



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

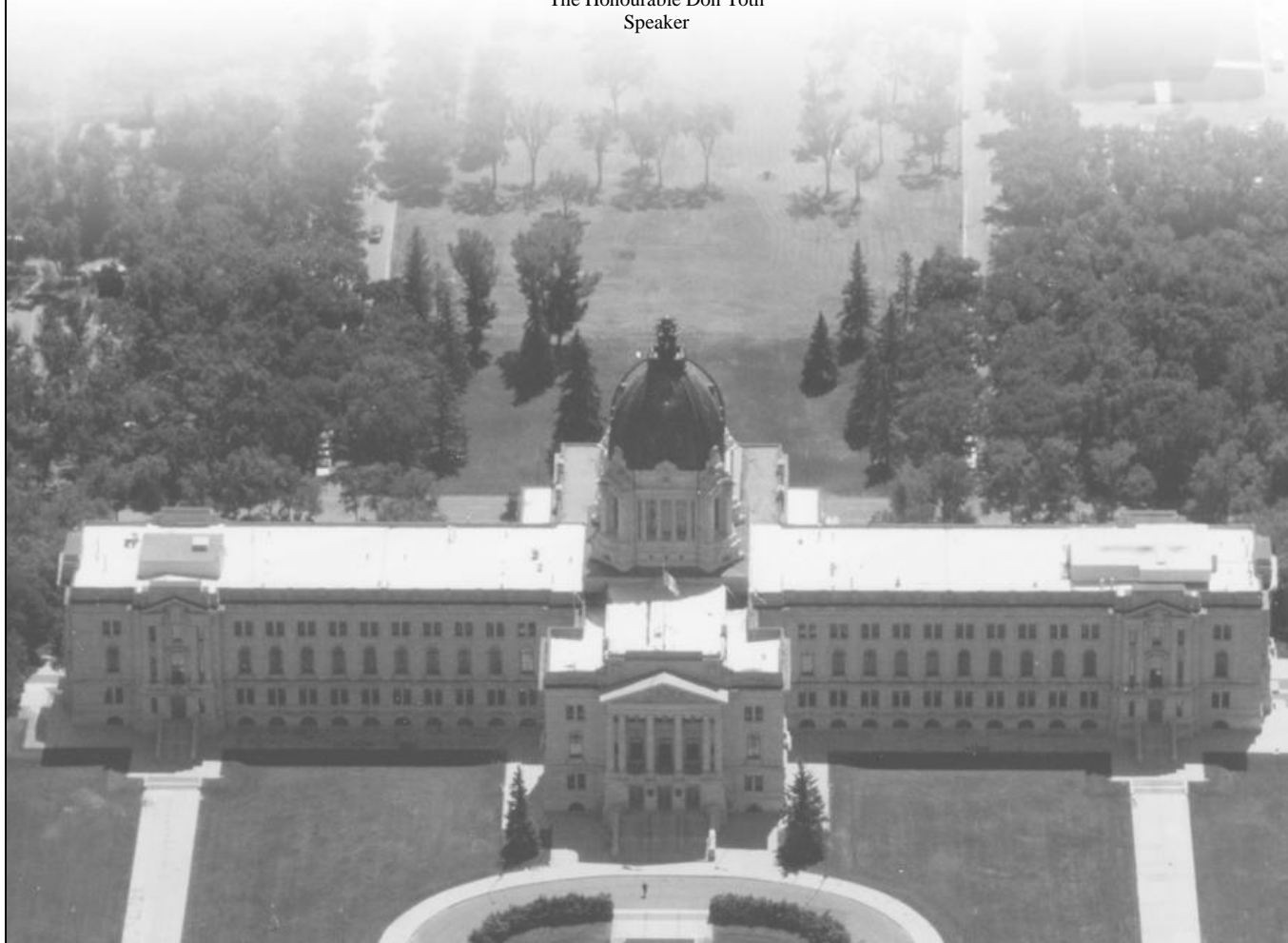
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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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
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Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
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Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
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Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
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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
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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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
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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
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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]

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before routine proceedings and according to section 30 of the Ombudsman and children's Act, I do lay on the Table the 2011 annual report of the child's advocate.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through to all members of this Assembly it's an honour to introduce the newly re-elected Member of Parliament for Regina Qu'Appelle, Andrew Scheer, who has joined us here today.

Mr. Speaker, this House will know that at dissolution and still today as tradition of the House of Commons, Mr. Scheer is also the Deputy Speaker in the House of Commons. We also know that the Speaker did not seek re-election. And so they will be choosing a new Speaker in Ottawa in the House of Commons, and there is a good chance that someone from the province of Saskatchewan will be able to be the Speaker of the House of Commons.

So we want to, through your good offices, sir, and through the members' offices here, encourage members of parliament to vote for Andrew Scheer as the Speaker for the House of Commons. Maybe some calls to Quebec and across the country from our colleagues across the way can also build some support for Mr. Scheer. But I want to introduce him to you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome him to his provincial Legislative Assembly.

And while I'm on my feet, two quick introductions in groups that will be more formally introduced by other members in the Assembly. I want to introduce and welcome a friend from Swift Current, Jerry Funk. Well actually from just south of Swift Current. Jerry's with one of the great firefighters in the city of Swift Current and been a friend for a while. And it looks like he's here with a group of students from Wymark, including his daughter Rebecca. There she is. So we say hello to both of them and to all of the students. I know the member will introduce them more formally in a moment.

And finally while I'm on my feet, in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, with another delegation that I think will be introduced is Delphine Gossner, who was a bridesmaid for Tami a few years ago when we got married and is also a good friend. I'm grateful that she didn't talk Tami out of making a terrible mistake on that occasion. And we want to welcome these folks as well to their legislature.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join

with the Premier in welcoming Andrew here to the Assembly. And having been a few elections both on the winning side and losing side, I'd much prefer your position. But I did want to say congratulations to you and your team. Great job.

And I also want to say that on a number of occasions, Andrew and I have had an opportunity to go to receptions. And I always find very interesting discussions, especially with your wife, who of course is a Ryan. And we're very pleased that Steve Ryan, your brother-in-law, is running for us in Regina Qu'Appelle. So it is in fact a family affair. But I did want to say in a serious way, congratulations to you, and you're doing a great job. Keep it up. And we'll be looking to you for some interesting results in certain areas, so thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, the member from Wood River.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate introductions I'd like to make, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly I'd like to introduce a very special visitor that's seated in your gallery today. It's my pleasure to welcome back to Saskatchewan, US [United States] federal Chief Judge Ralph Erickson. And also seated with Judge Erickson today are Wade Warren, chief probation officer for North Dakota, and Delphine Gossner who is the director of clinical services, Corrections, Public Safety and Policing in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, you may recall that my ministry signed a historic memorandum of understanding with US Federal Probation and Pretrial Services in the District of North Dakota in August of 2000. Later today I will be pleased to join with Chief Judge Erickson in signing a 12-month extension of that agreement. And we'll have a little more to say on that a little bit later in a member's statement, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Judge Erickson and his delegation to Saskatchewan and let's give them a warm welcome.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce a school group from Wymark. There's 16 grade 8 students in the west gallery, and a long-time friend, Brad Gasper. Brad brings a school group here, it seems like every year, so it's great to welcome Brad and his school group back to the Assembly.

And with Brad, as mentioned by the Premier, Jerry Funk. But also there's Trudi Banman and Claudia Olney. Unfortunately I won't be able to meet with this group after question period, Mr. Speaker, because I will be busy, but the member from Cypress Hills has volunteered to meet with the school group and be able to discuss some issues and answer some questions. So I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming Brad and his school group here to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the minister on behalf of the official opposition to welcome

Judge Erickson and the other guests that are in your gallery today and join in the introduction of them to the Legislative Assembly.

We know that crime doesn't, and criminals do not respect provincial boundaries, and they don't respect international boundaries. And any co-operation between our correction and policing services or justice systems across all those boundaries is welcome and invaluable, Mr. Speaker. So again, on behalf of the official opposition, I want to join with the minister in welcoming our guests here today, and I look forward to a renewal of current agreements and progress and advancement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery, I'd like to introduce to you and through you, 32 grade 5 students from Delisle Elementary School. Accompanying these 32 grade 5 students are teachers, Ms. Donna Dreher and Mr. Brent Reis. Also a number of chaperones, and I hope the number of chaperones aren't indicative of the behaviour of the students, but they brought quite a few down. I'd like to introduce them as well: Tammy Wiebe, Amanda Kemp, Dean Yuzik, Andrea Neufeld, Linda Keilo, Kim Smith, Dorothy Carnell, Udelle Milton, Laurie Gratton, Angela Wiens, and Kim Nickel. And we will have a photo after question period, and I will join them for a meeting with the students and take their questions at that time. So please join me in welcoming the students and chaperones and parents from Delisle Elementary School.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you some individuals seated in the east gallery. They come here today all the way from Red Earth Cree Nation, which is a fair distance to travel, Mr. Speaker. And they come on the heels of a fairly monumental flood fighting efforts which saw upwards of 250 individuals evacuated. A great number of families affected, and a lot of stress for those people certainly, but particularly on the leadership of the community going through something like that.

So I want to extend congratulations to them on behalf of the official opposition for the solid effort, putting up with the stress in that hard time for the Red Earth Cree Nation. But I also want to thank Chief Ian McKay for leading the delegation here today, as well as Elder Abelard Nawakayas. It's good to see them here in their Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully we can get them some answers for some questions that they have here today. But in closing, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say to them, ta wow. Welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to join with the member opposite and to welcome the group from Red Earth here today and to thank them and to let them know that certainly we all are with them as they strive to meet the challenges that Mother

Earth has put before us. We're working with all First Nations across Saskatchewan to ensure that they have the resources necessary to deal with this. But most importantly are the human resources and the people and the dedication, and I thank them for doing that and for being here today to set a great example.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the minister and the member from Elphinstone in welcoming Chief Ian McKay and his council and others who are here. I did have a chance to say just hello briefly in the hallway in the rotunda, but I understand our caucus members and our committee met on the issues of flooding and other issues.

But I just want to say that to all Saskatchewan families who were affected by the serious flooding, along with the members from Red Earth that we are very, very concerned about it. And in saying that, also the fact that the emergency measures and the volunteers across the province who are working so extremely hard, sometimes in very adverse conditions, Katepwa and other places, that it's not going unnoticed by others across Canada that Saskatchewan is a very unique place where, when we get into these difficult times, we band together and get the job done. And I just want to say keep up the good work, and we'll be there to support.

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to welcome the residents of Red Earth. And I know that they've had quite a few problems out there over the years, there's been some diking done and obviously there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker. But I know it's a long trip down here because I make that trip every week, and they're actually farther north than what I am. So I want to thank them for coming down to their Assembly and bringing their concerns with them. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

So in my own language of Cree, I just said, Mr. Speaker, that I'm glad that they're here. This is their House and I'm especially glad that the young people are here and that they have to keep their struggles and their fight always at the forefront. So again in my own Cree language:

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — Members, I note up in the gallery, Lenni Frohman from our Hansard and director of parliamentary publications is in the gallery, and so I extend an invitation to Lenni this afternoon.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present petitions on behalf of people that support quality health care services in the province.

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth that the Government of Saskatchewan ought to recognize the need for timely access to comprehensive and quality health care services for all communities within the province, including Wakaw and surrounding areas, and that the disruption of emergency services and in-patient services at Wakaw Hospital will not serve the needs of the residents of this community and surrounding areas; and

That the cuts in access to timely and accurate diagnostic and laboratory services within the community of Wakaw and surrounding areas will not serve the needs of the residents either.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintain quality health care services through the commitment of necessary funding to address critical retention and recruitment issues.

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

The many signatures on these petitions today, Mr. Speaker, are from Wakaw, Regina, Martensville, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Estevan, Cudworth, Belle Plaine, Yorkton, Bellevue, Yellow Creek, Middle Lake, Rosthern, and Wakaw. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of eliminating poverty here in Saskatchewan. We know that freedom from poverty is an enshrined human right by the United Nations, and all citizens are entitled to social and economic security. We know that Saskatchewan's income gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow, and one in five children in Saskatchewan now live in deepening poverty. 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 act as quickly as possible to develop an effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens.

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

I do so present. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to

present a petition in support of a potash royalty review because the citizens of Saskatchewan are the owners of a thousand-year supply of a strategic resource, and those same people deserve to receive the maximum benefit for that resource or from that resource, Mr. Speaker. Additionally, the CEO [chief executive officer] of a major potash company in Saskatchewan said that there's a new norm for potash moving forward in the global economy. And the prayer reads:

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 from this strategic resource for its owners, the people of Saskatchewan, who wish to use this additional potash royalty revenue 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, the petition today is signed by good folks from Ituna, Melville, and Fenwood, Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise yet again today to present a petition on restoring funding equity to Regina Catholic schools. Regina Catholic schools received \$275 less than Regina public schools in the last fiscal year, amounting to a funding inequity of \$2.7 million in total. The funding inequity places program delivery and staffing levels at risk, Mr. Speaker, and we're already seeing program cuts for the fall of 2011 in terms of the students returning back to school.

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 residents of Regina, Lumsden, and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

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

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that 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.

And today the petition is signed by residents of Regina and I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again to 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 to a record that includes the increasing of debt and running of deficits at a time of unprecedented highs in revenues, Mr. Speaker, recognizing that there's consequences both now and well into the future for this type of management, Mr. Speaker, running this year . . . piling up debt to the tune of \$548 million, Mr. Speaker. 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 they so deserve.

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

These petitions today, Mr. Speaker, are signed by concerned residents of Saskatoon and Moose Jaw. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is National MS [multiple sclerosis] Awareness Month. Multiple sclerosis is a disease. It is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system. MS affects vision, hearing, memory, balance, and mobility. Its effects are physical, emotional, financial, and last a lifetime. While it is most often diagnosed in young adults aged 15 to 40, we know that it affects children, even some as young as two years old.

Mr. Speaker, our government is following through on our commitment and has invested \$5 million to fund clinical trial for the multiple sclerosis liberation procedure. Ours is the first province to move forward on initiating clinical trials of the

liberation procedure. This liberation procedure is a potentially groundbreaking discovery for the treatment of MS. We are aware that it is still in the trial stages and is not yet proven as a scientifically valid therapy, but this funding will help determine its validity as a treatment for MS.

MS research is extremely important to the people of Saskatchewan. Our government is moving forward in search for a cure of this deadly disease. I encourage all of my colleagues to keep those who are affected with multiple sclerosis in their thoughts and prayers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Firefighters' Day

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize May 4th as International Firefighters' Day. Firefighters dedicate their lives to protection of life and property. Sometimes that dedication is in the form of countless hours volunteered, and then again it is many selfless years working in the industry. In all cases, it risks the ultimate sacrifice of a firefighter's life.

International Firefighters' Day is a time when the world's community can recognize and honour the sacrifices that firefighters make to ensure that their communities and environment are as safe as possible. It is also a day in which current and past firefighters can be thanked for their contributions. International Firefighters' Day is observed each year on the 4th of May. On this day, you're invited to remember the past firefighters who have died while serving our community or dedicated their lives to protecting the safety of us all. At the same time, we can show our support and appreciation to the firefighters worldwide who continue to protect us so well throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, we must also continue to protect and advocate these brave women and men. The firefighters are at increased risk for cancer because of their work. We must continue to monitor and expand the list of potential disease risks our firefighters face in the workplace. As our knowledge grows regarding their exposure to risks, so should our protection and compensation for these selfless workers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in showing our gratitude and recognize these brave women and men. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain Touchwood.

Mental Health Week

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week is Mental Health Week in Canada. It's an important year for the Canadian Mental Health Association as this year marks the 60th anniversary of this organization's improving people's understanding of mental health.

The CMHA [Canadian Mental Health Association] has launched a print advertising campaign for Mental Health Week

2011 designed to encourage the public to share how they maintain and improve their mental health. The literature features everyday people from diverse age groups and cultural backgrounds sharing their personal tips on what they do to be mentally healthy.

Mental Health Week 2011 will focus on key topics that help the public have a broader understanding of mental health including: kids have stress too, workplace mental health, resiliency, and mental health is everyone's concern. Mr. Speaker, that's why this year's theme is Mental Health for All. The CMHA is committed to breaking the stereotypes around mental health issues, and this week provides the opportunity for their organization to do this on a national stage.

On behalf of the government, I would like to congratulate the Canadian Mental Health Association for work well done and wish them every success in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Vote for the Sheepdogs

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon's very own Sheepdogs have made it to the third round in their quest to make rock 'n' roll history gracing the cover of the *Rolling Stone*. After hundreds of thousands of votes were cast online, only four acts remain in the hunt for one of the most coveted achievements in the music world — appearing on the cover. That final winner will also land an Atlantic Records contract launching their career.

Mr. Speaker, voting for this round will close on May 13th, so our chance to influence the outcome is now. The two surviving bands will advance to the final round, an epic battle on stage at the Bonnarro festival in June. The winner of the contest will be announced on the August 2nd episode on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* where they will also make their live television debut. The Sheepdogs recently visited New York City where they recorded a hot new track with multi-platinum producers and also performed in front of *Rolling Stone* editors and industry insiders.

Although the Sheepdogs hail from Saskatoon Nutana, they confess to looking south for their inspiration. This influence is clear on the band's latest album, *Learn & Burn*, which presents 11 songs. On "I Don't Know," the lead vocals shine in front of hard-hitting electric guitar to attain a sound that's reminiscent of Creedence Clearwater Revival.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of the legislature and all citizens in Canada to vote for the Sheepdogs, and hopefully very soon we'll see them on the cover of the *Rolling Stone*.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Enhancing Public Safety

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is an important day for Corrections both here in Saskatchewan and in the state of North Dakota. In August of 2009,

Corrections, Public Safety and Policing signed a historic memorandum of understanding with the US Federal Probation and Pretrial Services, District of North Dakota. Mr. Speaker, later this afternoon, the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing and US federal Chief Judge Erickson will sign a 12-month extension to this agreement. Mr. Speaker, the goal of this agreement is to enhance public safety in communities in North Dakota and right here in Saskatchewan.

The terms of the MOU [memorandum of understanding], Saskatchewan has provided services including training of clinical director in key areas including risk assessments, core correctional practices, and community safety planning. Over the next 12 months, Mr. Speaker, we will complete clinical director training in clinical supervision and help implement community safety planning by front-line probation officers. The MOU is also designed to promote joint research initiatives that will help both jurisdictions develop new approaches to rehabilitation and offender accountability.

Mr. Speaker, members of this Assembly should know the Federal District of North Dakota was referred to us on the basis of Saskatchewan's growing reputation for effective correctional practices. Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in recognizing the hard work put into this historic agreement and the people that are here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Missing Children and the Green Ribbon of Hope

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, May is Missing Children's Month in our province. Child Find Saskatchewan wishes to raise awareness for the 20th annual Green Ribbon of Hope campaign. And this campaign started May 1st and will continue throughout the month. This campaign increases public awareness about National Missing Children's Day on May 25th plus the issue of missing children generally in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Child Find does not receive annual government funding. They depend almost entirely on the benevolence of others in the manner of corporate and private donations in kind. Child Find has historically relied on two major fundraising projects, namely the annual Green Ribbon of Hope campaign in May and the Green Ribbon dinner.

The Green Ribbon of Hope is recognized as a symbol to remember missing children and to seek their safe return. It is also used as an expression of thought for missing children, their families, and their friends. Proceeds generated by the campaign will enable Child Find Saskatchewan to continue their mandate of assisting in the search process for missing children. This organization has an incredible commitment to protect children and youth here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people can play a vital role in helping to raise awareness. I encourage all members of this Assembly to wear the Green Ribbon of Hope as a symbol of remembrance and hope for the safe return of all missing children in our country, in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville.

Plan for Potash Taxes

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] leader's plan to destroy Saskatchewan's economy has become crystal clear. The NDP leader now says he will hike potash taxes up to 80 per cent. Not at all concerned about the fallout of his reckless position, he said, and I quote, "If potash companies objected to the point of shutting down operations and leaving the province, that wouldn't pose a problem because Saskatchewan has mined potash before."

In other words, Mr. Speaker, nationalization. The NDP leader wants to tax business out of our province and then swoop in to take them over. Mr. Speaker, that would absolutely kill investment in Saskatchewan. It would destroy Saskatchewan's economy. But that's the NDP leader's master plan to drag Saskatchewan back — back to economic decline, back to losing jobs and people, back to being a have-not province.

Mr. Speaker, today Saskatchewan is moving forward. It is a new era in our province, but the NDP policies will only drag us back, especially that NDP leader's plan of nationalization by taxation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Voting Requirements

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and it deals with, the question deals with Bills 161 and 162. That would be the local elections and *The Election Act* in the province of Saskatchewan. I have here a letter from the president of SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], Allan Earle, who in the letter says to the minister . . . And this is addressed to the hon. minister and signed by the mayor, Allan Earle. In the letter he says, and I quote:

. . . we are hard pressed to identify occurrences of local election voter fraud, or urban election results that are called into question due to potentially illegal practices. With no obvious fraud issues to resolve, SUMA believes that there is no immediate need to introduce voter ID provisions.

My question to the minister is: in light of the fact that thousands of Saskatchewan residents have approached you and the government and members of the opposition, SUMA's opposed to voter photo ID [identification], why is the minister pushing through with this ill-conceived idea and concept?

[14:00]

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to

thank the member opposite for the question. I too have a letter from SUMA, from Mr. Earle, dated April 27th, and I'll table it for the members today. And the letter in fact talks about working with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in developing regulations that will work for all stakeholder groups, Mr. Speaker.

And on that note, the question posed about fraud that was raised by the member opposite, the ministry officials have instructed me that every time there's a municipal election, there are emails and phone calls made to the ministry staff alleging that there were people who shouldn't be voting or people who were deceased who were actually on the voters list, Mr. Speaker. And on that basis, this is going to bring integrity to the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, in the letter that the president of SUMA sent to the minister, I want to quote again from that letter where the president says, and I quote, "appear to be unnecessary," referring to the new legislation, "raise possibility of voter intimidation," and "they are likely to negatively impact voter turnout."

In light of the fact that all across Canada we're trying to figure out ways and means of getting more people involved in the electoral process — more youth, more First Nations, more seniors, more everyone — why in the world, when there's no evidence of fraud according to SUMA and others in Saskatchewan, why would the minister push forward with this ill-conceived idea when the municipalities don't want it, the public doesn't want it? Why is it in the best interests of the Sask Party to have this legislation?

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from a letter I have here today, which I'll table at the end of the question period for the members opposite. Quote:

SUMA's Chief Executive Officer and your Deputy Minister met on Tuesday, April 26, to discuss my letter and SUMA's concerns regarding Bill 162. Based on the outcomes of that meeting, SUMA believes that the concerns raised in the April 19 letter can now be effectively addressed through further collaborative work on the associated regulations [Mr. Speaker].

Once again, Mr. Speaker, stakeholders met with ministry officials now, working in collaboration to assure that through regulations concerns will be taken care of and addressed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, in that letter that the minister's quoting from — and I have that letter here; I have it right here — the reason that they took that approach was because the minister informed them that there was no way to amend the legislation this late in the session. And I quote from the letter where the president of SUMA says, and I quote,

“Based on our recent discussions with your officials it was our understanding that our interest in making changes to the provisions could not be accommodated within the remaining sitting days of the Twenty-sixth Legislative Assembly.”

That’s what you said, and that’s not true. That is not true. We can make amendments. And my question to the minister is this: in light of the fact that you have told SUMA a false idea and concept, will you agree that today, today we can make the amendments that SUMA wants? We’ll give leave to move to that position. In fact we have the amendments ready. And in light of the fact that you have told them that we haven’t got time, will you now correct the record and realize we do have time and we can do it today?

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just two nights ago during the federal election . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two nights ago during the federal election, they used very clear guidelines to have voter identification at the polling stations. What did we see, Mr. Speaker? The election numbers for voters went up with this last election, Mr. Speaker.

So when we tie in Bill 162, Mr. Speaker, to the integrity of the federal Act, to what will be the integrity of Bill 161, Mr. Speaker, that we will see provisions in this particular Act . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Time is running out in question period. Members come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to add for the record, the letter the Leader of the Opposition has was dated before the letter I’m going to actually table today. So in this letter, Mr. Speaker, the concerns addressed in that letter have been addressed at the meeting with my deputy and Mr. Allan Earle and the executive director of SUMA. So, Mr. Speaker, moving forward, everyone knows that the Act is the overlying principle behind the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The minister may conclude his remarks.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Act is the overguiding principles of what we want to do to bring integrity to this particular level of the election. The regulations will operationalize the Act, Mr. Speaker. And if we look at what we just got in the mail from Elections Canada, the guiding principles behind the voter identification requirements, we’re going to look at those, working with our stakeholder groups to ensure that we can have as many people as possible vote, be

more inclusive versus restrictive, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, to the minister again, I have both letters, just to be clear. I have the letter dated April 19th in which the quote is that these are unnecessary, they raise the possibility of voter intimidation, and they are likely to negatively impact voter turnout.

And then the following letter is dated April 27th, in which the president indicates that he was informed that there was no time to make the amendments. That’s what you said to the SUMA representative, and that’s not true. We’re here. We can make the amendments. And what I’m offering in every way to help out the situation is that we will move by leave to work on this Bill today, on Bill 161 and 162.

Can the minister give a guarantee that when we sit down and get through question period, we can now move, because we have lots of time, to make the amendments that we can have the possibility or the option of having photo ID, but not that it be required in order to vote in the next election? Can you make that commitment?

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to just quote from a letter dated April 27th and it has a few points:

That the ministry and SUMA will continue to collaborate on the reworking of the draft regulations;

That the regulations will be constructed to limit the disclosure . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker:

That the regulations will be constructed to limit the disclosure of personal voter information to candidates and their aides at the polling stations;

That the list of potential ID will be restructured to ensure the integrity of the voting process;

That the ministry and SUMA collaborate to develop and support a plan for training Deputy Returning Officers regarding the new process; and

That the ministry work with SUMA . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I’d ask the members to allow the minister to respond to the member’s question. Order. I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: —

That the ministry work with SUMA to develop and support a plan of public education regarding [the] voter ID requirements.

Assuming you are in agreement with the principles above, SUMA is satisfied that the interest of urban governments can be addressed and we would offer our support for the passing of Bill 162.

Mr. Speaker, let's go to committee.

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

Solution for Flooding at Red Earth Cree Nation

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Red Earth Cree Nation it's spring, but it's no longer known as spring on Red Earth. It's now known as flooding season. And some years are worse than others, of course, Mr. Speaker, but this was certainly one of those years. This was the third large-scale evacuation on Red Earth since 2006.

Red Earth leadership is here today looking for a long-term solution. They have ideas on improving the situation so these annual problems can be prevented. They want to begin working now so that flooding is not a major problem next year and every year after. Will the minister agree to begin working immediately with the Red Earth Cree Nation which wants to be proactive instead of reactive?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by expressing our deepest concern for those people that have been flooded last year and again this year. It's unprecedented in the province's history as far as I know, where we've had this kind of disasters consecutively in last year and this year. So I really want to express my deep concern.

Mr. Speaker, as members of this Assembly will know, our government took a proactive move by putting \$22 million into mitigation, and we've discussed that in this Assembly, \$22 million for mitigation, and more if required. And the Premier spoke about that one day and offered to my ministry and to me more money if needed.

So we have gone out with SWWA [Saskatchewan Water and Wastewater Association], Sask Water Association, and actually have spent a great deal of money on mitigation efforts. Now that includes buying equipment such as Hesco barriers, water barriers, a number of issues that can help out. We have provided assistance with our First Nations. And I'm looking forward to the next question.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess there's a . . . I

guess there are two parts to this question. One has to do with the emergency response to the flooding, but there's a longer term solution that is required for the people of Red Earth. They've got a situation now where the water table is so high that when they go to build housing, those houses that should be lasting, you know, decades last for 10 years because the water table is so high. So in terms of responding to houses that have been flooded out, it puts this First Nation behind, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of what has been an emergency and an unusual occurrence in years past is becoming all too commonplace on Red Earth. So a long-term strategy is required. That requires certainly the Minister for Public Safety to work for this, but it also requires the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations to get together to work in partnership with Red Earth Cree Nation and with the federal government. Will they commit to meeting with the people from Red Earth today? And will they commit to that long-term strategy that will help Red Earth not just for this year but for years to come?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member for the very important question. Absolutely we'll meet with the people from Red Earth.

And I can tell the House as well, on April 20th, I received a call from Chief Lonechild, said he had a very important issue to discuss and asked if I would meet the next morning with the people from Red Earth. And he came to my office and members, chief and members of council came and we had a very good discussion. We offered help in any way we could, whether it was a community pasture from Agriculture, whether it was help from my colleague from CPSP [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing], or anything that FNMR [First Nations and Métis Relations] can do.

And I can tell the House as well, as recently as this morning, officials from FNMR have been in contact with INAC [Indian and Northern Affairs Canada] and examining all First Nations across the province and advocating on their behalf with the federal government. And the Premier has written to the Prime Minister on this as well.

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

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the people from Red Earth are here today not to fix blame but because they want to fix the long-term problem of flooding on Red Earth First Nation.

They were here two weeks ago, less than two weeks ago and they certainly had a meeting with the minister. But according to the folks from Red Earth, that meeting lasted five minutes. A subsequent meeting with officials from First Nations and Métis Relations again elicited a lot of sweet sounding words, but no commitment to work on gathering the information in terms of the watershed management and no commitment on a long-term strategy.

The people from Red Earth have come back to their Legislative Assembly to get a commitment in terms of working in

partnership, not having a five-minute-long, land speed record kind of meeting, but a genuine meeting where they get the information on the table and start working to a long-term solution for flooding on Red Earth Cree Nation. Will the minister or the ministers of that government give the commitment to working in partnership with Red Earth on a long-term strategy to deal with flooding for Red Earth Cree Nation?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well, Mr. Speaker, absolutely the commitment is there, the commitment to work with, towards a long-term solution was there. The five-minute comment is absolutely ridiculous because all time that was necessary was given there and every courtesy was given and will continue to be given in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier, along with the Premier of Manitoba, have talked to the Prime Minister, have written to the Prime Minister and received a response saying that long-term solutions will be funded by the federal government, along with the province.

We heard very eloquently from the members from Red Earth about the need for long-term solutions, and we couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. That's indeed what we're working towards. They made the case that flooding doesn't occur just out of the blue on Red Earth. It has been happening year after year, and a long-term solution is necessary. A long-term solution will be the priority of this government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Care of Children

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with today's release of the Children's Advocate office report, some disturbing trends are showing up, specifically the number of critically injured children reported to the Children's Advocate office last year, which jumped more than 300 per cent from 13 to 43 between the years of 2008 and 2010.

To the minister: what steps are being taken to address this disturbing upswing in the number of Saskatchewan children who are being injured?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question because I know that the members opposite are also worried about the safety of our children. Mr. Speaker, when this advocate's report came out, I had an opportunity to look at it and look at what we had done as government.

One of the first things we have done is, with the child welfare review, is making sure that we no longer look at children in just

one ministry, but we have seven ministers that are together looking at all the opportunities and the resources that children need to make sure that we can see that they can be a whole part of society.

We are further committed to making sure that the recommendations, working with First Nations and Métis partners, will be part of an ongoing plan. We've also worked on a new automated case management system that's being piloted this year. It's called the Linkin project. For far too many years, Mr. Speaker, the children in our province were paper children. There was no way to link them with the various services that were available because the tracking wasn't there.

Mr. Speaker, there is more work to be done. I appreciate the work that the child advocate has done, and I'm looking forward to working with him in the future.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, my question is about injuries. Mr. Speaker, one of the emerging issues that the Children's Advocate has identified was rapid growth of the number of group homes in the past two years, specifically the ability to staff these new group homes with certified, trained personnel that's raising a major concern.

To the minister: what steps are being taken to ensure that these children are receiving the best and most supportive care that they can at these group homes and that staff needed are fully trained and equipped to handle their positions?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, again this is a question that is important to me and everybody that's working with the children that are in our care. That's why we have opened a number of homes, over 100 new homes in the province, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that there are places for our children. And at the same time, we recognize that the staff has to be trained.

So in this year's budget — I think the member opposite received this information when we were in estimates — but we have \$850,000 in this budget to make sure that we can provide supervisory and leadership training to the people that are within our group homes. It's important to make sure that when children are moved into our care that they can be looked at in an adequate way and make sure that the children can fill their potential. Yes, Mr. Speaker, this is an issue we're looking into.

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

Mr. Forbes: — And I remind the minister the Rising Stars group home in P.A. [Prince Albert] fell through that safety net that she talks about.

Mr. Speaker, as part of its mandate, the Children's Advocate office is to investigate incidents of children who die or are critically injured while in care. In 2010, 34 children died, and

43 were critically injured. Despite these growing numbers, the Children's Advocate office has worked tirelessly to keep up with their investigations, but they are falling behind. And I wonder how many of these deaths and critical injuries to Saskatchewan children could have been avoided if the Children's Advocate office had been able to keep up with the investigations.

To the minister: when will this government take significant steps to help the Children's Advocate office in their efforts to protect Saskatchewan children from preventable injuries and deaths?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I want to make sure the members opposite and the people in the province know is that the number of children in care in our ministry is actually decreasing. In March of this year, there was 3,217 children. Last year there were 3,348 children. And the number of children that are in overcrowded foster homes is also going down as well.

Mr. Speaker, the number of the children that die in our care is absolutely astounding because too many of those children have fragile medical issues that there's no way that we can give them a life . . . And it's nothing that, no matter what kind of hospital care they could have, they're not going to be able to make it. It's a feeling, Mr. Speaker, that no parent wants to hear.

But I assure you that the people that are working with us in our group homes, in our foster homes, are looking after our children to the very best that they can. And we're making sure within the ministry, the money that we've spent within the ministry, including 124 per cent increase in the amount of money that's in child and family services, has increased since we became government.

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

Mental Health Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, to quote from the 2010 Saskatchewan Ombudsman's report:

Our society does not do a good job of addressing mental health issues. Far too many people fall through the cracks between government programs or have no programs designed to meet their needs.

In March, members of the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association of Saskatchewan came to the Legislative Building to bring attention to the fact that more mental health resources are needed. Mr. Speaker, the Ombudsman is saying the government is failing people with mental health issues. And members of the Canadian Mental Health Association and the Saskatchewan Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association who came to the legislature to get the minister's attention are also saying that.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: when is the minister going to stop

ignoring mental health issues and make it a priority of his government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we take very seriously the whole issue around mental health and the delivery of mental health services throughout the province. I can tell you that there are gaps within the system and we're working to try and fill those gaps.

I've talked to a number of parents that have children that have suffered from some mental illness issues over the last couple of years, or number of years, and they feel that there are certain places where the system can be improved. We look at where we can make improvements, Mr. Speaker. That's why we, in this year's budget, would increase funding to health regions by 9, over 9 per cent or \$260 million. That's \$260 million more, Mr. Speaker, going into the health care system, that will try and address some of the problems like the member opposite or, more importantly, the Ombudsman identified, Mr. Speaker.

Because as I said, when we have one person that doesn't get the care that they need, that is concerning to this government and this ministry, and we'll work to try and address those situations.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, one big step the minister could take in addressing mental health issues and showing that it is a priority for his government is to commit to building the mental hospital in North Battleford. Instead, the minister continues to ignore the need for a new mental health hospital, saying he has to wait for funding. Yet he can say that he's going ahead with 13 long-term care facilities when there is no funding in the budget for all of those facilities.

Mr. Speaker, Sask Hospital in North Battleford is 100 years old and deteriorating. It is out of date therapeutically. To the minister: why would anyone believe he is committed to addressing mental health issues and the well-being of Saskatchewan people when he refuses to commit to a new mental health facility in North Battleford?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, since our government has come to power, we have put more into capital repairs and capital construction than any year under the opposition, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've committed the 13 long-term care facilities and so far over \$80 million is in the budget, Mr. Speaker — last year's and this year — to cover those costs as those projects move forward.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't very long ago when the Leader of the Opposition put a circular out in Saskatoon to say that the children's hospital was cancelled. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. \$200 million has moved from our government to the Saskatoon Health Region to see that facility go forward, Mr. Speaker.

That is a long cry from what the members used to do opposite.

Just before an election, they'd announce a hospital in Humboldt, they'd announce a hospital in Preeceville, Mr. Speaker. No money towards that hospital, just trying to buy votes, Mr. Speaker, when no money was there.

That is not what this government will do. When the money is there to build a psychiatric hospital in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, that hospital will be built and announced.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 173 — *The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2011*

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 173, *The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Crown Investments Corporation has moved that Bill No. 173, *The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2011* be now read the first time. 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 the Bill be considered a second time? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I ask the member from Regina Dewdney to state his point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During question period today a very serious question was asked by the member from Elphinstone of the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations. Mr. Speaker, Chief Ian McKay was in the gallery. He's a very important person to his people. He had provided information that the meeting lasted five minutes in length. Mr. Speaker, we heard the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations say that that was absolutely ridiculous. Then under his breath he used the word, bullshit, Mr. Speaker, an unacceptable word in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, which members on this side heard and saw him mouth, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have a dignified leader of the First Nations in our province in the gallery. He deserves the respect, Mr. Speaker. He deserves to be treated with dignity. And that type of behaviour by any member of the Assembly is inappropriate, Mr. Speaker. This type of behaviour in front of the leader of the First Nations or for that matter any citizen of our province should not be considered acceptable by this Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I apologize and withdraw the comment.

The Speaker: — I thank the minister for responding to the point of order and withdrawing it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 1049 to 1057.

The Speaker: — Questions 1049 through 1057 are tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 172

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 172 — *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les victimes d'actes criminels*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill No. 172, *An Act to amend The Victims of Crime Act*. And it's a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that deals with an important area of work that happens within our province.

You'll note, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation was originally brought to the legislature in 1995 and passed at that time, and so this is an amendment of the 1995 legislation. And the question becomes, what is the purpose of the amendment and are there things that are being done here that are important for the people of Saskatchewan, or are there some things here that we need to raise some questions about?

[14:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, the victims of crime legislation in this province and in provinces right across the country and in the federal government, all of these pieces of legislation have been

introduced to provide services to people who have suffered because of crime. And there are a number of high profile cases that happened right across the country that focused attention on how there didn't appear to be a mechanism within our criminal justice system that would provide assistance to people who had been affected by criminal activity, and so these pieces of legislation across the country were introduced to further develop the response that the community could have towards the victims of crime.

And in our province, my predecessor as Attorney General, Mr. Bob Mitchell, brought forward this particular legislation after much discussion and review within the community and within the caucus. And I think the legislation itself has served our province well. Many of the members of the legislature have had a chance to meet with local victims' committees, we call them, and they have seen the good work that's done in assisting people who have been injured or in some way dealt with in the whole area of being a victim of crime.

Now many of these committees and many of the services have been provided in conjunction with the local police forces because that's how the structure was set up. And I know that the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], who are major providers of police services across the province, have worked closely within their organization and also within the local groups that provide guidance to victims' committees to make sure that there are the services available.

And quite often, Mr. Speaker, these services are having a safe, quiet place at a courthouse or at a police station where victims can be at a time when they are required to testify in a criminal proceeding. Because clearly the trauma of testifying in a criminal proceeding sometimes is even greater than or at least matches some of the same kind of tension that's there involved with the original crime, and this is especially true when it relates to a number of the assault cases or sexual assault cases. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have over the years been able to provide resources to these services across the province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, because this structure is there, that means that we need to look pretty carefully at what the minister is proposing and why he is proposing changes to this legislation. Now on April 20th the Minister of Justice set out the rationale for this particular change that's being introduced. And basically what he identifies is that there are some problems with the legislation as it exists now, and so as he states in his comments, he says:

... victims services providers must be able to determine who has been the victim of crime so that they can provide them with the support they need. That is why this Bill amends *The Victims of Crime Act* to establish a requirement that police must disclose to designated local victims service providers certain limited identification information about a victim. This applies to the RCMP, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, acting under a provincial policing contract as well as our municipal police officers [in Saskatoon, Regina, Weyburn, Estevan, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, and Corman Park.]

So, Mr. Speaker, what is being done in this particular legislation then appears to be correcting an issue whereby

sometimes the victim service providers were not being given information that would allow them to do the job that we as a community have given to them.

And so the minister goes on to say that there's a disclosure issue that's arisen within the RCMP across Canada, and I'm not sure quite what this means. And I guess this is the point of my discussion here is the minister did not set out what the issue has been across the country that would generate the reason for this particular legislative amendment.

It appears that there may have been some challenge to information being provided to victim service organizations, but it's not clear from his comments, the minister's comments or from the legislation itself as to what the specific problem is. So let's take a look here to see if we can figure out what's being identified. When we go to look at the actual Bill and look at the provisions that are here, I think we can get some sense of what's being tried, although we still, I think, are going to have a hard time figuring out why these changes are being made.

But when you go to section 3, basically you've created a new heading, a new heading which says that the title of the heading will be:

Short title, Interpretation, Declaration of Principles and Victims' Information

And note that it's victims, plural. So the change in this part 1 relates to information for many victims across the system.

So then you go and find out well, what is it that's being changed? Well we see that in section 4 of the Bill, the legislation adds a new section 2.2 to the legislation after the existing section 2.1. And what 2.2 does is it sets out a number of definitions. And, Mr. Speaker, these definitions go into a more, I guess a clarification of what's being identified here as victims' information. So first off it says that in this section, there's going to be something called a designated person, and this designated person will be identified by the minister and that person obviously will have some special power. And so the minister, through an order, will make a person a designated person or they will go to a whole class of people as designated persons.

So presumably that means that there could be an individual who may or may not be of a certain profession or certain classification who could be identified as a designated person, or the class of persons could be police officers or could be lawyers, could be doctors, could be teachers. All of these people could be designated persons under this particular legislation.

And so then you look at, well what or how or why are these people designated? Well subsection (3) goes on to say that:

The [person] . . . may designate a person or a class of persons pursuant to subsection (2) only if that person or class of persons is engaged in the delivery of victims' services.

So Mr. Speaker, presumably the intention is to designate a certain group of people who now provide victim services or

who will provide victim services so that something special can happen to them.

Then it goes on in subsection (4) to say a police officer. Well if we go back to the definition, subsection (1), we see that the police officer under this legislation in Saskatchewan means “a member of a police service as defined under *The Police Act, 1990*.” Well that’s clearly Saskatoon, Regina, Weyburn, Moose Jaw, Estevan, Prince Albert and Corman Park. Or it can be a member of the RCMP if that RCMP member is providing policing under the provincial policing agreement whereby we as the province through our Government of Saskatchewan have contracted for the RCMP to provide the policing services, and therefore basically the police service for everywhere else in the province.

So under subsection (4), we have this police officer being ordered to:

provide to a designated person [in other words, the people who are providing victim services] any information about a victim that is prescribed in the regulations and that is in the possession of the police officer.

So once again we get to a word victim which needs to be defined. So we go back to subsection (1), and we look and see how the word victim is being defined for use in this particular section. And here we see that victim is:

... a person who, by reason of an act that may be in violation of criminal laws [so it may be in violation; in other words, it hasn’t been proved yet] has suffered harm, including:

physical or mental injury;

emotional suffering; or

economic loss.

So we have this definition of a victim which includes the physical and mental injury, emotional suffering, or economic loss. And that last one could be to cover people who have been scammed or people who have had their properties taken from them or other areas of property crime. Clearly the other issues relate to something that has happened to them, either directly or indirectly, which causes physical, mental, or emotional harm.

So we have in subsection (4) a clear message to the police officer that they must provide information to the designated person, in other words the victim service person, any information about the victim which is one of these people and that that police officer has. Obviously the police officer can’t provide information that they don’t have.

Then in subsection (5), it says that this information “must be provided in the form and manner prescribed in the regulations.” Now that makes this Bill a little bit difficult to know exactly how it’s going to function because obviously we don’t have the regulations at this point, but we’re hoping that, in the regulations, it would give sufficient information for the victim services person to do the work that is required.

Then we go onto subsection (6), and it says what the person who’s providing victim services is supposed to do. It says that victim services provider, “shall use the victim’s information” which comes in the form as set out in the regulation, only. There’s a key word here, the word only, for “contacting the victim; and providing or facilitating the delivery of victims’ services to the victim.”

[14:45]

Now I suspect that that subsection (6) contains the information that is the reason for this whole Bill. Somewhere in Canada there must’ve been a problem with people getting victims’ information and having it go to victim services providers, and they were using it for something other than contacting the victim and other than providing and facilitating the delivery of victim services to this victim.

We don’t know if that’s what the reason is, but it looks like that’s where the problem lies. And so, are we supposed to speculate as to what other kinds of things could be done or with that information or how it could be used? I think that it would’ve been of assistance if the minister had been clearer in his initial remarks as to what kinds of problems have been encountered and why this particular legislative change is needed.

Now I’ll go back to subsection (6), but subsection (7) goes on to deal with the situation where the victim says, I don’t want victim services. And then in that particular situation, there’s an obligation on the person who’s providing victim services to immediately destroy the information that they’d received pursuant to subsection (4). Now I’m not sure what the reason for this particular clause is other than there must have been some problem once again as it relates to people holding on to this information or using it for other purposes that were beyond what was to be done in the provision of victim services.

Now I know, Mr. Speaker, that working within the RCMP, it’s always been a big challenge for them as providers of provincial policing services in Saskatchewan — well, in every province in Canada where they provide provincial policing services — to make sure that the RCMP is not exposed to liability. I know that a number of years ago when we were working through the mechanics of providing the point of service for contact for emergency services, one of the issues for the RCMP in doing this was that they were not very keen to be the ones that would receive the initial call of concern because they could not always be assured that there would be some emergency service at the end of the line when they transferred the call on to another service, whether it was the fire service or emergency medical services or even other policing services. And so there was a continual discussion about how one would deal with that liability.

It appears, Mr. Speaker, that there have been some concerns related around the transfer of victim information to victim services, from the police, that have come back to haunt the police service, and so they have therefore gotten into a situation where they’re not willing to provide information to the victims services providers in some communities or all communities, and so that appears to be what the rationale is for this particular legislation. But once again, Mr. Speaker, it’s unfortunate that

we haven't had some of the specific examples of the problems that have arisen that would require this change to be made.

And as we know that there can be protections put in place for the police, so this is clearly what this legislation is intending to do, is to provide protections to the police by setting out a very clear procedure for transfer of sensitive information, information about victims of crime. I think if that's what's intended to be done here, I think it would have been of assistance to have that more clearly set out in the original description of what we're trying to do here.

And so, Mr. Speaker, another question that arises once we've come to an understanding of what is being planned here, which is a protection for the police for providing sensitive information to victim services organizations, is to also raise the question whether there are some victim services organizations which are not police based, which may be in some way affected by this legislation because clearly this legislation relates directly to police-based victims services. And we know that there are organizations within communities that do provide assistance to victims, and they may not be in exactly the same organizational format as set out in the police-based victims services.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're not certain whether this legislation in fact restricts the number and the type of organizations that can receive this information from the police, and I think that particular kind of question can be answered subsequently. But once again, it would have been helpful to have that all set out here as we move forward. So it's an interesting change that's being provided here, and it clearly is addressing some issues that are of concern to the police. I am hoping that it does not in any way affect the services that are actually going to be received by victims and that the intent is also to protect the victims from being revictimized in some way as it relates to the use of their information.

Mr. Speaker, when we make changes in areas like this, I'm always concerned that many of the groups that are involved have had a chance to work through and understand what is being done and also to understand whether the changes do affect how the services are provided. And I know that the victims services branch has long experience within the government, has been working with the various groups involved. I know that it appears they've talked to the organizational level of all of these groups.

I'm not sure and it's not entirely clear whether individual victims who may or may not have had a complaint about the system or situations where they've been involved with the system have been consulted. It may be that we will hear about that later. But I think ultimately our goal has to make sure that we listen to the victims, that we continue to provide the best services possible, and that what we will do to change this legislation is to assist victims as opposed to . . . well maybe not as opposed to but in addition to assisting the police in some of their procedural and legal liability issues which clearly appear to be the impetus for this legislation. So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will conclude my remarks.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to address Bill No. 172, *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act*. As the previous speaker, the member from Regina Lakeview alluded to, this is one of those cases where one could wish and perhaps some day a court might wish that the second reading speech was a little bit more fulsome and not necessarily longer. And maybe fulsome's not the right word, Mr. Speaker, but a little bit more specific, a little bit more clear, a bit more precise, but exactly what remedy, what evil, what evil the legislation the Bill before us intends to remedy.

It does set out, as the Bill does itself, the changes that the government proposes to make to *The Victim of Crime Act* and states some general reason why these changes should be made. And specifically what the minister said, the Minister of Justice said in his second reading speech is, and I quote, "These amendments seek to address a disclosure issue that has arisen with the RCMP across Canada."

It doesn't say what disclosure issue, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact it implies that the issue has not arisen in Saskatchewan, that this is not a question that has arisen in Saskatchewan, that there's not necessarily a problem within the province of Saskatchewan, but an issue has arisen somewhere across Canada.

And it seems to imply again, Mr. Speaker, that these amendments are being made at the request or the initiative of the RCMP and whether it's because they speculate when looking at this legislation that their members or the service itself is at risk in providing information to what we would consider appropriate people or whether there's been an actual example or whether there's been an abuse because legislation somewhere in Canada was vague or unclear and perhaps similar to the legislation here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, and on the issue of discussions prior to the introduction of legislation in this House, I cannot help but briefly — very briefly because I want to address my remarks to the Bill — but very briefly comment on what has occurred in this Legislative Assembly today in respect to consultation on legislation that is before this Assembly as this Bill is before this Assembly.

And of course I speak, Mr. Speaker, as to the, well, complete lack of consultation that took place on the municipal election voting legislation, Mr. Speaker. We have legislation before this House that would see a requirement for photo ID to be presented by citizens of Saskatchewan to vote in municipal elections and legislation before this House that would see photo ID to have to be presented by citizens before they could vote in provincial elections. The one is being used to justify the other, Mr. Speaker. If we're going to have these rules for municipalities, surely we can have these rules for the province and vice versa.

Now in respect to the requirement for photo ID in municipal elections that the Sask Party government is trying to force through this Legislative Assembly this sitting, this session, Mr. Speaker, it's become clear that the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association was not consulted. And that becomes clear from correspondence sent in April to the government saying that they don't support the photo ID.

Now that they are aware that this is the proposal of the government, they don't support it. It will suppress voter turnout. It will lead perhaps to the intimidation of voters. With respect, Mr. Speaker, I think that's the intention of the provincial legislation, to suppress voter turnout amongst groups that don't vote for the government. It is legislation that they would not have recommended or supported if they had been consulted. They had not been consulted.

[15:00]

And there's a second piece of correspondence that the government waves around in response to our concerns about this lack of consultation and this criticism of this legislation by the organization of municipalities affected by it, saying that, well, we would support — because they support other parts of the legislation, Mr. Speaker — we would support passage of the Bill, given our understanding that we have now got from the Government of Saskatchewan that nothing can be done about the photo ID provisions, that the train has left the station. There is nothing that the government can do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The train has not left the station. Something can be done. When the letter was written after SUMA was advised that the legislation could not be amended, there were actually weeks in which the legislation could be amended. In fact now there are still two and a half weeks in which the legislation can be amended and the legislation could be amended today.

People have been told before that, well it just takes too long to make these changes. It takes too long to make these changes. We know in fact, we know in fact from this term of this government and of this Legislative Assembly and in fact whole Bills can be passed fairly quickly when the public sees the urgency and importance of them.

I will briefly take us back to the day when there was a public outcry about the prospect of Colin Thatcher profiting from a book written about the murder, for which he was convicted, of his ex-wife JoAnn Wilson. And the government said a number of things. They said, well we can't, we can't pass legislation stopping him profiting from the book because the legislation would be unconstitutional. And the opposition said, I said, Mr. Speaker, that, well we'll take the risk that it'll be unconstitutional. Let the courts tell us that if that is the case. But we need to stand up for the victims of crime in that respect.

And then the government's second defence was, well we don't have time; we don't have time now to pass such legislation. It takes too long to pass legislation. Well, Mr. Speaker, I reminded the public and I reminded the government and I reminded members of the Legislative Assembly that just in that sitting the opposition had raised two issues. One is that some people in the real estate development area and the city of Saskatoon in particular and city council of Saskatoon thought that our condominium laws that existed at the time did not allow for certain developments that were taking place in Saskatoon. And more than one development, Mr. Speaker. There were a number of developments.

And the opposition went to the government and said we would be supportive of — as a matter of fact we will initiate —

changes to the condominium legislation if the government doesn't do so. But we want to see those changes passed to facilitate what the city of Saskatoon wants to do. And indeed we did that and we did that very quickly. We did that in a matter of days because we had to, Mr. Speaker. We rise at a certain time and then there is no time. But now we're sitting, and then we were sitting.

The other issue that arose that the opposition brought to government's attention was that the provisions for treatment of tax-free savings accounts, which were then new, were not identical or similar or was treated the same as registered retirement savings plan within our Queen's Bench Act, Mr. Speaker. I won't go into a lot of detail about what all that meant, but it was clearly intended by Parliament of Canada that such provisions would receive similar tax treatment, and some provincial legislation had to be amended to change how that was done. And that was done very, very quickly, and it was done in the same sitting. And just a few days before, the Minister of Justice said, well we don't have time to draft legislation that might at all be constitutional in respect to this victim issue, this issue of profiting from a crime.

Well the public wanted something done. The opposition wanted something done. And the opposition pointed out that when we can agree across this aisle, Mr. Speaker, when we can agree here, things can get done. When we're here and we agree, we can do things that are within our jurisdiction and within our constitutional authority. Legislation was passed. If this was the United States, one might call it the JoAnn Wilson Bill. But here we don't have that habit; we don't have that tradition. But *The Profits of Criminal Notoriety Act* was passed, Mr. Speaker. And not only was it passed, it was passed in short order, disproving the Minister of Justice's argument that there was no time to do it, that it couldn't be done, that there was not time left in the legislature; we are only sitting for another matter of . . . another couple of weeks or another few days, whatever it was, and it could not be done.

It was done, Mr. Speaker, and it was done in short order. It was done expeditiously. But more than that, it wasn't just a matter of image management for me and everybody else calling for the Bill. It was not just that, because the constitutionality of that legislation was challenged. And I know members of the government, the former member from Saskatoon Northwest who might have felt a little threatened by the Bill, Serge LeClerc, Mr. LeClerc thought the Bill was unconstitutional. As a matter of fact, I know for a fact the Minister of Justice thought the Bill was unconstitutional. He was just giving in to public pressure. He was just giving in to our demands.

And when it became clear that the arguments about constitutionality did not stand with the public, when it was clear that the arguments about not having time, not having time to pass this Bill, were not accurate — that we did have time — he gave in. And he was as surprised, I think, as anybody in this province when the constitutionality of that Bill was challenged and the Bill, the legislation, the then Act, *The Profits of Criminal Notoriety Act*, Mr. Speaker, was upheld as constitutional and effective and had the effect in protecting victims from criminals profiting from their crimes that it was intended to have, Mr. Speaker.

That is an example of what can be done in the case of an entirely new piece of legislation. It needs its own definition section. It needs its own substantial measures. It needed to be crafted by the Ministry of Justice, instructions by government and the Minister of Justice who dragged their feet in giving those instructions.

But once they gave in, once they gave in to public pressure and public demand and calls from the opposition to do so, once they gave in, it was done. It was done professionally. It was done well. It was constitutional. It was upheld by the court and it's in effect and is the law of the province. And it's a precedent. It's a precedent for this country, Mr. Speaker. So these things can be done.

So when the government says, when the government says to SUMA we cannot, we cannot amend — when we have weeks — we cannot amend legislation, Mr. Speaker, well I think . . . And I'll probably have occasion to say this again and perhaps more relevantly when I speak specifically to that legislation if the government does not come to its senses and move the amendments that SUMA has requested and that we have requested day after day after day. I'll again have time to say and occasion to say that this is . . . And I don't say this lightly, and you can only say it once, Mr. Speaker. This is the most flagrant example of allowing the public and stakeholders to misunderstand what this Assembly is doing and what it can do, when you allow the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association to be working under the premise that this debate that we are having today — and we'll have later today I believe, on Bill 162, on the municipal election changes and the photo ID and the other, a sister Bill in respect to provincial elections and photo ID — that once this has entered this stage that I'm in on the victim of crimes Act amendment legislation, Mr. Speaker, that once it enters this stage, the government is helpless. No amendments can be made.

Well every member of this Assembly who sat in a committee where we've amended legislation knows better than that, Mr. Speaker. We know better than that. That's just not acceptable. It is just inexcusable that the minister today would wave around a letter saying, well see, SUMA supports the legislation, knowing, if you read the letter, they support the legislation because they believe the part they don't support can't be removed, that it's beyond the ability of this Assembly to amend the Bill that's before this Assembly, when that's just not the case. And it's just, it is outrageous, Mr. Speaker. And that is a word I know some members use fairly often. Not a word I use very often. But it's a word that I have to use today.

And when I talk about consultation, when I talk about consultation on a Bill as I'm speaking about today in respect to victims of crime or any other legislation, I assume that — and I'll assume it less often, I think — I assume that the government has talked to the people affected. It's clear that in the case of important election legislation, they have not . . . [inaudible] . . . they have not. On the sister legislation, on the provincial legislation in respect to photo ID, it is clear from the discussions that were held in committee, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Chief Electoral Officer was not consulted. And you can't tell the Chief Electoral Officer that we can't amend legislation now. I think he knows better.

It's clear the opposition wasn't consulted. And that, Mr. Speaker, is in violation of a longstanding precedent that changes are not made to election legislation without the agreement of the opposition and in violation of the Minister of Justice's commitment made this year to follow that precedent, tradition, and convention. Direct breach of that.

Not only is the photo ID legislation, as SUMA points out, likely to lead to voter suppression, it's probably intended for that exact purpose, Mr. Speaker. Voter intimidation, SUMA says. Not only that, the municipalities weren't consulted on the municipal legislation. The opposition wasn't consulted despite the convention, despite the tradition on the provincial legislation. And of course we know why, Mr. Speaker. We know why. Because SUMA would have said no, we don't need it. And then the argument for the provincial legislation would not have had that leg to stand on. That would have been knocked out pretty early. The Chief Electoral Officer would have said no, we don't need it. And the second leg would have been knocked under the argument for that legislation, and that's why they didn't consult.

So when I'm looking at a second reading speech on this legislation, on *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act*, and I have to guess, I have to guess whether it was the RCMP who came to the government or the government went to the RCMP; whether there was a disclosure issue raised in Saskatchewan or somewhere else in the country; whether the issue arose from our legislation or similar legislation, but not identical, in some other province; whether it's a matter of protecting victims from police services that have been too liberal with information or it's a case of protecting victims by allowing the RCMP to do what this legislature intends the RCMP to do — well I don't know the answer to any of that.

I don't know that because the minister makes a very short second reading speech. It's going to be the only explanation before we go into committee, before the very, very end of the process — the last half hour, hour, you know, before this legislation is passed — before anybody will get another explanation from the government as to exactly what the problem here is, what the evil was that was going to be remedied.

[15:15]

Now on legislation like this, the purpose of which I support . . . And I will want to speak to both the role of the police and the value of these services and to the extent that they are provided by the police, police-based victim services. And certainly in favour and strong support of the regime that's in place — that was not put in place by this Sask Party government but put in place earlier — and I think what is the intent of the amending Bill. But usually I would do this, and have often done this, with the assumption that, you know, the government is acting in good faith and the government is acting in consultation. That's not so clear to me anymore, Mr. Speaker.

And I've mentioned the excuses the government throws up when it doesn't want to do something for victims like *The Profits of Criminal Notoriety Act*, the excuses it throws up when it wants to ram through this Legislative Assembly voter suppression legislation for municipalities, when municipalities

don't want it, and for the province, when the Chief Electoral Officer doesn't want it.

And another example, Mr. Speaker, not nearly as heinous, not nearly as outrageous . . . And I won't use the word outrageous but just, I think, sloppy, Mr. Speaker. And I hope that this Bill doesn't have disguised or hidden within it the same type of sloppiness both in consultation and in drafting that recent changes to *The Police Act* had when it first came before this Legislative Assembly.

The Bill was introduced, distributed to members. I pick it up. I look at it. And the Bill as it was brought before this Assembly . . . which supposedly was a subject of consultation with municipalities having their own police services, municipal police services, supposedly a subject of consultation with police chiefs in the province, and supposedly a consultation of those associations, federations that represent police officers.

I looked at the Bill. It seemed to suggest that a municipality, with cabinet approval, could dissolve a municipal police service and replace it with the RCMP, and that in particular cities that, because they had reached a threshold of 20,000, were required to have municipal police services, could do that as well. And that would be, I would think, of some concern on the plain reading of the legislation that's brought before the House, of some concern to police associations in the province. And so I wrote to them and, highlighting that section of the Bill, said you know, this causes us some concern. We're not sure of why this provision is even here. Do you have any concern?

Well there was, I think, Mr. Speaker. I think, while the minister defended the wording, the original wording right to the end, but the Federation of Police Officers sought clarification. The government proposed an amendment. Now the government didn't say to the Federation of Police Officers, which they apparently said to SUMA in respect to the photo ID for municipal elections, they didn't say oh, this has already been introduced in the legislature. There's already been second reading debate. We can't amend this legislation. They didn't say that. They amended the legislation. We amended it in committee, which is what we can do in respect to the legislation on municipal elections, Mr. Speaker.

Just another example of how outrageous, outrageous the correspondence to SUMA on this subject, on this issue they raised, yes, because when the Federation of Police Officers says we have a concern about how this legislation might be interpreted, the government, even though the government doesn't think it's sloppy drafting — I thought maybe it was sloppy drafting, Mr. Speaker — even though the minister doesn't think it's sloppy drafting, they come up with better drafting. And we have an amendment that the government and the opposition can agree on and that allays any concerns of the Federation of Police Officers in the province. We can do that, and we did that. And we did that in short order. As a matter of fact, we did it in this sitting, and we've already done it.

And in fact the same night in committee, we could have fixed the issue that SUMA has with the municipal election legislation, Mr. Speaker. We could have fixed that Bill that same night instead of the minister or somebody in his ministry telling them it's too late. We can't make these changes. It can't

be done. So do you support the Bill with your objection, or do we withdraw the whole Bill? Well SUMA says, well no, we support the Bill because we want other things that you have in the Bill, so we'll take the thing we object to.

Well the Federation of Police Officers weren't told that. They weren't told . . . do you accept the changes to *The Police Act*, the clarification around public complaints, and all these other good things in the Bill because if you don't want them, you won't get them. If you do want them, well you have to take the section that you're concerned about, that the opposition's concerned about as well. That wasn't said to the Federation of Police Officers. But it was said to the Saskatchewan Urban Municipality Association. Outrageous, just outrageous, Mr. Speaker — it just clearly was.

So here the examples of how the government consults after the fact . . . I mean I could talk about the wildlife protection Act, Mr. Speaker, where, you know, these groups are talked to afterwards, Mr. Speaker. And apparently the government's operandi here is we'll tell you what the legislation is as late in the process as we can, and then if you have any problems with it, we'll tell you it's too late to make any changes, whether it is or it isn't, Mr. Speaker. That seems to be the modus operandi.

And so that raises concerns when we have legislation that it's not clear whether they want to address the liberality of sharing information or the restrictions that are perceived to be there. What gives rise to the concern? Whether it's A or it's B? Who raised the concern? And were the RCMP and victims organizations, were they truly consulted about this legislation? Or is the history of this government's lack of consultation, lack of discussion with stakeholders, does that infect this legislation, Mr. Speaker? We don't know. We don't know that.

And again what we've learned today about some legislation and what I see . . . And I listened carefully to the minister when he made his second reading speech. I tell you; the printed version in *Hansard* doesn't help me a lot either. We have a Bill that is vague in its explanatory notes. It's vague in the second reading speech, and it addresses matter of detail in regulation.

And I know. I've been to these discussions before, on both sides of the table as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker. The Justice minister used to be the Justice critic. And now the Justice critic, he's the Justice minister. I know that the Justice minister will say the regulations aren't drafted. That concerns him a lot less now that he's Justice minister than it used to, Mr. Speaker. It used to concern him a lot if the regulations weren't drafted yet, and we were going to pass legislation. But now I see the regulations aren't drafted. So what the legislation actually means, Act and regulations, well we'll find that out someday down the road, Mr. Speaker. We won't find that out just because we've passed the Bill into law. We have to wait for the cabinet to decide what key terms in this legislation mean.

As I have alluded to, I am supportive of the principles and the intent, substantive content and effects of the legislation that is being amended here. I expect that — given all my concerns about consultation and all my concerns about spin and marketing of legislation by the members opposite, given all my concerns about the vagueness of the legislation and all the gaps to be filled in by regulation, despite all my concerns about the

nature of some of the second reading speeches including the one on this legislation that we see — that I support the intent of the amendment as well. But again, Mr. Speaker, just given the history and particularly given today's discussions around some legislation, I just can't be as comfortable as I would like to be.

In respect to victims services and police-based victims services, Mr. Speaker, there is a conventional understanding of the role of police officers, and I think if you actually inquired of the average citizen, they would quickly realize that the role is larger than first comes top of mind. At first top of mind is the understanding that the police investigate crime, apprehend criminals, arrest them, detain them, and then . . . or at least alleged criminals. And then the circumstances of the inquiry into guilt or innocence or inquiry into guilty or not guilty, and if guilty the sentence is taken out by another part of the criminal justice system.

But that the police are engaged in that activity and that they primarily reduce crime by investigating it, apprehending perpetrators or suspects and detaining them until the court can decide how they should be dealt with, that is not a significant part of the time, the role of any police officer. That's not primarily even how police officers reduce crime.

And the time that police officers spend in the community, driving the streets of our cities, walking the streets of our cities, the RCMP driving the highways of the province of Saskatchewan, that is not done in the investigation of crime. That is not done looking for suspects. That is not done chasing fleeing suspects from a crime scene.

That is all done . . . And sometimes we resent it when we're guilty of the infractions, particularly and most commonly driving infractions of various levels of seriousness, but that is all done primarily for crime control, not for crime investigation, and not necessarily for crime suspension or for apprehension. And that is a significant part of what police officers do. And a lot of behaviour and conduct that may or may not be criminal that is detected by police officers when they are doing this work within the community may not result in charges or apprehension at all. But the attention is brought to the activity and it is suspended, it is stopped, and we are the better for it. And that is called discretion, and there is nothing wrong with discretion. And they couldn't do the job without it, and it exists at all levels of the criminal justice system. But police discretion is very important because a large part of what is crime control and crime prevention doesn't involve detective work at all. Mr. Speaker, and most police officers aren't detectives.

The police are actually a fairly modern institution. They came into existence with industrial society. All the feudal systems of crime control that existed up to the 19th century were beginning to prove unworkable in a new urban industrial setting. Members will be well aware of Robert Peel and the establishment of the first modern police service in England which we now are the inheritors of.

[15:30]

All the police services in the province and the country, I think, date back to that service, Robert Peel service. The bobbies take their name from Robert Peel, from his name. They were his

police service. But he laid out some principles of policing, Mr. Speaker, that apply to police-based victim services as well as other areas of policing. And one of those principles was the people are the police and the police are the people. That is a principle that the police are not, in a democratic society, a force imposed on people to impose order, but a group of people that are within the community who assist the community and are assisted by the community in maintaining what we call in Canada peace, order, and good government.

And that principle speaks to what is the largest part of police work in crime control, crime reduction, crime prevention. The presence of active citizens in the community has much the same effect as the presence of police officers in the community in letting people know that this is a community that people care about what happens in it, that neighbours are taking care of each other. You don't expect police officers or you wouldn't expect citizens following that principle of Peel's to be investigating crime and to be acting as detectives. When Robert Peel said the police are the people and the people are the police, that's not what he meant. What he meant was that the police are part of the community caring about itself, showing that neighbours care about neighbours.

And that's the motivation, that's the reason for victim services. That's the reason, I think the argument for, or at least one of the arguments for, police-based victim services is that a community takes care of its own. When its own are attacked, even by another member of the community, the community reaches out and helps and, in the case of violence, in the case of crime, through the police but also through other neighbours, Mr. Speaker. And the work of the police and other neighbours can be seamless and invaluable, invaluable assistance to people in the community.

Sometimes victim service volunteers have come here to the legislature. They've been introduced when they've received awards. And when I was Minister of Justice, I had the honour and the privilege of giving long-time service awards to people who've worked as victim service volunteers in communities for many, many, many years, Mr. Speaker. And I rise and I, sometimes in my introductions or in my remarks about victim services, talk about how if one visits a community that has been, and a family that has been, devastated by a crime . . . And unfortunately there's a lot of crime in our society. And Saskatchewan has a particularly high crime rate which sometimes is a political issue, but more importantly is a fundamental social problem, Mr. Speaker, which we want to address.

But when certain crimes, certain crimes of violence, are visited upon individuals or communities, they can be particularly devastating. And I suppose an analogy can be made with car accidents which can be annoying or fatal, Mr. Speaker, and there's a big spectrum there. But when people are seriously hurt, whether by violence or by accident, we need to reach out. We need to be able to help. And that's what victim services does in the case of crime and particularly in the case of violence.

And I am thinking of one particular case, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the value of victim services and the value of police-based victim services. And it's a case that's starting to

recede into history, happened when I was minister of Justice and when I was the minister responsible for Policing. Still a very recent memory for me. And in a community in Saskatchewan there were two murders. The murders, because of the nature of them, shocked the province. There were devastating. They were devastating to the entire province. We were shocked by, we were shocked by these crimes, Mr. Speaker.

But they didn't come out of the blue. These murders didn't just happen. They were perhaps the conclusion, we would hope the conclusion of a history of violence in the community and a history of the violence in a particular family. And unfortunately as many crimes of violence and unfortunately as many murders take place, they arose from issues of domestic violence, Mr. Speaker. But this domestic violence flowed outside of family. It flowed outside of the family and eventually resulted in the deaths of two other people who were in a way neighbours, and in a way . . . well not in a way, but in a very fundamental way, were there to help and protect and put themselves between danger and where it would've been other innocent victims, Mr. Speaker.

I went to a memorial for in respect to the two deaths, the murders. But then I had an occasion, Mr. Speaker, to attend, to meet with a woman who long before these murders took place had been living and dealing with violence and domestic violence but continual terrorizing really of her over a number of years. And the way that she felt, the way that she felt trying to live in this community, the way that she felt living in this community, Mr. Speaker — and able to live in this community very close to the person who had been oppressing her — the fact that she was able to do this and able to do it with comfort, knowing that she was surrounded by friends, the reason that that was the case, the light that was brought into her life, that was from her neighbours, her neighbours who work for the RCMP and her neighbours who volunteered for victim services in that community, Mr. Speaker.

And I had worked with victim services. I had met victim service volunteers. I had dealt with this legislation that's being amended today, Mr. Speaker. I had dealt with issues of funding for victim services, both as minister, as a member of Treasury Board, and then again as a member of cabinet, Mr. Speaker. So I knew intellectually about the importance of these services. I knew intellectually about their value.

But it was those meetings, and particularly the meeting with that woman . . . And I don't know if any of the violence that was committed against her ever resulted in a conviction, Mr. Speaker. I can't actually recall. I don't know that. But she was the victim of violence, and she had received the support of her neighbours and her community. And she had received that support of her neighbours and her community through the police who are also the people in her community, and through the people in her community, victim services, who are also the police and exemplifying the principle of Robert Peel.

And so this legislation addresses, we hope, Mr. Speaker, we hope this legislation addresses the proper provision of victim services through police and with the co-operation of police, to victims, including victims of the most horrendous violence or the most long-term terrorism and oppression of one person by

another.

You know, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, these things are not easily addressed through a criminal justice system that requires, and quite properly so, Mr. Speaker, requires guilt to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt. But if that cannot be done, we do not sit on our hands. We do not say, we can't do that; we can do nothing. That we can only do something where somebody can be convicted where we have all the evidence, we have all the proof and no mistakes were made, procedural or otherwise, in respect to someone's rights — that's the only time we can do anything. That is not the case. That is not the case. And the safer communities and neighbourhoods initiative, which I introduced into this Assembly when I was Minister of Justice and which was passed, and the program that has been continued these many years shows that there is a lot we can do for families, for individuals, for communities, for neighbourhoods in crime control, whether or not we actually raise the conviction rate.

And that is the case with victim services as well. And victim services speaks to after someone has become a victim, but some of these crimes and some of these cases of violence are not isolated incidents. They are patterns of behaviour, and strengthening the victim and strengthening the community around the victim prevents future victimization.

So there is much we can do that is not covered by a television show like *Law & Order*, but is still the role of police, still the role of us as citizens, still the role of us as neighbours, and that is reflected in victim services programming legislation brought in by former governments. And as issues arise as to addressing the application of that legislation and making sure it works well, that it is efficient and effective and that things can be done, we in the opposition support amending, making amendments that allow the legislation to work effectively.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I trust that the intent of the amendments are to make the legislation more effective. I assume that that was what the government wants to do. But again we have, I think, two overarching concerns, putting aside the vagueness of the second reading speech by the minister. And I've spoken to this before, Mr. Speaker, on other legislation. It would be helpful I think if some of the ministers and the Crown for the province of Saskatchewan appreciated that not very often, but every now and then, what is contained within their second reading speech is of very great importance in deciding what is the intent of the legislation.

And putting aside that, putting aside that, Mr. Speaker, the overarching concerns of course are we have some, I think, understandable distrust now of the government's consultation on legislation. And we have some concern about the care that is taken in drafting legislation. And the prime example of that, without going back to the photo ID issues, Mr. Speaker, the prime example of that would be recent changes to *The Police Act* where the consultation with the police, the Federation of Police Officers specifically, on the drafting of one section of the proposed legislation was made by the opposition. The government clearly hadn't done it. And when the opposition raised it, the Federation of Police said, yes we do have a concern that this is drafted badly and will have an effect that we would not like to have. And then the government changed it.

But obviously there was no consultation in advance. There was no careful drafting to ensure that the intent of the government was being met.

[15:45]

And so it's not evidently clear in this case that those are concerns, but those might very well be concerns here, Mr. Speaker. And so we have to have some concern that although we think we agree with the intent of what the government wants to do with the legislation, we think we understand what might be the evils the government seeks to remedy with this legislation, the government has not been clear about what the evils are that they want to remedy. And therefore we can't be sure that we aren't being more than optimistic about what the legislation will in fact do on the issue of legislative intent.

And I will conclude my remarks. But it is both in the clarity of the legislation, the clarity of the second reading speech, it is important that people be able to understand what this Assembly intended. And an example of that that arose, again relatively recently, because in my history here in the Legislative Assembly in respect to again a policing issue, again a victims issue and again, as in this legislation, an issue of disclosure of information. With respect to victims of shootings and stabbings, Mr. Speaker, we thought that, the legislature thought I think, I think it was pretty clear in the discussions that we had at one point in time, this Assembly thought when it brought in *The Health Information Protection Act* that the clear exemption for disclosure of information for the protection of the public would allow, would foresee and facilitate provision of information to police officers about the victims of violence. And clearly that's what the Legislative Assembly thought the intent was.

When I was Minister of Justice, minister responsible for policing, police officers came to me and said, that is not the way this legislation's being interpreted in emergency rooms. People are being stabbed. People are being shot and that circumstance is not being reported to the police. People who have shot someone or stabbed someone are out in the public with their gun or their knife and perhaps there will be another victim harmed and we are not being informed. And the reason we're not being informed, we are told, is because the exemption within HIPA [*The Health Information Protection Act*] is for the immediate protection of nurses and whoever is in the emergency rooms so that they call the police if they're under threat.

Well I don't think that was the legislative intent, Mr. Speaker. I don't think you could go to the second reading speech for legislation that was quite extensive — and the second reading speech was probably longer than the one here — and maybe find any clarification of that. But in fact the matter wasn't before the court in any case, Mr. Speaker. It was a matter that was being dealt with emergency room by emergency room by emergency by emergency, and not well in the opinion of the police, and not well in the opinion of myself as the minister responsible for policing, the minister responsible for Justice, not well in . . . by considered being treated well in the opinion of the government of the day, the New Democratic Party, the government of the day, and not, as it turns out, by any member of the Assembly at the time.

So the government, through me, introduced legislation in respect to mandatory reporting of gunshots and stab wounds, Mr. Speaker, and again in precedent-setting legislation in the country. And it became quite clear that every member, both sides of the aisle, the NDP government of the day, the Sask Party opposition of the day, understood that the intent of the exemption within HIPA was that such crimes of violence would be reported to the police so further violence could be prevented. And so legislation was passed which had the effect of clarifying the legislation in HIPA, Mr. Speaker.

So I understand, if it's the RCMP saying we want it clear what the law is, I understand why that would be the case. I understand why they would want that, Mr. Speaker. If that's the initiative here, we want to be clear what we can do and what we can't do, who we can provide information to, what information we can provide, who we can provide it to. If that's the intent, and I think that's the intent, if that's the intent here is to satisfy concerns about what the legislature intends to be done with victims' information, and we've had considerable discussion in this Legislative Assembly about what can appear to be, to us and to the people of Saskatchewan, the Sask Party government's disregard for the privacy of health information, if the police want to be sure that somewhere down the road nobody can say you provided information that you shouldn't have provided, you provided information to somebody you shouldn't have provided it to, and they want to be clear about what the legislation says — and that's what the opposition wants and that's what the opposition would have wished for, more clarity about this subject from the government when the legislation came forward for second reading — and if that's what the RCMP wants, that makes perfect sense, Mr. Speaker.

On the other side of it, we don't want a situation where, similar to the situation that we had prior to our legislation on the mandatory reporting of gunshots and stab wounds, or information that should be provided — in this case not from the police but to the police — isn't provided because some people interpret the legislation to prevent that, to restrict that.

And you know, some of the privacy and freedom of information legislation in the province may not be as clear as, say, the independent officer for the Legislative Assembly, the privacy and information access officer would like it to be. And so some clarity around the provision of information certainly is to be desired, Mr. Speaker.

So all these concerns exist on the part of the opposition. I think we've heard both from the member from Regina Lakeview and myself on the concerns that we have concerning our support for the institution of police-based victim services and for providing that information and just that information to those and just those to whom it is necessary to support victims of crime, an important part of the role of all citizens, but particularly of the police.

And so since we're not going to get any answers to the questions that we raise about the intent and the effects of this legislation in second reading, Mr. Speaker, I will now take my seat and allow this Bill to proceed to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill 172, *The Victims of*

Crime Amendment Act, 2011 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Deputy Speaker: — This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental and Justice.

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 Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to follow the hon. member from Saskatoon Meewasin who just gave a most thoughtful speech on a different Bill. My Bill is Bill 162, *An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts*. But I just want to take about 10 or 15 seconds to congratulate my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Meewasin, for a most thoughtful and eloquent laying out of some of the concerns around the victims of crime legislation that's just going before committee.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill 162, *The Local Government Election Act* is in many ways even more important than the legislation that governs the provincial election Act. And the reason . . . You might be, people might be surprised to hear an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] saying that, but the reason that I feel that way is that if you talk to people — our neighbours, our friends, our relatives — just talk to people in every walk of life and ask them which level of government most profoundly affects them in their day-to-day lives, and almost without variance it's the municipal government.

Whether it's the RM [rural municipality] or whether it's the urban municipality, but almost, almost without fail, people have long felt that it's the local government that they deal with much more often and in a much more face-to-face way. I mean if you live in an RM you're seeing . . . This winter you have met the snowplow. If you're travelling at all, you've met the snowplow hundreds of times. And in the summer you can hardly drive on our roads through the RMs without meeting a grader or seeing evidence that the road grader has been working very recently. And of course there's much more than that that the municipal governments do.

But because it is such an important level of governance to the

people of Saskatchewan, I'm arguing, Mr. Speaker, that we should make the effort — it's not so much a question of taking the time — but we should make the effort to get this election amendment Act correct, to do it properly rather than to make an error in the passing of this Act, only to have to come back and revisit it at some point in the future.

And part of my argument, Mr. Speaker, is an article that has come to my attention. This article from, well quite frankly from *The New York Times*, and it's eight days old so it's a relatively new article. And the lesson that I get out of this article . . . And it's written about United States electoral process and right to vote, but it is almost directly transferable to the Canadian situation. And as I go through this article, Mr. Speaker, I think anyone that has an interest in this matter will see the parallels. And I think I just want to read parts of it.

But it was April 26th, 2011, in the *New York Times*. And the title of the article is "The Republican Threat to Voting." The republican threat to voting and it describes how . . . I'll try and paraphrase because I know that these things are available online or if somebody has great difficulty with that, please to contact me and I'll try and provide a photocopy of this article. It's not that I'm trying to misrepresent the article but — how do I describe it? — it's three pages long, and I don't intend to read . . . We'll see but I don't intend to read every last word of it. But it starts:

Less than a year before the 2012 presidential voting begins, Republican legislatures and governors across the country are rewriting voting laws to make it much harder for the young, the poor and African-Americans — groups that typically vote Democratic — to cast a ballot.

Spreading fear of a nonexistent flood of voter fraud, they are demanding that citizens be required to show a government-issued identification before they are allowed to vote. Republicans have been pushing these changes for years, but now more than two-thirds of the states have adopted or are considering such laws. The Advancement Project, an advocacy group of civil rights lawyers, correctly describes the push as "the largest legislative effort to scale back voting rights in a century."

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, the parallels between this legislation that's coming seems to be in vogue in the United States and the laws, the Bills that are being proposed in right wing Canada are all too similar, Mr. Speaker, because in the United States they're requiring that you have a state-provided piece of ID with photo. In Canada we're saying you have to have photo ID according to Bill 162, photo ID. I'll get to it; there is alternatives in there, but instead of one piece, it's two pieces of other identification and so on. I'll get to that.

Again I'm not trying to misrepresent what this Bill is about. I am clearly pointing out the parallels between right wing governments because we're told that Bill 161, the provincial election Act simply flows from the federal election Act, the changes made by a conservative, right wing Conservative government. And it flows, and that subsequently the Bill 162, the Bill that I'm speaking on right now, simply flows from the

provincial Act which flows from the federal Act.

Both Acts calling for photo ID, both Acts trying to fix an imaginary problem — they're solving a problem that is largely non-existent. Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the Leader of the Opposition has read a letter from SUMA. I am going to come to that, but he clearly described voter fraud as simply non-existent. That would be the best way to describe what that said, and I'll get to that in a few moments.

The New York Times article carries on. I am going to pick it up again: "Anyone who has stood on the long lines at a motor vehicle office knows that it isn't easy to get such documents. For working people, it could mean giving up a day's wages." In this, they're talking about getting the identification documents that is being proposed in the United States. So working people and working poor in the United States would stand in what sounds like a long lineup to get the photo ID that they would require.

Well, Mr. Speaker, where do we get our photo ID? At our friendly SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] office. And not every village or hamlet has an SGI office, so it means in some instances we have to travel, hope that the camera is working, hope there's someone there to operate it, hope that the stars are in alignment which they are most days. Absolutely, admittedly, the stars are in alignment most days and you can get the photo ID. All you have to do is travel the, you know, 20 kilometres, 30 kilometres, 40 kilometres to the nearest SGI office.

Well you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a saying: time is money. And whether it's a farmer taking the time to go there and get the ID or whether it's a working person, someone that might have picked up some day work . . . I know before I moved to Regina many years ago, Outlook was where my wife and I and our family called home. And there was tremendous opportunity for particularly young people and working people trying to get established in the workforce to work in the potato industry. You know, Barrich Farms was one of the biggest employers there at the time and continues to be to this very day. In fact I stopped in just last weekend to conduct some business there.

Mr. Speaker, for working people to have to go and stand in line or travel some distance from where their point of work is always means money — whether it's gas money, whether it's time away from work. And many people are paid an hourly rate. Well if it takes you two hours to go and get your photo ID and come back, well that's two hours of pay that's missing.

And I don't care how you slice it, you know. Essentially we're talking \$20 and up in terms of cost, and often much more than that because very few employers would say, oh sure, just go for two hours. More typically what they'd say is, you want the day off? You can have the day off and you're welcome to it. We understand you have, you know, you have some personal business to conduct and you have to conduct it. But don't be just taking an hour here and an hour there and two hours somewhere else. Try and bunch your personal work together.

So this "Republican Threat to Voting" article out of *The New York Times* describes some of the problems in the United States, and I'm trying to draw the exact parallels between

problems here. The article, getting back to the April 26 article, says:

A survey by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law found that 11 percent of citizens in the United States, 21 million people, do not have a current photo ID. That fraction [in the United States, that fraction] increases to 15 per cent of low-income voting-age citizens, 18 per cent of young eligible voters and 25 per cent of black eligible voters. Those demographic groups tend to vote Democratic, and Republicans are imposing requirements that they know many will be unable to meet.

Mr. Speaker, everything that I believe about the United States of America and Canada, often parallel . . . I'm not standing here and trying to tell you that 11 per cent, exactly 11 per cent of Canadians do not have photo ID. But I am standing here saying that our numbers won't be wildly different than that. It won't likely be 22 per cent, and it certainly won't likely be lower than 6 per cent. How the United States functions is in many, many, many ways the way that Canada functions. We are cousins in so many ways. You talk to the people at Big Beaver where their port of entry is closing, and they'll literally tell you they are cousins because they're related on both sides of the border and consider themselves as one community as opposed to one country being Canada and one country being the United States, notwithstanding what our respective federal governments try and convince the locals. They know who their friends are, and they know who their relatives are, and they know who their neighbours are in places like Big Beaver.

So, Mr. Speaker, this clearly shows that poor people, young people getting established in the workforce and, in the United States, the black community just find it, have disproportionately, are disproportionately under-represented in the photo ID situation. And I'm confident that there are parallels here.

The article goes on. I'm referring to the April 26, 2011, article in *The New York Times*, titled, "The Republican Threat to Voting". It says:

Kansas' new law was drafted by its secretary of state, Kris Kobach, who also wrote Arizona's anti-immigration law. Voters will be required to show a photo ID at the polls. Before they can register, Kansans will have to produce a proof of citizenship, such as a birth certificate.

Tough luck if you don't happen to have one in your pocket when you're at the county fair and you pass the voter registration booth. Or when the League of Women Voters brings its High School Registration Project to your school cafeteria. Or when you show up at your dorm at the University of Kansas without your birth certificate. Sorry, you won't be voting in Lawrence, and probably not at all [the article says].

And the next sentence, the next paragraph, Mr. Speaker, I just find appalling, but it reads:

That's fine with Gov. Sam Brownback, who said he signed the bill because it's necessary to "ensure the

sanctity of the vote.” Actually, Kansas has had only one prosecution for voter fraud in the last six years. But because of that vast threat to Kansas democracy, an estimated 620,000 Kansas residents who lack a government ID now stand to lose their right to vote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that kind of puts it in context about what the right wing is about when it comes to voters and the right of voters to participate in our democracy.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I was in grade school, not high school, grade school, they taught us about the Boston Tea Party. They taught us about the Boston Tea Party. They taught us about representation before taxation. That’s what it was all about in the United States, and indeed it was held up as something honourable throughout the world — representation before taxation, no taxation without representation.

In other words, I get to vote for somebody to set my taxation laws and my taxation rate. And if I don’t have a say in that, in who gets to put on E & H [education and health] tax or property taxes or school taxes or any other form of taxation, income taxes, if I don’t have an opportunity to vote, Mr. Speaker, I’m resentful as all get-out about being taxed. Give me the right to vote. Give me the opportunity to vote. Make that opportunity a reasonable opportunity to vote. Let us help people to vote.

Let us not put up roadblocks such as they’re doing in Kansas where they’ve had one case of voter fraud in the last six years that was prosecuted — one case of voter fraud. And the situation is 620,000 people in the state of Kansas, who do not have the requisite photo ID, run the risk of not being able to vote at all in the next election which is coming up next year in Kansas. I’m not trying to look out just for the people of Kansas. I am suggesting and saying as clearly as I can, that Saskatchewan parallels our great friends to the South. They’re requiring a photo ID in Kansas. The Government of Saskatchewan is requiring a photo ID of Saskatchewan people.

Name a situation where we’ve had voter fraud. There’s been allegations we found out from the minister, allegations that — if there is any truth to them — then it is somewhere a responsibility either in the ministry or in the minister himself to see that those are followed up and that any fraud is dealt with appropriately under the laws of Saskatchewan. In this case under Bill 162, *The Local Government Election Act* and, Mr. Speaker, that’s the governing Act.

And if there’s fraud committed under that Act, the minister has a responsibility to uphold this Act, to help see that it is upheld. That’s his job. That’s the minister’s job. That’s the government’s job, Mr. Speaker.

The job is not to drive voters away and tell voters that you’re not entitled to vote. The job of governments should always, always be, Mr. Speaker, to help people to vote. Always, at every turn in a democracy, we are better served to have people vote. They don’t have to vote for me. They just should vote. They just should vote. Many people don’t vote for me, and it’s a good thing. The minister agrees with it. It’s okay. You don’t have to vote for this MLA, but you should vote. You should vote. That’s important.

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, this *New York Times* article, I think, has belled the situation. And it continues, and the parallels you will see are just stark, the parallels between the great country south of us and our own great country of Canada. The article goes on:

Eight states already had photo ID laws. [Eight.] Now more than 30 other states are joining the bandwagon of disenfranchisement, as Republicans outdo each other to propose Bills with new voting barriers. The Wisconsin bill refuses to recognize college photo ID cards, even if they are issued by a state university, thus cutting off many students at the University of Wisconsin and other campuses. The Texas bill, so vital that Gov. Rick Perry declared it emergency legislation, would also reject student IDs . . .

But get this, Mr. Speaker. The article says:

. . . but would allow anyone with a handgun license to vote.

A Florida bill would curtail early voting periods which have proved popular and . . .

I’ll come back to the gun laws in a minute:

A Florida bill [Mr. Speaker] would curtail early voting periods, which have proved popular and brought in new voters, and would limit address changes at the polls. “I’m going to call this bill for what it is, good-old-fashioned voter suppression,” Ben Wilcox of the League of Women Voters told *The Florida Times-Union*.

Mr. Speaker, the article, the final paragraph of the article, and then I’m done quoting from this article in *The New York Times*, April 26th, “The Republican Threat to Voting,” the final paragraph says:

Many of these bills were inspired by the American Legislative Exchange Council, a business-backed conservative group, which has circulated voter ID proposals in scores of state legislatures. The Supreme Court, unfortunately, has already upheld Indiana’s voter ID requirement, in a 2008 decision that helped unleash the stampede of new bills. Most of the bills have yet to pass, and many may not meet the various balancing tests required by the Supreme Court. There is still time for voters who care about democracy in their states to speak out against lawmakers who do not.

And that’s the end of this very good article that parallels the situation in the United States, and I’m saying parallels the situation here in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is just as simple as can be. There is absolutely, absolutely no cogent argument that can be made to make it more difficult for people at the municipal level to vote.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in the recent federal election, I voted where my wife and I reside. It’s a small town familiar to many places. My wife and I now reside in the village of Elbow, and

that's where we have our residence. That's where I voted. You know what? They already know me there. They already know us, and it was fairly easy to vote. And they were embarrassed that I had to show, they were embarrassed at the polls that I had to show my voter ID. They were embarrassed because they knew who I was and they knew it was wrong. They knew it was bad legislation. They knew it didn't, it didn't prevent a single iota of voter fraud, Mr. Speaker — not one iota of voter fraud.

The right wing — whether it's the Republicans in the United States, the Sask Party in Saskatchewan, or the Conservative Party in Ottawa — want to deny people the right to vote. They want to cause the necessity for photo ID when it's absolutely not necessary through most of, certainly of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is a place where, I mean, the Sask Party will tell us they know their neighbours. Well come on now, do you know your neighbours or don't you? If you know your neighbours, how is a photo ID going to help you recognize your neighbour one bit better than you do already today or than you did last week or last month or last year? Mr. Speaker, tell me how photo ID helps one iota . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker that has the floor. I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Saskatchewan we know our neighbours. We know our communities, by and large. And there are provisions. You have to be able to provide, in the current legislation, proof of identity. The requirement for photo ID is simply an intimidation, as is pointed out in a letter dated April 19th, 2011. And this letter has been quoted from earlier today in question period when my leader, the Leader of the Opposition, asked questions about it.

When we offered, we made the offer to the minister responsible that if you just take away this mischievous photo ID requirements, take that away as requested by the president of SUMA in a letter dated April 19th, if you would just take that bogus requirement for photo ID away, we can pass this Bill today, Mr. Speaker. But the minister said and has told SUMA is that they don't have time in this legislature to make the changes. They don't have the time to make the amendments to do this Bill correctly, Mr. Speaker.

And what a pile of poeey, I don't even know if that's parliamentary. If it isn't, Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I won't use that term again. It just kind of fell out there. But it is certainly a pile of nonsense. It is certainly unnecessary. It certainly doesn't improve our democracy in one little bit.

And we had the Leader of the Opposition offer up more than one time today, give us a commitment you'll change this photo ID requirement, and we'll get on with the business of passing Bills 161 and 162 today, the provincial election Act amendment and the municipal amendment Act, Mr. Speaker, the one I'm speaking to at this moment.

So we've lots of time for opposition to state our case repeatedly or as best we can. The government has got lots of time to sit on its hands, to wring its hands and close its ears and eyes and say, no we don't have time to do it right. We introduced, we

consulted, and we got it right they say, Mr. Speaker, they say.

Well how would it be, how is it possible, Mr. Speaker, that the government consulted and got the municipal, *The Local Government Election Act*, and they got it right, and yet the president of SUMA writes April 19th, I'm quoting, it is to the "Honourable Darryl Hickie Minister of Municipal Affairs." I will not use . . . I know I can quote. And I'm not planning to use the name repeatedly, but Minister of Municipal Affairs is how it will come, and it was a quote. But the letter starts, it starts like this, the very first:

Dear Minister . . . [and his name]:

I am writing today to express SUMA's opposition to voter identification (ID) provisions contained within Bill 162, an Act to amend *The Local Government Election Act*.

That's the first sentence. Now I don't know how the president, who's Mayor Allan Earle, who signs this two-page letter, I don't know how he could be any clearer than to start "Dear Minister . . . I am writing today to express SUMA's opposition . . ." he says to these amendments.

And if you read the letter in its entirety, Mr. Speaker, they're trying to be supportive of *The Election Act*. I don't want to misrepresent SUMA and say, oh they're opposed to all of the changes. Not at all, Mr. Speaker. They like much of the changes. The voter ID, they do not like, Mr. Speaker. They say take it out, and they are happy campers. Take out this nonsensical requirement for ID, for photo ID, Mr. Speaker, we become pretty darn happy campers on this side too.

Mr. Speaker, the president of SUMA couldn't be any clearer. The minister says, oh SUMA's all in favour of the rest of it. I have characterized this letter I think quite properly. But you can't be any clearer than the opening sentence: "I am writing today to express SUMA's opposition to voter identification provisions contained within Bill 162 . . ." That's the opening sentence, can't be any clearer than that. It doesn't beat around the bush. Here's the problem, here's the problem with the Bill . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, no. Read it later, Minister, absolutely. And I've said the rest of the Bill is fine.

You've gone on, there's the April 19th letter and then followed up with an April 27th letter to the same minister from the same President Earle of SUMA, Mr. Speaker. And it is quite clear in the second letter that SUMA was told that there was no time in this sitting of this legislature to make amendments to the Act. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is so remote from reality. It is remote from the truth. It is simply not accurate. We have a commitment from my leader, earlier today, not taken up by the government. We have speeches time after time. We have stood, I've listened to, I've participated in speeches on Bill 161 and on Bill 162, both of which our biggest problem, the biggest concern is the unnecessary requirement of photo ID.

What we are concerned about, Mr. Speaker, is the disenfranchisement of voters at every letter. And I know, I know I've got members opposite's attention. They're heckling, Mr. Speaker, and that's their right to, and I welcome it. I think it's a great democracy we have when I get to stand up and represent my constituents and other people throughout the

province of Saskatchewan to the best of my ability as I see fit and they get to heckle. And the government gets to propose legislation, Mr. Speaker, and in this case the government has.

But I want to contrast this. I want to contrast this Sask Party legislation, Mr. Speaker, that's saying, you don't bring your ID, your proper ID, you don't get to vote. You don't have a proper ID, too bad. If you've just moved recently and you can't prove your residence, too bad. You can be denied the right to vote. You don't have a photo ID, you can be denied the right to vote. That's what this legislation says.

Mr. Speaker, I want to contrast this Sask Party legislation with legislation brought in in the 1970s dealing with the very same municipal election Act. And in the 1970s, up until that happened under the Al Blakeney New Democrats, up until that moment you had to be a property owner, owner to vote in a municipal election, in a local government election, school board or municipality. You had to own the property, Mr. Speaker.

Blakeney recognized the reality, which was that renters pay the taxes. It flows through the landlord, but a landlord that owns a half a dozen — or pick a number — of properties, and pick any number of properties, but the people that are paying that rent ultimately are the renters. And they were included, and they were included after that because my party, in fact a great man, Al Blakeney, who I had the great fortune of serving with in this legislature when I was first elected in 1986 He sat right there and I sat two seats behind him. Things have changed now front row . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . But yes, I won't be front row next time. The member for Regina South has got that absolutely right. He's got that absolutely right. I will not be in the front row after the next election, Mr. Speaker.

But Allan Blakeney was a consummate believer in democracy. I don't want to make this about Al Blakeney, but he passed this legislation including renters because he believed it was the proper thing to do, because he believed that a democracy with greater participation was a democracy that we should salute, and even if it meant that we would ultimately lose an election.

[16:30]

Incidentally I know that several elections, or the election leading up to the 1971 election, Al Blakeney represented a constituency in Regina that was more than four times the average size of constituencies throughout the province because there had been . . . We had the situation of gerrymandering of unequal sizes of constituencies. But because New Democrats, led by Al Blakeney, believed so strongly that we would get it right, we've got the situation where today we have a situation where every constituency with the exception of the two northern ones — I want to point that out, Athabasca and Cumberland, because they between each of them represent one-quarter of the geographic area of Saskatchewan — but all of the rest are mandated to be within 5 per cent, plus or minus 5 per cent largest to smallest. And we have redistributions every two elections by law just to make sure that we stay within that plus or minus so that everybody's vote essentially counts equally in Saskatchewan.

And we did that not because it would benefit the New Democratic Party in particular or any individual candidate. We

did it because it was the proper thing to do. Because we believe in democracy, Mr. Speaker, because we believe that the electorate has the right to say. And, you know, they absolutely have that ability.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have the April 19th letter to the minister from the president of SUMA, Mayor Allan Earle, and in the third paragraph it says, "The proposed voter identification amendments as they stand present numerous challenges including that: (1) . . ." This has been highlighted and it's difficult to read. Now it's better with glasses.

Mr. Speaker, "(1) they appear to be unnecessary." So it's unnecessary. "(2) the provisions and the proposed regulations do not further the purpose of the amendments." They add nothing to the legislation. It adds nothing, Mr. Speaker, to the legislation. "(3) they raise the possibility of voter intimidation." Voters are being essentially told, it's more difficult to vote so don't show up at the polls. That's what SUMA has to say. Mr. Speaker, the fourth thing is "they are likely to negatively impact voter turnout," discouraging voters from showing up to vote, Mr. Speaker.

Four reasons outlined by SUMA to just get rid of this . . . [inaudible] . . . voter ID requirement. It adds nothing. It doesn't enhance our democracy. It doesn't stop voter fraud. It doesn't do anything other than actively discourage voters from going to vote, Mr. Speaker.

Well what kind of a democracy is that? What kind of a deaf government is that that refuses to listen to that argument, not by the member for Regina Coronation Park, but by Mayor Allan Earle, the SUMA president? What kind of a deaf government is it that says, we've consulted? We've consulted, and we have got *The Election Act*, Bill 162, *The Local Government Election Act*. We got it right because we consulted first. And then SUMA, for heaven's sake, says, we don't like this.

It's hard to believe that there was a serious consultation undertaken. There may have been a serious reading of the tea leaves. There may have been a Ouija board involved. There may have been a discussion with mom or with dad, but I don't think there was a serious discussion with SUMA. I don't think there was a serious discussion likely with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] or with any of the school boards.

Mr. Speaker, all it takes for this to end, all it takes for this to end and for us to pass this legislation is a commitment by the government that they'll take out this unnecessary nonsense about photo ID, Mr. Speaker. That's all it takes. Nobody but nobody but nobody has been able to say how photo ID is going to help us at all. There's been no answer as to how photo ID is going to help us at all. Mr. Speaker, when the Bill is called, there's every opportunity, equal opportunity for government members to stand and speak as there is for opposition members.

Mr. Speaker, we had the minister tell the Leader of the Opposition in question period that SUMA knows there isn't time, that SUMA's happy with this legislation. And yet in the April 27th letter it is quite clear that SUMA was told, and I'm going to read and then . . . Pardon me. I'll read the second paragraph because it's pretty clear.

As articulated in my letter, SUMA supported the majority of the content in Bill 162 and supported the intent of voter ID requirements. We did however have reservations regarding the provisions as articulated in the Bill and in the draft regulations. As the letter indicates, it has always been our intent to work with the government to improve these provisions. Based on our recent discussions with your officials it was our understanding that our interest in making changes to the provisions could not be accommodated within the remaining sitting days of the Twenty-sixth Legislative Assembly.

Well, Mr. Speaker, again I say to our friends in SUMA, to our friends right across Saskatchewan, that is very remote from the truth. It is very remote from reality. We have a standing commitment to make these very changes that are being asked for. We've said the opposition will facilitate the passage of Bill 161 and 162 in committee. All we need, the only thing we're requiring is the government to commit to changing the photo ID requirements, to listening to what SUMA, the president of SUMA, after he met with his board, what the president of SUMA wrote to the minister asking for.

This is not some great orange crush or socialist cause or anything like that. It's a cause for democracy, Mr. Speaker. It's a cause for us to help uphold the president of SUMA, the great SUMA organization, and just make as sure as we can that Saskatchewan's municipal elections are conducted in a way that encourages Saskatchewan's electorate to vote, that encourages a greater turnout because it is again in all of our interest.

What's not in our interest is to have a potential voter say, well you know, they don't want to hear us anyway; they all do the same thing; they're all alike — words to that effect. Mr. Speaker, I know it's not accurate. I know there are differences in councillors within every village, hamlet, town, municipality, city. There are differences on council. And it's a good thing, Mr. Speaker. There are differences in the Saskatchewan legislature. I'm going to go a step further. There are differences on this side of the House amongst ourselves and I'm sure there are differences — I sure hope there are anyway — on the government side. And the reason I say I hope so is, Mr. Speaker, if everyone agrees on everything absolutely all of the time, it means you've got an awful lot of people that are not thinking.

And I believe that Saskatchewan people by and large are thinking people. We are respectful people. We want to have the best for our neighbours, our friends, our relatives. We want good things. We want good things not only today, but good things in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that SUMA's being told is we don't have time to make amendments to Bill 162, the municipal election Act. We don't have time to make changes in committee, notwithstanding that the very rules of this legislature say that you make amendments in committee. We do it all the time, Mr. Speaker. Many Bills, in every single session I have been a part of in 24 years, every session where there's been Bills passed, every single session there have been amendments. I don't want to quantify it, but significant numbers of amendments. I'm not talking one or two amendments a session. I'm talking lots of Bills have one, two,

six amendments in the Bill alone and often more than that. Some Bills of course get passed without amendment.

But to say that we don't have time to amend Bills or that somehow that's foreign to the rules of this Assembly is just absurd. It's an insult to the intelligence of the president of SUMA, and it's an insult to the board of directors of SUMA. It's an insult to the people of Saskatchewan to say we don't have the ability or the time to make amendments to the municipal election Act in the Saskatchewan legislature where we're supposed to do that. It's just crazy. It's just crazy, Mr. Speaker.

Nothing again could be further from the truth. We have the time. We can do this Act right. We can make improvements to the municipal election Act. That's what we want to see. Make these changes we're asking for, and you know what? We'll say good things, nice things about the Sask Party government and the municipal election change. We'll say nice things about the change in the provincial election Act too if you do the same thing, Mr. Speaker.

And the nice part is it would break this nonsensical right wing drive to disenfranchise poor people, to disenfranchise seniors, and to disenfranchise, frankly, in Saskatchewan, the Aboriginal population — disproportionately disenfranchise. Not everyone from those three areas will be cut out, far from it, but too many will. If we disenfranchise one voter, one voter with this legislation, we have failed; we have been negligent in our duty.

Nowhere does it say that the job of an MLA is to make sure that people can't vote. Nowhere does it . . . You know, not one minister, not one member of the government can find constituents that will tell you your job is to cut people out from voting, disenfranchise them from voting. I defy you to find someone that will say that, that will say, oh no, you should cut out this segment or this segment or disallow that person or that person from voting. Mr. Speaker, that's not our job. Our jobs, our jobs are to absolutely enhance the voting opportunities, to make it as clear as we can, and just to do things in a better and better way.

Mr. Speaker, the argument that we don't have time to pass legislation, I stand before you proof that we can. And I just want to remind myself. I need some reminding from time to time. We passed the Gallenger amendment, the Gallenger Act. It was an amendment to *The Highway Traffic Act* that resulted from the tragic death, from the tragic death of a snowplow operator, Department of Highways worker, Jim Gallenger.

Jim and his widow Sharon, you know, great people. We can't do anything to bring Mr. Gallenger back, Mr. Speaker. But what this Assembly was able to do — and we did it — we invited the Gallenger family in. Crystal, their daughter, was here as well. And we passed that Act in something like 30 minutes, start to finish, passed the Act. With consent, we passed. To stop that Act from passing, it would have required one person to say no, to stop the consent, and then it would have had to take a little slower path.

[16:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, why would we . . . I mean, we're not even

talking about that. We're talking in this Bill 162, *The Local Government Election Act*, we're talking a regular process of . . . Our job is to point out the problems. The opposition's job is to point out the problems in particular. The government's job is to find them in the first place before they even draft the legislation, but they've missed on this one. The government missed.

We're pointing out that there's an opportunity to make this piece of legislation one that we could all be proud of, Mr. Speaker. And why on earth would we pass up that opportunity? What reason on this wonderful world could there be to not agree that we want to enfranchise? We want municipal voters to vote as the president of SUMA has asked for, has pointed out is eminently reasonable. Why on earth would we not simply say yes, we'll make those changes?

And you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not a brand new concept that I'm bringing up today. I brought it up on Bill 161 just a couple of days ago, last week. And other colleagues on this side of the legislature have been bringing up the concern with photo ID for a good, good long time. The government has had all kinds of time, Mr. Speaker. We've got this fairly significant file. I've got the other half of the file on my seatmate's desk. We've got this fairly significant file around this one Bill. And all of the file is essentially around the requirement of voter ID and photo ID which we find particularly offensive, which we find mean-spirited, and we find it as simply reprehensible.

Mr. Speaker, what we should be looking for is ways of saying to SUMA and SARM, school trustees, school board association, we should be finding ways to say to these organizations, you probably know what's right and what's wrong with your municipal elections. Primarily of course I'm talking SUMA and SARM, Mr. Speaker, because that's where the balloting transpires.

But we should have a little bit of faith in our municipal governments when they say that voter ID doesn't add a thing to the legislation, that adds absolutely no value at all. Well then it seems to me we should be listening to the president of SUMA when the president says that. When the president of SUMA says voter ID, the photo ID is unnecessary, we should listen. We should listen. He took the time, not once but twice, to write two thoughtful letters that we have.

I have no idea how many other letters, I have no idea how many other attempts at communication there have been. I don't know that. I just have the two letters that were carbon copied to the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow and that's, I'm confident, that's how we came about them. And it's very appropriate that we should have it because we can make common cause on this issue, Mr. Speaker. We can make common cause with SUMA and try and get the Sask Party government to shift from the nonsensical notion that photo ID enhances the electoral process. We have quotes from the president of SUMA talking about it not adding any value, about them being hard-pressed to find any evidence of voter fraud.

We have a comment that this Act will lead to voter intimidation. I know that one of the ways it can lead to voter intimidation is that the scrutineers can also be challenging credentials and need to see the identification of voters, and

that's simply a wrong-headed move. You have your electoral officials charged with making sure that the documents are appropriate. It is absolutely fair, Mr. Speaker, that if a scrutineer is convinced that someone is ineligible to vote, it is absolutely fair for that scrutineer to challenge. But then the job is for the paid officials at that polling station to set rules, to follow the law, to ensure either they are, yes, eligible or they are not, no. And if the answer is no, then they simply cannot vote, Mr. Speaker. So I just don't understand the voter ID requirement that the government is so determined to have, Mr. Speaker. I just don't quite get it.

We've got a situation where the Sask Party is proposing changes that will disenfranchise, changes that will help drive voters away from the polling station. Not in droves — I don't want to overstate this, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to overstate it. But we have a situation where not one single voter will be encouraged to come and vote as a result of Bill 162. Not one single voter will be encouraged to show up, but according to the president of SUMA, voters will be discouraged, in other words, not invited to come and vote.

And that's at every stage a mistake, Mr. Speaker. New Democrats believe in the voter's right to participate. We believe that you should have representation before you have taxation. It's a long-standing tradition. I've already talked about in the '70s when the New Democratic Party Government of Saskatchewan brought in the right for renters to vote in municipal elections, and that was an important step forward for people that didn't own property, Mr. Speaker.

Along those lines, we are the party that has brought in the independent officers of this legislature: the Ombudsman, the Children's Advocate, to name a couple; the Rentalsman. In workers' compensation, we brought in the worker's advocate's office, you know, the worker advocate, and a host of workers that can look into claims of mishandled workers' compensation. These are all things that New Democrats believe in, and we put the enabling legislation in place. We put the resources in place.

We try to make those things happen because we firmly believe that good governance requires a population that is able to fairly readily get access to the information that enables them to make decisions. If you provide the ability to make decisions, this is a good thing. And that's something that we have long believed, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the '70s and even before, I'm reminded of when Tommy Douglas — great leader of the CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party], Canada's greatest Canadian — said to the chief librarian, your job is to keep library services accessible, particularly to researchers and MLAs but most especially, most especially, these resources have to be available to the opposition.

That's what he said then, Mr. Speaker, and it has everything to do with our democracy. It has everything to do with our belief that elected officials need to have the ability to get access to information, and it should be in as timely a manner as we can. It should be readily available, and then the elected officials in turn disseminate that information out to our respective publics. And it happens, certainly it happens at the federal level to some

degree. It happens to a greater degree, I would argue, at the provincial level. And it happens almost constantly at the municipal level, Mr. Speaker.

You know, the mayor of Regina, Pat Fiacco, can't go anywhere without being recognized as the mayor of Regina. And people think he's the mayor whether he's out with his family having supper or whether he's chairing a city hall meeting or whether he's opening a business or whether he's simply having a cup of coffee with you or I. Everyone knows he's the mayor of Regina here and feels free to communicate with Pat. And I think that's probably, on balance, a good thing. It's probably a good thing. But that's the reality of our lives.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill 162, we have offered in question period, the Leader of the Opposition made an offer directly. He asked questions of the minister responsible and he made the offer that, if you just take out this bad provision for photo ID, Mr. Speaker, take out that bad provision and we will . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Yes. I'd ask members to allow the member to continue his comments. I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has made it crystal clear in question period. He asked questions around this. He's trying to be supportive of Mayor Allan Earle, the president of SUMA, who wrote not one but two very thoughtful letters. The first one that started with, quote from the letter:

Dear Minister Hickie:

I am writing today to express SUMA's opposition to voter identification (ID) provisions contained within Bill 162, an Act to amend *The Local Government Election Act*.

He started with that and then very thoughtfully outlined his concerns which substantially are four concerns. He was very clear about it. Mr. Earle was generally very supportive of the overall changes in the municipal election Act.

And I want to be crystal clear. We are, by and large, in support of the changes to *The Election Act*. What we object to is this nonsensical requirement for photo ID, this requirement, Mr. Speaker, that makes it not easier in any way for anyone to vote. Not easier at all; it makes it more difficult to vote. It has people unable to vote.

People in our democracy, Mr. Speaker, people are . . . We're a law-abiding society. People just need to know what the rules are. We're Canadian, eh. We're Canadian, eh. We obey the laws, by and large.

And it's interesting. Now I'm getting to the crux of it. Sask Party members are saying, oh but they could vote twice or some other nonsensical thing. If there's voter fraud, the minister responsible for the municipal election Act should see that *The Election Act* is followed. Voter ID does nothing to change how often you vote. If I vote at one place, I have to register as a voter. If I then go to the next place, I have to register as a voter.

Mr. Speaker, it is crystal clear I've tried to vote twice then.

Voter ID is nonsensically . . . It's a nonsensical barrier put up and it will have, the only effect it will have is it will drive voters away from the polling station and that is a shame. It's a right wing effort to suppress people's right to vote. And I say shame on the Sask Party government for doing that — shame, shame, shame. This should be gone, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Being 5 p.m., the hour of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker.....7495

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Wall.....7495
Lingenfelter.....7495
Huyghebaert.....7495
Quennell.....7495
Weekes.....7496
McCall.....7496
Cheveldayoff.....7496
Lingenfelter.....7496
Bradshaw.....7496
Belanger.....7496
The Speaker.....7496

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Junor.....7497
Forbes.....7497
Furber.....7497
Morin.....7497
Quennell.....7498
Wotherspoon.....7498

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

Gantefoer.....7498

International Firefighters’ Day

Iwanchuk.....7498

Mental Health Week

Hart.....7498

Vote for the Sheepdogs

Atkinson.....7499

Enhancing Public Safety

Eagles.....7499

Missing Children and the Green Ribbon of Hope

Forbes.....7499

Plan for Potash Taxes

Heppner.....7500

QUESTION PERIOD

Voting Requirements

Lingenfelter.....7500
Hickie.....7500

Solution for Flooding at Red Earth Cree Nation

McCall.....7502
Huyghebaert.....7502
Cheveldayoff.....7502

Care of Children

Forbes.....7503
Draude.....7503

Mental Health Services

Junor.....7504
McMorris.....7504

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 173 — *The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2011*

McMillan.....7505

POINT OF ORDER

Yates.....7505
Cheveldayoff.....7505
The Speaker.....7505

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Weekes.....7505

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 172 — *The Victims of Crime Amendment Act, 2011*

Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les victimes d'actes criminels

Nilson7505

Quennell.....7508

Harrison (referral to committee)7515

Bill No. 162 — *The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2010*

Trew7515

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