways, Saskatchewan has been a

leader as it relates to human rights, Mr. Speaker, for many years. And what we see under this Sask Party government is a continued attack on human rights. Bill 160, the Bill before us here today as a specific example, Mr. Speaker, a Bill that is all about driving voices and concerns and complaints to the backroom, Mr. Speaker, for backroom deals instead of dealing with those complaints in the way that they should, Mr. Speaker, and giving voice to victims, Mr. Speaker, giving voice to social ills within our society and bringing change, Mr. Speaker, for the betterment of all Saskatchewan people.

And to see a step away from that and to see a Bill that in fact is taking us in the other direction on this front is disappointing. It's fair to say that we've been concerned on many fronts with this Sask Party government, with the sort of similar attacks on either human rights or the voice of the marginalized, Mr. Speaker, and voices that often aren't heard otherwise.

And we see it here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, where this government has eliminated the Welfare Rights Centre, Mr. Speaker, and removed that voice for individuals who don't have voice otherwise, Mr. Speaker. And what they've done is they've taken a mechanism that was external to government, independent from government, and they've brought it inside of government, Mr. Speaker, keeping those voices internal to government and not where they should be, voices that allow the public to understand the true circumstances of their province, the harsh reality sometimes, Mr. Speaker, that we face, the social ills that exist and allow us to commit ourselves to bettering our self and our province, Mr. Speaker.

So we see this sort of activity on many fronts. We've seen it in the legislation that's before us right now by the Sask Party as well that puts restrictions on the ability to vote and will have a direct impact on the ability for many young people or seniors or otherwise, First Nations and Métis people to come out to the polls, Mr. Speaker. And this is moving in the wrong direction and shameful, Mr. Speaker, for a province that should be world leaders, should be leaders as a jurisdiction, and in fact have been leaders at different points and time in our history, Mr. Speaker, something we should be proud of.

We witness nations around the world that aren't free and democratic, Mr. Speaker. We witness the turmoil, the crisis that is occurring in many of those nations as we speak here today, Mr. Speaker, fighting for the sort of democratic rights, the sort of human rights that we sometimes take for granted here in Saskatchewan but certainly have fought for it and had leadership here in this province, Mr. Speaker. When we see that going on in other nations where individuals are in circumstances of violence and great turmoil, in many cases dying for the types of laws and protections that we have as a province and a nation, it's a shame that where we are in our protected circumstance here in Saskatchewan, we're moving the wrong direction, that we're moving backwards on these fronts, removing the voice of marginalized, Mr. Speaker, reducing the number of the individuals that will come out to vote and participate in their democracy and have their say.

And we see other pieces of legislation this government's brought forward that have similar impacts, that are a step backwards — specifically Bill 43, Mr. Speaker, that was put forward that took away the ability for groups and for civil

society to speak out, to rally, to organize, and to have their say.

And it's a sad day in this province, Mr. Minister, when we have all these concerted efforts of this right wing Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker, to eliminate these important voices. Whether they be the victims of harassment, as may be the case through human rights legislation, or through abuses, Mr. Speaker, the removal of those voices, Mr. Speaker, that should be heard by the public and that should allow us as policy-makers and the public to resolve ourselves to bettering our circumstance, Mr. Speaker. A silencing of those voices that are critical for us to be able to analyze our well-being, analyze our faults and strive to a better place, Mr. Speaker.

Removing those voices from a human rights perspective, Mr. Speaker, is something this government's been deliberate with, something that's disappointing, something that's wrong, something that's not fair, and something that we will fight, Mr. Speaker. Something that we should fight, Mr. Speaker. When I say we, certainly I speak of we, as in the opposition New Democrats. But I think I speak in a more global we on that as well, Mr. Speaker.

Because the more individuals that I sit down with and speak about Bill 160 with, Mr. Speaker, and the elimination of human rights and the backwards movement on this front, and the fact that Amnesty International has a spotlight on our province as a jurisdiction that's going in the wrong direction and has stated specifically that this Bill needs to be repealed, Mr. Speaker, before it's passed, removed before it's passed, Mr. Speaker, is a sad day for our province. A province that has had a lot of pride, Mr. Speaker, in being world leaders on many perspectives.

Now we're leading in a different direction, Mr. Speaker, and I guess the . . . I guess that's how things work. You elect a right wing government, Mr. Speaker, and they grab that wheel and they certainly grab legislation such as this, and they've yanked us to a hard right, Mr. Speaker.

It's almost inconceivable to most individuals when we sit down and work through these pieces, why this government would choose to silence the voice of victims, Mr. Speaker. Why they would choose to drive underground matters and remove tribunals and mechanisms that should be availed to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, and to reduce that sort of protection that Saskatchewan people should be afforded.

So we see it with this piece of legislation. We see it with the reduction of . . . the restrictions on voting, Mr. Speaker, a deliberate attempt to keep many individuals away from the polls. A piece of legislation that will affect First Nations and Métis people in a significant way, many young people, Mr. Speaker, who we should be enabling to take lead roles in our participatory democracy, Mr. Speaker, and seniors, Mr. Speaker, who have served our province and have every right to cast their ballot. And a shame, Mr. Speaker, that we're stepping in these directions when we look at the global conflict in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, in the circumstance of what individuals are up against and fighting for a better place, for good human rights laws, Mr. Speaker. And then here we are in Saskatchewan moving backwards in 2011. It's disappointing.

When we look at this Bill specifically, it's worthy to note that

individuals from around the globe are weighing in on this Bill, critiquing the fact that it's been put forward, challenging this government to remove this Bill from consideration, Mr. Speaker. Yet this government forges ahead. We have Alex Neve with Amnesty International who is Secretary General, Mr. Speaker, who has weighed in both in speaking — he's come into Saskatchewan and spoke for the purpose of challenging and fighting against this Bill, Mr. Speaker — but he's also written, Mr. Speaker, submissions that have been published in our newspapers.

Now what we need to understand is that Amnesty International is not a political organization in the sense that it weighs in to matters of jurisdiction in this way, in any sort of a focused way. This is a rare circumstance where we have Amnesty International, a Nobel Peace Prize winning international organization, putting a spotlight on Saskatchewan in a negative way and saying, get rid of this Bill; it's wrong. It's wrong for Saskatchewan and it's wrong for the position that Saskatchewan's held within North America and within the world as a place that's led on areas of social justice and human rights, Mr. Speaker.

One of the headlines that was in *The StarPhoenix* just a little while ago from an article that was put forward by a law professor from the University of Saskatchewan by the name of Mr. Ken Norman, the headline speaks for itself. This is from *The StarPhoenix*. It says, "Sask out of step on human rights process," Mr. Speaker, stating that we're out of step, that it's the wrong direction. And if I move through the article which puts forward a very strong case against this legislation and the concerns that we should be aware of, it just finishes in closing here: "None of the last five full external reviews of human rights processes in Canada have seen any merit in abandoning human rights tribunal systems in favour of high courts."

So of the last five full external reviews of human rights processes, not a single one of those reviews, Mr. Speaker, has called for this sort of a process, to remove tribunals and drive these to the high courts, in this case the Court of Queen's Bench, Mr. Speaker. Strong opposition to this Bill within the legal community, within human rights activism community, Mr. Speaker, as well, and for good reason. In fact we should be ashamed that this Bill's been put forward by the Sask Party.

Now part of the challenges with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is how it's been marketed. This Bill very much has been marketed to date as a Bill that has to do with what's been described as four pillars of human rights, Mr. Speaker, approaches that are something that we can certainly support, and reflect best practice. But the fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that this piece of legislation has nothing to do with those four pillars, Mr. Speaker. This government has marketed this piece of legislation in a very misleading fashion by focusing in on these four pillars, Mr. Speaker. And in fact these four pillars are in many ways in the current code as it exists, already included, Mr. Speaker.

And just one example of that would be the education aspect, Mr. Speaker, that the government as proponent of this legislation, as mover of this legislation, has focused in on. But, Mr. Speaker, what we need to recognize on education is that education is already fully enabled and fully provided for within

the code as it exists. And what we should recognize further on that is that, as it relates to education, the word is not even utilized in the Act before us here today and the Bill before us here today, Mr. Speaker. So it's a real red herring, Mr. Speaker, to pretend that this is about education. It's not even included in there. To pretend it's about the four pillars, well that's already included in legislation, Mr. Speaker.

And it's a real classic misdirection, waving this four pillars document and approach in one hand while the other hand's crafting a Bill, Mr. Speaker, that brings to an end or certainly controls, Mr. Speaker, what sort of cases can go to court. And it's not in the best interests of Saskatchewan people, and it's something that we should oppose strongly, when a right wing government like this Sask Party comes in and starts taking away human rights in this sort of a fashion, Mr. Speaker.

Getting rid of the tribunals to move them to the Court of Queen's Bench is something that we oppose, and with a focus in on what is being called directed mediation, Mr. Speaker, and called by others coercive mediation. And that's a course of mediation, I believe is the term, that Alex Neve of Amnesty International, Nobel Peace Prize winning organization, Mr. Speaker, that's brought a lot of good to our world that at times can be troubled, Mr. Speaker . . . and now focusing in on this piece of legislation referring to it as coercive mediation.

Well that goes against the very principles of mediation, Mr. Speaker. It goes against the very best interests of human rights legislation and victims in this province, Mr. Speaker, and certainly against the best interests of a province that should be resolving itself to dealing with its ills and bettering itself as a province. We have a circumstance where if human rights adjudication in this province . . . almost entirely eliminated by effect of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and by impact and choice by this Premier, Mr. Speaker. And that's not in our best interest.

[16:00]

The fact that this Bill moves in a direction to settle basically everything in a confidential manner, Mr. Speaker, behind closed doors is not in the best interest. When we're dealing with individuals and circumstances where we're talking about abuse and harassment not being made public, where are we as policy-makers to be resolving ourselves with decisions and resources, Mr. Speaker?

And sometimes court decisions are simply required, Mr. Speaker, to improve a society, to change a society, Mr. Speaker. And the fact that this Bill removes the voice of victims, Mr. Speaker, victims of abuse, harassment, you name it, Mr. Speaker, egregious acts against human rights . . . and that the individual, the Chief Commissioner, has now the ability to simply dismiss those cases, Mr. Speaker.

So we're very concerned about these aspects, this forcing of mediation with groups that, I think it's fair to say, come in, when I say about the various parties that enter into mediation, the victim and otherwise, Mr. Speaker. These are parties coming in with very unequal positions, Mr. Speaker, inequitable positions, Mr. Speaker. And it's simply not fair or appropriate to pretend that somehow mediation can work in such an unequal, unfair environment, Mr. Speaker.

As I've spoken a little bit here today, I really want to highlight the fact that the impact of this Bill is to drive cases underground and matters underground, Mr. Speaker, to remove the discussion of injustices within our society and to prevent the discussion of social ills that may be occurring, Mr. Speaker. And I'm talking about abuses and harassments and disgraces, Mr. Speaker, that should not be tolerated and that we should be resolving ourselves to reducing and eliminating across Saskatchewan, across our province, and being leaders on these fronts, Mr. Speaker.

So here we are in Saskatchewan with a right wing government that's silencing the voices of those victims and fails to give voice to matters both of that victim but that are relevant to individuals across this province.

What we need to recognize, Mr. Speaker, is that when we have an individual and a case that's before tribunals or a complaint has been lodged, more than likely, Mr. Speaker, there's many other cases unfortunately that are going on quietly across this province. And when one case gets heard and when it's brought to light and it becomes part of public discourse, Mr. Speaker, it's for the good of all Saskatchewan people to understand those circumstances, to understand contributing factors, to understand the role for laws, to understand the role for resources and planning, Mr. Speaker. And that's removed.

This gets to the fact that quite simply, Mr. Speaker, decisions are required sometimes from courts. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, those decisions drive change within a society. And they shape a society, Mr. Speaker, and shaping it for an improved circumstance, Mr. Speaker, for all Saskatchewan people and certainly in response to the circumstance that it's making judgment on, Mr. Speaker.

So we're concerned, very much, about this silencing of voices that simply need to be heard. Mr. Speaker, I'll be frank here. Those voices will sometimes be unpleasant, for the stories that will be told will sometimes be unpleasant. We as a province, when we hear some of the human rights abuses, we shouldn't be proud. We wouldn't be proud, but we should hear those voices. We should hear those concerns, so we can resolve ourselves to not let that happen again, to improve ourselves as a jurisdiction, and to see what we have the ability to do.

And I believe that this comes down to informing and driving changes from a legislative perspective, but it also is well served within our communities, Mr. Speaker, to understand the egregious acts that occur, their hurt and abuse, so that we as communities and community leaders and individuals can take action and to move towards a better day, Mr. Speaker. Silencing these voices doesn't assist that process, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke a little bit about the concerns of the granting broad powers of discharge to the commissioner. New powers to dismiss, Mr. Speaker, would be sort of the frame that I would share. And basically if the Chief Commissioner believes a case is not warranted, then that case can be discharged. And this goes against the very principle of mediation. And we're dealing with two parties already that are in very unequal positions as they enter into this, Mr. Speaker. To remove this or to move in this direction and to give these broad, sweeping powers of dismissal are not appropriate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for Saskatchewan people to understand that many cases, in fact I think it's fair to say probably most cases, of human rights abuses never make it to tribunal. But the very fact, the very fact, that that mechanism is available and utilized is critical to a well-functioning democracy, Mr. Speaker. It's critical to the advancement of human rights and critical to the advancement of well-being within a jurisdiction, in this case our province.

By eliminating the tribunal and by way of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, it's disconcerting to see that we are doing away with even some of the publications that are important to providing the kind of information that Saskatchewan people and decision makers need to have, Mr. Speaker, information that even if a case may not proceed is still very, very important to have.

And I would talk about something such as the annual reports, Mr. Speaker, something that are being done away with in this province, annual reports from the tribunal. And this sort of annual report would give us information of the nature of the number of cases, Mr. Speaker, that have been heard. It would highlight the nature of those cases, Mr. Speaker, the nature of those alleged abuses, Mr. Speaker, the harassments that have gone on, and it would lay out information as it relates to resolution of those cases and the processes involved.

Now that's valuable and needed information to the public, to legislators, to individuals, to community leaders, and it's something that it's disappointing to see being removed. It provides in many ways, I guess you could say, an important window into human rights within our province and the state of play, Mr. Speaker. And removing that again simply removes that understanding of how we need to resolve ourselves, Mr. Speaker, and what we need to work towards as a jurisdiction.

This government, as I've mentioned earlier, has pretended that this legislation has to do with legislation or has to do with education, Mr. Speaker. It's important to note that this Bill has nothing to do with education. Education's already addressed in the code, the Bill as it stood, the Act as it stood, Mr. Speaker, I should say, and that all those powers currently exist by way of the Act. And in fact, it is a statutory responsibility to be moving forward with education. And that's the state of play before this legislation was brought forward — a Bill that's been sold to the Saskatchewan public that it's about education, but yet education's not even mentioned in it, not named in this Bill once, Mr. Speaker. So Saskatchewan people have been misled on this matter.

When it comes to the matter of proper consultation, something that's vital to creating good public policy, Mr. Speaker, that hasn't happened.

And in fact, the shameful occurrence is that we have a minister and a Premier that have shrugged off all responsibility on this Bill. They've tabled it. They wrote it. They put it forward. And now they shrug all responsibility, Mr. Speaker. They won't even provide the basic side-by-side comparison of legislations for the understanding for stakeholders and for Saskatchewan people to understand the impact and the analysis of the Bill, the intended consequences, and then of course for us, as legislators, and for the public and stakeholders, to understand all the unintended consequences, Mr. Speaker. In this case, both the

intended consequences and the unintended consequences are unacceptable. And they're wrong, Mr. Speaker, and they take us in the wrong direction.

There is no way . . . There's been contentions, Mr. Speaker, that the moving to courts may be cheaper. There's no way that that's possible, Mr. Speaker. Certainly they're not cheaper. And, Mr. Speaker, certainly they're not more hospitable, can be certain of that.

And when we talk about hospitality, Mr. Speaker, of a process, we're dealing with individuals that are in states of extreme stress. That have been victimized, trauma, sometimes in a circumstance where they are in sort of a hopeless and helpless sort of a feeling, Mr. Speaker. Certainly moving in this direction will bring more hopelessness, Mr. Speaker, to the plea of many victims. But what we need to understand is that a hospitable environment is in fact a consideration that should be not dismissed, and something that I can be certain is that moving to the high courts away from tribunals does not improve that circumstance.

We see a reduction by way of this Bill for the filing of a complaint, Mr. Speaker, down, reduced now to one year. Why we would move in this direction, Mr. Speaker, is a good question for the government. But, Mr. Speaker, it's the wrong direction to go.

When we think of individuals and the circumstances they've faced as victims and the harassments and abuses and the harsh and ugly stories, Mr. Speaker, and the circumstances they've faced . . . The stress and trauma that they've dealt with, Mr. Speaker, are often, often impediments to them coming forward and telling a story that is important to be told, Mr. Speaker, something that's vital to be told. Individuals that fear consequences or don't understand those processes and in . . . often may delay sharing that story, Mr. Speaker. And what I fear most is that many victims never do share their stories, Mr. Speaker. And they need to understand the process that's laid out to them is one that's fair and just, something that isn't the case with the legislation that's put out here today.

So there's many reasons, Mr. Speaker, why I oppose this legislation, why the official opposition Saskatchewan New Democrats oppose this legislation, and why people across this province are speaking out and concerned by this legislation put forward by a right wing government, not in the best interests of Saskatchewan people, a Bill that's in fact has the international spotlight on us when I speak of Amnesty International weighing in on matters here in Saskatchewan.

It wasn't long ago, Mr. Speaker, that we were leaders in Canada, in North America, from a global perspective as it relates to matters of human rights, Mr. Speaker, and providing dignity to all. And it's been by way of a few pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker, a very deliberate attack on those very human rights, Mr. Speaker. Bill 160 stands out very significantly on that.

And we should be disappointed when we see Alex Neve, general secretary of Amnesty International, weighing in on matters. I'll just share a few of the comments here. This is Alex Neve on March 2nd, delivered in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker,

March 2nd, 2011. Alex Neve is general secretary of Amnesty International, Amnesty International of course an international human rights organization advocating for better societies, better conditions for people, Mr. Speaker. And very rare that Amnesty International would weigh in on a political matter, something that's become a political matter, Mr. Speaker, a rare circumstance and a shameful spotlight for this province. And worthy to note that Amnesty International are Nobel Peace Prize winners, Mr. Speaker. And they're focusing in on this right wing group here, Mr. Speaker, this right wing Sask Party Premier, and they're taking them to task. But they're also asking them to take this Bill off the table because it's wrong for Saskatchewan people.

I'll just quote from this presentation, comments delivered by Alex Neve:

Human rights are the bedrock principles that guide the most important aspects of our existence, as individuals and as communities. They shape how we will live our own daily lives and also how we live together, in neighbourhoods, cities, provinces, as a nation and globally. They touch on so much.

It goes on, Mr. Speaker. Of course this is a lengthy presentation. I'll move through some of the other pieces here:

They talk to me of two main concerns. First, I am told that the consultation was not an open-ended consultation seeking views about the state of human rights protection in the province and ideas for change to the system; out of which a reform proposal could have been developed. Rather, it was a consultation in which people were asked to react and respond to the proposal that had already been developed. Second, many have expressed concern to me the consultations focused mainly on the four pillars and gave much less attention to the more controversial proposal related to the future of the human rights tribunal.

I'm not in a position to reach my own conclusion. I haven't been involved in the consultations as I said. But I remain struck by the expressions of concern I have heard from many quarters.

Mr. Speaker, this is the words of Alex Neve, Amnesty International, casting great caution and concern with the direction of this government, Mr. Speaker, and specifically Bill 160.

[16:15]

I can move on to an article authored by Alex Neve that was published in *The StarPhoenix* on March 21st, 2011. This was authored by Alex Neve and as well Ailsa Watkinson: "Saskatchewan has a proud history on human rights. Going back more than six decades, it led Canada on human rights protection." Just think about that statement, Mr. Speaker, and the pride that Saskatchewan people, all Saskatchewan people, should feel when they hear that. I'm just going to repeat what was said here, "Saskatchewan has a proud history on human rights. Going back more than six decades, it led Canada on human rights protection."

This is a statement that's being provided by an international organization, by Amnesty International. That's quoting the six decades of leadership provided by the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, leadership that has served Saskatchewan well; leadership that has served the world well, Mr. Speaker. That was the context viewed of Saskatchewan. That's changed significantly, Mr. Speaker, now that we have a spotlight on this legislation that's been put forward, Mr. Speaker. That simply takes us in the wrong direction.

The election of this right wing government was on some . . . They put forward some promises, Mr. Speaker, and on commitments to Saskatchewan people. I've gone back, Mr. Speaker, to look at those commitments. Not a mention in that platform to provide that mandate to this right wing government was a mention about reducing human rights legislation, to reduce human rights. I didn't see that anywhere. Those were none of the . . . That wasn't part of the mandate offered to this government.

Nor was it, Mr. Speaker, to reduce the ability for people to vote in this province, specifically young people and First Nations and Métis people, seniors across this province, Mr. Speaker. That wasn't part of the mandate offered by Saskatchewan people, wasn't anywhere near their campaign promises, Mr. Speaker.

Nowhere in those campaign promises did I see that they wanted to eliminate independent mechanisms that spoke on behalf of individuals facing poverty, Mr. Speaker, individuals who are marginalized and don't have voices otherwise. Didn't see that, Mr. Speaker. And nowhere in that legislation, Mr. Speaker, did I recognize that, as Bill 43 did, that was going to take away the rights of individuals to organize as a civil society, should be provided to speak out and have their say and to rally and to organize, Mr. Speaker. All acts committed by this government in a couple of short years by way of just a few decisions and pieces of legislation. None of those, Mr. Speaker, were part of the mandate offered to this government by the people of this province. They take us significantly in the wrong direction.

And I put that back into context with the statement here, Mr. Speaker, that we should be embarrassed that this right wing government is taking us away from . . . This is a statement from Amnesty International, not a political organization, but Nobel Peace Prize winners, Mr. Speaker. And the statement by, authored by the author here Alex Neve and Ailsa Watkinson, specifically is that Saskatchewan has a proud history on human rights going back more than six decades. It led Canada on human rights protection. It's disappointing, it's wrong, it's shameful. We're moving in the opposite direction, Mr. Speaker.

Going to move down just a little further in that article, specifically:

What is most worrying about Bill 160 is the intention to abolish the Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal. The tribunal is currently responsible for . . . [hearing] human rights complaints that cannot be resolved by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. [A model used by every other Canadian jurisdiction.]

Mr. Speaker, we spoke just a few minutes ago here that the

elimination of tribunals has not come as a single recommendation from the reviews that have occurred, full reviews, as pointed out by Professor Ken Norman from the University of Saskatchewan, a law professor, and I quote, "None of the last five full external reviews of human rights processes in Canada have seen any merit in abandoning human rights tribunals . . . in favour of high courts!"

So, Mr. Speaker, five reviews that have been conducted, none of them finding merit in the direction that this government has chosen to take. We are the only province to take this step, to silence those voices, Mr. Speaker. Voices that are required, as ugly as those stories sometimes are, Mr. Speaker — the social ills, the hurt, the challenge, the abuses that go on within our province at times, Mr. Speaker — these are circumstances that need to be heard and this government is silencing those voices. Not only should they be heard; they should bring change. We should be finding the ability of how do we bring that voice more often, Mr. Speaker. Because as I've shared here today, I believe adamantly that the number of individuals that are victims of egregious acts of human rights violations far exceeds the number of individuals that enter into a process of complaint.

So when one of those complaints comes forward, it should be heard and dealt with in the most serious manner that it can be, Mr. Speaker. And sometimes courts are required to make decisions that shape society. And sometimes, Mr. Speaker, the public's required to understand the nature of the abuses and hurt that's going on within their province so that we can resolve ourselves to bettering ourselves as a province, to putting in laws of protection, to resourcing plans, and to be looking for leadership, Mr. Speaker, towards a circumstance where human rights violations are eliminated, Mr. Speaker.

It's a red herring, Mr. Speaker, that's been put before us by this government to pretend that this is about this four pillars discussion and about education. Those are already in place by way of the current Act, Mr. Speaker. And in fact as it relates to those responsibilities, specifically education, as an example, it's a statutory responsibility, Mr. Speaker, for a government to be leading towards the elimination of human rights violations, Mr. Speaker.

The headline from the article in *The StarPhoenix*, March 21st, "Backward step in human rights." This is the article that was authored by Alex Neve and Ailsa Watkinson, says it all. And why would we be taking that, Mr. Speaker, highlighting in that article the proud position we once had in this province, something that we should all be proud of, Mr. Speaker, going back to 1947 with the first Bill of Rights? Something that I'm hugely proud of as part of our provincial story, Mr. Speaker, as a province — part of our heritage, part of our modern history. And something that I'm proud of as a Saskatchewan New Democrat, Mr. Speaker, with the fact that it was Tommy Douglas in the first term of that CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] government, Mr. Speaker, that brought forward that sort of change.

So on many fronts, Mr. Speaker, I oppose this Bill and will fight this Bill, as do Saskatchewan people. Saskatchewan people are becoming more and more in tune with what's going on. I've noticed that individuals are aware of a pamphlet that's out here fighting for the protection of our human rights. And

it's highlighting, and the question on the front is "Are you aware of the proposed changes to *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*?" And no individuals that I've engaged in on this discussion, Mr. Speaker, many of them weren't in tune with what was going as it relates to human rights in this province, and when they find out what's being done, Mr. Speaker, they find it to be an egregious Act.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, and this is to be totally and entirely frank and honest with you, I haven't come across a single individual that I've discussed and presented this to, Mr. Speaker, that has supported Bill 160 — not a single individual, Mr. Speaker.

We look at basically, you know, what is proposed, where we are right now, and why we aren't improving the circumstance that we are currently under, Mr. Speaker, in being leaders and continuing to be leaders as Saskatchewan, instead of proposing these regressive changes where tribunals are being abolished, where the Chief Commissioner can simply dismiss a complaint if he or she believes a hearing is not warranted or an individual no longer appeals it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we talked about already some of the coercive nature of the mediation that's put forward, the unequal approach to that mediation, and the fact that that mediation is against the very principles of what mediation is all about, Mr. Speaker — the unequal positions that the various parties enter into that mediation and just showing how unfair, Mr. Speaker, it is to enter into that sort of a process and even attach the word mediation as if it's providing some level of fairness.

We fight against the fact that the filing of complaints has been reduced to one year, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that so many individuals with the heinous and egregious acts that have violated their human rights, the stress and trauma that may prohibit them from coming forward, Mr. Speaker, we challenge that change to reduce to one year, Mr. Speaker. When you hear these stories, Mr. Speaker, of some of the abuses and hurts that individuals have been subjected to, it's understandable that many across this province are hugely concerned that reducing to one year will prevent many individuals from lodging that complaint.

And then the fact that when that complaint is lodged or if it is lodged, that that voice simply has been silenced by this government, driven underground and into this coercive sort of a mediation environment to broker some sort of a backroom deal, Mr. Speaker, on very unequal grounds, as opposed to making that ill and that issue and that case public, having courts be able, tribunals to be able to render decisions and being able to allow Saskatchewan people to understand some of the circumstances that we face as a province, allowing ourselves to bring change and better our province, Mr. Speaker. This Bill moves us backwards. It's a shameful direction of this Sask Party government and it's a shame that Saskatchewan people don't take lightly, Mr. Speaker. We've been proud of our position as leaders as it relates to human rights and social justice. This is a regressive move that we will fight as opposition New Democrats in every way that we can. And that I believe Saskatchewan people will weigh in and have their voice as well, Mr. Speaker.

At this point in time, with other things to say on this Bill and

further consultation and looking forward to committee on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate on this Bill 160, Mr. Speaker. And it certainly hasn't been my pleasure to weigh in on debate because this Bill shouldn't be here, but certainly I do so with recognizing the importance of doing so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 160. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. Why is the member from Lloydminster on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. McMillan:** — To ask for a leave to introduce guests.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. McMillan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member who was about to make his speech. I'd just like to take this opportunity to introduce a representative of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, Regina businessman, Tom Paradis. Thank you very much for joining us here in the gallery today. And I think we'll be meeting a little later on this afternoon.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, I would also like to join with the member opposite and welcome Mr. Tom Paradis for joining us today from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. And we do look forward to the meetings that we will be holding later today. Thank you very much.

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

##### SECOND READINGS

###### Bill No. 149

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 149 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Moving on with Bill 149, Mr. Speaker, *An Act to amend The Income Tax Act, 2010*, Mr. Speaker, or *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2010*, this Bill relates specifically to mineral processing tax refunds, Mr. Speaker. It speaks of processing of minerals that have been extracted or mined in another jurisdiction, talks about refunds and qualifying corporations. There's been many speeches made in

the Assembly on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. We've had consultations with stakeholders on this Bill. What we look forward to at this point in time is referring this Bill to committee and seeking for the clarification on certain matters and aspects that we've had brought forward through consultation from the respective minister, the minister responsible, the minister that's put forward the Bill.

And so at this point in time with those questions, I think that is the most appropriate forum for those questions to be asked. We want to make sure we understand the intended consequences of this piece of legislation. We want to make sure we're protecting ourselves against unwanted, unintended consequences, Mr. Speaker. So at this point in time, I would refer this Bill, *An Act to amend The Income Tax Act*, to committee, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is that Bill No. 149, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2010* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill stand referred? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise.

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

###### Bill No. 150

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 150 — *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2010*** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to talk about Bill 150, *An Act to amend the Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act*. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is only one page, but it has three items on it. Two of them are ones that I think make some sense, and I'll explain why. The third one has some difficulties.

And so basically this Bill deals with superannuation payments for people who are employed within the provincial civil service. And what one of the . . . The first item relates to a further definition of how pensions are divided between an old spouse and the new spouse, if we can put it that way, but basically divided in a situation where there's a division of matrimonial property.

And, Mr. Speaker, every time a Bill like this comes up in this House, I'm reminded of a court case that I argued many years ago now in the early '80s called *Tataryn*. And in that particular case, the lawyer for the husband — I was the lawyer for the wife — but the lawyer for the husband said, oh no, pensions are not assets that should be divided. They don't have any value. They're just sort of a promise out there. But we argued — or I argued — on behalf of the wife. And the Court of Appeal of Saskatchewan said no, these are assets that should be divided. And ultimately legislation has been changed to define how that division takes place.

And what we have here today, Mr. Speaker, is a further gloss on how to divide pensions and make sure that it's fair. And the proposal that is here does make sense in that it will allow for the proper valuation of the pension between the new spouse and the divorced spouse. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't have a problem with that particular provision.

The next area is section 4, and this basically relates to how the work is dealt with to make sure it complies with the *Income Tax Act of Canada*. And, Mr. Speaker, this is clearly something that has been identified as a problem and needs to be fixed, and this particular clause provides that fix. So I don't think I have any problem; I don't think the opposition has any problem with that.

Section 5 though, is an area where I think we should have some discussion. Section 5 says that the present section 50, which reads as follows, and the title is, "Annual report need not disclose allowance paid to each individual." It says, "The report transmitted by a board to the president of the Executive Council need not show the amount of superannuation or other allowance granted in each case to a named person."

And what the change that's coming forward in this Bill is to totally repeal this particular provision and put in a further or a longer version. And the new version says:

The report transmitted by a board to the president of the Executive Council must not show the names of individuals who retired or died during the period to which the report applies, the amounts of superannuation or other allowances or benefits granted in individual cases or any other personal information respecting any of those individuals.

Mr. Speaker, the problem here is that this allows for the hiding of payments to individuals who would receive large payments under this particular legislation, and it doesn't provide full transparency to the public as it relates to some of these payments.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you hear the words and you look at it, you kind of wonder, well who might this apply to. Well if anyone was looking at the newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* — I think it was today's paper, might have been yesterday's paper — but the story was about a senior official, the deputy minister of Health in the province of Ontario where approximately a year, year and a half later, the information comes out as to the size of a settlement that was made with him, which included pension and other amounts. And it's a sufficient amount to raise concerns about what kind of arrangement was made on the

termination of his employment. And as many people remember, that related to a number of issues with their information technology in the health care system in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I think we could go and see situations here in Saskatchewan where it would be appropriate for the public to know exactly what amount of money was paid to individuals in a situation like that. And so, Mr. Speaker, we fundamentally have a problem with this. It would be possible for the minister responsible for this Bill, when we get to committee, to take another look at that particular provision because it would make sense to drop section 5 and just allow us to go ahead with the other two sections that accomplish some things that are appropriate for this Bill.

So, Mr. Speaker, a number of my colleagues have already spoken about a number of the problems, but I think all of our comments have focused on the lack of transparency, the ability of the government to hide information from the public, and the ability to hide crucial information from the public. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that we can ask further questions about how this provision would work, and we would make our further suggestions about how this Bill could be amended to make it more appropriate for the people of Saskatchewan in committee. So at this time, I would move that this Bill be sent to committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the . . . Is the Assembly ready for the question? Pardon me. The question before the Assembly is that the second reading of Bill No. 150, *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2010* be now moved. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to move the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. Carried.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise. To which committee shall this Bill be referred?

**Hon. Mr. Harrison:** — The Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

### Bill No. 155

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Duncan that **Bill No. 155** — *The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2010* be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to enter into debate on Bill No. 155, *An Act to amend The Natural Resources Act*.



Mr. Speaker, when considering changes to *The Natural Resources Act*, one thinks of the great landscape and resources that we have in this province and the natural environment that so many people enjoy, appreciate, and also base their livelihoods upon. I know for everyone in Saskatchewan, when we think of our natural environment, everyone can think of favourite holiday spots throughout the summer or the winter, or other seasons for that matter, where individuals go out into the great outdoors and experience all the things that our province has to offer.

And key to that, Mr. Speaker, are the availability of access to clean lakes, to forest, to grassland, the various natural environments that we have in the province that enable people in Saskatchewan and outside our borders as well to enjoy everything that our province has to offer. And so I know whether it's recreational pursuits or whether it's tourism that is supported here in the province through the natural environment, the preservation and the protection of our environment is a very important thing.

For many people it is about recreation and it is about tourism, but for many people also, Mr. Speaker, our environment is about making a livelihood and about earning a living. And whether that is, Mr. Speaker, individuals who are involved in the tourism industry in outfitting, or whether that is, Mr. Speaker, the hunters and trappers that we have in our province who live a traditional lifestyle off the land through hunting or fishing and trapping, that, Mr. Speaker, is an important consideration as well. Whenever we look at possible changes to the Act, to *The Natural Resources Amendment Act*, that is something to take into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill 155 seeks to make some changes with respect to the funds that are generated through the sale of licences for hunting and angling. Currently 30 per cent of the revenue that is generated through the sale of these licences goes into the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund. And it's estimated, based on the minister's second reading speech, that \$3.5 million annually is generated through this process.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think while not every Saskatchewan person may be aware of this fund and the benefits that are realized through its existence, certainly all Saskatchewan people benefit from this fund and the activities that are supported through the \$3.5 million annually. And as I said in my opening remarks about the wide array of individuals in Saskatchewan who benefit from our environment through recreational or economic pursuits, clearly it's in everyone's interest to have a fund that is well resourced and doing the job that it needs to do.

The funds that are used, Mr. Speaker — and this has to do with some of the changes that are proposed in Bill 155 — have to do with securing land, the purchase of land through partnering with other organizations in order to have land that is set aside or land that has restrictions on it so that sensitive areas can be protected and the habitat, the animals that live in that land are able to thrive. We know, Mr. Speaker, that the funding that is, that currently is present supports partnerships with a number of organizations with respect to the acquisition of land in order to ensure that land is preserved and secured going into the future.

We know that the funding that is available, partnerships exist

with Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. And this occurs under cost-sharing agreements where dollars that are available through the fund can be leveraged with other dollars, and more land can be protected. And this, Mr. Speaker, is something that has been going on for some time. And when good partnerships like that can exist with reputable and trusted organizations, I think members would agree that that is a good thing to do if it's increasing the amount of land that is protected here in the province.

The changes suggested here, Mr. Speaker, have to do with the changing the scope and the ability of the group of individuals from organizations that give guidance and recommendations with respect to how that funding ought to be spent and how it ought to be allocated.

[16:45]

The changes in this proposed legislation, Mr. Speaker, also have to do with some of the programs that are offered, because in addition to the acquisition of land that is made possible through the \$3.5 million fund, there are also a number of programs that are provided that encourage better awareness or preservation of lands.

And for this, Mr. Speaker, there's another group of organizations that receive funding and participate through this process. The committee that provides guidance is comprised of representatives from the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, the Saskatchewan Bowhunters Association, the Saskatchewan fly fishers association, Nature Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Trappers Association, and the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, by the list of organizations that are present, a good number of groups are represented and a good number of groups have a role, a stake, and an interest in how the \$3.5 million that is acquired through the selling of licences for hunting and angling, how that money is spent.

In looking at some of the changes that are proposed by the minister in these amendments, some of them, Mr. Speaker, I can see the merit in them and there can be a good case in building upon the relationships that are established with some of the groups that I listed. And these are groups, Mr. Speaker, that are well respected by the Saskatchewan population in general. When we think of the Wildlife Federation or Ducks Unlimited or the Nature Conservancy, these are groups that have done good work and certainly have the interest of their members in mind, but also have the broader good of the environment as a consideration.

What the proposed amendments do, Mr. Speaker, is to expand the role of this board, this advisory group so that there is a larger role for them in determining where funding is allocated. And while I certainly respect and acknowledge the expertise that these groups have in providing that type of advice — and I think that is a good thing to have that type of consultation with groups — it's also, Mr. Speaker, important to keep in mind the role of government when determining decisions about spending and where money is allocated. And it's important to ensure that the necessary oversight and involvement of government is in

place. Because at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, it is elected officials who are chosen by the people to make decisions about spending. So it's important to ensure that, as the role for this board enhances, Mr. Speaker, that the proper controls and levels of accountability are also in place to ensure that everything is being done properly and that the common interest of all Saskatchewan people is being considered. And so that's one question for me that is raised and I think is important to keep in mind as we consider these types of amendments.

There's also, Mr. Speaker, some suggestions here about an increased role in programming that some of these groups may undertake. And again, it's important to acknowledge and respect the very good work that many of these groups do in society and for society and for the environment. But it's important, Mr. Speaker, to also recognize the important role that the provincial government has and that the different ministries, respective ministries have with respect to delivering programming as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if this decision is tied into at all with other decisions the government has made with respect to reducing the number of civil servants, but that is another question that I have, Mr. Speaker. Certainly it's important to engage these groups, and it's important to use their expertise and their connections in communities. But it's also important, Mr. Speaker, to support a strong civil service that works for all Saskatchewan people. And I think that is an important thing to consider.

Mr. Speaker, so when thinking about these changes, it's important to ensure that the government is considering the greater good, considering the natural environment that all Saskatchewan people have and are able to experience. And I think when looking at these types of changes, while these amendments, some people might say aren't that great or may not have a huge influence on what may occur, we are looking, Mr. Speaker, at a fund of \$3 million. And we're looking at an industry that provides a great amount of wealth and a great amount of recreational pursuits to Saskatchewan people. And I think that's important to consider.

One thing, Mr. Speaker, I would think about when looking at the changes that are proposed here . . . The opening statements by the minister in the second reading speech talk about the natural environment and the importance of it. And I certainly agree with that. But I would look at other actions that the government has made in recent months and years of its mandate, of its current term in office with respect to the environment.

And I think of the decision that the government made to remove protection of millions of acres of Crown land and to sell that off, land that was enjoyed and appreciated by all Saskatchewan people. And I think that the way that that was handled, Mr. Speaker, without appropriate consultation with many groups, leaving many to wonder in this Assembly and in the broader Saskatchewan community as to what were the motives in that decision in removing the protection on, removing the protection on millions of acres of Crown land and putting a for sale sign on it. I think that caused many individuals, Mr. Speaker, to wonder what the motives of the government were in making that decision. And it caused, Mr. Speaker, many groups to

wonder about its true commitment to openness, transparency, and consultation. And we've seen some of the fallout of the decision that the government made when it decided to remove protection on millions of acres of Crown land.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to remember that mistake that government made on that decision. Because there's a great similarity when we think of the goals that are stated in this Bill with these proposed amendments and the actions that were taken around the removal of protection of land, of millions of acres of Crown land. And I think that's an important reminder for members in this Assembly and for all Saskatchewan people to think about. While the government in this Bill, Bill 155, may say that the amendments they are proposing aren't that significant and that the changes are constructive and that consultation has occurred, according to them, we know in recent actions with very important legislation around the issue of Crown land, land that is owned by all Saskatchewan people, that their course of action and the decisions that they made would paint a different story and would teach all of us a different lesson when it comes to their true commitment to enhancing and preserving the natural environment.

Mr. Speaker, I think, you know, I stated at the beginning how the environment is so important to all Saskatchewan people. We think of the pursuits that everyone enjoys in the province, whether it is hunting and trapping or fishing, or whether it is the ability to go out and enjoy a park, enjoy land that has been set aside that has protection on it in order to preserve the flora and fauna of that area. And so, Mr. Speaker, when we're making changes to the legislation that can determine the long-term viability and the long-term health and wellness of such lands, I think, Mr. Speaker, it's important to look at the motives of the changes and it's important to look at the changes in the broader context of what other government actions have occurred in this area.

In my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I have talked about the incredibly good work that the organizations that are listed in the minister's second reading speech, the incredibly good work that these organizations do. We can think of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. We can think of the Saskatchewan Bowhunters Association. We can think of the Saskatchewan fly fishers association. We can think of Nature Saskatchewan, and we can think of the Saskatchewan Trappers Association, and the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association.

We know that these are groups, Mr. Speaker, that do what they do out of love and commitment to the natural environment. And yes, in many instances, there is an economic aspect, and that is appropriate and that's a good and fine thing, Mr. Speaker. But these individuals, these groups realize that the pursuits that they want to support, the pursuits that they want to grow, the pursuits that they want to have spread for other Saskatchewan people and for people outside of our borders, they realize that such changes really do depend on having a strong and healthy environment going into the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, I in no way question the intentions and the mandate and the activities that these groups support and enhance. I think, Mr. Speaker, that those are very good things. My question, Mr. Speaker, and the questions that I have posed

with respect to some of the issues that are raised through this legislation that the government has put forward in Bill 155, it has to do with ensuring that there remains an appropriate level of oversight by the provincial government, that decisions about spending are in fact ultimately being made by elected officials who are elected and chosen by the people to make such decisions.

And my concerns, Mr. Speaker, are also about how the system that is present through the provision of the work that civil servants do here in the province, Mr. Speaker, in the area of the environment, my questions are to suggest that it is important when making decisions, it is important to maintain a role for civil servants in the programs that they provide, the educational services that they provide, and many of the front line activities that they pursue in order for all Saskatchewan people to have a strong and healthy environment.

I know that some of the decisions that the government has made with respect to civil servants cause some of us on this side, and I think people in the broader public, to wonder about its commitment to a strong civil service providing public services to all Saskatchewan people.

A quick aside, Mr. Speaker. It was interesting today in question period. There was reference to the government's commitment to a four-by-four reduction, 4 per cent over four years, for a total reduction of 16 per cent of the size of the civil service. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, while they're happy to reduce the number of individuals employed in the civil service, they're also very, very happy to write blank cheques when it comes to expanding the office space and the financial commitment of all Saskatchewan people with respect to leased office space here in the city of Regina as a means to secure a building project over the course of a 20-year agreement.

So when we see those types of examples where the government will say one thing and then they'll turn around and take an action which does not support, in my opinion, the common good, does not support the provision of services for all Saskatchewan people, and really works against many of the things that some of the groups involved would support, Mr. Speaker, I think that's a problem. And the example that I have provided is the decision by the government, over the past months of its term, to remove protection of Crown land. And this was land, Mr. Speaker, that all Saskatchewan people own, and it's land that — all Saskatchewan people — is available to them to enjoy.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, when we have seen the actions of removing protection on Crown land, when we see legislation that follows that and addresses the protection of the environment, I think it's important to look at those two pieces of legislation at the same time because we see the result of the one piece of legislation with respect to removing protection of Crown land. We also see now legislation that is suggesting that the amendments to Bill 155 would improve the environment and improve the protection of the environment.

And I'm not sure, Mr. Speaker. When we see those conflicting messages from a government, it causes me to raise some questions, and it causes me to have some concerns about the true motives and intentions of the members opposite in bringing

forward changes in legislation. And it's certainly not only this area where this is a concern. So, Mr. Speaker, with those remarks on Bill 155, having taken some time to go through some concerns, I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 155.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has moved to adjourn debate on Bill No. 155, *The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2010*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. This House now will stand adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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