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Bill No. 104 – The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Consequential Amendment Act, 2013

Mr. Forbes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise tonight and enter into this debate on Bill No. 104, *An Act to make a consequential amendment resulting from the enactment of The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2013*.

And my colleague from Regina just gave a pretty good discussion about our hopes and fears around what this all means. And of course you know, as he said clearly, we want to do all that we can to make sure maintenance orders are enforced. And that only makes a lot of sense. And we have a pretty high standard here in Saskatchewan of achieving that and we are very proud of that, of the office that looks after that. And so if this is one more tool that they need in their tool kit, that's fair enough. We are very interested in hearing about that.

But I do have some questions, and very similar to what the member had earlier said about when they did the consultation, about what can we do to make our maintenance orders — the enforcement rate — much higher? Was this the only thing they could think of? Was this the only thing they could think of?

Now interestingly, we do have a pretty high enforcement rate. The office that works out of Justice is a pretty effective office. And we were able to and I, just a few months ago, we were able to question them a bit about their work, and the auditor had their comments and they were pretty favourable, if I recall that correctly.

But this was an interesting one. I mean, it's interesting. I didn't realize, you know, when you have preconceptions about maintenance orders that, you know, it only relates to a certain age group, and when kids grow up and they hit 18 that the enforcement is done. And that's not the case. In fact, maintenance orders can go on for quite a while. Or the payment that didn't happen is actually still outstanding, and this in fact could . . . in fact I understand that there are actually seniors who are still involved with making sure that

they pay their maintenance orders. It's not all done just because the child hits 18. And so this is an interesting one about fishing licences, because what's interesting is that you're not really . . . It's more of a punishment. And that's fair enough. We want to do all that we can if that's the case. But I'm wondering, in terms of the amount of red tape, and we want to be effective. You don't want to have just a piece of legislation that says we're going to take away your fishing licence but we're not really going to do that because it's just too much work to actually do that.

And you know, I know this government, to a fault almost, I mean, they've really on one hand gone in and cut a lot of red tape, where sometimes I wonder if they have gone too far because we don't know what's going on anymore. And here they are creating another step that we really want to know how effective it can be. How effective can it be?

It's really important that there is some . . . You know, when you think about a tool or a hammer or whatever, you've got to make sure you don't make a hammer out of something really soft because it won't do any work. It won't hurt. So how will this really. . . Are they really planning on, you know, the Nerf hammer?

How do you really make sure this will achieve the results, you know, that we're going to drive up the enforcement order, the enforcement compliance from 90 to 95 per cent? That last 5 per cent can be pretty difficult. And I'm wondering, is it because they have fishing licences, you know? I don't know. Maybe they do. Maybe that's something that we've heard from the office, but we'll have lots of questions about that.

They've done very good work, very effective work. But will this be as effective as putting another law on the table? And then you do have a responsibility. These folks over here will have a responsibility to make sure that's carried out. It's not just something that we've spent hours debating in the House and they've spent and the Department of Justice has spent a lot of time thinking about. It has to be something that has some teeth and has some effect. It has to have an effect.

And so I'm curious about this. I'm really . . . And it's interesting. As my colleague said, was this the only suggestion they had? Or were there others, and they discounted them and put them off the side of the table? And we know that often, and we've seen this earlier, even earlier today my colleague from the North was talking about how we've been paying for seven years the rush to put essential services legislation through improperly. And they've done it improperly because they didn't listen. They didn't listen to the people who really have some experience in this.

So this is, while it is a small thing, it's a pretty significant thing. And I know that in fact we have a lot of beautiful lakes in our province. We have a lot of people who love fishing, and this is one more wrinkle in that case.

And as my colleague earlier said about the snafu that happened when we moved to having the local co-ops or the local Canadian Tire selling the fishing licences, and it was pretty much a small-business type of thing. And I know this government prides itself on

being small-business oriented, except for when it comes to fishing licences, the bigger it can be. If we could have an international conglomerate look after our fishing licence, it must be a good thing, you know. And so only when you have international businesses, when you have an international office dealing with this.

So it's really important that, I mean, here's where we have this inconsistency. You know, we love the small business but we don't want the Co-op selling a fishing licence. We don't want the Canadian Tire selling the fishing licences or the local gas station.

You know, I think this is really, this is the inconsistency, the incongruity we see of this government. When on one hand they love small business and they hate getting rid of red tape, and here we introduce red tape and we want the big business to deal with it. So it doesn't make common sense at all. There's no common sense in this at all. And we have said when it makes sense we will be right there. We will step right up and work with the government.

But we've seen this Tennessee licence boondoggle that they had. And I mean, they may be proud of it. It sounds the minister thinks it was the greatest thing since sliced bread to bring the Tennesseans up to sell the fishing licences. He really likes that idea . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Davy Crockett. He must have been sold on the Davy Crockett thing.

But here we have a situation. Here we have a situation where what we're trying to do, a simple thing, is get more people to pay their maintenance orders. And is this going to really achieve that? I don't know. So we'll have lots of questions. We'll have lots of questions and what the consequences of this legislation will be, will be of interest. I think that it's an important area and we want to make sure that we do the right thing. And if this the right thing, then fair enough and we'll go with it. But I do have to send out some flags that we've had some big questions about the lack of common sense from the other side when it comes to some of the things that they've done. That just seems like when if it ain't broke, then why are you fixing it by bringing up Tennesseans to deal with this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know there's lots of interest. And I know that the members on the opposite side have really sparked up on this a bit. But I think that we'll have questions in committee, but I know many of my colleagues will want to speak to this piece of legislation. As small as it is, it just sort of indicates that, you know, have they done their full . . . have they done all their homework? Have they done all their homework? That's the question we have.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn Bill No. 104, *An Act to make a consequential amendment resulting from the enactment of The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2013*. I do so move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.