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## Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

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# DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

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**Bill No. 171 – *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act***

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to enter into this debate on Bill No. 171, *An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. And I want to thank all the guests who've come here from across the province. And I want to especially thank the Chief Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission for the good work that he has done, and played a huge role in bringing this forward, and also to the Minister of Justice and this government and the Premier for bringing this bill forward. It's a very important bill.

But even more to the citizens who worked tirelessly to see this day. You know, our leader said if a bill makes sense, then we will be here to support it. And so we are here today, and I think this is a good thing. I also want to recognize the important work of community groups such as TransSask Support Services, Avenue Community Centre, gender equity, and Time 4 Rights. And raising awareness is about the challenges facing a sex- and gender-diverse community while celebrating the lives of transsexual, transgender, and intersex people from across, in Saskatchewan.

We believe that all people of Saskatchewan should have the resources and support to lead their lives however they wish to and have their needs accommodated without being hindered by discriminatory practices. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in that instrument without distinction of any kind.

The acts of violence and discrimination directed towards people because of gender identity or expression are simply unacceptable. To that end, the opposition has called in the past for greater protection by changing *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* to include the terms gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination. We were, to paraphrase the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., appalled at the silence of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* to address the protection of the

trans community. But today we celebrate its strong voice. This is a good day. We are told the protection is there. It's implicit, not explicit like everybody else's. But it reminded me of the civil rights movement in the '60s when Afro-Americans were told they were equal too but just separate.

Every member of society expects explicit protection from our Human Rights Code — say what you mean and mean what you say — and we have that today. The struggle continues though for sure, for example, to ensure that there are supports in our schools for students who request support like GSAs [gay-straight alliance]. And we will continue to monitor whether gender expression is needed as well.

Mr. Speaker, this Wednesday, December 10th, is international Human Rights Day. This year's slogan is Human Rights 365.

It encompasses the idea that every day is Human Rights Day. It celebrates the fundamental proposition in the Universal Declaration that each one of us, everywhere, at all times is entitled to the full range of human rights, that human rights belong equally to each of us and bind us together as a global community with the same ideals and values.

And so we should celebrate human rights every day.

In closing, Martin Luther King said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” Today that arc is bending even more here in Saskatchewan. Thank you very much. The opposition is now prepared to have Bill 171 move to committee.