

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Fourth Session — Twelfth Legislature

34th Day

Tuesday, March 27, 1956

The House met at 2:30 o'clock p.m.

On the Orders of the Day.

No. 1 Highway

Mr. R. H. Wooff (Turtleford): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with I would just like to draw the attention of the House to a clipping from the 'Moose Jaw Times' of Friday, March 23rd, dealing with the reconstruction and building of No. 1 Highway. It was my privilege to drive over a long stretch of No. 1 Highway at the weekend, and I consider it as a credit to the Minister of Highways (Hon. Mr. J. T. Douglas), his engineers, road-builders and the province.

Interest Rate on Government Loans

Mr. A.H. McDonald (Leader of Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day are proceeded with, I would like to refer to a statement which was made by the Provincial Treasurer (Hon. Mr. Fines) in the House on March 24, when he referred to some of my remarks during the budget debate in a radio address a day or two following. He criticised some of the things I had to say at that time.

Since that time I have been able to get a copy of the 'Leader-Post' with the statement of the Provincial Treasurer in it, and I want to read it to the members of the Legislature, to confirm that what I said both in the House and on the radio is a statement of fact, and I will quote from an article that was produced by the Provincial Treasurer, the Hon. Mr. Fines. He said this:

"Only this month we were able to borrow \$10 million at a lower rate of interest than any other province, or even the Dominion has done since 1950."

There is no more nor less to the statement than that. There is no qualification as to the length of the loans; there is no qualification as to whether the money was borrowed in Canada, the United States or Great Britain, and for that reason, I take in my statements from the Bank of Montreal report for 1955, and have marked the loans which I refer to in this booklet, which I will deliver to the Provincial Treasurer. I note there is one loan for a 20-year period and I will be very pleased to draw that to his attention as well.

When he was speaking in the House on the 24th of March, he said if I were able to prove this, he would be very pleased to apologize to the House, and I would certainly accept his apologies.

March 27, 1956

Hon. C. M. Fines (Provincial Treasurer): — Mr. Speaker, may I point out again that the official statement I gave in writing to the press on the day the loan was made, was the first day of April, published in the paper on the second. I had no idea it was coming up, consequently I did not bring it. This article was one which came out some 24 days later. I realize that the hon. gentleman has say on this. However, I would say that certainly the first official statement dealing with the debt covered the situation as I outlined it the other day, and as they put on the records of the House, what I did say in the official statement.

Secondly, may I say that anybody who knows anything about finance knows that when you are talking about lower interest rates, you take it on a comparable basis. You do not compare one-year notes with 18-year bonds.

Mr. McDonald: — There is a 20-year one in here.

Hon. Mr. Fines: — Mr. Speaker, may I say to my hon. friend that there is not, with the exception of one in the United States — the province of Quebec — a 20-year bond with the province of Quebec, but again, that has nothing to do with bonds issued in the Dominion of Canada. The statement which I made originally on the first day of April, the statement that was handed to the press of this province and which they published on the 2nd day of April, still stands.

Therefore, I have nothing to apologize to my hon. friend for. We shall settle the matter in the country.

Mr. McDonald: — Is that your statement? I would like to ask a question. Did you prepare the statement that you have . . .

Hon. Mr. Fines: — This is one of my statements . . .

Mr. Speaker: — Order! Order!

Second Reading

Bill No. 67 — An Act to Amend The Larger School Units Act.

Hon. W. S. Lloyd (Minister of Education): — Mr. Speaker, under this Act is our intention to place before the Legislature legislation which will change the method of election of unit trustees from the present delegate system to one of direct vote of resident ratepayers. The present method was first set out in legislation in the School Divisions Act of 1940 and has been used since the organization of the first units in 1944.

For the information of members of the House I will read parts of the Act of 1940: (Sections 10 and 11)

The School Divisions Act, 1940

Section 10. Subsection (2).

In each year after the year in which a school division is established, the secretary of each school district in a subdivision in which an election of a member of the divisional board is necessary shall in the month of September call a meeting of the trustees for the purpose of electing a delegate to attend the subdivisional meeting.

Section 11. Subsection (2).

In each year after the year in which a school division is established and in which the election of a member of the divisional board is necessary in a subdivision, a meeting of the delegates of the subdivision shall be held for that purpose on a date not earlier than the fifteenth day of October and not later than the first Tuesday in December and at such time and place as may be fixed by the divisional board.

The delegate system was in my opinion a desirable procedure during the process of transition from local districts to larger units. Today, 56 out of 60 areas in the province are organized as units. Fifty-one have completed their trial period of 5½ years.

These units include 4,795 districts. As at June 30, 1955, 5,096 classrooms operated in 3,074 of the districts. In the remaining 1,721 no schools were in operation and conveyance programmes in effect except where there were no children. The centralization of school population through the use of school buses has developed steadily and solidly and will without doubt continue.

With these developments there is a growing feeling in the province that the delegate system leaves the ratepayer separated by too many steps from his unit board member. The ratepayer must first elect a local board member — one of three or five. The local board members in turn choose one or more delegates who then, together with other delegates, select a sub-unit trustee. When a conveyance arrangement is in effect the local board is less directly in contact with the actual school operation. This may mean a greater tendency towards non-election of local boards, election by a small number of ratepayers or self-perpetuation of existing local boards. None of these is desirable if avoidable, and it is argued that the direct election will better avoid such difficulties. Direct election does make it possible for the resident ratepayer to participate more intimately in the selection of the sub-unit trustee.

The suggested amendment should not be construed as reflecting any feeling on the part of the Government — most certainly not on my part, that present trustees have been derelict in the performance of their duties. I have said before, and wish to repeat that the people of Saskatchewan have been fortunate in the quality of men — and some women — who have been willing to shoulder the responsibilities of unit trustees. They have had vision, vigour and courage. They have developed an experiment in

March 27, 1956

school administration into a lasting and accepted form of local education government. They have produced many new ideas and pioneered the development of those ideas. They will undoubtedly continue to do so.

But changing circumstances do require changing measures. It should be mentioned that in those town districts constituting in themselves a sub unit we propose there to keep the delegate system. There is certain to be a school in operation in such a district. In rural districts only one member of the board participating with delegates from other boards has selected the sub-unit trustee. In the towns constituting a sub unit all the board members and only the members of that board select the sub-unit trustee. Hence the difference in proposed procedures.

This change raises the question of the statutes of local boards. There will be some who argue that the change reduces the responsibility and the authority of local boards. Whether or not it does depends, I suggest, on one's view of the function of the local boards — if you like, of the philosophy of the unit. I have never believed that responsibility is necessarily a function of the right to make the final decisions. Nor do I believe that meaningful authority is necessarily defined by the right to commit a certain act unless that act in itself has considerable implication. A man building a simple piece of furniture requiring simple materials and elementary tools, has rather complete responsibility for the outcome and authority within the limits of the project. The same man working with others on a more comprehensive project requiring varied materials and complex tools may well have much more responsibility and in fact, more is less direct — authority.

The value of local boards lies not so much in the direct authority as it does in using them to assist in analyzing the problems of education in the area and in planning the solutions of these problems. So used, they can assume much more responsibility than when in complete charge, limited only by circumstances, of the local school. So used, their authority — spelled out in terms of the effect it has on the educational programme — can likewise be increased. The need for this kind of use, plus the need for supervision of local schools and bus arrangements, plus the possibilities of central boards in conveying areas, provides considerable scope for the members of local boards. It also provides responsibility and authority within a system of democratic, responsible local government.

I therefore move, Mr. Speaker, second reading of Bill No. 67.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:00 o'clock p.m.