



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

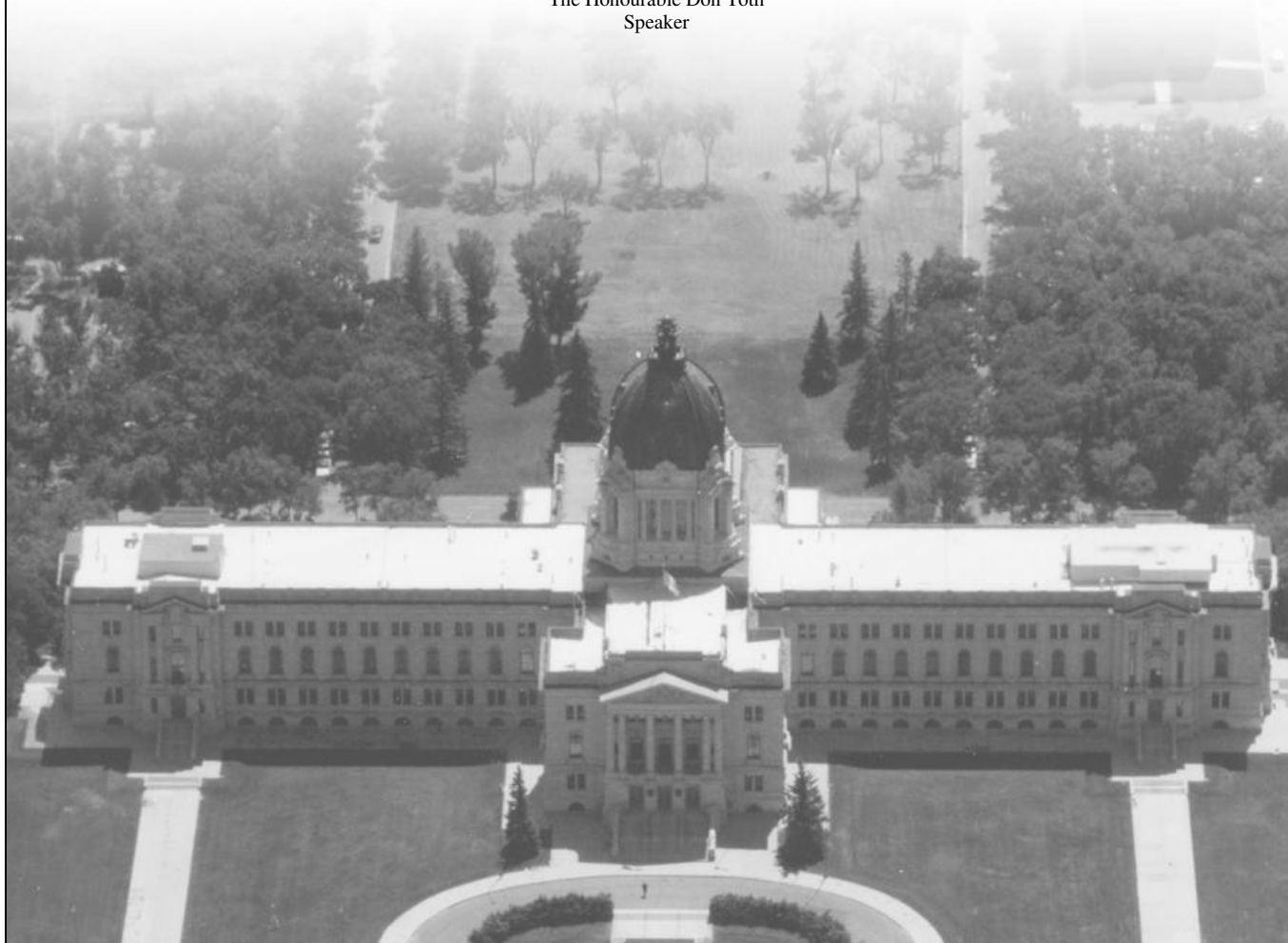
of the

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 — Lorne Calvert

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce a number of students, 17 to be exact, from the Kelvington High School — my hometown, the nicest town in Saskatchewan. And with them today we have Trent Whippler, the teacher. And we have Greg Niezgodá and a special lady, Caren O'Grady-Blatchford. She is also my CA [constituency assistant].

And I'm really pleased to see everyone in this legislature today. I'm looking forward to meeting with you afterwards and answering any questions you may have and listening to your comments. And I ask my colleagues to please help me welcome these students to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce a group of 10 grade 12 students from a constituency high school. This is Luther College's high school campus. And they're here with their teacher who's made this a tradition, Mr. Mark Leupold, Mr. Ben Rain, and Ms. Courtney Waugh, who I believe is interning at Luther.

Luther has graduated many, many very successful graduates, Mr. Speaker, among them, my wife. And I certainly look forward to chatting with these graduates here today, and they've got bright futures before them. Could I ask the Assembly to join in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to all members of this Hon. Assembly, I would like to introduce three individuals who are joining us today. Firstly — and they're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Dale Lemke, current president of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. Dale is also president of Display Systems International, Inc., otherwise known as DSI, an award-winning computer company based out of Saskatoon. Dale has most recently been appointed as Chair of Enterprise Saskatchewan's information technology sector team. Dale's knowledge of the industry and his business savvy will be most helpful to the work of this new team.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Ms. Susan Gorges. Susan is the chief executive officer of SpringBoard West

Innovations, a non-profit organization which assists business in technology commercialization and innovation. Susan is a member of Enterprise Saskatchewan's commercialization and R & D [research and development] services sector team. Her expertise and experience in this field will be a very valuable asset to this sector team.

And thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a man who is no stranger to this Hon. Assembly and the province of Saskatchewan — Mr. Steve McLellan, outgoing president of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce.

I hope that all members will extend a warm welcome to all three of these special guests.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming these folks to the Legislative Assembly today. It is the chambers of commerce and their members that fuel the growth in our province. And I appreciate the opportunity to introduce them to this Assembly today, and I hope all members will join with me in doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to members of this Assembly, what I'd like to do is introduce Mr. Doug Richardson and Mr. Tom Galloway. We're delighted to have them join us in your gallery today, sir.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents. And it really speaks to the issue that families are struggling to find affordable and even available child care spots so they can return to work and enter the economy. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately add at least 1,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present on behalf of Saskatchewan residents.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents concerned about the sporadic increases in minimum wage that do not often reflect the rising cost of living. Mr. Speaker, the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to indexing Saskatchewan minimum wage to ensure that the standard of living of minimum wage earners is maintained in the face of the cost of living increases.

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

And the petitions are signed by residents of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of affordable housing for Saskatchewan seniors, and I would like to read the prayer.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to act as quickly as possible to expand affordable housing options for Saskatchewan's senior citizens.

Thank you very much. I do so present. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition concerning the high cost of post-secondary education. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to increase funding for post-secondary students and help to alleviate the large financial burden placed on students for pursuing a post-secondary education at a Saskatchewan institution.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition was circulated by the Canadian Federation of Students, the University of Regina Students' Union, the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union, and the First Nations University of Canada Student Association. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to

present petitions in support of a reduction in the education portion of property tax. This is desired by Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan business. I will read the prayer. It reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to stop withholding and to provide significant, sustainable, long-term property tax relief to property owners by 2009 through significantly increasing the provincial portion of education funding.

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

And these are signed by concerned citizens of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

United Way Thanks Community Members

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, November 20 I had the pleasure of attending the 2008 Saskatoon United Way Dinner Date along with several other Saskatoon MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

Mr. Speaker, the annual dinner date is an opportunity to thank community members who have led by example in demonstrating what it means to give back to the community. This year's supper was a tribute to well-known philanthropists Les and Irene Dubé. Community turnout for the event was great, and a packed TCU Place banquet room was able to say thank you to the Dubés for the millions of dollars they have given to community organizations and facilities.

Mr. Speaker, philanthropy is about the donation of financial resources, but it is equally about the donation of our time. Whether sitting on a board or helping with the front-line delivery of services, Saskatchewan people are among the most generous citizens in our country. The Saskatoon United Way understands this, and for nearly 50 years it has been providing resources to the community. This year they have set \$4 million as a fundraising goal. I'm happy to report that they are already \$2.5 million on the way.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the organizing committee for the United Way dinner date on hosting another highly successful event and thank Les and Irene Dubé for the role they have played in our province. I also want to say thank you to the thousands of Saskatchewan people who regularly give of their time and resources, often without any recognition. I ask all members to join me in showing our appreciation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Kelvington Gold Hawks

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on November 14 I had the honour of bringing greetings from our government to my hometown of Kelvington. The provincial girls 3A volleyball championship was hosted by the Kelvington High School and co-hosted by Porcupine Plain.

The Kelvington Gold Hawks were coached by Raymond Krienke, assisted by Blair Lissinna and Michelle Patenaude. I'd like to recognize Mr. Krienke for his dedication to coaching for 30 years, and this is his retirement year. We think that he's put in about 18,000 volunteer hours.

Five senior players from his team are sitting in our gallery today. Kelli Blatchford, Kayla Spray, Holly Marquette, Allysia Doratti, Kristin Shirley had already won provincial bronze and silver, and these girls finally achieved gold in their senior year and brought Coach Krienke's 11th provincial gold medal.

Mr. Speaker, not to be outdone, the Kelvington senior boys also competed in provincial 4A volleyball championship in Tisdale last weekend. Their coach was Barry Mason, assisted by Rob Lissinna. And their captain, Sean Patrick, is also in our stand today. They competed along with their classmates, and they took the Assiniboia Rockets in two straight games and the championship final. This is their second provincial gold in two years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Assembly to join with me in congratulating the Kelvington Gold Hawks on their double gold victory.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Room to Grow Auction

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my pleasure to attend the Room to Grow Auction which was held Thursday, November 20 at the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] Heritage Centre in the fine constituency of Regina Rosemont. Also attending was my colleague, the member from Regina Douglas Park and the member from Wascana.

This event featured both live and silent auction for many pieces of art donated by local artists including Vic Cicansky, Leesa Streifler, Jeannie Mah, Ken Lonechild, and Robert Roycroft.

In celebration of International Children's Day and to highlight the promise and potential of the young children, artwork was on display, and five piece of children's artwork were included in the sale. All proceeds from this event are for the Regina Early Learning Centre's Small Hands — Big Dreams capital campaign, Mr. Speaker. Joe Fafard, honorary patron of the capital campaign, sent his greetings to the 180 people in attendance.

I would like to thank event sponsors SaskEnergy, Karal Management, and Nicky's Cafe & Bake Shop, as well as the

many artists and businesses which made donations. I would like to thank the dedicated board, staff, and volunteers for the Early Learning Centre who ensured the success of this event.

I ask all members to join with me in extending our congratulations on this successful even. And our thanks for the essential and enriching contributions that the Early Learning Centre makes to our community. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Get in the Game for United Way

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to congratulate Regina area employees of SaskEnergy and TransGas for surpassing their United Way fundraising goal. These employees set a rather ambitious target, Mr. Speaker, to raise \$145,000 in a two-week campaign.

I'm pleased to report that they beat that total, Mr. Speaker, by collecting \$146,112. That's an average of more than \$300 per employee in the Regina area. In fact, Mr. Speaker, special honours go the employees of the TransGas Regina's storage caverns with 100 per cent participation in the United Way campaign.

The corporation campaign includes fundraising breakfasts, luncheons, bingos, ticket raffles, food sales, as well as employees signing up for payroll deduction. The generosity of these employees in support of the United Way campaign in Regina is overwhelming.

The theme of this year's campaign was Get in the Game. And I think we can say that SaskEnergy and TransGas employees scored a big touchdown for the United Way. In fact, Mr. Speaker, over the past eight years, SaskEnergy and TransGas employees provided worldwide donations of more than 500,000 to United Way campaigns throughout Saskatchewan.

Please join with me in congratulating SaskEnergy and TransGas on their contributions to the United Way.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Poet Honoured

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, Dr. Elizabeth Brewster is a very talented poet living in Saskatoon Nutana. On Wednesday, November 19, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor granted Dr. Brewster the 2008 Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Also a prolific author, novelist, and short story writer, Dr. Brewster has been publishing her poetry since the 1940s. She has received numerous awards for her clear, direct style and stimulating themes. Born in New Brunswick, she helped to found the journal *The Fiddlehead* before migrating to Saskatchewan where she joined the Saskatchewan Writers

Guild and immersed herself in the rich writing community we enjoy in our province.

[13:45]

Dr. Brewster mentors young and emerging writers with constructive criticism and encourages writers through monthly poetry workshops reminiscent of those hosted by Saskatoon poet Anne Szumigalski for several decades before her passing.

Dr. Brewster has received, among other awards, the Saskatchewan Book Award for Poetry in 2003 and a Lifetime Award for Excellence in the Arts from the Saskatchewan Arts Board. She was short listed for the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1996, and is a member of the Order of Canada, a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal, and the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal.

I invite all of my colleagues in this Assembly to join me in congratulating Dr. Elizabeth Brewster on receiving the 2008 Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Member Elected to Executive of Pacific Northwest Economic Region

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to announce the recent election of the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford to the executive of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region as Canadian vice-president.

Founded in 1991, PNWER [Pacific Northwest Economic Region] is the only statutory non-partisan, non-profit, binational and public-private partnership in North America. As a pragmatic organization, PNWER provides formal structures for building and enhancing Canada-US [United States] relationships and discussing issues on a regional basis.

The PNWER organization has over 14 working groups addressing such policy areas as energy, environment, agriculture, and border issues. Each of these groups is co-chaired by an industry leader and legislator.

PNWER executive network includes private and government leaders and officials, industry associations, and economic development commissions. As a legislator, my colleague has been observing and attending meetings with this organization for the past four years. In April he was instrumental in organizing an official PNWER officers visit to Regina.

At the PNWER annual summit in Vancouver in July, Saskatchewan officially announced its membership into the organization. Since August the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford has been serving on the finance and audit committee of this organization.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate my hon. colleague in his new role as fourth vice-president of PNWER. He's an excellent ambassador for this province and I'm confident he'll do an outstanding job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Multilingual Association of Regina's 30th Anniversary

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, Canada est un pays avec deux langues officielles. Nous parlons français et anglais.

[Translation: Canada is a country with two official languages. We speak French and English.]

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

On Saturday I had the pleasure, along with the member for Regina South, to attend the 30th anniversary of the Multilingual Association of Regina. MLAR's [Multilingual Association of Regina] objective is to support and promote the diversity of culture, as well as to promote the teaching and retention of international and heritage languages.

Mr. Speaker, given that MLAR has achieved the milestone of their 30th anniversary, I would say that their objective is being achieved. Regina currently has 22 heritage language schools in operation, offering classes in Afghan, Chinese, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Spanish, and Ukrainian, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker 2008 is the International Year of Languages. There are more than 6,700 languages being spoken in the world today.

I would like to ask all my colleagues to join me in commending the Multilingual Association of Regina for their dedication and achievement, and thank all of the students and families for providing the entertainment at the celebration on Saturday.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

AgriStability Program

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When questioned about the AgriStability program move to Melville, the minister replied, and I quote, "It will cost a few million dollars to bring it home, but I think down the road . . . it will be cheaper to administer and that will save us more dollars . . ." In a November 12 Melville *Advance* article, when pressed on how much money would be saved, the minister couldn't give an answer. He wasn't sure.

Well he's had over two weeks to find out. A simple question to the minister: how much is it going to cost to move the program to Melville? And how much is the province going to save?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And,

Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite's information, that this year, in this year's budget, it will cost about \$3.8 million, additional dollars to bring it back. The initial start-up of hiring people and start the move to Saskatchewan, next year will be about an additional \$8.8 million, Mr. Speaker, which will be cost shared, of course, by the federal government who are assisting us in this move.

Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't be doing things like this if the previous government, for the last many, many years, had've paid any attention to agriculture whatsoever. We're bringing the administration of CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] home because right now there's files sitting there from 2005 and 2006. Producers all across this province are waiting for payouts from the program and are not receiving them, Mr. Speaker. We're actually cleaning up a mess left by the NDP [New Democratic Party].

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, Alberta administers its AgriStability program. They've said that it has to be up and rolling for three to four years before you see any cost benefits. If the program is launched in Melville in 2010 and it requires three or four years until the province sees the benefits, it could well be 2014 or 2015. To the minister: is it true that the province will not see cost benefits of administering this program at home until 2014 or 2015, and what type of deficit will this program run until then?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, on a number of occasions I have told her that we have worked directly with the province of Alberta who administers their own program. The advice I have received from Alberta, who has been very good by the way in giving us ideas on how we can bring the program home, how we can make more efficiencies to the program, and how we can make the program better for producers. Mr. Speaker, by doing that, I think the member knows full well that a number of these numbers we won't know till we get down the road.

What we do know is we can make the program more efficient by having it here in Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, the efficiency that we're going to bring to this program will actually get dollars into the hands of producers far quicker than is happening now under the federal administration, and actually will get dollars into the hands of livestock producers. And if the former NDP government had've done this four or five years ago, we wouldn't be in the mess that we're in today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a letter from a livestock

producer sent to my office dated November 18 says, and I quote:

... AgriStability does not work for cow-calf producers. The Ministers of Agriculture must meet ... and ask some serious questions. So far nothing has changed.

On the other hand, the minister has just said that AgriStability will provide further assistance to the livestock industry.

So to the minister: what specific changes has he made along with his federal cousin, Mr. Ritz, to make the program such that it will provide further assistance to the livestock industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we have to go down the list of the things that we've done. In a small way I think a number of programs that we brought in ... And I've been first to say that not one of them are something that's really dramatic for the industry but I think every initiative that we've come forth with in the first year of being government are helping the industry across this province, but especially in the Southwest where they were ignored for the last four years of drought by the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, I find, somewhat at odds with the member from Nutana ... But I'd like to give her some of the quotes coming out of some of the industry right now that might be a little contrary to what she's saying. And I'd like to quote:

Saskatchewan's cattle producers are pleased with Agriculture minister Bob Bjornerud's announcement last week to bring the administration of AgriStability — formerly known as CAIS — home to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is the leaders of the industry in Saskatchewan who knew full well there was nothing done on the previous administration, and they appreciate the moves that we've made to this point.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — To quote from a letter sent to my office, and I quote: "... unfortunately, this program was not set up for situations such as the ones livestock producers find themselves in now."

Now, Mr. Speaker, in order to be eligible for this AgriStability, two of three production margins used to calculate the producer's reference period have to be positive. The livestock industry is in crisis. Many are showing negative margins, not only for last year but for many years, and will not be able to benefit under AgriStability.

To the minister: how does his AgriStability benefit those livestock producers that have shown negative margins for the last four or five years?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, number one, I would appreciate the member tabling that letter. But I want to remind the member . . . And I think she answered her own question; she said for the last four or five years. Is her memory that bad that she doesn't remember who was in government until November '07? How quick we forget, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind that member, and the Leader of the Opposition said, things are worse than when BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] hit.

Culled cows, culled cows — for the members on that side that would know what I'm talking about — in October '03, on average they were \$296 a head. In October '07 — they were the government, Mr. Speaker — they were \$398 a head. October '08, this October, Mr. Speaker, they're \$548 a head. If you can do the math, that means today, this October, they were \$150 more than when you were in government.

Where was the crisis last year? What did you do about it last year?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Environmental Issues

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An article in the October 29 *Leader-Post* stated:

Wall said there are areas of federal-provincial duplication of services where the federal government could cut instead, such as "environmental processes."

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Environment: why is the Sask Party advocating that the federal government withdraw from its responsibility to protect the environment?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as the member opposite would know, the province has jurisdiction in certain areas and the federal government in others, and at times they are overlapped. There is ways that we can streamline in the issue of Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

If the members opposite would listen to, for the most part, their rural constituency, as large or small as that may be, they would understand that there were concerns with Department of Fisheries and Oceans in this province. And if we can find any kind of areas where we can streamline operations in conjunction with the federal government, we will do that. It's good for our residents. It's good for business. It's good for our province overall.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, no one in their right mind would trust the Sask Party government to conduct an unbiased environmental impact assessment. The Sask Party appointed a nuclear advisory panel to advise the government on nuclear industry development. The minister who made the announcement recently told the Sask Party convention, quote:

The purpose of this particular lobby is not to advise us whether we should proceed in the full nuclear cycle. It's to help us understand how we can best do that.

To the minister: how can the Sask Party conduct a fair and unbiased assessment of any potential developments when it's already made up its mind?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the position that our government has taken, that we're actually open-minded to the possibility of value-added on the uranium side in Saskatchewan, and we look forward to information coming forward on the potential for nuclear power for our province.

The NDP on the other side, Mr. Speaker, continually say that we need to do something for greenhouse gas emissions in this province, yet they've completely slammed the door on clean coal even though they were huge proponents of it last year when it was apparently their idea. And they have absolutely no interest in even looking at the idea of nuclear power for our province. So in the face of dirty coal, I don't exactly understand how the NDP expect us to reach any kind of emissions targets in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Perhaps not cutting the \$320 million fund that was there to address it would have been a start.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the so-called Uranium Development Partnership includes three people with connections to a company that wants to build a nuclear plant in Saskatchewan. And their so-called representative of the environmental community, Dr. Patrick Moore, recently told *Rolling Stone* magazine that quote, "People who don't want to live near nuclear facilities should probably move."

To the minister: given that the Sask Party's closest advisers have such contempt for people's understandable reservations about nuclear, why should anyone have confidence in this government's ability to defend the public interest?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that so far the sole candidate for the leadership of the NDP in this province is Dwain Lingenfelter who is an absolutely enormous proponent and cheerleader for the nuclear power industry in this province. He has asked that it be here. He thinks Saskatchewan is the ideal place for nuclear power. And I would wonder perhaps, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite should first pose her questions to her potential new leader.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Ms. Morin: — There's a big difference in being a proponent in a responsible fashion, which is not what we're seeing from the Sask Party.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party wants to control the environmental assessment process so it can control the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I think too many members want to get into the debate, but there's only one member recognized on the floor. The member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party wants to control the environmental assessment process so it can control the outcome. They want the freedom to do whatever they want without having to be accountable to anyone.

Another example, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy and Resources told the Sask Party convention that he believes oil sands development will proceed at some point in time. Again these are not the words of a minister who is studying the matter. He has already made up his mind.

Again to the minister: why should anyone trust the Sask Party to conduct a fair and unbiased environmental impact assessment of oil sands development when it's clear that the government has already made up its mind?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I would point out that in the NDP's *Energy and Climate Change Plan* on page 16 that the NDP released in 2007 says, and I quote, "Identifying economic opportunities for the development of new energy resources such as oil sands, oil shale . . ."

And, Mr. Speaker, I would also point out that the member for Riversdale, the now Opposition Leader, speaking at the Petroleum Technology Research Centre in Regina in March 15, 2005 said this. When it comes to tar sands, oil sand, whatever

you want to call it, the member opposite said this, and I quote:

It benefits the companies. It benefits the communities where this development will occur. It benefits the province, in that any increase in oil patch activity has a positive impact on jobs and the provincial treasury.

If she has concerns, she can talk to her now leader. If she has concerns about nuclear energy, she can talk to her new leader.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for Proposed Bridge in Saskatoon

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to refer to a Saskatchewan government news release dated June 20 of this year where the government is announcing a bridge in Saskatoon. The Premier is very excited to point out that the federal government and his buddy, Stephen Harper, is paying \$86.5 million to that bridge.

To the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure: does this news release reflect the situation as he understands it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to stand on my feet on two days in a row. And, Mr. Speaker, the issue of infrastructure in the province of Saskatchewan is a very important issue, and it's our pleasure as a government to address infrastructure in the most aggressive, dynamic way that that issue has ever been undertaken and approached before.

Mr. Speaker, this year we have committed more money to infrastructure expenditures in the province than ever in the history of this province's budget process. Mr. Speaker, we have achieved more kilometres of repair on our highways than ever in the history of this province. Mr. Speaker, going forward we're going to be spending a lot more money on highways.

As it concerns the bridge in Saskatoon, the federal government has made a commitment to us to assist with the cost of it, and we're looking forward to their participation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I will quote from the news release of June 20. The Premier says, and I quote:

The federal government's funding commitment — which

is over and above the considerable funding already committed to Saskatchewan under Building Canada — is further proof that, by working in partnership, our government is able to get results for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — To the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure: is this bridge an example of unique money for Saskatchewan? And does a single bridge, no matter how good, make up for \$800 million in equalization?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, the growing economy and the impact it is having on our traffic patterns in this province are going to necessitate a lot of investment in infrastructure in the years to come.

We've already indicated this year that we were committed to make that kind of investment. We had the largest budget in the history of the province for infrastructure this fiscal year. Next year we're going to be committing a lot more money. We believe that the money being spent by the federal government on the bridge project is new money, and that they are going to be willing partners in other endeavours in terms of infrastructure development in this province in the days and years to come.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier says in his news release that this money is over and above the Building Canada fund, but the Prime Minister disagrees. In his news release he says, and I quote, "It is part of the Building Canada plan."

So, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is saying one thing and the Prime Minister is saying the opposite. To the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure: is the Premier right or is the Prime Minister right?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, once again I appreciate the question and I think the line of questioning has been pretty much in line with our expectations. They want to know if the money is unique. We believe the money to be unique, and we're anticipating receiving it at an appropriate time as we go forward in this infrastructure development.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Financial Relationship with Federal Government

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, this bridge is just one small example of a much, much bigger problem. Stephen Harper and the federal Conservatives promised \$800 million to Saskatchewan citizens, then they broke their promise. This Premier has completely sold out the people of this province when he dropped the lawsuit we launched to hold the Conservatives accountable.

To the Premier: why won't he just admit that his relationship with Stephen Harper isn't worth a dime, never mind \$800 million?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's safe to say that it's our expectation that the relationship we have with Ottawa should continue to produce results for Saskatchewan people. That should be the measure, Mr. Speaker. And so far, we're making progress. Are we exactly where we want to be yet? No, we're not. But we're making progress.

We see 10 million more dollars, new dollars, for the synchrotron. We see a quarter billion dollars of federal investment for our clean coal project in southeast Saskatchewan. We see \$90 million for a bridge that certainly was not necessarily the case in all of the other provinces. We see \$30 million for child care, Mr. Speaker — \$30 million for child care that those folks in government apparently forgot to ask for.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this to members opposite: compare that track record in one year against a big fat zero that they were able to get, that they were able to deliver for Saskatchewan people, and then you have an accurate comparison, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Regina Northeast raises a specific example of a much larger problem, and that is accounting for exactly what funds Saskatchewan people get from their federal government. Mr. Speaker, surely the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know — have a right to know — exactly what transfers Saskatchewan is receiving from the federal government and how this compares to transfers to other provincial jurisdictions.

The question I have for the Minister of Finance: can the Minister of Finance tell us, are his officials currently keeping track of these federal transfers and are they in a position to tell us what these transfers are and how these compare to other provincial jurisdictions?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in response to the member's question, of course we're keeping track of it. You know, we don't have a practice in Finance that we just sort of put money in a sack and hope that we won't need to use it for the future. We account very, very deliberately. All of the records are deliberately audited, and we keep very deliberate account of where the fiscal transfers come from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I could say the federal government has lived up to all of its obligations — past and present and ongoing. They are living up to their obligations for the health and social transfers. I am very, very hopeful and confident that when Minister Flaherty gives his economic update tomorrow, he will indicate that they — the federal government, that is — has full intentions of honouring their commitments to the social and health transfers. And we certainly expect them to do that exactly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, back this last summer when the Sask Party government was deciding to sell out the people of Saskatchewan, the Premier said, and I quote, "Mr. Speaker, we've taken a certain tack, and it's pretty clear it's paying off . . ." and earlier said that we're making progress.

So does the Minister of Finance agree with the Premier that his relationship with Stephen Harper is paying off as compared to other provincial jurisdictions? Has his government seen a sudden influx of federal money that we're not aware of as compared to other provincial jurisdictions?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that the member isn't more enthusiastically supportive of the fact that Saskatchewan has become a have province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I was in attendance . . .

The Speaker: — I call the members to order. Will the government members allow the Minister of Finance to respond.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, that former government was so engrossed with finding a way to try to milk every cent out of equalization, they forgot to get the province into a position . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I had the rare opportunity to be in Toronto at a meeting where the federal minister substantiated the fact that Ontario was likely going to slip into a have-not province status. That is not where this province wants to be. This government is going to do everything it can to continue its status in the future as a have province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Where I come from, Mr. Speaker, money is money. Well, Mr. Speaker, again this last summer when the Sask Party decided to sell out the people of Saskatchewan, the Minister of Justice said, and I quote, "We will work to develop a positive working relationship with the federal government and we will deliver dollars to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Let me underline that: ". . . we will deliver dollars to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker." If the Minister of Justice is so convinced and if the Premier is so convinced that we're going to get new money from the federal government and that this is a good deal for the people of Saskatchewan, surely they don't mind proving it. And so far the question I have for the government is, will the government support the private member's Bill to publicly report all transfer payments from the federal government as compared to other provinces?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fundamental answer is, will this government continue the practices in place to do detailed and complete reporting? Of course the answer is yes. We will report on a General Revenue Fund basis and we will report on a summary financial basis the affairs of the province and the relationships with the federal government. That is appropriate and responsible.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to put measures in place as we develop the budget to ensure this province maintains its status in this country as a have province. We'll continue to do those things that are needed in challenging the future to make sure that those challenges are met.

Is the next year going to be an easy budget year? It's going to be more difficult than the current year we're experiencing, but we are confident that this province is well poised and well positioned to ensure going forward that we are going to continue to be a proud member of the have provinces in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 71 — *The Innovation Saskatchewan Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 71, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Enterprise and Innovation has moved that Bill No. 71, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Act* be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered a second time?

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting. Members will come to order. We'll move on with the business of the Assembly.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its fourth report. I move:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Economy:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

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 question no. 125 to 131.

The Speaker: — Questions 125 to 131 tabled.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I lay on the Table the annual report of the Saskatchewan legislative internship program.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 72 — *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008*

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today on this historic day for Crown corporations in our province and pleased to move second reading for *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008*. *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008* is administered by Saskatchewan Government Insurance, and it outlines the laws regarding road use in Saskatchewan. It is scheduled to come into effect in April 2009.

The first proposed amendment that I'll outline is designed to provide Saskatchewan residents with an alternative identification source to a passport for United States land and water border crossings. The amendment will allow SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] to provide qualified Canadian citizens residing in Saskatchewan with an alternative form of acceptable identification for United States land and water border crossings in the form of an enhanced driver's license or enhanced photo identification card. Currently Canadian citizens travelling to the United States by air are required to present a passport for entry into the country. Effective June 1, 2009, Mr. Speaker, that requirement will extend to border crossings by land and water with the introduction of the western hemisphere travel initiative.

The western hemisphere travel initiative requires all Canadian residents seeking entry into the United States by land or water to have a passport or a NEXUS or FAST card, an enhanced driver's license, or an enhanced photo identification card.

The enhanced driver's license and enhanced photo identification card are voluntary options for Saskatchewan residents to purchase through SGI. They do not replace the requirements of having a passport to cross the border by air. However they do provide an alternative for Saskatchewan residents who do not have or do not wish to get a passport for land or water crossings.

We're committed to making cross-border travel easier for Canadian citizens who are Saskatchewan residents and business owners. And we are actively working at having the enhanced driver's license and enhanced photo identification cards

available by June 2009. Mr. Speaker, this will make us the third Canadian province to move in this direction. BC [British Columbia] was the first to go forward with a pilot concerning the 2010 Olympics. Ontario has just passed legislation last week, and we will be the third province to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the second proposed amendment deals with allowing municipalities to designate vehicles owned by volunteer firefighters and first responders as emergency vehicles. The amendment will allow Saskatchewan municipalities to designate volunteer firefighters and first responders to operate their vehicles as emergency vehicles when responding to an emergency situation. This includes using flashing red lights and sirens and driving contrary to the rules of the road if, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed safe to do so.

To ensure public safety as well as their own safety, all volunteers, Mr. Speaker, will be required to complete emergency defensive driver training before receiving this designation. Once designated, these volunteers will be recognized as being on the job as soon as they leave their home in response to emergency situation.

Currently in Saskatchewan volunteer firefighters and first responders are required to obey all traffic rules while attending to an emergency. If they do not, they are subject to traffic convictions and penalties for breaking the law. For example, they cannot speed or go through red lights. We are proposing this change, Mr. Speaker, because many small communities in Saskatchewan rely on many, many volunteers to meet their firefighting and EMS [emergency medical services] needs.

This amendment allows us to recognize the importance of volunteer firefighters and first responders in our province. The service these volunteers, Mr. Speaker, provide, some 6,000 of them, they provide a service that is invaluable, Mr. Speaker. Since they best know their communities, and they best know their specific needs, municipal leaders will be allowed to authorize this designation. This includes making sure these vehicles are mechanically fit and have proper lights and sirens. They must also ensure that these volunteers are adequately trained.

Mr. Speaker, that concludes the outline of the proposed amendments found in *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008*. These amendments will simplify land and water, cross-border travel for Saskatchewan residents and will enable volunteer firefighters, and first responders to properly respond to emergency situations.

Mr. Speaker, with that I move second reading of *An Act to amend The Traffic Safety Act, 2008*.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations has moved that Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008* be now read the second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak at second reading of Bill No. 72,

An Act to amend The Traffic Safety Act. And, Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the minister outlining the government's reasons behind this piece of legislation and, Mr. Speaker, some of the explanations as to what is contained within that legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, obviously we see these two parts as being distinct and separate, but, Mr. Speaker, we also recognize the value that exists within the changes that are being made here.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, on the enhanced driver's licence, Mr. Speaker, I want the government to know that I think from my reading of the Saskatchewan population that there is considerable support for an enhanced driver's licence. Despite the fact that a passport is the best identification that an individual can have, not all Saskatchewan residents feel the need to expend the money and go through the process of having a national passport, Mr. Speaker.

The province does identify people for almost every reason except citizenship. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are circumstances on both sides of the Canada-US border where Saskatchewan meets the United States where residents are frequently crossing the border, Mr. Speaker, and have done for generations, Mr. Speaker, without a passport. There has not been seen to be the need for that passport purpose to drive across the border to visit friends and family, Mr. Speaker, because that border — the 49th parallel, Mr. Speaker — for all intents and purposes for people who live in that area, does not exist. It's not an identifiable border other than the way in which we've established it as such, Mr. Speaker. So families have crossed the border. There's been marriages between American citizens and Saskatchewan citizens over the years, Mr. Speaker, and there's a lot of family crossing.

That, as well, Mr. Speaker, there is business crossing between farmers and ranchers, Mr. Speaker. There are business crossings between suppliers and users in both directions, Mr. Speaker. And for all intents and purposes, therefore an enhanced driver's licence is something that Saskatchewan people would applaud and would support.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, we know that there have been negotiations for quite a number of years in the intergovernmental area between national and state, federal and provincial governments, to ensure safety and security of international borders, safety and security of citizens on either side of the border. And for a long time, the national government in the United States would not recognize Canadian drivers' licences because they did not contain a citizenship designation. And of course, Mr. Speaker, it was deemed not appropriate for driver's licence issuers around the province to become the individuals who would identify a person's citizenship.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable amount of discussion about the development of an enhanced driver's licence for identification purposes. And so, Mr. Speaker, it's generally believed and generally supported that this is certainly a step in the right direction. And hopefully, Mr. Speaker, through our Intergovernmental Affairs offices at the provincial and national level and between the federal and national governments of Canada and the United States, we will eventually sort out this border crossing dilemma that affects two friendly countries and the citizens of those two friendly

countries.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, the second part of this Bill in front of us, *The Traffic Safety Act*, does deal with the circumstance about volunteer firefighters. And, Mr. Speaker, I read with interest when the Bill was introduced at first reading, the Regina *Leader-Post* writer Angela Hall wrote a story that sort of outlined where this part of the Bill comes from, Mr. Speaker.

And she writes, the Bill “. . . will allow municipalities to designate volunteer firefighter and first responder vehicles as emergency vehicles.” Mr. Speaker, she goes on to say, “After designated volunteers complete the necessary driver training, they can use flashing red lights and sirens on their own vehicles and drive ‘contrary to the rules of the road’ in emergency situations if safe to do so . . .” Mr. Speaker, finally she says, “The issue came to the government’s attention . . . [last] summer following news reports about a volunteer firefighter from Estevan who was ticketed after proceeding through a red light while responding to a call.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, a couple of things come to mind here. First and foremost of course we want to ensure that the citizens of our community are fully protected by their police, fire, and emergency services. Mr. Speaker, we want — as a society and as citizens of a community — we want to ensure that those who are delivering those services are properly trained and, Mr. Speaker, that they have the proper equipment and are financed appropriately, Mr. Speaker, to provide us with the appropriate response to our emergency circumstances, and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, in the case of fire and emergency services, to protect property and life, Mr. Speaker.

When we are talking about fire and emergency services, a critical component to this whole process, Mr. Speaker, is indeed an adequately funded fire service. Now some communities in our province, Mr. Speaker, are serviced by a full-time fire department, and other communities, Mr. Speaker, are serviced by a volunteer fire department. As far as this legislation goes, Mr. Speaker, we know that this would not apply in communities where there are full-time firefighters.

[14:30]

And that means that, Mr. Speaker, the cities in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, with full-time fire services would be Regina and Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, North Battleford, Yorkton, and Weyburn.

Now we notice, Mr. Speaker, that Estevan is not on that list. Estevan — a growing city, a city with a tremendous amount of growing pressures, Mr. Speaker — Estevan does not have a full-time fire department, fire service. They have a volunteer service. So naturally, Mr. Speaker, in a growing community with a growing population and a lot of new construction and a lot of young people, Mr. Speaker, would want to know that their service — their fire service, Mr. Speaker — is providing the same standard of response, the same standard of care, the same standard that people expect in other communities would be provided in that community.

There are reasons, Mr. Speaker why some cities in our province

— not many, but some — and other communities do not have a full-time fire service but rely on volunteers, Mr. Speaker. And one of those reasons is strictly financial. The taxpayers in the community, through their elected councils, municipal councils, have chosen not to support or fund a full-time fire service, Mr. Speaker. And therefore the ability of volunteers to respond in emergency cases are very important in those communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, it makes sense that we are providing volunteers in those communities with the same type of response ability that we would . . . Response ability, not one word but two words, Mr. Speaker. Response ability — that means their response time, their ability to respond in time, Mr. Speaker, is the same as or similar to what people with full-time fire services would expect.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, does go beyond what exists in other provinces. I don’t know if that’s necessarily a good thing or not, Mr. Speaker. That’s something we’re going to have to look at. Other provinces have some rules that allow volunteer responders to use their flashing lights, however they have to obey certain traffic rules, Mr. Speaker, whereas the Saskatchewan Party Bill in front of us now allows them to drive contrary to the rules of the road. So, Mr. Speaker, we’ll have to examine this point. We’ll have to examine this point, Mr. Speaker, as we are examining the Bill further.

But back to my other point, Mr. Speaker, about the capacity of a community to meet the fire expectations of the citizens who live in that community. Members of government just last week, Mr. Speaker, met with the Saskatchewan Professional Fire Fighters Association. And in fact questions from this side of the House to the minister responsible brought forward the response from the minister that this government, Saskatchewan Party government, would indeed respond as positively as possible to the demands and the needs and the expressed desires that were brought forward by the Saskatchewan Professional Fire Fighters Association.

Mr. Speaker, and I’m getting to a point here that ties the volunteer services in communities like Estevan with some of the services in the other communities, Mr. Speaker, by the following. The Professional Fire Fighters Association brought to the attention of the members of this House, and through us, Mr. Speaker, to the public generally, that in fact fire service personnel within the province of Saskatchewan may today be unable to meet the expectations of the Saskatchewan public.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, according to one of the background sheets provided by the firefighters themselves, they say it is essential to make clear to the community that inadequate staffing equates to reduced service levels. And if the public expects a continued aggressive attack on fires, they must provide the fire department with at least minimum resources required to meet community expectations.

So, Mr. Speaker, are the expectations of the people who live in a house or an apartment in Estevan for firefighting services the same as the expectations of the people who live in North Battleford — one with a volunteer service and one with a full-time service? I think, Mr. Speaker, the answer would be yes. The expectation is the same.

Mr. Speaker, the Professional Fire Fighters Association goes on to say a crew size of four firefighters or less on an initial single-pump response to a residential structure fire is inadequate to safely perform the functions of water supply, interior firefighting, search and rescue, and also be in compliance with occupational health and safety regulations for firefighters.

So in other words, Mr. Speaker, the professionals are telling us that with fewer than four firefighters responding on an initial call to a fire, the best that the public can expect is an evaluation of the fire circumstances, an assessment of the circumstances that they find — in other words what the fire is doing, and preparation for a full complement of four firefighters to appear. If we're going to see the circumstances relating to the . . .

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

Mr. Vermette: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you to my colleague for granting me leave. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members of this Assembly, on behalf of the member from the Athabasca, I'd like to introduce to you seated in the east gallery a group of grade 9 students and their teacher. Also accompanying them is three chaperones.

They're high school students in Pinehouse. They've made a long journey to join us here today. I hope they find their visit here to be a great experience. I ask all members to join me in welcoming these students and their chaperones from northern Saskatchewan to their Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 72 — *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008* (continued)

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as the record will show, the member from Cumberland constituency was just introducing some people in the Chamber from northern Saskatchewan. We are talking about a piece of legislation that recognizes needs of volunteer firefighters.

And, Mr. Speaker, while my remarks were very much directed at volunteers who are within our cities and towns, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the volunteer firefighters in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, provide exemplary service to this province. And, Mr. Speaker, we have to do all that we can to support the volunteer firefighters that are protecting communities, people, and the resource infrastructure that surrounds our communities, Mr. Speaker.

And so I want the students who are in the Chamber today, introduced by the member from Cumberland constituency, to know that the members on this side of the House are fully supportive of the volunteer firefighters in their communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on the Bill that we're talking about, Bill 72, *An Act to amend the Traffic Safety Act*, Mr. Speaker, I was talking and I think, briefly. But some members may think a little longer than I should but, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important tie that I'm trying to make to the volunteer firefighter services.

So we have a situation where occupational health and safety regulations, Mr. Speaker, for our full-time service require that at least four fighters be available prior to the ability of a fire and emergency services worker, Mr. Speaker, to enter a burning building. Mr. Speaker, that means if you respond with less than four, you can't do suppression and rescue.

Suppression, Mr. Speaker, is entering the burning building and pushing the fire out of that building, Mr. Speaker. If you have three or fewer firefighters on the scene, Mr. Speaker, you are simply working on the exterior of the building and perhaps pushing the fire into the building, Mr. Speaker, which might make circumstances worse. So, Mr. Speaker, occupational health and safety regulations require the two-in and two-out rule, Mr. Speaker. Two firefighters outside, two firefighters who can enter the building to provide suppression and rescue.

So when we are talking about a community that has a volunteer service, Mr. Speaker, and you don't have firefighters arriving all at the same time to a scene, yes it's important, Mr. Speaker, that they get there as quickly as they can with the least difficulties, Mr. Speaker. But it's also important, Mr. Speaker, that if they don't all arrive at the same time, the public's expectation of the ability of that service to meet their needs, saving property and perhaps life, Mr. Speaker, then the expectations of the public certainly aren't met.

So, Mr. Speaker, what has been proposed by the professional firefighters, Mr. Speaker, they have suggested that because firefighting is a municipal issue, and municipalities choose, Mr. Speaker, how they direct the dollars that are collected from the local tax base, sometimes without the full understanding of the value for money for fire and emergency services. Since this is a municipal issue, Mr. Speaker, it's important for the province to understand — the government especially — but important for the province to understand that if there was a pool of money available from the province to the municipalities to increase the numbers of staff that are available, Mr. Speaker, we can improve the ability of the fire and emergency services personnel to actually suppress in the case of a fire, and rescue people, Mr. Speaker. Two, three minutes makes a tremendous amount of difference in a fire situation.

The essence of this legislation is to provide those two or three minutes of extra driving, to reduce the driving time to a fire circumstance by perhaps two or three minutes, Mr. Speaker. The province could take one step further and create an additional pool of dollars to ensure that municipalities could have an adequate and province-wide firefighting standard, Mr. Speaker, a standard that would mean that the expectations of the people in Estevan are the same as the people in North

Battleford, and that they can be met, Mr. Speaker. So I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that the government take a page from the book that the New Democratic Party started to write four or five years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the public will remember that a few years ago municipalities were saying that we have a deficit in our communities for sports, recreation, and cultural facilities. The province recognized, Mr. Speaker, four or five years ago that the province has some responsibility to assist municipalities to deliver a quality of life to the citizens who live within our municipalities. So from windfall revenues from oil and gas, Mr. Speaker, the former NDP government put \$100 million aside and created the building communities fund. Communities had the opportunity to make application based on need for infrastructure money to support them with sports, recreation, and culture facilities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no reason why this government couldn't establish a fund from windfall revenues, from oil and gas or resource revenues. A fund, Mr. Speaker, that would be identified that municipalities could draw from so that they could then provide for increased staffing levels within their fire service, Mr. Speaker, and therefore improve the quality of life in those communities. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, improve the ability of the fire service to respond to fire calls and, Mr. Speaker, provide greater protection for life and property, Mr. Speaker. And I am sure the government would very much like to do this.

The other alternative, Mr. Speaker, is to finally, finally settle the revenue-sharing issue with municipalities that improves the ability of provinces to have access to identifiable and sustainable funding. Mr. Speaker, that could provide them with a pool of money to greatly enhance their fire and protection services.

So, Mr. Speaker, to make a long story short, this legislation in front of us, Mr. Speaker, identified through essentially the courts and the media a need that communities have to address the ability of communities to meet the communities' needs on fire and emergency services calls, Mr. Speaker. What this government can do is take this as a wake-up call, Mr. Speaker. The lights can go on and we can identify that there is a greater need province-wide to improve the ability of our fire and emergency services personnel in meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people.

[14:45]

So, Mr. Speaker, I say to the government opposite that Bill No. 72 is an interesting first step. Mr. Speaker, it is a Bill that we on this side of the House will review over the course of the next little while, Mr. Speaker. We will review this further and, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are other members on this side of the House who have an interest in speaking to this Bill, maybe about their own communities. Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of volunteer firefighters across this province, Mr. Speaker, who will be happy about this circumstance.

Mr. Speaker, there are also communities like Estevan, a population of 10,000 people and growing, Mr. Speaker, who may want to take a look at upgrading their fire service, Mr.

Speaker, from a volunteer service to a full-time, professional service, Mr. Speaker, realizing that that's the responsibility of the municipal government but, Mr. Speaker, with support and co-operation from the provincial government, these services could be significantly enhanced.

So, Mr. Speaker, knowing that the other members may wish to speak to this Bill, I would move that Bill No. 72, *An Act to amend The Traffic Safety Act*, that debate on this Bill be now adjourned.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved that debate on Bill No. 72, *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008* be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 67 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)/ Loi n° 2 de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks on Bill No. 2, I also want to join in welcoming the students behind me in the gallery. I understand, as indicated by the member opposite, these are students from Pinehouse who've travelled as much as eight hours to be here and I want to congratulate them for showing the interest in the process.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 67, *The Education Amendment Act, 2008*. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that the changes we are introducing today strengthen our education system for our students and ensure that Saskatchewan is compliant with other jurisdictions across Canada.

Many of the provisions we are introducing today apply to teachers who are not members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

I would like to start out by saying that teachers from Saskatchewan are some of the most highly skilled and well-educated teachers in the world. Together they uphold a very high professional standard of conduct. It is our hope that this legislation reflects this high standard.

As members may know, in 1999 the ministers of Education in Canada agreed to an interprovincial protocol to include improvements to the process of identifying and disciplining teachers who have behaved in a manner that constitutes professional misconduct or incompetence. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, the changes we are introducing today in compliance with the interprovincial protocol includes: firstly, a process for school divisions to report instances of teacher suspension or termination and share such information with the Ministry of Education, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and other jurisdictions; secondly, a ministry process for the investigation

and discipline of teachers who are not members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, including independent schools, custody and care facilities, and adult basic education facilities.

Saskatchewan is the last province in Canada to implement the 1999 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada interprovincial protocol. This has allowed us to learn from other provinces' experiences in implementing this type of legislation. The Government of Saskatchewan has been working with our education partners, including the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, since the interprovincial protocol was agreed to in 1999. Mr. Speaker, we value the strong relationships that have been forged between the Government of Saskatchewan and the education sector. We rely on these ties when developing important legislation such as the changes to *The Education Amendment Act, 2008*.

The Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, and independent schools have been consulted. Based on our consultations with our partners, we made several amendments to address concerns and strengthen the Bill. The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes that additional concerns have been brought forward since the time of first reading. Mr. Speaker, I want our education partners to know that we look forward to discussing these concerns with them through the legislative process that provides opportunities for meaningful consultation.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation retains the responsibility for the investigation and discipline of most of our province's teachers within a separate process. To ensure accountability and strengthen our communication processes with the federation, we are proposing a reporting and monitoring process in addressing public concerns between the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the ministry. The changes will also improve the sharing of information on teachers with the public, employers, and other jurisdictions.

Other jurisdictions will be informed once a teacher has been found guilty of misconduct or incompetence and their appeal period has expired, or they have had any appeal concluded, Mr. Speaker. This will ensure teacher registration authorities across Canada will be better informed if a teacher has a certificate to teach cancelled in one jurisdiction for professional misconduct or incompetence, and is attempting to take up teaching in another.

It will also help to improve teacher mobility. It will support Saskatchewan's school divisions in hiring teachers from out of province by ensuring that the teachers hired have not had certifications cancelled by another province. It will also support Saskatchewan teachers in applying for positions out of province.

There are also additional amendments to the Act, including the following: updating the role of secretary-treasurer of school divisions; permitting elected members of boards of education to participate in board employee benefit programs; amending the date for notification of property taxes and when school divisions must prepare and present their public accounts; and

clarifying how education property taxes should be allocated by companies without share capital.

Mr. Speaker, these changes to the Act strengthen our education system and provide a measure of security for our students, families, and communities. I am pleased to move therefore that Bill No. 67, *The Education Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Education has moved that Bill No. 67, *The Education Amendment Act, 2008* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on second reading of Bill No. 67, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995 and to make consequential amendments to certain Regulations*.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the remarks of the Minister of Education as he explains the Bill and some of the processes that he sees coming out of this Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, I want the minister to know that I'm very happy that he has raised the issue of consultation and process, Mr. Speaker, because that essentially is the essence of my opening remarks on this Bill to amend *The Education Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the minister opposite says that this Bill essentially comes as a result of an interprovincial protocol. Other provinces have taken steps in this direction and, Mr. Speaker, he indicates that this gives Saskatchewan the opportunity to learn from the experiences in these other jurisdictions. Mr. Speaker, I think on first reading, it appears that the minister has presented an Act that simply copies what has taken place in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, but has failed to take into account the opportunity to learn from the experiences in the other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, when you have an opportunity to view what you would like to do when it's already in place, Mr. Speaker, you can indeed learn from the mistakes of others. And I think, Mr. Speaker, from what I'm hearing from some of the education partners that the minister refers to, in fact we have not learned from the other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. In fact it would appear that we have not even consulted the other jurisdictions on their experience in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also says that the government values the strong relationships that exist with the education sector. And, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House certainly agree that the government should value strong relationships with the education sector, and I think we can legitimately argue, with support from the education sectors, that that valued relationship, Mr. Speaker, has existed in this province for quite some time. Previous ministers of Education consulted regularly with the education sector and, Mr. Speaker, that consultation, that working with the education sector, has resulted in a number of good things over the past years and, Mr. Speaker, helped to establish this valued, strong relationship that currently exists.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the approach to the Act currently in

front of us may jeopardize that valued, strong relationship with the education sector. Mr. Speaker, I hope that I'm wrong, but the initial response that I'm getting from the education sector is that this Act is certainly stretching their view of what consultation means. And they're telling me that the process that has got us to this point where the Bill is in our hands is certainly very flawed, Mr. Speaker.

Now the minister also said he wants our education partners to know they will be consulted through the legislative process. Mr. Speaker, what does that mean, consulted through the legislative process? Number one, it indicates to me that perhaps the consultation has not been as would have been expected. In other words the legislation, the ideas, the direction would have been shared with the education partners prior to the writing of the Bill, and that when the Bill is tabled in the House the expectation is that there is a consensus agreement on what it is in the Bill, and one could expect an easy travel, an easy time through the legislative process. But instead, Mr. Speaker, we have a Bill that some members of the education . . . most members in the education sector, Mr. Speaker, are saying that it doesn't reflect their ideas as to what should be in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, what is the legislative process? It's debate at second reading. How much consultation takes place in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, with the education partners during second reading, Mr. Speaker, debate in principle? Mr. Speaker, we can go out to have our meetings and our discussions, and we've come back with information that we can share in the Chamber. But, Mr. Speaker, the consultation with the government on the Bill doesn't happen at the second reading stage, Mr. Speaker.

Once second reading is done and members have had an opportunity to express their opinions in principle, Mr. Speaker, the Bill moves to committee. Well, Mr. Speaker, what is the consultation process in committee? Is it the intention of the Minister of Education to ask the committee to invite public participation when this Bill is being heard? Does that consultation occur in the committee Chamber, Mr. Speaker? Will members opposite say that the consultation through the legislative process includes questions that can be asked and answered by the public in the committee stage?

Mr. Speaker, that hasn't been the general practice. It is possible. But if we are going to do consultation through the legislative process, Mr. Speaker, that's somewhere where I would expect the minister to say yes, we will have the boards and the teachers and the LEADS [League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents] officials and the business managers, Mr. Speaker, coming forward and addressing these concerns in the committee stage. Then what happens, Mr. Speaker, if it hasn't happened through the committee stage, the Bill comes back at the third reading. Well, Mr. Speaker, at third reading if there's no amendment, the debate — if there is one — is simply to approve the Bill as written, as drafted.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, well what's the point of consultation then when you've gone through this whole process? Mr. Speaker, it's just the government's will; the majority votes whatever they want. If there's no change desired by the government, Mr. Speaker, it

doesn't matter what anybody said — the opposition, the sector, the public. Doesn't make any sense, Mr. Speaker.

Consultation is important through the legislative process. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker, and we on this side of the House, as the opposition, intend to consult broadly on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. Because what we are being told today, a preliminary reading by the sector, is that the process to this point has been flawed, that the legislation has been created in a vacuum, Mr. Speaker, without reference to the Saskatchewan circumstances. It has been argued, Mr. Speaker, that the legislation is not even workable, Mr. Speaker.

So we will consult, Mr. Speaker. But the member, the minister opposite, said, with the valuable, strong relationships and the consultation through the legislative process, we will have a good piece of legislation here, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know how they intend to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the minister also says he wants to have a separate process with the teachers. And again, what does that mean — a separate process from the teachers, Mr. Speaker? Does he want to have a quiet meeting somewhere with a number of the teachers' representatives through the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation]? Does he want to have a more public . . . What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? He's going to consult with the sector and then have a separate process with the teachers.

We can all read *Hansard* tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, and we can see those were the words that the minister said. He's probably still got his written speech in his desk, Mr. Speaker. A separate process with the teachers, what does that mean? And what does it say about where this legislation is going, Mr. Speaker?

We believe that it's important that there is consultation. That consultation should include the teachers, Mr. Speaker. It should be a transparent consultation process, and it should be a process in which those who are being consulted feel that their input, Mr. Speaker, is valued. Because of course there is value in having a strong relationship with the education sector, Mr. Speaker, all aspects of the education sector.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have work to do on this side of the House. We have work to do. We have consultations to do, Mr. Speaker. And we also have a number of members who, as they consult with representatives of the sector, will have some things to say at this the second reading stage of the Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading is debate in principle on the Bill. We have a number of members who will want to speak on that. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move that debate on Bill No. 67, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995* be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved that debate on Bill 67, *The Education Amendment Act, 2008* be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 70 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*. *The Summary Offences Procedure Act, 1990* establishes the procedure for laying charges, the options for persons charged, and the enforcement mechanisms for provincial offences. It applies to all provincial and bylaw offences. Under this Act over 100,000 tickets are served annually on persons charged. Most of the tickets are for traffic offences, in particular speeding; however a number of other areas are enforced as well.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments we are proposing with this Bill address the enforcement mechanism provisions of the existing Act. These amendments will provide clear authority for the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General to enforce restitution orders on behalf of victims. These new provisions respecting enforcement of restitution orders will apply to orders that judges may make at the time of sentencing. This will include sentencing of people convicted of provincial offences and more commonly people convicted of criminal offences under the Criminal Code.

Mr. Speaker, collecting on a restitution order can be a long and complex process. These changes will assist victims in collecting on restitution orders. And by taking steps to enforce compliance with court orders that require offenders to pay their debts to victims, these changes will result in greater accountability on the part of offenders.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved second reading on Bill No. 70, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for The Battlefords, the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak on Bill No. 70, *An Act to amend The Summary Offences Procedure Act*. And, Mr. Speaker, again as I have said on previous Bills, I appreciate the explanation given by the Minister of Justice just a few seconds ago.

Mr. Speaker, on the surface this Bill appears to be one that will provide a benefit to citizens in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we're also aware that to ensure that the government is able to do what this Bill says, it is likely going to require the addition of human resources within the department. This will likely create some new jobs, Mr. Speaker, in government to ensure that we have the proper collection of fines and distribution to those that they are intended to go to, Mr. Speaker.

It's a short Bill. The explanation is one that we accept on face

value. We will do some research, Mr. Speaker, on the terms of the Bill to ensure that indeed the government is in a position to do what it wants to do. So therefore, Mr. Speaker, really without further ado on this Bill, we know that we have a little bit of additional work to do. I know that some members of my caucus are very interested in the provisions of this Bill and will want to speak after some consultation, Mr. Speaker, to the clauses in front of us.

So I want to say to the Minister of Justice that again I take his remarks at face value. I appreciate the direction that the government seems to be moving with regards to this Bill. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move that debate on Bill No. 70, *An Act to amend The Summary Offences Procedure Act, 1990* be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of Bill No. 70, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 68 — *The Arts Professions Act/Loi sur les professions artistiques*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 68, *The Arts Professions Act* is being presented to support professional artists in Saskatchewan and to encourage a thriving arts and culture sector in our province. The purpose of *The Arts Professions Act* is to stipulate written contracts between professional artists and engagers, thus promoting better business practices in this sector.

Written contracts will require clearly defined elements and will ensure documentation of agreed-upon terms of engagements. Contracts between professional artists and engagers encourage better business practices and provide a measure of protection for all parties. This is particularly important in an age when the Internet and digital copying have made a huge impact on production and consumption of intellectual property. This government is committed to building a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life for all its citizens. A healthy arts and culture sector contributes greatly to our overall quality of life.

We have so many gifted artists and performers in our province, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they are able to develop their commercial potential and are sufficiently equipped to succeed in the marketplace. We believe the individual creator or artist is central to the arts and culture sector. We must support artists in order to ensure that they live and work in Saskatchewan, and indeed want to live and work in Saskatchewan.

This legislation supports professional artists by providing a clear definition of the term professional artists, and by recognizing the contribution of artists to the cultural, social, economic, and educational life of the province.

An important aspect of this Bill regards to the intellectual property of artists. We are keeping our promise to protect the intellectual property of artists by promoting its inclusion within contracts when it is applicable. The Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport will continue to work with our major stakeholders such as the industry associations to assist in promoting the legislation and in providing assistance to artists in drawing up contracts.

The proposed Act is scheduled to come into force June 2010. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 68, *The Arts Professions Act, 2008*. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 68, *The Arts Professions Act* be now read the second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the Opposition House Leader, the member from Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a significant pleasure of mine today to rise and speak on second reading of Bill No. 68, *An Act respecting the Arts Professions and the Status of the Artist*.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation today, Mr. Speaker, and I also appreciate the words of the minister in providing some explanation to the Bill. Mr. Speaker, given that the legislation has taken some time to get in front of us and given that the legislation actually is multiple pages, I would have expected a greater explanation by the minister opposite, Mr. Speaker. But that having been said, I think it is relatively clear what exactly it is that this legislation does.

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, I should just start with the name of the Act to begin with, Mr. Speaker. Let's recognize and understand that indeed there was a status of the artist Act, Mr. Speaker. This is actually a federal initiative that all provinces have engaged in, Mr. Speaker. And it is very interesting to note that while other provinces all have status of the artist Acts, Mr. Speaker. Only in Saskatchewan is the Act that does this sort of stuff, Mr. Speaker, called *An Act respecting the Arts Professions and the Status of the Artist*, Mr. Speaker. Only in Saskatchewan have we chosen to name the Bill something different, Mr. Speaker.

It goes to the heart of the politics of the existing government, Mr. Speaker. Since the Saskatchewan Party was elected, we've seen all sorts of initiatives take on a different name, Mr. Speaker. And so what we've got here is, you know, same things, same programs, but different names attached to them, Mr. Speaker. It's the branding, the Sask Party's branding of initiatives that Saskatchewan people have enjoyed to a certain extent, Mr. Speaker, and the desire of the Saskatchewan Party to name these things as their own.

Now I am surprised, given that they've changed the name, Mr. Speaker, that the Act actually isn't called artists first, Mr. Speaker, given that so many of the other name changes have

taken us to something first, whether it's ForestFirst or Sask first or whatever else they've got that's first, Mr. Speaker. The bottom line in all of this stuff, Mr. Speaker, is it doesn't matter what they call it. It usually means that Saskatchewan people are last, Mr. Speaker. So we've got the artists first Act in front of us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for all intents and purposes the New Democratic Party in government worked very closely with the artists' community in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite will know very clearly that an Act was introduced into this House. It went into committee. There was considerable consultation, Mr. Speaker. And interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, that Act for one reason or another — and I'll get to that in a second, Mr. Speaker — that Act did not make it out of this legislature in the last, in the last . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to allow the member currently recognized to speak, and other members will have ample opportunity in the debate. The member from The Battlefords.

[15:15]

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was indicating of course that the Bill didn't make it out of the last legislature before the election. Government changed. And of course one would have anticipated that this new government would have reviewed the legislation that was in committee, consulted further with the arts community, Mr. Speaker, and have brought that forward. Mr. Speaker, to a certain extent, that's what's happened here. Some of that legislation now is coming forward in Bill No. 68. But this Bill of course, Mr. Speaker, can be considered a good half measure because it doesn't go far enough.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the Act was introduced here just last week, independent journalists took a look at the legislation, did some phone calls to representatives of the artists' community, Mr. Speaker, reviewed the files from last year and the year before, Mr. Speaker, and wrote the following, Mr. Speaker, in an article in the Regina *Leader-Post* just last Friday, November 21. One of the paragraphs is:

The requirement for written contracts between artists and "engagers" was nearly put in place under the previous NDP government.

. . . [But] that bill stalled in committee as the then-opposition Saskatchewan Party raised concerns with the collective bargaining portion of the legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Bill stalled in committee not because New Democrats didn't want this to go forward or weren't committed to the artists' community, Mr. Speaker, but because the Saskatchewan Party refused to allow this Bill to move forward because of provisions relating to, believe it or not, collective bargaining.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Act comes forward and there is surprisingly no reference to the collective bargaining process. Well, Mr. Speaker, in discussions with the executive director of the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance, Marnie Gladwell, the reporter

for the Regina *Leader-Post* had this to say:

... Gladwell said legislation to allow collective or “sector” bargaining for artists who are contract workers is something the arts group would still like to pursue.

Quote from Ms. Gladwell: “We could see it as being the next place we need to go.”

Mr. Speaker, so what we have in front of us is a good half measure, half of what the consultation with the people of Saskatchewan said that we should be doing on their behalf, Mr. Speaker. We have half the way there done, Mr. Speaker. We’ve got the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance indicating that the Bill itself looks positive, but that there is more yet to be done.

So, Mr. Speaker, where that leaves us, Mr. Speaker, as New Democrats who have been very interested and supportive of the artists’ community in Saskatchewan in ensuring that their ability to earn a living and maintain their quality of life in this province is enhanced, Mr. Speaker, we take a look at this Bill, Mr. Speaker. We want to continue to support the artists’ community, Mr. Speaker, and whether the Act is called the respecting arts professions or whether it’s called status of the artist or whether it’s called artists first, Mr. Speaker, we are very interested in consulting.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you are able to hear comments that are being made throughout the Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I think that the public should be aware that members opposite are saying the NDP didn’t do this; didn’t do it, Mr. Speaker. I just outlined the NDP, Mr. Speaker, did do this, Mr. Speaker. We did do it and the only reason it didn’t get completed, Mr. Speaker, is because going into an election, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite stopped it in committee. The Saskatchewan Party stopped it in committee, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to respect the member that has the floor. I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So as much as it’s obvious that there could be some additional debate over this Bill, Mr. Speaker, in the interests of the time of the Assembly this afternoon and in the interests of the arts professionals in this province, Mr. Speaker, who I believe have asked for some time to review the Bill, we would like to consult further with them. And there are a number of, and I think a large number of members in the opposition NDP caucus who want, Mr. Speaker, to debate this Bill at second reading. I would therefore move that debate on Bill No. 68, *An Act respecting the Arts Professions and the Status of the Artist* be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has made a motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 68, *The Arts Professions Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 69 — *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l’exécution des ordonnances alimentaires*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2008*. The maintenance enforcement program was created in 1986. It is the sole provincial program whose primary function is to enforce the right of a dependent spouse or child to support payments.

The director of the maintenance enforcement office is responsible for recording and enforcing orders and agreements that are registered with the office. The maintenance enforcement office manages close to 10,000 enforcement files and collected a record \$34 million in payments for some 20,000 dependent children in 2007 and 2008.

Mr. Speaker, the current Act provides a variety of mechanisms to assist the director in the enforcement of delinquent accounts. For example, the director may attach pension entitlements and RRSPs [registered retirement savings plan], place garnishments, suspend drivers’ licences and federal licences, and also seize and sell personal property. However, to increase the office’s effectiveness, additional enforcement tools are needed. This is what we aim to achieve with the passage of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, when an individual is entitled to workers’ compensation benefits for a period of at least 24 consecutive months, an annuity is created in the name of that worker. This proposed Bill includes a provision that will specifically allow the director to attach this annuity. If other enforcement measures have been unsuccessful, they can go ahead with this provision and this process. Currently the director is authorized to attach pension benefits and RRSPs. With this amendment, an annuity will be no different than a pension or an RRSP.

Mr. Speaker, under the current legislation the director may also instruct SGI to suspend the driver’s licence of a payer who is at least three months in arrears of support payments. Since November 1996, when the driver’s licence suspension provisions were enacted, the maintenance enforcement office has suspended a total of 4,463 drivers’ licences. Often after a first suspension, the payer will make payment arrangements and the suspension will be removed. If payments are not made, the maintenance enforcement office is forced to restart the suspension process, which can often take several months. This Bill will add a new provision that will allow the director to revive a suspension within 12 months following the removal if the payer fails to follow through with the payments to which they have agreed.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill adds a new provision that will allow the director to seek an order from the court for security for future payments where no arrears are owing. This will be done in cases in which the payer has a history of chronically late or nonpayments.

Mr. Speaker, another new provision of this Bill will allow the director to enforce an amount that is less than that set out in the court order where the original order was made for two or more

children pursuant to the table amounts in the federal child support guidelines. This provision will be used in cases in which one child ceases to be a dependant. Presently when an order is registered with the maintenance enforcement office where it considers support for two or more children pursuant to the federal guidelines and one child is no longer a dependant, the director does not have the legislative authority to enforce a lesser amount of support. In cases such as this, a new order or an agreement between the parties must be secured. This new provision will authorize the director to collect a lesser amount where the Act's criteria are met.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will also clarify the summons provisions to ensure that a payer is present at the first appearance and at every subsequent appearance before the court. Furthermore this Bill will ensure that if the payer fails to appear without just excuse or relief from the hearing, a warrant may be issued to direct his or her arrest.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Bill will introduce provisions giving maintenance arrears priority for a period of one year over all other unsecured debts. The existing Act gives child support arrears one year priority over unsecured debts. However, this only applies where funds are realized through the writ process and not in other situations. As an example, where a payer dies, child support ranks equally to other unsecured debts of the deceased. These amendments will extend the one-year priority over other unsecured debts to situations other than those in which the funds are realized pursuant to the seizure of property.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of the enforcement orders amendment Act, 2008.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved second reading of Bill No. 69, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2008*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak here at second reading on Bill No. 69, *An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act, 1997* and, as the title suggests, to make related amendments to *The Workers' Compensation Act, 1979*.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I have done throughout the afternoon so far, I listened carefully to the introduction at second reading here by the Minister of Justice with regards to this piece of legislation. And in addition to my other pre-thought remarks, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just make a comment on one of the minister's comments in regards to the Bill.

Towards the end of his introduction, Mr. Speaker, on this piece of legislation, he talked about the changes that would provide one year of priority, Mr. Speaker. As I will say in a few moments generally about the Bill, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we continue to ensure that the enforcement of maintenance orders process evolves, Mr. Speaker.

We also have to be very protective and understanding of unintended consequences, Mr. Speaker. And this provision that the minister has pointed out is one of those areas that we really

have to look at very closely because it provides — I mean on the surface — the possibility that some debtors could be put ahead of some children, Mr. Speaker, and that would be an unintended consequence of an otherwise positive move, Mr. Speaker. So we want to take a very close look to ensure that under no circumstance, Mr. Speaker, in a priority of debt, Mr. Speaker, that debtors could be put ahead of children when it is not so desired, Mr. Speaker.

I work very diligently, Mr. Speaker . . . Some might argue to the contrary, but I work very diligently in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And my constituency office is open, as most constituency offices are, all week long, morning and afternoon. And sometimes, Mr. Speaker, when people can't see us during the day, we meet with them during the evening.

One of the sad statistics related to the operations in my office, Mr. Speaker, is about 80 per cent of the activity in my office centres around social services and around maintenance enforcement issues, Mr. Speaker. We live in . . . The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker, is a community that's highly mobile, has a very active, young population, Mr. Speaker. And unfortunately a lot of those people have grown up in very vulnerable circumstances, Mr. Speaker, and have an attachment with the Department of Social Services or with provisions that require them to see maintenance orders enforced, Mr. Speaker.

[15:30]

We try very hard to address these individual concerns that are raised by people, Mr. Speaker, and quite often the concern relates to communications. It's either a lack of education or a lack of ability, Mr. Speaker, to assume all information and being able to assess it in a way, Mr. Speaker, that allows people to respond positively to the information that's provided to them.

So a lot of the Social Service cases, Mr. Speaker, are quite simply related to information provided at the office of the Social Services workers. It's provided in such a way that the public doesn't fully understand what's been said to them. They come to my office. We have a little more time to listen, understand all of the other circumstances that may be affecting them in their lives, and be able to provide them some support in the process of dealing with Social Services.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the same process is undertaken on enforcement of maintenance orders. The unfortunate circumstances are, Mr. Speaker, there are quite a number of people throughout this province — and the minister outlined some of the numbers — quite a number of people who rely on the enforcement of maintenance orders, Mr. Speaker, to ensure quality of life for themselves and their children.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that many individuals do not take responsibility for their own actions, many individuals don't take responsibility for orders of the court that have been assigned to them.

It has been my experience, Mr. Speaker, in dealing with these matters of people who have moved from other provinces who have found themselves in these circumstances, Mr. Speaker, it's my experience that the maintenance enforcement Act in Saskatchewan is the best in Canada. Mr. Speaker, over the years

this legislation, this process, the regulations have evolved to the point whereas we have exceeded what exists in other provinces. People who have come from other provinces will attest to that, where there are maintenance orders that have not been enforced in other provinces that are enforced in the province of Saskatchewan.

Sometimes we have these interprovincial challenges and it's one of the areas that we need to do some more work on, Mr. Speaker. But we have, because we've cared about people and particularly, Mr. Speaker, we care about children that we have evolved the maintenance enforcement process in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we see in front of us here is, we hope, a continued evolution of making this process better, meeting the needs of more people, and in fact improving the circumstances of people who may already be under order, but who can't find a way to ensure that all the benefit of that order comes into their household and supports those children.

Mr. Speaker, this process is about responsibility. It's also about people helping people. It's also about being able to ensure that the justice system within the province of Saskatchewan is there to ensure that when the courts have provided evaluation and order that people can ensure that they receive the benefit of that order, and don't have to continually fight, argue, and wait for the provisions of that order to be provided.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that my constituency office has dealt with quite a large number of cases like this. I have indicated that communications is often a challenge, Mr. Speaker. One of the problems about waiting is that you get a lot of different information when you're waiting and it is sometimes difficult to separate the good information from the not-so-good information.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our office has always been in a position of being able to help people sort through some of the information that is provided. And I think we know that coffee shops and friends who spend time in coffee shops don't always provide the best information when you're dealing with a legal matter.

Well, Mr. Speaker, our offices and the offices of the maintenance enforcement branch are there to ensure that people have access to the information they need to know. If they're waiting, why are they waiting. If they have needs that courts have ordered to be dealt with, why there are problems with that order, and what the province can do to assist in ensuring that the maintenance order is carried out.

Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the provisions of this legislation will in fact improve the circumstances for these vulnerable people in need. Mr. Speaker, I will consult further on this Bill including, Mr. Speaker, with my constituency assistant who deals with these people almost on a weekly basis, Mr. Speaker. And I know that my caucus colleagues, other members of the New Democratic Party opposition, have constituency assistants that have also been through this process of working with people whose court orders have not been enforced to the extent that is required. So, Mr. Speaker, that consultation process will continue and I know that other members will wish to engage in the debate on this legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I move that debate on Bill No. 69, *An Act to amend The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act, 1997* be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of Bill No. 69, *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2008*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 58

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantfoer that **Bill No. 58 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise in debate on this particular Act or amendment to *The Income Tax Act*. And it's good to see the Saskatchewan Party government continuing the good work of the NDP in Saskatchewan with respect to monitoring various taxations and ensuring that we provide the right kind of tax levels for, not just people, but also for businesses and other enterprises, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Sask Party in its latest branding exercise is fond of saying that the NDP for 16 years did nothing — blanket statement about the NDP — 16 years did nothing, you know, did nothing. Well, Mr. Speaker, it must be remembered that the NDP led this province from bankruptcy to a boom. And we're sure hopeful that the members opposite don't lead us in the opposite direction, Mr. Speaker.

I think the fact of the matter is that when they speak about the NDP not having any clear record, I think it is important and instructive to review that record, and remember that the first act, the first act of the NDP government when it was elected in 1991 was in fact a massive tax change in Saskatchewan to reduce the harmonization of the provincial sales tax with the goods and services tax which would have imposed a very large tax increase on the consumers and people of Saskatchewan. And the first act of the NDP government was in fact to reverse that. So the first act of the NDP was a tax-friendly act for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I think we need to remember that.

It also should be pointed out that in all the years that the NDP, while struggling with a legacy of massive debt from the previous administration, nevertheless continued to make tax changes in Saskatchewan. Significantly some of the first tax changes were for business tax for small business.

One of the significant changes that the NDP made in 1995 — after balancing the budget in Saskatchewan, after finally dealing with the deficit that had been bequeathed to us by the previous administration — one of the first acts of the NDP was to deal with the question of corporate income taxes for those industries in Saskatchewan that were involved in manufacturing and processing, to lower the corporate tax rate for those industries to provide for a way of reducing their input costs through tax credits for any sales taxes they may have paid on some of their capital and other equipment. That was a significant act by the NDP.

And it's interesting to note that after that time Saskatchewan has led the rest of Canada in terms of manufacturing and processing outputs. That's, you know, recognizing that we came from a very small manufacturing and processing base. We have seen expansion in that base, which is significant compared, you know, in relative terms to the rest of the country.

So those were early significant acts by the NDP administration, contrary to this blanket rhetoric that we see from the opposition.

When our financial situation improved further, the NDP set out to look at the question of income taxes in Saskatchewan. We established a commission to look at the question of personal taxes in Saskatchewan, headed by one Jack Vicq. Mr. Vicq and his committee toured the province, looked at questions of competitiveness of our tax rates with other jurisdictions, looked at the question of fairness in our tax system, how our tax system might be improved to introduce greater fairness for all those who are paying taxes, looked at the question of affordability which is a significant issue for the government in those days. Unlike the current government which came to power with \$1 billion-plus in the bank and has since, because of the increases in the price of oil, been able to add significantly to the amount of money that it has available now; I think something close to \$2 billion in its Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

So those are issues that Mr. Vicq and his commission looked at, then came with a report, made recommendations to the government. We implemented it. Those recommendations did not proceed to harmonize the tax with the federal government, did not — as he suggested — put a tax on restaurant meals, as he was suggesting, in terms of broadening the base for the provincial sales tax. But we made significant changes in income taxes in Saskatchewan with arguably, arguably far less in the way of resources available to it, but still accomplishing those changes. And one of the reasons that the government had to implement those changes over a number of years so that we could do it in an affordable way, unlike the current government which is so flush with money that it can make this change in the course of one year.

And you know, they shouldn't talk in terms of that it's some great leadership on their part that's enabling that. We all know the reason for that, and that it's because of the price of oil which is providing historic, historic revenues for the Government of Saskatchewan.

The income tax changes were followed by changes to the royalty rates in some of our industries — significantly oil — so as to encourage more production in Saskatchewan. I think that's something that we saw, are continuing to see. Note that there's

no changes in that royalty structure from the current government, indicating their happiness with that. So that's a change made by the NDP at a time that there was significantly less resources available from oil revenues than is currently the case. But those are changes made by the NDP, not by the current administration.

NDP also moved to make changes with respect to potash royalty structure to encourage expansion of mines in Saskatchewan, something that we've been seeing to a very great extent in the last year or so, at a time when the price that potash commanded on the world market was significantly less than it is today. We made those changes as a way of encouraging production, and I think that we've seen that, Mr. Speaker. So I think a kind description would be that it's inflated rhetoric on the part of members of the government to talk about the NDP not having done anything.

[15:45]

Well in this particular case when it comes to the issue of taxation, it's the NDP that has led the way in Saskatchewan in terms of ensuring that not only that we have a fair taxation system, but also that we have an affordable and a competitive taxation system, Mr. Speaker. So that's the NDP record in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So it's good to see that the Sask Party's using at least some of the massive surplus that they inherited from the previous NDP government to in fact undertake this tax change. We welcome that. Certainly as I indicated, the question of affordability is not really an issue in this particular case because the projections are that the government will have enough money in the future years at a cost or reduced revenues initially of \$300 million. That's what the tax cut is going to cost when it's annualized that the government will in fact have the additional revenues to cover that. And so we don't have any concerns in that basis.

On the question of competitiveness, we see this as a welcome step to ensure that we continue to be competitive — not the same as but competitive — with other jurisdictions when it comes to personal income taxes. That may not be a concern for many people in Saskatchewan, but that certainly is a concern for some of our highly paid professionals and for some business people who want to not pay more taxes than they have to in one jurisdiction as compared to another. So that may be a factor for, as I say, highly paid individuals, and we're supportive of the changes to ensure that our tax system continues to be competitive.

The fairness question, we support the initiatives in this budget to take an additional number of people off the tax rolls, low-income individuals off the tax rolls. This is not the first time that will have been done in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That was done under previous income tax changes by the NDP, but we welcome these changes as well, these further changes by the Saskatchewan Party government. We think that's a good thing. Also to add to the tax credits that some of our poor people who don't pay income tax, because their incomes are so low that they don't pay tax, are able to receive income tax credits to assist them with rising costs in our society — we appreciate those changes as well.

So I think on the question of fairness, I think these changes are measuring up to what we would have expected and to the expectation that we set for ourselves in government, Mr. Speaker. So we appreciate these changes.

Having said that, I think we have to recognize that tax cuts are not some magic cure or a cure-all for all of the affordability issues that are facing many people in Saskatchewan. It's welcome to have a tax change for many of my constituents — and I have to just add parenthetically that the constituency I represent, Regina Douglas Park, probably has the highest concentration of renters in any constituency in Saskatchewan. I stand to be corrected on that, but if not the highest, certainly one of the highest concentration of renters in all of Saskatchewan.

And so in my office, we do get stories about people whose rents have been increased very markedly in the course of this last year or so, and it's raising affordability issues for people. When your rent goes up by some 200, \$300 a month over the course of a year — you know, I'm no great mathematician, Mr. Speaker — but when your rent goes up by \$200 a month, 12 months of the year, that's \$2,400. And so a tax cut is welcome. But a tax cut doesn't begin to deal with the kind of imposition that our current economic climate is putting on those people and is putting on many other people.

I'm fortunate that I have a number of renters who are able to pay the additional dollar, although they don't much like it. But I also have other constituents that — how shall I say? — people who live on the margins of our society, who are massively disadvantaged in the competition for shelter and having to compete with people who can pay far more than they can pay, and that's a concern that we have in my area.

It's also a concern that I noted in a visit to Weyburn and Estevan earlier this year where, I think it's fair to say, that the oil industry is busier in those areas than in any other place in Saskatchewan and probably many places in Canada and the competition on the part of people who work in the oil industry and others who are then attracted to this activity, the competition from these people for shelter in many communities in southeast Saskatchewan . . . and that is particularly troublesome in places such as Weyburn and Estevan where we find people who live on the margins of our society.

People who live in very modest accommodation, people who pay very little in the way of rents are having to massively increase the amount of money to pay for the rents and they can't, or face eviction because you have someone who makes a lot of money — and many people do in the oil business — be able to take their place. So that is a concern in Saskatchewan. That is something that the provincial government should not lose sight of.

I'm concerned that the provincial government isn't taking advantage of its leadership role in this area to work with the industries in southeast Saskatchewan to see what it is that industries working together might be able to do to deal with this question of shelter for many of their workers. Recognizing that we have a number of small employers — this drilling company, that drilling company — that each of them working on their own, it's difficult for them to construct shelter for their workers.

But you know if the provincial government and the Minister Responsible for Energy were to get off his duffer and exhibit some leadership in that area in working with the companies to see how these companies might be able to co-operate to deal with the question of shelter and to ease, to ease some of the extreme pressure that is being put on people of low incomes in some of those communities, I think that would be a welcome thing.

And I'm not arguing for any provincial government expenditure. I'm just simply saying that in addition to governments spending money, governments are also in the position to provide leadership, and we're not seeing any of it here, Mr. Speaker. So that is a concern that I have, and I hope that the Minister of Energy and the cabinet doesn't lose sight of this opportunity they have to display leadership in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go on much longer. I think I've covered the major points that I wanted to make. We support the income tax changes. We think it deals effectively with the questions that we have with respect to competitiveness, fairness, and affordability.

Having said that, we think that there are challenges that are still before us in Saskatchewan that I think the provincial government really needs to pay a little bit more attention to and provide more leadership for, so that those people who are left behind in the current boom that we have — so-called — in Saskatchewan, that those people who are left behind will not be left behind for long and will in fact also see their day in the sun here in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support this Bill. My colleagues support this Bill, and at this point we're certainly prepared to deal with the vote to send it to committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is that Bill No. 58, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)* 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 Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I recommend that this Bill be moved to the Crown and Central Agencies. Thank you.

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

Bill No. 64

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hutchinson that **Bill No. 64 — *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am extremely pleased this afternoon to stand and speak to Bill No. 64. Mr. Speaker, that Bill is *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act*, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill is the last piece of municipal legislation in the province to put in place a province-wide assessment system. And it's a goal I think that all members in this House have supported for a number of years. We had the support of the members opposite when we brought forward the two first pieces of legislation that brought this system into place in the province, Mr. Speaker. And we will inevitably, Mr. Speaker, see the North come into the regular assessment process as the rest of the province over a period of time.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill really updates the property assessment and taxation system in northern Saskatchewan communities, Mr. Speaker. It puts the entire province then on a similar assessment system. It ensures that the economic realities in property values in the real estate market in northern Saskatchewan can be reflected in a more understandable and transparent manner than they would be today.

Mr. Speaker, this property assessment process in northern Saskatchewan is a very complicated one, Mr. Speaker, because the properties in northern Saskatchewan have not been assessed in the same manner as other properties traditionally in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will in fact for the first time move them to a similar assessment system as the rest of the province.

Mr. Speaker, this has been under review for some time. We gave the northern municipalities some additional time, northern communities some additional time before moving forward with this assessment system because they needed a little longer, Mr. Speaker, to work with the system, to understand the system prior to being put in place. And that, Mr. Speaker, that is because of the unique nature of the North and having not had an assessment system like this in the past.

Mr. Speaker, because it's such a complicated and technical system — the assessment of property, Mr. Speaker — this Bill is very detailed and lays out the technical aspects of moving forward with that assessment.

But firstly, Mr. Speaker, the new system, property assessors will be able to employ any of three internationally accepted or recognized methodologies for determining assessment — the sales comparison approach, Mr. Speaker, the replacement cost approach, and the rental income approach, Mr. Speaker. Because as you are well aware, in many northern communities the vast majority if not all the housing may be owned by Sask Housing or other partners with Sask Housing in providing

housing in those communities, Mr. Speaker, so different approaches are required to be looked at in some of our northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan, unfortunately, is the last jurisdiction in Canada to move to a market-value-based valuation system. This is a significant step for the economic development and attraction of new business in our province, Mr. Speaker.

And because the previous government moved forward in both *The Cities Act* and the rural municipalities Act to ensure that that assessment process was put in rural Saskatchewan in the last years of its mandate, Mr. Speaker . . . and left the North because of its unique qualities and needs for some additional time, Mr. Speaker, in order to ensure that those communities in the North and the town councils or village councils, Mr. Speaker, had the tools, understanding, and the experience to move forward and utilize the new system, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, *The Cities Act*, which was introduced by the last government, and *The Municipalities Act*, which guides Saskatchewan's towns, villages, and rural municipalities, are organized very differently than northern municipalities, Mr. Speaker. And for those reasons that additional time was needed, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

We do appreciate though the fact that the new government when they came into power continued with the work we had undertaken for a number of years, continued working with those municipalities, and today they have in fact tabled legislation that reflects that work that was started four or five years ago with those northern municipalities and is coming to fruition this year, Mr. Speaker.

And the members opposite, although they never like to recognize the work done by the previous government, it couldn't be said that in many cases, Mr. Speaker — if not all cases — the work that we're seeing today is a continuation of the work done by the previous government, and they're simply following through with the work and the groundwork and foundation that was built over many years by the previous government, Mr. Speaker. And that's fine, Mr. Speaker. That is, Mr. Speaker, the way that you progressively make progress in a province, Mr. Speaker. So that's fine, Mr. Speaker. It would just be nice if once in a while they'd acknowledge that somebody else did some of this groundwork and laid the foundation that we're in fact working upon today, Mr. Speaker.

We all understand that we needed to consult with the northern municipalities and the people of the North prior to implementing that, Mr. Speaker. We understand the opposition have done some consultations with the people of the North. There were consultations going on prior to them becoming government. But, Mr. Speaker, we still need to meet with some of those stakeholders in the North to ensure that their issues were heard and understood as they brought forward concerns on this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we need to know that the people of the North feel that the unique circumstances in which they live and the

communities in which they live, Mr. Speaker, has been considered and looked at, and how they build their lives in their northern communities, Mr. Speaker. It must be recognized and respected. And we need to follow up with those stakeholders in the North, Mr. Speaker, and see if they feel that they were in fact heard and listened to through this process.

We also though do recognize the need to pass this piece of legislation in order to have it in place, Mr. Speaker, in a manner to allow it to be used in the next taxation assessment, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have not been able to today finalize our consultations with our stakeholders in the North. My colleagues from the constituencies of Cumberland, Mr. Speaker, and the neighbouring constituency of Athabasca still need to consult with some stakeholders in their communities. We hope that they'll be able to do that over the next few days, Mr. Speaker. But today, Mr. Speaker, we're not in a position to move this Bill forward. So I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 64.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has made a motion to adjourn debate on Bill No. 64, *The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 60

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 60 — *The Senate Nominee Election Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Here we are, Mr. Speaker, everyone's favourite subject — the Senate of Canada. Mr. Speaker, when we last dealt with this Bill, I dealt with I think the three Es that we refer to when we talk about the Senate. One of the Es that's anticipated in this Bill is the question of elections, although I'm not really clear that it is an election as such.

If you have an election and you elect people to a post, then if they get the most votes then they should occupy that post, right. I mean I go into an election, I get more votes than the other guy, and I'm elected member for Regina Douglas Park. But this particular Bill doesn't work like that. This particular Bill, as near as I can determine, is that you have an election and you elect people to become senators, but they don't become senators necessarily. What they become is the nominees from your province that a prime minister may consider when it comes to appointing a senator from this jurisdiction. But there's no guarantee that having won the election that someone is actually going to become a senator.

So you have to wonder whether election is the right term here, what it is we're doing. But that's the reality of it; that's the reality in our situation in Canada. We would have, if you like, a

popularity contest to see who's the most popular nominee to become a senator, and then if the prime minister were of a mind, then he might appoint that person.

But in this particular case, in this particular case as my colleague from Regina Northeast knows, that if you were to elect someone in Saskatchewan through this process and that person were to be a Liberal . . . I'm not sure about a New Democrat because I'm not sure what our position would be in terms of becoming involved in anything like that. I rather think that we wouldn't be. But let's accept for a moment that it might be a Liberal, might be a Green Party member for all I know. But it might be a Liberal, as my colleague from Regina Northeast knows. It might be a Liberal. So here we are, the people of Saskatchewan, we've elected a Liberal. But they're not elected. They don't have a specific seat. We simply put their name forward to the prime minister.

But now, the current Prime Minister has a bee under his bonnet about the Senate blocking certain reforms. And he's taking the point of view that I may not accept anyone that's been nominated by the provinces pursuant to some election in those provinces. I may want to appoint the people that will do my bidding in that Senate to make sure I get the changes that I want to see in that Senate.

So the question here is, what kind of election are we exactly having here?

An Hon. Member: — Democratic.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well it may be democratic, but it's an election to what? How democratic is it to elect someone and then to not have that person be able to occupy the seat that they think that they are running for? What kind of a system is that?

Well so when I said earlier that one of the three Es is the E of election, I'm not really clear what kind of an election this is going to be, what it will result in. And what kind of election is that when you elect someone and the prime minister said well no, I don't want to take that person. That person may not do what I want to have done in a particular Senate, whether it's reforming the Senate in his vision or whether it's to make sure that he has a compliant Senate when it comes to certain kinds of legislation; that they not hold up legislation — which the Senate can do from time to time, although never forever and not very successfully, I might add. So that's a question that we have about what kind of election is this and is this then something that we should be rushing into sign on to.

Having said that, I just want to briefly touch on the other two Es, so-called. And the other two Es are in addition to an election is the question of effective. So when we talk about an elected Senate, we also talk the same time about have an effective Senate. There's not much point of going through a huge expense to elect people to some post or seat when . . . And of course, we're not saying that's the way it works. You still have to be appointed by the prime minister. But if you elect someone to some body and they really have no effective power, there's nothing that they can effectively do . . . Well I mean they do things, and I'll get into that in a minute in terms of what senators actually do, but certainly there's a large budget component so they must be doing something. But the question

of effectiveness is something that I dealt with the last time we talked about this Bill.

This is a body that cannot introduce legislation to increase or lower taxes, as the tax Bill we just talked about in this Chamber. Senators can't do that. Senators have no responsibility whatsoever when it comes to the question of money. So given that's a large area of responsibility for elected members, is to watch the public purse and to ensure that the government is getting the right kind of money, what kind of a Senate is that? And how effective is that when you can't deal with the question of money?

And the other thing that they don't really do is with respect to legislation. The senators from time to time will put forward amendments, and some of those amendments may be accepted by the government, but they really have no ability to fundamentally change legislation or to say, you know, we want to veto this Bill; we don't want the Bill to go forward. We don't agree with this direction of the government. We don't agree with the direction of this government because a Bill would affect a region in certain ways.

And an important responsibility for us and the reason that the Senate was constructed initially is so that there can be some regional balance so that a federal government can't make use of the majority it has which comes from a certain part of the country to put forward legislation that might benefit one region as opposed to another. You know, there's no effective way for the Senate to deal with that — none.

And now I know that the members opposite are going to get up and do a song and dance about, well if we'd only elect them, if we only elect them then they could become effective. Well I'm not so sure about that. And I'm not so sure about the transition of that and as to whether or not other provinces will want to sign on to that. So I'm not so sure that it's an automatic leap to say, okay, we're going to elect them. Well we're not really electing them; we're going to elect them and then recommend their appointment to a prime minister who's still going to appoint them, but that somehow that's going to morph into a more effective Senate somehow.

And I know that's the wishes and the dreams of the right. And they talk about it in glowing terms that if we just elect them, then the Senate will become more effective, but there's no real role definition in terms of what effective means here. Lots of different perspectives by those who support this approach about what the Senate might do, but there's no agreement by people in this country and their elected representatives as to what that role might be, if that's some change from the role that the Senate has historically been given to it and which they're not able to really do. So there's no real consensus here as to what's meant by consensus. If we were to morph from elected into effective, what that effective really means and what is it that Senate would do and what their responsibilities would be, there's been none of that.

And I'm sure we're going to get perspective from government members who have now signalled an indication that they want to weigh in this debate, which I might say parenthetically would be very welcome, would be very welcome because we've had no real articulation of what it is that the government is doing

here other than the straight mechanics of an election. There's been no articulation, no vision by this government as to why, why we want to go in this direction of electing people to be the nominees that we would recommend to the prime minister. No articulation at all.

Now they may put up a backbencher to deal with, but that's not the same as the government articulating what its vision is, what its plan is in this regard, and we've not seen any of that. So we would welcome the intervention by members, but we have to circumscribe that in terms of, you know, who do they really represent, who do they really speak for in this particular case.

So, Mr. Speaker, the other question . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now they're saying, well we were elected as government; we've always kind of said we want to elect a Senate and therefore we should be able to do it and ram it through. Well that's a rather quaint notion, Mr. Speaker, that you take every little thing that you've got on your agenda and lots of others that you've decided to ignore, and that's democracy too. Others that you have decided to ignore, you take this one and say you're going to do it — no explanation, no nothing.

And I'll get to that, Mr. Speaker, about what kind of a Mickey Mouse operation is that, that you would take a serious fundamental change in some institution with all the constitutional overtones that it has and say, we don't really want any discussion because we're going to do it. We've got the might and therefore . . . You know, we've got the might, we've got the most members, and therefore we had the right.

That is no way to run a ship, Mr. Speaker. And you know, that is a majority then trumping over minorities. And that may well be a government trumping the real wishes of the people of Saskatchewan because there had been polls. There had been polls which suggest that . . .

[16:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I'll remind the member from Saskatoon Northwest that he can enter the debate. It's just not going to be now. I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we certainly would welcome the intervention of the members in debate, Mr. Speaker, and to weigh in on these particular issues.

Again, we would appreciate it far more if the government of the day and not the backbenchers would state specifically why it is that this change would be good for the people of Saskatchewan. But we've not heard that. All we've heard from the Minister of Justice in moving the Bill is the mechanics of how we would do something. And that's a little bit different than the why.

And now the members are taking this totally arrogant position — well, we were elected. We were elected, and we said somewhere that we support an election of senators, so we should get to do whatever we want. Which is, when you think of it, the height of arrogance especially given that constitutional changes, and any attempts that you might be making to provide for constitutional tweaking down the road, is really something that ought to be dealt with in a measured way, is something that

should be dealt with in a consultative way, not to simply ramp through a provincial legislature, Mr. Speaker.

So the question of effective is a very real question that the government and not just the backbenchers need to deal with and to articulate.

The other issue that I think people who take the approach that the Triple-E will work is the question of equality and the distribution of Senate seats. And I made the argument, and I'll make that point again that simply electing senators . . . Not really electing them, you're saying to the Prime Minister, these are our nominees for you to put in those seats. He may or may not accept that. And that somehow this might morph into some effective role as yet largely undefined for the Senate. It raises the question of how do we deal with the inequalities that are there in the current Senate?

How do we deal with the fact that Saskatchewan has, at this point, six senators, but Nova Scotia has 10 senators, New Brunswick has 10 senators? How do we deal with that inequality? And having now elected, not quite elected but say, for the sake of argument, electing senators — and those senators are taking on to themselves a little bit more power and so on — please do explain to me and the people of Saskatchewan why it is then that those jurisdictions that have a far greater presentation or representation in the Senate would want to give that up? Why would you give that up? What is the incentive to give that up?

Well I know that one of the incentives might be, is that if you make other fundamental constitutional changes, you might do some horse-trading. But I'll get to that in a minute. But, you know, here again like without any other things on the table, why would a province give that up? Can anyone answer that question? Why would you give up something that you have in terms of power at the centre? Why would you give it up? And that is a question that when we ask it, it just met with a stunning silence — not just here, but in other quarters as well, Mr. Speaker.

So we're not at all convinced that this approach that the government and the so-called Triple-E advocates are on is the right approach. Again, and all of it comes back to the fact that, you know, all of it comes back to the fact that if you want to change this organization called the Senate — which has been bequeathed to us by the Fathers of Confederation in something called our constitution — that you can't arbitrarily make changes to that structure through something called a Triple-E and not at some point at the end of the day arrive at a question of you know, whoops, a constitutional change is required here if you really want to have an equal, effective, and elected Senate, Mr. Speaker.

So I certainly can appreciate where the right is coming from on this, but I don't quite follow the logic here as to how this is actually going to result in a reformed Senate as opposed to an abolished Senate.

Now the abolition of the Senate, that's an alternative that the government hasn't put forward. That's something that had long been advocated by interests in Canada, the latest being the actual Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who's mused about

abolishing the Senate. If the Senate didn't do his way in terms of what he was looking for, he said, well I would consider abolishing the Senate. He would join forces with Jack Layton, who favours an abolition of the Senate. And the Prime Minister might do the same.

So you know, I see the member's scratching his head. He's right. I don't understand this either, how these things happen in Ottawa. But here you have it. You have a Conservative Prime Minister; you had a New Democratic Party leader. And both of them are both of the same mind in terms of the abolition of the Senate. And I say that by way of indicating that there had been voices over the years — in fact since the Senate was first established — there had been voices who have called for the abolition of the Senate because of a number of reasons.

This is certainly because there's this tension between elected versus non-elected. That this is the same tension that the British House of Lords must be feeling in the British parliament when it comes to the House of Commons, and one of the reasons that the Blair government then moved to begin to reform the House of Lords.

In some ways the Senate of Canada was constructed to reflect the same thoughts that people in Great Britain had about the House of Lords, where the House of Lords was put into place to ensure that there was a body of sober, second thought, so called — and something that people have certainly had a lot of puns with on, but I won't go there.

But in the House of Lords the position was taken that, you know, you really couldn't have this popularly elected rabble in the House of Commons make all kinds of changes that might affect capital in our country. And therefore there needed to be some constraint on those popularly elected Democrats to take a run at the property classes in England. And that was an important role of the House of Lords in Great Britain, to act as a bit of a check and a balance on the House of Commons so as to ensure that the House of Commons didn't go overboard in terms of attacking capital in Great Britain.

Well similarly here in Canada, the senators were expected to provide sober, second thought to decisions reached in the House of Commons which would otherwise have gone unchecked. And they were also expected to represent the interest of the property class, the landed gentry, hence the requirement that the senators own \$4,000 worth of real property. And that was \$4,000 of real property back in the 1800s, and that \$4,000 would have a little bit different value today.

But even there the thoughts were, by the elites that controlled the country, that you know we really need to have some check and balance here. That properly elected representatives don't do things that affect capital in this country, and we've got to have some check and balance on that. Well that's what they're originally thinking. I think that's probably the source of the tension that still exists in Canada about the question and the role of a Senate, and as to whether there should even be a Senate.

And I know that the members opposite say the way to deal with that is now to elect these senators — well not quite election — but to elect senators in Saskatchewan that can then be recommended for appointment by the Prime Minister. And

that's the way to deal with that. But others take the point of view that it should be abolished. Certainly that has over time been a belief of the party that I belong to.

The New Democratic Party has long taken the point of view that the Senate in Canada ought to be abolished, that we should not for one moment, not for one moment, accept a scenario where those who are elected by the people in democratic, fair elections — elected by the people to represent those people — should have in any way their considerations be trumped by those who are appointed. That that is not tenable in any kind of a democracy in fact makes Canada a bit of a laughingstock for the rest of the world, when they see this unelected, unaccountable Senate making use of the limited powers they have to try and subvert the popular will of parliament.

So that has always been a considerable source of concern for my party, the New Democratic Party. I'm pleased to see that the Prime Minister of Canada is now also now musing in those ways. That historically has not been the position of the Liberals and Conservatives federally because they've seen the Senate as an important source of being able to appoint partisans, to appoint those people that supported them — the people that raised money for them in election, the people that did significant work for them in election. To use the Senate as a way of rewarding those political activists by appointment to the Senate for the prestige and, I guess in some ways too, for the salary that senators receive.

And we've certainly seen that in Saskatchewan where we've seen a number of very, very partisan people being appointed to serve in the Senate. Eric Berntson is certainly one that comes to mind as a person that was appointed because of his political connections. Dave Tkachuk is certainly someone that comes to mind, given his very active role in the election of Grant Devine in the 1980s and his active work on behalf of the then Progressive Conservative Party, probably federally as well. And that was rewarded by his appointment to the Senate. And there are others from the other side as well.

From time to time, the Prime Minister may make appointments that seem more independent, people who are not partisans as such, for whatever reason that might be the case. But in the main, the appointments to the Senate have been people who are being rewarded for their political contributions to the Conservative and Liberal Parties in this country. So we've always seen a great deal of resistance from those parties to any change in that ability of theirs to reward their political activists.

And my party takes the position that there shouldn't be a Senate, has never been in office in Ottawa either to be put in a position of what you would do with a vacancy in the Senate. But they've taken the position that the Senate should be abolished.

You know, what does the Senate do? What change would it really make to Canadians if the Senate were abolished? When you go to their annual report, their most recent annual report, they will outline a number of things that they're active in. For example, they say that they legislate for Canadians. And I read their annual report and it says:

Senators considered 59 bills this fiscal year. Some bills

they passed without amendment, they amended others where they perceived problems, and made observations about related concerns. They spent hundreds of working hours studying and debating legislation. And, not content to simply review cabinet's agenda, they introduced nearly half the bills they considered, addressing issues important to the citizens they represent.

[16:30]

No doubt. No doubt. But the question is, why should an unelected group of people be put in a position of doing that, and also recognizing that their ability to deal with legislation, even if they were elected, is very circumscribed, very limited, Mr. Speaker.

So yes, they do deal with legislation, but again recognizing the major activity of the House of Commons when it comes to legislation, the Senate's activities in this regard might be considered to be a minor contribution overall to the development of legislation in Canada.

Now I'm sure that there will be arguments from senators on that point, and again I don't want to, at any point, have my remarks misconstrued as being critical of any of the people that currently serve in the Senate and the contributions they make to public life and have made to public life in Canada, and some of those contributions are significant, and I referenced that previously in my remarks, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that the Senate also does, they call investigating the issues. They have set up a number of committees. They have committees that deal with various policy areas. They say these committee operate like think tanks, independently pursuing research in areas that affect Canadians' lives. They've spent thousands of hours in committee meetings, and I would agree that they do that. There's no doubt they do that. That's not to say that the House of Commons might not undertake a greater role in that respect, but the Senate certainly has committees.

But again the question is, why should an unelected group of men and women be put in a position of passing judgment on policy matters in our country? And again, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak positively of the reception that people of Saskatchewan received by the Standing Committee on National Finance where we appeared on a number of occasions to speak to issues related to equalization. That has been a considerable source of interest and concern to that particular Senate committee. I think they've done good work in that regard, and the other committees have done good work in that regard. But, you know, why have a Senate to simply do committee work and to review things that, you know, arguably, the members of the House of Commons could also undertake to do, Mr. Speaker?

So yes, they investigate issues. They advocate for change. There are other things that they do. Yes, they advocate for change. They bring Canadians' concerns inside parliament, they say.

There have been special task forces that have been undertaken by senators. I made mention earlier of the Croll commission, Senator Croll, and his groundbreaking work on poverty in this

country. Other senators have done some very important work — Senator Kirby, if I remember correctly in the area of health care. All of them have made a substantial contribution to public debate. But it's a valid question as to whether or not you need a Senate as such to be able to do that kind of work and whether there are other ways, through royal commissions and the like, to also do that work.

Now all of this work, there's a cost involved to Canadians of doing this. The financial statements for the Senate indicate that the total operations of the Senate is in the neighbourhood . . . cost to the Canadian taxpayers some \$80 million a year. And that's not a small amount of change. That's \$80 million a year, and it raises the question under abolition whether there are more effective ways for people to be engaged to do some of the work that Senators are doing at considerably less cost, and also to eliminate the tensions that we see there with respect to unelected versus an elected House of Commons.

So there is not inconsiderable cost, and I know that somebody was suggesting that, you know, the Senate being the only other red Chamber in the country, if it was abolished, we might be able to get a deal on a second-hand, red carpet here because we're the only other Chamber in Canada, I think, that has a red carpet for reasons that I don't want to go into because you'll say you're straying from the topic at hand. But it's no secret that the carpet here is a little bit threadbare. And the question was, were the seats the priority or is it the carpet? But we certainly would be able to pick up a deal from carpet from the Senate. But I'm joking, Mr. Speaker.

The question of abolition though is a real question and one that when people have looked at this there is support for it. In 1998 an Angus Reid poll found almost as much support for abolishing the Senate as reforming it. Only a very small portion, 5 per cent, supported maintaining the Senate in its current form. So clearly there is a challenge as to what to do with the Senate. And it's also clear now that there are two differing approaches as to how to deal with it.

One approach is to abolish the Senate. The other approach is to — through the back door, I guess — begin to elect people sort of and hope that that morphs then into a consideration of a more effective Senate, unstated what that might be and who might actually define that, and still begging the question of how you deal with the question of equality and equal representation for the provinces or for the regions.

So those are the issues. And you know, where I land in all of this and where I keep coming back to is the question of whether this approach by the government or the abolition approach that's advocated by some, will either of these approaches work at the end of the day?

There is considerable opinion that suggests that abolition of the Senate requires constitutional change, that the federal government cannot arbitrarily say we're going to abolish the Senate, and that at least 7 of the 10 provinces would have to agree to such a change. And yet we know that there continues to be strong support in the Atlantic provinces for the continuation of the Senate, whether those provinces would at any point agree to such an abolition.

The same token, there's a question of whether the change that's envisioned I suppose by the government . . . although they don't articulate what that vision is and this particular change might at the end of the day also not result in the same expectation of constitutional change. That again if you elect or you elect to nominate people to the Prime Minister, you have an increasing number of elected versus non-elected senators, although what kind of system that would be I'm not really clear, and that somehow this would then also translate through into a redistribution of Senate seats that might better reflect regional balance in this country, might reflect other considerations . . . I don't know, but certainly would have to deal with the inequalities that we are currently seeing in a Senate when you look at it from a provincial basis, again, where you have Atlantic provinces that each are entitled to 10 senators, but Saskatchewan is entitled to 6 senators.

And again I think that if that particular part of the equation is to be changed, then I think you're looking at constitutional reform. And then the question is, if you're looking at constitutional reform at that stage, as the last stage of the Triple-E, what kinds of horse-trading would we have to do if we are wedded to that approach? What kind of horse-trading would we have to do as a province to be able to convince other jurisdictions, other provinces, to give up, relatively speaking, some of the power they now have in that Senate?

And so I keep coming back to the question of the constitution and that you really cannot effectively reform the Senate unless and until there's agreement on the part of our leadership in this country — and significantly the premiers in this country and the legislatures in this country — to fundamentally reform the Senate and then to have some vision as to how to do that.

And again I note the irony, the irony that the one attempt in all of our history to reform the Senate that was agreed to by the provinces was in the Meech Lake Accord and recognizing the . . . And that was a change that would have dealt with regional issues, would have moved us to an effective and elected Senate although none of it was spelled out, but there was agreement to move in that direction. I find it just so ironic that the right wing in this country, who valued the reform of the Senate, an elected Senate above almost anything else . . . and I don't know. We'd have to ask what their primary reason is for that. But, you know, an elected Senate, an elected Senate as a check on parliament, raises questions about what kind of power a Senate would wield and how that might subvert the popular will of people who are elected to the House of Commons.

But, Mr. Speaker, that is the question as to how we would amend the constitution, but they did it through Meech Lake. There was agreement in the Meech Lake to reform the Senate, but the right wing said no. The right wing in Canada said, no we don't want to do that. Having argued for reform of the Senate, then said no, we don't want to do that. And the right wing, the Reform Party, significantly one Preston Manning — whence some of these members opposite come from, whence some of these members opposite from — also argued mightily against that Meech Lake Accord. So you have to question what is that they wanted with respect to an election of the Senate.

So I see the Premier is speaking from his seat, interjecting himself into this debate. You know, I wish the Premier and his

Minister of Justice would get to their feet in this debate and articulate clearly for the people of Saskatchewan what it is that they are seeking to do here, not just the mechanics of how we might elect a nominee to recommend to the Prime Minister but why we would do that, what kind of change that might result in at the end of the day in the Senate, how that might reform a Senate, and how all of that would better the situation for Canadians from coast to coast.

And they've been very silent on that. All they've said is that we're elected and somewhere in our platform . . . although it's not something that factored heavily in the provincial election just passed. I don't remember that being an issue on doorsteps. But nevertheless they say, you check the fine print; we've always favoured an elected Senate. So therefore we're going to do it.

Well that's a real issue that I have, that you would in this way seek to introduce constitutional change in Canada and, I guess, in Saskatchewan in this way, that you would put a Bill before the Legislative Assembly and not really provide an explanation why you would do it and why it's in the interests of people in Saskatchewan to do it, simply say, in an arrogant dismissive way, well it was in our platform so you have to vote for it. That's what we wanted, and that's what we're going to do.

Don't ask us for explanations. Don't ask us to outline our vision for a reformed Senate. Don't ask us to weigh in as to what an effective Senate might look like in Canada. Don't ask us for the hard questions on an equal Senate — what kind of representation we would seek to have from Saskatchewan versus other jurisdictions — don't ask us any of that. Just vote for the Bill, for a reformed Senate. Just move us down that road.

[16:45]

Don't ask us any of the hard questions. You know, we're just doing it because those guys in Alberta did it and what's good for them is good for us. What's good for the people of Alberta should be good for the people of Saskatchewan. Don't ask any questions. Well it's a good thing we have a Legislative Assembly to in fact ask some of these questions, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I take the point of view that to proceed as we are doing with this motion — no explanation, just simply the mechanics of how we would do it, the mechanics of how we would do it, not why we would do it, not what the vision is — that this is a Mickey Mouse way to operate. And I think it's not worthy of the government to in fact deal with a constitutional change in this way.

To deal with questions of constitution, to deal with questions of a constitution — and surely this is a constitutional issue at the end of the day, because I think the inescapable conclusion for anyone that's weighed on on this, at some point you come back to a constitutional change — then begs the question of where it is we're going, what our vision is, what kind of support we can get from people for that vision, and then take the hard decisions about, okay, what direction do we now go? And you know, we've not seen any of that.

We've had other constitutional discussions in Saskatchewan. Some of them have been limited primarily to this Chamber, but

there have also been other discussions that have been broader ranging. And I take the point of view that when you're dealing with the constitution that provides the framework for how we govern ourselves, it is always appropriate to consult, and to consult widely and to consult substantially, with the people that you represent to ensure that their viewpoints are being heard, that their perspectives, that their thoughts, their ideas, are also being listened to when it comes to changing the Senate — not just a question of, well we were elected and it's the fine print in our platform and if you don't like it, lump it. Well that's the height of arrogance as far as I can see, Mr. Speaker, and we ought not to move in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I have been speaking on this matter. That's why I have concerns about this. I think that the government is moving in completely the wrong direction. I think there needs to be a debate as to what an effective role for a Senate might be before we start electing these senators — what our vision is.

Is it a question of regional balance? Is the regional balance still an effective and a valid question in a country like Canada which many people have observed as being the most decentralized country in the world? You know, it might escape our attention because we're so used to it, but not every country in the world has these kinds of powers in provinces and states. The states south of the border have in many ways far less power than the provinces of Canada. We have a great deal of power resident in our provinces.

And so the question is, are we seeking to enhance the power of the provinces at some central location in Ottawa? What is it that we're seeking to do? We need to deal with this question of regional balance. We need to deal with this question of decentralization. What kind of vision do we have for Canada as a country? And what kind of vision within that do we then have for its Senate, Mr. Speaker? And I frankly think that those are the questions that really need to be dealt with.

I would strongly encourage, strongly encourage the provincial government not to continue to proceed in the arrogant fashion that it is without any explanation, to not proceed in the arrogant fashion that it is — to pull this Bill, to look at a consultative process as to where it is we're going when we elect senators. What is our vision for an effective and an equal Senate? What kinds of constitutional amendments we might be needing to look at down the road so that we are fully informed as to what the outcome is of this little piece of legislation, this Mickey Mouse Bill that's before us, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly today and to speak in support of Bill 60, *The Senate Nominee Election Act*.

While I have much to say in support of this Bill and in response to members opposite in their intervention on this Bill, I appreciate the time constraints of the Assembly and other

members' desire to debate this and other Bills today. So I'll keep my remarks brief this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I come to this debate not at the behest of any individual, not another member of this Chamber, or any other citizen of this country. Nor, Mr. Speaker, am I simply adhering slavishly to any political thoughts as members opposite have come to believe.

Mr. Speaker, I do support this Bill and its intentions because, yes, it is what I believe my party and most of my constituents agree with. But, Mr. Speaker, more than anything else I support Bill 60 and seek to add my voice in support in this Chamber because I believe that this is a small but important step in improving our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is, as the Justice minister said in his second reading speech, an important step in moving our system of government down the path of being a more democratic system. This Bill will ensure that the people of Saskatchewan have an increased say in who represents them in the national capital.

Mr. Speaker, while there is much debate and dissenting opinions on the role of the Senate in Canada, one thing is very clear. The Senate as an institution has served this country for 141 years, and there's nothing to suggest that this will change any time soon no matter how many times members opposite chant words abolish, abolish, abolish.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the abolition of the Senate would only happen under a federal NDP government. A federal NDP government and the abolition of the Senate are two things I would advise my constituents to not hold their breaths waiting for. So, Mr. Speaker, we as elected officials and as citizens of this nation, have really two options: retain the status quo or work to bring all of our democratic institutions into their rightful place into the 21st century. Mr. Speaker, I choose the latter.

Mr. Speaker, in opposing this Bill and the democratization of Senate selection, members opposite put forward the argument that there is no sense in changing how senators are selected because it is by its nature an ineffective body. The member for Regina Douglas Park, my hon. colleague, said quote ". . . why spend money to elect a senator when that senator has no effective role?" Mr. Speaker, he furthered his argument by stating that senators in Canada are largely ineffective because they have quote ". . . no authority to spend money, has no authority to vote on taxes, to raise or to lower taxes."

Mr. Speaker, he is somewhat correct. According to section 53 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, "Bills for appropriating any Part of the Public Revenue, or for imposing any Tax or Impost, shall originate in the House of Commons." So, Mr. Speaker, on this point he is somewhat correct that senators cannot spend money or raise or lower taxes.

But, Mr. Speaker, does this in itself make the Senate ineffective? Mr. Speaker, here's another quote. Quote, "All bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House." Mr. Speaker, I have taken this directly from another important document, section 7 of the United States constitution. Rules governing the

United States Senate were adopted by the framers of the US constitution largely from the British parliament, just as was the case in Canada. Surely, Mr. Speaker, there is not a rational person who has ever taken a political studies course or a history class or, dare I say, no one who has ever read a newspaper would argue that the US Senate is an ineffective body.

Further to this point, Mr. Speaker, if one of the bars for the member from Douglas Park in determining the effectiveness of a legislature or its membership is the authority to raise or spend money, then, Mr. Speaker, what does that say about that member's belief in his own effectiveness in this Assembly? As a private member, he does not have this very same ability in this Chamber to move a Bill that would spend money or raise taxes, yet I do not believe anyone would argue that the member from Regina Douglas Park is not an effective member of this Chamber despite the lack of authority, that surely this member believes that the people of Regina Douglas Park should be represented in this Chamber and should have the right to vote for their member of their choice.

Mr. Speaker, democracy and our form of government is ever changing. We've seen changes to how this very legislature functions in terms of the role committees play and other rules and procedures.

We have seen in our province and in other provinces and the national parliament how our system has adapted and changed, hopefully to better serve our citizens. Democracy is not static.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Douglas Park referenced the American and the Australian models of Senate. But they too have witnessed their share of changes. It wasn't until 1913 in the 17th Amendment that American citizens were allowed to vote for their members of the upper chamber, which had up until that time been chosen by the state legislature.

Mr. Speaker, our very own province has recently joined the rank of other provinces in having set election dates. Democracy is not static.

Mr. Speaker, as my time draws to a close, I want to conclude this by saying, with all due respect, I do not consider, as does the member from Regina Douglas Park, this Bill to be frivolous. I do not consider it a waste of time nor money. Mr. Speaker, nor do I consider any attempt to give my constituents and the people of this great province a little more say in who governs them frivolous or a waste of time. Democracy is never a frivolous exercise.

Mr. Speaker, does this Bill provide for a sweeping overall on how the Senate functions? No, it does not. Does it on its face improve the effectiveness of the upper chamber? Perhaps not, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, as legislators, we ultimately determine how effective this place functions. And I would submit to you that no law or Act or proclamation can dictate the effectiveness or efficiency of any legislative body as effectively as those who serve in it.

With the passage of this Bill, I believe we are giving the people of Saskatchewan what they deserve — the opportunity to choose their own representatives. Mr. Speaker, a better democracy.

Mr. Speaker, governments in a democracy don't always move swiftly, nor in always a progressive direction. Change is not easy. But that doesn't lessen our responsibility to try to make it better. Since declaring their independence from Britain in 1776, American lawmakers have amended their constitution 27 times, the last coming in 1992. That amendment, the 27th, made its way through the long and difficult process over the course of 74,003 days. From the day it was first proposed in the 1st Congress by Madison and first ratified by the state of Maryland in 1789, it took some 202 years for it to be fully ratified and enshrined into law.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Douglas Park called the ongoing Senate debate in our country the curse of our country. Mr. Speaker, the fact that we are today on a November afternoon in 2008 discussing the Senate, discussing how our democracy functions, just as I am sure Mr. Blakeney and Mr. Romanow discussed it some 30 years ago, just as parliamentarian David Mills spoke of reform in 1874 as pointed out by the member opposite, the fact that we can and are discussing this 141 years later is not, as the hon. member said last week, the curse of our country. That this ongoing debate, I believe, is not the curse of our country, Mr. Speaker, but a tribute to this great nation and to the strength of our democracy — that we can discuss it and maybe even, Mr. Speaker, maybe even change it for the better. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to join in this debate in large part because of the considerable thought that has obviously gone into the remarks of all the previous speakers, including the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy who I know was anxious to deliver his remarks today. And so I'm glad for him that he had the opportunity to do that. I quite happily would have heard them, I would have quite happily heard them on Monday. I was quite happy to hear them today.

As I said, my remarks, I expect — following such thoughtful submissions as were made by the three previous speakers — may be briefer because of the territory that's already been covered. But I suspect not so brief as to be entirely completed in the time left for us today.

The previous speaker, Mr. Speaker, entered into the discussion as if we were debating a change to the constitution and, Mr. Speaker, of course there's a way that the legislature could do that. The legislature could pass a resolution to allow for constitutional discussion, constitutional amendment.

I listened to the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy very carefully, and he was talking about amending, how the constitution was amended in the United States 27 times, and you make these incremental changes, Mr. Speaker.

And if we want to talk about constitutional change, there are ways that we can do that, Mr. Speaker. And they would be more democratic than what's being proposed by the government, which is not to talk about constitutional change but to avoid

actually debating about whether we want to make a constitutional change and effect a constitutional change to the Senate, Mr. Speaker.

And on the next opportunity to address this matter, I will want to talk about what the resolution does or the Bill does do and what it does not do, Mr. Speaker, but that will be another day.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time of adjournment having been reached, this House now stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

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Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Crown Corporations

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Minister of Government Services
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Gaming Authority
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