

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of petitions here to present from the Environmental Fairness Association. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any consideration of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the costs involved in digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offer alternatives through abandoning regulations called for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have proven to be leaking, cost-sharing or other alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

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

These petitions come from Radisson, Hafford, Dubuc, Estevan -- across the province, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present them now.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I as well would like to present a petition. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to put aside any consideration of forcing small-business owners to pay 100 per cent of the costs involved with digging up underground storage tanks and replacing them, and instead offer alternatives through abandoning regulations calling for digging up underground tanks, with the exception of those tanks which have been proven to be leaking, cost-sharing or another alternative agreed upon by all parties affected.

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

These petitions are signed by individuals from Watson, Leroy, Goodsoil, Pierceland, Lloydminster, and Sturgis. I so present them.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce Bill Albert and other members of the Environmental Fairness Association who are seated in the west gallery today. I would ask that members welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Knezacek: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you, as well, the foursome from the Saltcoats constituency, Barb and Bill Albert, and Mr. and Mrs. Greg Rushka from the town of Saltcoats. They're in town on official business. And I'd like to welcome them. And have a safe trip home, would you please. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to introduce a very special guest to our Assembly today to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, Dr. George Gedvanishvili, from the Georgian Republic.

The doctor is a cardiologist from the Georgian Republic health care organization and regional management care department. He is visiting Saskatchewan to get a better understanding of how we provide health services here in the birthplace of medicare.

Toward this end, he will be meeting with various health officials, visiting some of our health facilities, and having discussions with some district health board staff and representatives. And I look forward to meeting with the doctor later this week.

Members will be interested to know that the Republic of Georgia is also in the process of reforming its health system.

Hence, I would invite all members to join with me in welcoming the doctor here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Country Music Awards

Mr. Serby: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this afternoon to boast that the city of Yorkton will be hosting the 1994 Saskatchewan Country Music Awards on April 29 and 30. This, Mr. Speaker, is the fifth annual country music award. And not to be outdone by any of the previous host communities, our local radio station, GX94, their staff, along with dozens of volunteers, are busy making the fifth annual a weekend to include on your calendars.

Saskatchewan is of course very rich in history and talent in the field of country music. Commencing on Friday evening at 8 p.m., the Saskatchewan Country Music Association's fifth annual award show will get under way in the Ann Portnuff Theatre where the Johnner Brothers will be hosting several Saskatchewan entertainers.

Saturday morning will feature a Saskatchewan country music round table discussion on topics on country music opportunities with guest speakers like

Ralph Emery of TNN (The Nashville Network) and entertainer Blake Emmons. The awards banquet on Saturday evening will feature Ralph Emery as the guest speaker, and the cabaret will see Poverty Plainsmen performing.

At this time I'd like to congratulate the bid committee for bringing the Country Music Awards to Yorkton. Yorkton has a long tradition of being a great host and we look forward to seeing country music entertainers and fans from across the province in our city.

So I invite all of Saskatchewan to join us in Yorkton for a great country music weekend. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Esterhazy and Langenburg Arts Council Productions

Mr. Knezacek: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday I boasted about the artistic excellence found in the community of Stockholm in the Saltcoats constituency. There is so much talent throughout my constituency, that today I have to combine two more towns into one statement. I apologize in advance for having to rush.

The Esterhazy Arts Council recently sponsored its second annual talent show with special guests. The show had a country flavour, which was obvious from its title, "Kicking Country." There was a baker's dozen of local acts which kept the audience's toes tapping and hands clapping. As well, there were special appearances by the Parkland Fiddlers and by Dorothy Greenbank.

On October 26, the Esterhazy Arts Council will be featuring Saskatchewan's Connie Kaldor at its next function.

Not to be outdone by Stockholm's dinner theatre, the Langenberg Arts Council recently staged its own show, also written, directed, produced, and performed entirely by local people. This was the Langenberg Arts Council's first attempt at dinner theatre, and according to the review in **The Four-Town Journal**, it was a highly successful production. And that reviewer, Mr. Speaker, is a notoriously tough critic.

The show was called "Fifties Frolic" and is about a time I am too young to remember. But I hear they got it right.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to see these kinds of activities take place in Saltcoats and across the province. They are fun, they raise money for worthwhile projects, and most importantly, they show that our communities are vibrant, alive, and proud. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Retirement of Earl Grey Fire Chief

Mr. Flavel: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to pay tribute to the volunteers of Saskatchewan, the people who give freely of their time and effort to make this a better and a safer place to live. But I want to especially pay tribute to one in particular, a Mr. Karl Glass of Earl Grey, better known as Charlie.

Charlie has just recently retired as fire chief of the town of Earl Grey and the RM (rural municipality) of Longlaketon after 37 years of dedicated service. Charlie has always kept his fire-fighters up to date on new and improved fire-fighting techniques and equipment. Charlie has also always put safety of his fire-fighters first and has worked very hard to achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to again congratulate and thank Charlie for 37 years of excellent and dedicated service as fire chief of the town of Earl Grey and the RM of Longlaketon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Wildlife Week

Mr. Scott: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week, the week of April 10 to 16, is National Wildlife Week in Canada. In 1947 the federal government established National Wildlife Week to honour the late Jack Miner, the father of wildlife conservation in Canada.

Each year we celebrate National Wildlife Week during the week encompassing April 10 which was Jack Miner's birthday.

It is particularly appropriate that we celebrate this week in April, as throughout Canada there is an awakening of life with the spring bird migration, mammals becoming active after a long, cold winter, and the renewal of plant and insect life.

The theme of National Wildlife Week this year is: biodiversity works for wildlife; you can too. In other words we can all do something for wildlife. Landowners can protect habitat on their land, urban residents can plant trees and shrubs in their backyards for wildlife, and feed wildlife, especially in winter, and many teachers and volunteers work with our youth teaching and involving them in wildlife conservation.

As in the past years, concerned citizens and conservation groups in Saskatoon and Regina are pooling their resources and expertise and hosting a variety of wildlife week activities for the public in their cities. For many years Saskatchewan has been a leader in wildlife conservation. Our achievements are commendable, but much remains to be done right here at home. We can, and should, work for wildlife. The results are most satisfying and rewarding. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Commonwealth Games Baton Relay

Mr. Thompson: -- Mr. Speaker, today the Queen's baton relay begins its journey across Canada, as it is officially received by Governor General Ray Hnatyshyn in Ottawa. Since leaving England, the baton has made stops in Kenya, India, Barbados, St. Lucia, and Australia. The baton will visit each province and territory before the August Commonwealth Games in Victoria.

The Queen's baton is a symbol of unity between all Commonwealth nations as they come together for fellowship and competition at the games. The baton carries a message of welcome from the Queen which will be read at the opening ceremonies of the Commonwealth Games by her son, Prince Edward.

SaskPower has the privilege of sponsoring the Queen's baton on May 9 and 10 as it makes its way across our nation. On Monday, May 9, the Lieutenant Governor will welcome the baton in Victoria Park after a relay from the airport. Premier Romanow will launch a relay from Saskatoon to Victoria Park to the Kiwanis Park shell the following day. The public will enjoy these events to welcome the baton and have the opportunity to show their support for our Saskatchewan athletes attending the Commonwealth Games.

I encourage all sports and community groups to participate in the relay and be part of this historic sports event. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: -- I just want to remind members that even in their statements by members they should not refer to the proper name of individuals in this House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Extended Health Services

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again we'll be devoting most of our time this question period to questions submitted to us from members of the general public.

Before I start, however, I'd like to extend a note of appreciation. We have received a tremendous volume of calls, letters, through the "Mr. Premier, I want to know" program, and we probably won't have time this session to get through all of them. As well, many of the questions and concerns we get are of an urgent personal nature such as health, social assistance. For these reasons we have been sending some of these questions directly to the office of the appropriate minister. We have sent letters to several ministers but we would like to . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I believe that there is nothing in our rules that permits the member to make a statement on question period. If he has a question, I would ask the member to please put his question.

Mr. Martens: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to

commend the Minister of Social Services for his effectiveness and promptness in answering the questions, and I want to say that he has done better than most of the others.

My question today is this: Mr. Premier, I want to know, why is there such a lack of services in the extended health care field? We have a four-year-old that is . . . his family doctor feels should have been assessed for ADD (attention deficit disorder) which is attention deficit syndrome. We have been referred to Saskatoon. There's a 12- to 18-month waiting period for this service. The service was available in Swift Current two years ago, and now the public health department tells us this position has not been filled. Why? We have also checked out mental health; no one can help us. We have been told the sooner that these children are helped, the better advantage they have of reaching their full potential. Where is our help?

And this letter comes from Laurie Schultz from Leinan, Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Simard: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank Ms. Schultz for the question and I do think that she has made a very good point in her question. There is a tremendous amount of work that has to be done in the area of extended health services and community-based services.

In the past what the government has done, under the former regime, was concentrate on hospitals and physician services. What health reform is trying to do is re-priorize some of our priorities in the health care, and re-channel money into more community-based services.

The specific problem that she points to is one that has been brought to my attention and that I have asked the Department of Health to take a look at vis-a-vis provincial policy, and to urge district boards to start analysing what services are needed in their district to meet these needs. This is exactly the kind of problem that we want to be able to deal with in the future through our district health boards.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crop Insurance Conference

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today comes from Craig and Marilyn Kurz from Central Butte, Saskatchewan; and they would like to ask a question of the crop insurance minister.

We would like to direct our question to Mr. Cunningham regarding his so-called surplus in the crop insurance program that was spent on a party for paid employees. We were wondering if our premiums for the crop insurance are going to go down to reflect this surplus; when we see how he visibly wasted \$100,000, we really hate to think how he is really

running our crop insurance program.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture has commented on this before. This was a convention held in the normal course, and these things are held. I think if the members want a lot of detail about precisely what was happening, a more appropriate forum would be estimates rather than question period. But the minister's commented on this and pointed out this was a routine meeting.

Education Funding

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is from David Danyluk from Fox Valley. If education is a priority in Saskatchewan, then when will the chopping of schools and teaching staff stop? Will personal taxes for 1994 increase another 5 per cent, and how much more do you think the ordinary taxpayer can be squeezed, Mr. Premier?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank Mr. Danyluk for the question.

As all people in this province know, this government was greeted with a \$15 billion deficit when we took office in November of 1991. We have been able to reduce our provincial deficit by over \$1 billion with the help of all of the people of our province, including Mr. Danyluk.

There is no question that there have been funding reductions to help us accomplish that task in both health and education. But the Minister of Finance announced in her February budget that there would be no further funding reductions to education come next budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Student Employment Program

Mr. D'Autremont: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier comes from Delbert Chicoine of Storthoaks who writes:

I have participated regularly through my business in the partnership program for students. The deadline for the program this year was April 6, but I received no notification of this and didn't hear about it until it was too late. Was any advertising done to tell people that this deadline was coming? Why don't you set up a mailing list and notify people who have participated in the past? In light of these problems, will you extend the deadline for this program?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: -- I want to thank the gentleman for his question. There was a press release issued. Obviously it was not covered in his local newspapers. We have received literally hundreds and hundreds of applications. I'm not quite sure what the auditor would say about extending the deadline, Mr. Speaker, because you can get into difficulties with these kinds of situations, but certainly I will see what I can do on

behalf of the gentleman to see whether or not we can accommodate him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Financial Accountability

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier comes from Elaine Jackson from Rocanville and she says: no one seems to be responsible for money misspent or misappropriated as indicated by the auditor's report. Each department should have their budgets cut by the amount wasted. It's time bureaucrats were held accountable. Doesn't anyone in government have to be productive?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: -- Mr. Speaker, what I would say to the individual is this: some of the most positive comments made by auditors have been made by the auditor in Saskatchewan with respect to the accounting practices of this government. He said recently that Saskatchewan has gone from having amongst the weakest financial statements in Canada -- and the members opposite know when that was -- to having amongst the strongest financial statements in Canada. So we are open and accountable with the public.

When a government does thousands and thousands and thousands of transactions, there obviously are occasions in which the transaction or the issue is not handled in the best possible way and the auditor does a good job of pointing these out to us. And we do hold civil servants accountable because we ask them to act immediately to correct the problem and they do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Board of Internal Economy Powers

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member of the government who is designated to answer for the Board of Internal Economy. Last week, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition, as you know, introduced legislation which would allow the Board of Internal Economy to function as it was originally intended -- not only to make the rules that MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) use . . . the funds that MLAs use, but also to enforce those rules, Mr. Speaker. We even supplied the government with an advance copy of the Bill several days prior to introducing it, so that we could work together in working out a meaningful solution.

To the member responsible, does your government support simple legislation empowering the Board of Internal Economy; or is it your intention to oppose this solution as you have opposed and blocked every other avenue that the opposition has proposed to deal with this particular matter?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for the question. And I would like to indicate to him that government members on the Board of Internal Economy and the

government will work towards democratic reform and reforming the directives and the way these issues are dealt with, as we have since we were elected in October of 1991.

The member, instead of playing politics, if he would be interested in working with government members on the Board of Internal Economy, I'm sure that we would have much more effect in terms of reaching our objectives.

I bring the member back to the last Board of Internal Economy meeting when instead of working with government members, both him and the Leader of the Third Party were attempting to play petty politics when we were trying to bring together through the Clerk, and we've requested of the Clerk that she would bring together . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. The member must know that he cannot bring the staff into the discussion that happens on the floor, and I think he has to refrain from doing so.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am aware of that rule, and I apologize for that. But let me say that we have asked that information be brought to the Board of Internal Economy with respect to how we may handle enforcement of directives and we intend to pursue that through the Board of Internal Economy which is what we believe to be the most appropriate vehicle for handling these issues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the member . . . the minister well knows, and I'm sure all members have had the opportunity to read the verbatim of the last Board of Internal Economy meeting, that that simply wasn't the case at all; that the problem is, as has been identified in the House and at the board, that the board does not have the power to enforce its own rules.

So I say to the member again, Mr. Speaker, given the fact that everyone is recognizing that there is a lack of credibility in the process surrounding the Board of Internal Economy, will you and other members of this Legislative Assembly support a legislated solution to the problems that the board have? And will you stop blocking those proposals and get on with rectifying the solution so that once again the public will have the confidence that we as elected members can govern our own affairs? Will you do that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Speaker, let me say in answer to the member's question that he would recall, and I would hope he would recall, that it was this government that opened the Board of Internal Economy to public scrutiny so that the public will be aware of how members govern themselves and how they govern their allowances. And I want to say that I have had a close look at the legislative proposal which you put before this House and, at first blush, it would

appear to me, and I do believe that it is frankly rather narrow in focus.

I would want to say that I look forward to some debate with respect to issues relating to members' directives and I want to say that government members are committed to reforming some of these directives. As we know that they do require some form of amendment. But I want to say to the member that rather than playing petty politics, we intend to gather information from other jurisdictions as to how they govern themselves and how they handle themselves. We will then bring it to the Board of Internal Economy, which we believe to be the appropriate place where there can be some debate and some meaningful discussion.

I want to say in closing, Mr. Speaker, that this government is committed to reform of the system. We have shown that in a number of ways. And I want to say that we will continue on that path, as we have since we were elected in October of 1991.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Final question to the minister. Mr. Minister, we can wonder about other jurisdictions all we want. The simple fact is that the Board of Internal Economy in the province of Saskatchewan does not have the legislative power to govern itself and equate the issues that come before it.

Mr. Minister, we have the power in this Assembly to enact legislation and rules to govern all members of society. What we're asking from you today is a commitment that a Board of Internal Economy meeting can be held as soon as possible, and that we as members of the Saskatchewan Assembly sit down and design the rules that will give the public the confidence in this Assembly to govern its own issues. Mr. Minister, we don't have to worry about anyone else.

Can you commit to that today, sir?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: -- Mr. Speaker, what I can commit to is the process that we have embarked upon. And I want to say to the member, he knows full well what kind of information that we have asked officials of the Legislative Assembly Office to generate for us.

Mr. Speaker, I have been in touch with officials and I have been in touch with your office with respect to this information and when in fact it will be brought forth. I'm awaiting that information. Once we have received it, we will put in place a process through the Board of Internal Economy where in fact there can be open and meaningful discussion with respect to a solution to the problem that the member raises.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that some of those directives have been amended no less than four times since 1988. We recognize that there are problems but

what we want to do is see a long-term solution. And we're not going to do it helter-skelter, we're going to do it in a planned and a managed and a staged process, through a staged process, that will work and serve members in the long term.

I think, Mr. Speaker, people have had enough of helter-skelter politics. The member sat in cabinet during the years from 1982 to 1991 when there was no planning, it was all crisis management and it resulted, frankly, in a \$15 billion debt and, Mr. Speaker, we're committed to repairing that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Farm Bankruptcy Legislation

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, today a Saskatchewan farm family is in desperate need of your help. A major bank has advertised their land for sale and has served them with an eviction notice.

Hundreds of other Saskatchewan farm families may soon suffer the same fate. There is a loophole in The Farm Securities Act because it allows lending institutions to repossess the leaseback rights of farmers. Mr. Minister, for months you've been aware of this flaw.

Mr. Minister, you could have prevented what is happening today. You could have stopped the bank from evicting this family. Why has your government failed to amend the legislation to protect the leaseback rights, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, this problem of the interpretation of the statute by the Court of Appeal was drawn to our attention in late February. And since that time the Department of Justice, together with the Department of Agriculture, has been working urgently on the solution to the problem which we believe has to be resolved in some way.

We have asked for the assistance of the federal government in correspondence to the federal ministers asking for a change in section 48, I think it is, of the Bankruptcy Act that would cover this situation and they seem agreeable to that, although the wheels move slowly in Ottawa.

We are still considering the matter with a view to bringing something before this legislature this session and we're working towards that timetable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Justice minister claims that his government has known about this since the beginning of February and has been working to urgently correct this, yet we see nothing before the legislature to prove that this be the case.

Mr. Minister, the bank has lit a fuse under one farm

family and their land may have already been sold out from under them as we speak. Tomorrow I will introduce a Bill to amend The Farm Security Act to prevent this from happening to other farm families.

Can I have your assurance that you will move immediately to save these farms by committing to support the changes we are introducing to amend The Farm Security Act?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- Mr. Speaker, I won't give this member any assurance of anything at all. What I told this member is that since this matter was decided by the Court of Appeal in late February, we've had it under urgent consideration. It's a tricky area, because bankruptcy is a subject that falls entirely within the jurisdiction of the federal parliament, and it's the federal parliament who should be moving to act on this thing.

We are considering though what we can do within the limited jurisdiction that we have over these matters to amend our legislation to try and cover the situation. I warn the member while he's coming forward with his politically grandstanding Bill, that it's a tricky area constitutionally, and he should be careful how he drafts his so-called legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Justice minister claims that we're dealing with tricky legislation; however, he's brought in some Bills that are enormous and take a great deal of effort just for an opposition party to get through them.

What is tricky, Mr. Minister, about protecting farm families? What is tricky about your government, for once, standing up for people?

Mr. Minister, your government has used its majority to overturn legislation to suit its political agenda. The Farm Security Act is faulty legislation which has direct and immediate implications for hundreds of families who are facing bankruptcy as their only hope to rebuild their life on the farm.

Mr. Minister, will your government commit to put this issue at the top of your agenda, behind all other issues? Can the Liberals count on your support to deal with this crisis without further delay or danger to these farm families?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- I have said, Mr. Speaker, that I won't give this member assurances of anything at all. I would suggest to him that the best thing he could do would be to contact his counterparts, his colleagues in Ottawa, Mr. Manley and Mr. Goodale, and talk to them about changes to the Bankruptcy Act which could be rushed through parliament, which began to sit this morning, and would be a perfect answer to this problem.

We in Saskatchewan will be able to fashion a solution, I think. It will be imperfect and it will be constitutionally suspect. It's not a question of it being

a tricky area to protect farmers. It is a tricky area, though, to try at the provincial level, and the member should listen to this. The member should listen to this: it's a tricky business trying to legislate in respect of something which is within the primary jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Indian Celebration Debts

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for Indian and Metis Affairs. Mr. Minister, last summer a number of aboriginal groups held an indigenous peoples celebration in Moose Jaw. Unfortunately, this powwow has left about \$200,000 in unpaid bills to many local businesses, the city, and at least one bank.

Now, Mr. Minister, this comes as quite a blow at a time when many Moose Jaw businesses are already struggling to survive. There are many questions about these outstanding debts, and few answers. In fact, Mr. Minister, no one seems to know who exactly is responsible for these debts or if the creditors can ever expect to be paid.

Mr. Minister, I know that you've been requested to look into this matter. Can you tell us what you have done with regard to this serious problem and what assurances you can give Moose Jaw businesses that they will in fact be paid?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- I thank the member for that question. This is a serious question, and it's one over which we can't offer any constructive advice. The organization that organized the function that the member refers to is not one that we're familiar with nor one that we have any contact with. Furthermore there was no provincial money of any kind in this particular function, so we were bystanders just as the hon. member was. The function was in effect privately organized, privately run, and we have no ability to do anything about the situation.

Mr. Toth: -- Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, this question was also raised by the Member of Parliament for Moose Jaw with the federal Indian Affairs minister and the federal minister told him at that time that it was a provincial matter. Obviously no one was willing to take any responsibility for this débâcle and it is the local businesses in Moose Jaw and the Moose Jaw taxpayers who will end up paying the price.

Mr. Minister, the spokesman for the local businesses feels that an inquiry should be conducted into the whole affair and that the government should determine who was responsible for these unpaid bills. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- I think we can do that. It is quite likely at the officials' level that we have a good deal of information about who did organize it and who the bill should be sent to.

I don't understand the answer of the federal minister,

because there is no basis for saying it was in any way put on by or guaranteed or underwritten or even contributed to by the provincial government. We had literally nothing to do with it.

And so while I feel a lot of sympathy for the Moose Jaw businesses for the debts that they've racked up, I have no budget from which to pay those debts nor any particularly constructive suggestion to make except, as the member suggests, we will look into it and try and clarify to whom the bills should be sent and who should be looked to for payment.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: Mr. Minister, as you know, there is a controversy surrounding the possible misuse of funds by the Metis Council and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. And quite appropriately, your government has decided to freeze all provincial funding until this matter is sorted out.

Mr. Minister, have you considered taking a similar course of action in this case? Now you've told us that really you're not that familiar with . . . or aware of the fact of the circumstances here. What I would suggest, Mr. Minister, is that you approach the federal minister on behalf of the Moose Jaw businesses and all the creditors that are left out in the cold and ask the federal minister if indeed it's his responsibility, but take your responsibility as the Justice minister in this province to pass that on and ask for the federal government at this time to look into this matter as you have done so in the province of Saskatchewan with regards to the Metis Council and Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'll undertake to the member to contact the federal minister and have a conversation along the lines that he suggests. I repeat that the provincial government did not put any money into this function nor do we have any plans to make any grants to this organization so we can't freeze any funding, there being none. But I certainly will have the conversation with the federal minister that the member suggests.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Question to the minister: Mr. Minister, are you saying that none of the organizations involved in the Moose Jaw powwow receive any funding at all from provincial agencies of any sort? Are you saying that, sir?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: -- Well, Mr. Speaker, none that I'm aware of; certainly none from my departments. And I'm not aware of any provincial funding being involved in that project at all.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- I wonder if I might have leave to revert to introduction of guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since introduction of guests, the Chamber has been honoured by the presence of the president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, Barbara Byers. Seated beside her is Larry Kowalchuk, who is a lawyer and who has shared the work and the struggle of the trade union movement.

And in your east gallery is the executive assistant to the president, Don Anderson. I know all members will want to join with me in welcoming these people here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 54 -- An Act to amend The Trade Union Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Trade Union Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: -- Before orders of the day, I wish to, according to the section 14(b) of The Provincial Auditor Act, table the 1993 fiscal year *Report of the Provincial Auditor*. I here so table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Shillington: -- Yes, Mr. Speaker, if I could have the assistance of one of the pages, I would table the response to question 55.

The Speaker: -- Answer for question 55 is . . . Order. The answer to question 55 has been tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 8 -- An Act respecting Fisheries

Hon. Mr. Wiens: -- Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After my remarks I will be moving second reading of the new Fisheries Act for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's fish resource is cherished by the people of the province. In order that the citizens of this province may obtain maximum benefit from and at the same time protect this valuable resource, it has been necessary to change legislation that has been in existence for more than 40 years. With cooperation from the federal government and intensive consultation with northern people, fishing organizations, industry, and the public, The Fisheries Act for Saskatchewan has been revised to meet the needs of the 1990s.

The basic premiss of this new Act is that protection of Saskatchewan's fish resource depends upon the cooperation of all who benefit from it. What will the new Act do? It will incorporate licensing and fee powers, some of which are currently under federal regulation, into the provincial legislation. It will provide the authority to allocate fish to our many resource users through various types of fishing licences.

It will allow us to control importation or stocking of fish, classify fish or water bodies according to fish quality and public health criteria. It will also permit the establishment and enhancement of fish populations on public lands, either directly through cooperative projects with our many fish and wildlife groups, or through individual agreements with landowners on privately owned properties. And it will determine the circumstances in which fish harvested from Saskatchewan's waters may be delivered or marketed.

Some of these matters are currently contained in federal regulations but rightfully belong in provincial legislation as the province has public trust responsibility for management, policy making, and licensing of the fish resource and stakeholders under their purview.

This new Act will also pave the way for new regulations to deal specifically with conserving and managing the province's fish resource. There are a number of benefits in the new Act which I would like to briefly summarize.

Firstly, the new Act will reduce Saskatchewan's dependency on the federal government and allows the province to design regulations and enforcement regimes which meet our needs.

Secondly, it will strengthen the partnership between the government of Saskatchewan and stakeholders in regards to meeting legal requirements, and attaining goals aimed at providing a lasting food source and recreational fishing for Saskatchewan residents.

Thirdly, this new Act will ensure a continuing flow of economic and social benefits to the province, as the provincial government can work cooperatively with commercial fishermen, outfitters, anglers, and other resource users to regulate resource utilization in ways that maximize economic benefit for both the province and the resource user.

This new Act recognizes the benefits of multiple uses of fish resource that support recreational, commercial and subsistence activities. It is important to note that this Act will not affect existing treaty rights. Existing treaty rights are guaranteed under The Constitution Act, 1982, and federal legislation takes precedence over this Act.

The new Act acknowledges that the Government of Saskatchewan has the responsibility of protecting, conserving and enhancing the fish resource for public

benefit. It also recognizes the importance of a strong partnership between government and anglers, commercial fishermen, outfitters and related businesses to work together in managing the resource. These partnerships provide great opportunities for maintaining and improving the fish resource.

(1415)

For these partnerships to be effective, however, we need a framework of respective responsibilities and authorities. These responsibilities and authorities are contained in the new Fisheries Act for Saskatchewan. They will ensure the future of Saskatchewan's fish resource for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I now move the second reading of the new statute, The Fisheries Act (Saskatchewan).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as at first glance looking through this Bill, we think that the intent of the Bill is good, but I believe that we're going to find -- and will find -- that there are numerous problems with detail. And I'm sure as we enter into the debate and the adjourned debates on this Bill, and certainly in Committee of the Whole, we will have a lot to say about the Bill as we enter into the discussion.

It would seem to us that the intent of the Bill is to replace the previous federal Bill that regulated fisheries in the province. Mr. Speaker, there seem to be numerous problems and delays in receiving federal approval for fisheries matters that were basically under provincial jurisdiction. And I understand that this Bill attempts to deal with the problem, and in a sense, repatriate fisheries legislation to Saskatchewan. This, Mr. Speaker, I believe would be a positive step and should be a positive step. However, we feel that the Bill falls down in several areas and that more consultation should have been done.

As a result and as usual, Mr. Speaker, we find that the government likes to talk a lot about how they have consulted extensively with individuals and groups. Yet as we've found time and time again this session, and particularly in reference to The Labour Standards Act that is currently before this Assembly, when you check into the matter you find that even though the government and the minister has taken great pride and deliberately tried to inform us or indicate that there was a long period of consultation, that when you really looked into the depth and looked into the matters a little more closely, you will find that the consultative process may not have been that broad-ranging; or that certainly there were many groups whose concerns have not been taken into consideration in forming this legislation.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, one of the very obvious factors about whether or not people ... or whether the government has listened to groups, concerned groups, is the environmental question that has ... And we've got a Bill before this Assembly, but there's an

ongoing debate regarding some of the environmental issues. And there are many people who have been speaking out with some concerns, especially regarding underground fuel tanks; and it seems that the government is bode to go ahead regardless of what the public are saying.

And I think in the same case, we find here that the government tends to decide when it wants to listen and when it doesn't want to listen; whether or not it really wants to pay attention to the concerns that are raised.

We've received extensive concerns from the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association. Although, Mr. Speaker, this organization is generally in favour of this Bill, they feel that there are still some areas that have yet to be addressed.

The general complaint we've heard about this Bill is that it is too preoccupied with enforcement and punishment and not enough with positive fisheries policy. There are some major questions that we must enter into as we get into Committee of the Whole.

It seems that outfitters feel that many areas of the Bill are potentially in conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And this, Mr. Speaker, I think would be a serious charge and one which the government has an obligation to investigate. And we trust that ... and even as I raise some of these matters right now, we trust that the minister will take the time to raise some of these concerns, as we're bringing them out in second reading, with the department and indeed review the legislation and see that it doesn't interfere with the basic rights of individuals under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which the Premier of this Assembly worked so hard to have enforced in the 1982 constitution.

The Bill creates as well a number of situations of legal reverse onus on outfitters and other fishers. Although reverse onus is necessary in some cases, it is an obvious offence to the premiss of being presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Again the government should show caution before getting into this questionable legal area. And we have seen, and there are a number of Bills before this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, where there are some very major issues regarding the legality of some of the legislation that is coming forward. And one Bill that is before this Assembly that there are some major concerns as well regarding legal concerns is the Bill that addresses the court and the judges issue.

This area of legal concern is of special concern to the outfitters who fear that they may be held liable for their clients whose actions, in many cases, are beyond the outfitters' control. And I believe the outfitters do their best to provide an environment where their clients would come and give them an opportunity to get in some excellent fishing. At the same time I'm sure that all the outfitters across this province are very diligent in recognizing the environmental problems that may arise and trying to make sure that they run

their camps in a way that fall well within the guidelines and certainly continue to enhance environmental issues and the environment in this province.

The Act on the whole provides for sweeping powers for fisheries officers, in many cases going far beyond the powers normally allowed to police officers. As well, it is virtually silent on the issue of training for officers on topics such as search-and-seizure law. And, Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me this should be the very least that should be done to ensure that the officers do not abuse their powers.

The Act is also silent on the issue of privately owned lakes or other fishing resources that do not fall under the direct authority of the minister or the Act. This again is a great concern of the outfitters, which the government has chosen to ignore.

And one would wonder when we have such a large industry, an industry that draws a lot of revenue into this province, as people come here for leisure, whether it's fishing or hunting or whatever the process, that the government, I believe, and the minister and the department should at least be listening to the concerned citizens and the people that are providing the service.

Because we do not want to chase away the revenue that comes into this province by people who . . . in fact right now I believe the province of Saskatchewan and the Department of Tourism has a major ad campaign bestowing the virtues of holidaying in Saskatchewan and what we have to offer -- the environment that we have to offer, the beauty of the natural lakes, and whether it's in fishing or just coming up and taking the time to holiday in this province.

Finally we see, Mr. Speaker, the Bill provides for sweeping powers of discretion for the minister on everything from the granting and conditions of licences, to the actions of officers, to the management of lakes.

Any time such powers of discretion are granted to a minister, one has to wonder how they impact on the rule of law. One has to wonder about the recourse citizens will have from arbitrary decisions. One has to wonder if the minister will be at all constrained to consult with the people affected.

None of these issues are addressed in the Bill, but they should be. And I think they should be, in view of the fact that the minister responsible for this Bill happens to be the minister responsible as well for the environmental questions. We passed a Bill last term on the environmental question that gave the minister very discretionary powers. And we certainly want to raise those concerns with the minister and bring them to his attention.

Time and again this session and last, we have seen the government extend its powers of discretion at the expense of the rights of ordinary citizens. We have seen them intrude more and more into the

administration of private boards and organizations.

And we ask, where will this empire building by the government stop? Why does the government feel such a compulsion to extend its control over the day-to-day lives of its citizens?

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is reminiscent of the series of assaults on the rights of citizens and on the rule of law that we saw last session. And I just want to bring to the attention of this House some of the changes that were made last time in the assaults on the rule of law.

And these include the following Bills from the last session: Bill No. 3, An Act to Amend the Environmental Management and Protection Act, allowing government employees to enter private property without a search warrant. Bill No. 14, An Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act, allowing the minister to divulge personal records to the public, NDP (New Democratic Party) Party members, or anyone else a cabinet minister chooses.

Bill No. 13, An Act to amend The Adoption Act, allowing the minister to forbid a court of law from hearing or receiving evidence held by a government employee that might be relevant in determining a person's innocence or guilt. Bill No. 10, An Act to amend The Crown Minerals Act, allowing the minister to retroactively increase taxes on oil, gas, or mining companies. And on and on. We have seen this government assault the very foundations of our democratic society.

Ministerial discretion is a very dangerous tool for the government to use. Surely with the resources the government has, and the bureaucracy, and the judiciary, this is unnecessary. With discretion being held by the minister, what avenue of appeal will ordinary citizens have? What standard for justice will be followed? What guidelines in general will the minister be required to follow? What accountability will there be that these guidelines are in fact followed?

All of these questions in this as in other Bills, have remained unanswered. Mr. Speaker, given all these difficulties, and given that we will have to go back and consult further with the public on this Bill as the government has once again clearly not done, I move that debate on this Bill be now adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 52 -- An Act to amend The Education Act

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to outline the purpose and the major provision of this Bill to amend The Education Act.

The amendments fall into two main categories: amendments to eliminate the barriers to the voluntary amalgamation of urban and rural school divisions; and there are a variety of administrative and housekeeping changes which have been identified as appropriate to help keep the Act up to date.

Mr. Speaker, The Education Act is structured on the premiss that there are two distinct types of school divisions in our province: rural divisions which encompass several towns and villages and substantial rural area; and urban divisions whose boundaries are the same or almost the same as the boundaries of one urban municipality.

The current Act sets out different principles and structures for these two types of divisions in terms of the election of school board members and the form of school-level governance bodies. The Act does not accommodate a school division consisting of a larger urban centre plus a larger rural area. This being the case, the present legislation serves as a barrier to existing school divisions which might voluntarily want to amalgamate into a new school division of this type.

Members may be aware for example that in Prince Albert and Melfort the urban and rural boards have been seriously discussing the concept of voluntary rural-urban amalgamations.

Mr. Speaker, our government has stated clearly that we have no master plan for any province-wide restructuring of school divisions. On the contrary, we have indicated that our intention is to proceed with a small number of voluntary amalgamations on a pilot project basis only.

The amendments in this Bill reflect the government's approach. These amendments will accomplish the following objectives, Mr. Speaker. First, they address the problem created when an urban division whose board members are elected at large amalgamates with a rural division whose board members are elected on a subdivision basis.

The amendment will allow a school division created in this way to continue electing the urban board members at large and the rural board members through subdivisions. The option will exist for the entire school division to be split into subdivisions if that is the local preference.

Second, Mr. Speaker, the amendments address the desire to retain local community and parental input and advice in the event that a voluntary amalgamation between a rural and urban division occurs.

At present, rural divisions are divided into school districts, each of which elects a local board of trustee; while urban divisions appoint local school advisory committees to serve a similar purpose.

The amendments will allow each part of an amalgamated rural-urban division to retain its current type of local board or committee so that there continues to be a direct link between the community and the school.

As I've indicated, Mr. Speaker, the current amendments are designed to eliminate clearly identified barriers to a particular type of an amalgamation. The amalgamation of school divisions

raises a variety of legislative and administrative questions which will need to be addressed by all of our stakeholder groups.

The amendments have been prepared in full consultation with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association; the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, and the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials. And they have the support of all of these organizations.

(1430)

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn now to the second main type of amendments contained in the Bill. These amendments are a group of miscellaneous changes to repeal obsolete provisions, revise sections which are in need of updating, and add new provisions to assist in the efficient operation of our school divisions. They may properly be described as administrative or housekeeping amendments.

These administrative amendments cover such diverse topics as the operation of the Saskatchewan Book Bureau, the sharing of secretary-treasurers by school divisions and a liability clause related to school safety patrols.

As well, the terms chairman and vice-chairman, which appear throughout the Act in a variety of contexts, are being replaced by the gender-neutral terms, chairperson and vice-chairperson.

Again, Mr. Speaker, these amendments have all been drafted in consultation with the stakeholder organizations and have their approval.

Mr. Speaker, The Education Act is the fundamental legal basis for the K to 12 school system in our province. It is important that we continue to revise the Act to reflect changing circumstances and facilitate new arrangements.

I am therefore very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to move that Bill No. 52, An Act to amend The Education Act, be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been listening very carefully to the minister's second reading speech. And it would seem that certainly the Bill that the minister has brought to the Assembly and in her comments would be reasonable and non-controversial.

However I must remind the Assembly -- and I'm sure the minister is quite well aware of this -- that a piece of legislation such as this Bill that we have before us today is something that causes a stir amongst a lot of residents in the province of Saskatchewan, especially when you talk about education, and certainly in the rural areas of Saskatchewan. And I think that there are many people that have a lot of concerns, and I believe as we get into further debate on this Bill there certainly will be a number of concerns that would be brought to

our attention and will be raised with us, as we have seen today.

I think one of the areas that people in this province feel threatened about by this government's legislation is the area that allows for . . . particularly the part in the legislation that allows for any type of amalgamation. Now the minister had indicated that certainly there has been some talk, and the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) at their last convention did pass a resolution that asked their members to look at alternatives and to discuss the issue, and I think that's appropriate.

I think it's certainly excellent that leaders amongst the school trustees would take some of the initiative. I would like to indicate that certainly in the area I represent, in my constituency, two of the major school boards have been actually consulting amongst each other as to ways and means and areas whereby they could provide a more effective service, and in fact where they could maybe amalgamate some of their services -- not necessarily amalgamating the two units into one, but where they could work together with some of the services.

And I think, when you think about this, this is certainly not unreasonable. And I think the concerns that people would be raising to date aren't unreasonable as well when you take a minute just to reflect upon where the government has been and some of the actions that they have undertaken in other areas where they have talked about amalgamations. And one of the major areas that is raising a controversy, and it continues to boil across this province, certainly is in health care. Mr. Speaker, when you realize that 52 facilities were closed, 52 hospital facilities were closed, and towns and villages were forced to form districts, and if they didn't join school districts soon enough, the minister decided where they should be placed.

Mr. Speaker, our health care system is still reeling from this government's reform, and I would suggest and I trust that the Minister of Education has taken some time to reflect on the problems that have arisen because of the reform that has taken place in health and in particular, the way the government went about reforming health care districts across this province.

I believe that is one of the major reasons that people fear this type of legislation, because they have been involved and have been affected . . . they're directly affected by the health care reform and how it has hit their areas. And certainly in many cases where it has taken away a lot of services; some of the major service that they've had access to.

The minister has said that in the past that school divisions will not be forced to amalgamate and I trust that the minister holds true to her word. And that in fact the legislation we have before us will go further and will not only just . . . that leave it up to a minister, but will enshrine that fact and allow school divisions to make their own decisions about amalgamation so that if there's a change in ministers, a new minister

then will not be able to decide that no, they're going to make the decision like the Minister of Health did regarding health boards.

The minister has said she has assured parents, students, teachers, and boards that the government would take a hands off approach and I'm sure many people, when they hear that, will say: fine and dandy, we like that, we will wait and see, we will reserve judgement, we trust and hope the minister is true to her word.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, when we look at what has happened over the last two, three months, and four months, and even the last year and a half to two years, that it is unfortunate that people will look and they'll listen to the minister and say well it sounds good, but we're not exactly sure if we can trust the minister or if this government can be trusted to keep its word.

I think if the government had a better track record, if it kept its word to others, this legislation and other Bills would quickly pass through this Assembly. And I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, instead we have seen this government is known to pass legislation breaking contracts without consultation and without consideration of the Bill's ramifications on the people of the province.

In fact we have a Bill before us that shows this government doesn't even have any regard for the laws that it creates. We have seen the evidence of this with the amendments before the Assembly for The Provincial Court Act, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that's unthinkable and unheard of that members would break their own laws and would even in this case, even though it would be politically right to say no to a salary increase, the fact that you would instil a law and bring it into place to force you or to . . . actually the legislation was brought forward because of an agreement between the judges and the government. And what we see is the members broke their own laws in regards to provincial court judges' salaries.

And it's because of these things that people out in rural Saskatchewan feel betrayed and they feel abandoned. They simply do not feel that this government is going to bat for them. And I believe there was a question raised in the Assembly regarding a farm foreclosure action, and again if people feel the government is going to bat for them . . . this minister responsible this afternoon certainly didn't leave us with that impression. It left us with the impression that we're on our own. And the people right across Saskatchewan and rural Saskatchewan have that feeling that they are out on their own. And that's why they are standing up, beginning to stand up, and speak out and fight for their rights

People right across this province have suffered cuts to health and now they fear major cuts to our educational system, and certainly a lot of these cuts were going to come and will take place anyway regardless of what the government does. But I think what we need to do -- the most important thing -- is to make people feel and allow people the ability to

make some of the difficult decisions at the local level so that they can feel they are a part of the process.

And you wonder why rural Saskatchewan fears for its school system. They look at the Bill and they say, will this lead to school closures in the future? We see that children in rural Saskatchewan already ride the bus far too long. And we've seen the number of articles already with headlines talking about the fact that some children are on the bus at quarter to seven in the morning.

And I talked with some of the teachers at the recent STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) council meeting here in Regina and they acknowledged the fact that in some of the divisions where they are teaching that children, some children, are on the bus at quarter to seven. And you have to ask yourself, especially when a child who is just into grade 1 -- 6 or 7 or 8 years old -- is on the bus at a quarter to seven and doesn't get home until after 5 . . . that's a long time period and long time frame.

And teachers are even asking themselves, are we being able to give them the proper education because this child really doesn't have the physical capacity to ride a bus for an hour or hour and a half, or almost two hours, Mr. Speaker, and then sit in class for five hours and try and keep their mind on the subject matter. And so parents of children who ride buses do not want to see their kids even have to get on and ride further and start the day out earlier.

If there are amalgamations, all decision making should be in the hands of local boards, and it is imperative that local control is absolutely necessary. Mr. Speaker, when I talk about that I recall the concern that was raised in the community of Wapella when the local board or the unit board at that time, about four years ago, decided to move grades 10 to 12 from Wapella into Moosomin and it was a decision made by the local board.

Now certainly the community didn't like it, the parents affected in Wapella didn't like it, and to this day there are still some animosities although in the end, in some cases, it worked out well. But on the other hand, I think what people, and the people in Wapella, will be looking at with regards to this piece of legislation -- we talk about amalgamation -- they'll say, well does that mean that we're going to lose our school altogether now?

And that's why it's very important that local boards and unit boards have the ability . . . and that the minister do exactly what she has said -- that she'd take the time to sit down, not just with the SSTA, not just with STF, but even with the parents, and have a broad base of discussion and allow our local boards the avenue and the means and the tools whereby they can sit down and address some of these concerns so that as they make the decisions, they've got some parental support.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association has proposed and voted in

favour of amalgamating many school divisions and boards. And I also realize that if existing school divisions were amalgamated into one larger school division, some financial savings could be realized and most people are aware of that, but you wonder at whose expense. Who pays for it? Are the rural people going to be short-changed again, as they were in health care? With amalgamation perhaps we would see a reduction in the number of board members which would result in lower cost for meetings, travel, and honoraria for trustees.

If there were a reduction in board members, perhaps we would see a similar reduction in the number of division-level senior administrators, program consultants, and secretarial staff. If savings are to be realized, it is my hope that all of the dollars stay within the educational system, not that the educational system looks at ways in which they can become more efficient, ways in which they can save some money, and then the government conveniently pulls those monies and puts them into another project.

Again I'm forced to compare this Bill to the health districts Bill. The NDP revamped our health care system -- nurses were let go, hospitals were closed and wellness centres were introduced.

And, Mr. Speaker, the government said they were hoping to save money by having health district boards in place. However, what has happened since the two large boards have been in place in Saskatoon and Regina? All they have done is spend money. And my colleague, the member from Kindersley, was raising some of these questions with the Minister of Health the other day, and we'll certainly get into more of that discussion as we get into Health estimates.

Health care professionals call our office regularly to complain about the large number of people working for the boards. It seems, Mr. Speaker, that the downsizing does not apply to district boards who hire on a quite regular basis. However, I realize this is a topic for estimates.

It is my hope that if there is to be some amalgamation, some reduction of school divisions, that the administration will be reduced accordingly. Amalgamation may be necessary, and it may occur quite painlessly. I think that the SSTA is already studying options and feel if given enough time the divisions can work together without controversy and I commend them for that.

Mr. Speaker, rural divisions in particular are anxious about any changes, as I mentioned earlier. They fear a loss of local input and control of their communities. And again the reason for this fear is past evidence with regards then when we look at the health reform Bill.

It is my hope that this legislation helps districts in the deliberations and does not tie their hands or hinder progress to reward local-level decision making.

Mr. Speaker, there are certainly a number of other conditions or considerations I could raise as well. And

I believe my colleague, the member responsible, has a number of concerns and he would like to address those at a later date as we further consult with people in asking them for their input regarding this piece of legislation before we move through adjourned debates and into Committee of the Whole and passage of the Bill. And therefore at this time I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

(1445)

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 32

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Shillington that Bill No. 32 -- An Act to amend The Labour Standards Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Goohsen: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not often that we have the opportunity to debate such a serious and heavily impacting piece of legislation as this one that we have before us in this debate.

As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, I have spoken a couple of times on this issue. The first time I took all of my time to discuss from the point of view . . . those things that were going wrong in this legislation from the point of view of the workers of the province of Saskatchewan. I felt very strongly that everyone was jumping on the bandwagon to support the business side which is only natural because there is very much for them to worry about.

But at the same time there was a lot being done here that was going to affect the actual workers of the province and the ability for workers to be able to get jobs in the future. And of course with the loss of our job base, we also have those implications that go along with it, which means very simply that we lose our tax base and all of the ramifications that that can have for society.

But we did spend a considerable length of time, I think, putting into perspective how the workers in the province would be negatively affected by this legislation.

In the second occasion, Mr. Speaker, that I spoke on this issue, you will recall that I then took the point of view of the business community and tried to lay out very distinctly for the general public how this legislation is going to be regressive for the business community.

But more importantly, what we now need to look at is the fact that we have a very strong argument that, first of all, labour is being injured by this legislation; secondly, that business is being injured by this legislation. And when you combine the two together, then we see a detriment to all of society around us. In other words, the province of Saskatchewan becomes

the net loser through this legislation.

And you will say, well that's all well and fine; you've pointed all that out, but today we now have even more fuel thrown into the fire of debate. We now have added to The Labour Standards Act, An Act to amend The Trade Union Act, which of course, combined together, makes this an even more Draconian type of approach to the province's labour problems and business problems that we face.

We face a tremendous challenge in Saskatchewan, not only in terms of the fact that we are a land-locked province with no easy transportation methods in or out of our province, but we now have labour legislation that puts us out of synchronization with all of our neighbours in North America. And so quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I can't see how any business that has a choice in the matter will ever stop to develop in Saskatchewan.

There are certain infrastructures, of course, that always need to be served. Those infrastructures will always have some entrepreneurial individuals that will serve those needs. However if you have a population declining to 600,000, then you don't need very many of those people as well. And so you have almost a guaranteed scenario with these pieces of legislation that dictate that the province of Saskatchewan will decline in population, and very significantly and very rapidly.

Quite frankly, there is no possible way that I can see that businesses from the outside world will ever come to this province under the deterrents that are proposed in these two pieces of legislation that we have finally seen the bottom half of today, with the new Act.

So, Mr. Speaker, then folks would say, well you made a few points on both sides, why not just let it go on and let the people suffer; and if they suffer enough, in the next election they'll surely change the government, and the new government can change it back.

Well realistically that's probably what will happen in the end, because as the opposition is smaller in numbers than the government, the government will surely outvote us in the end. However, in the democratic process we have always the hope, that same kind of hope that every farmer in the province has in the springtime when he plants a crop, and that is the hope that things will turn out better as the year goes along.

Our hope in this debate of course is that we might still be able to affect the thinking of the government so that they will bring in regulations to this piece of legislation that will modify at least to some degree the impact that this legislation will have on the province, so that in fact we can exist, so that in fact we don't go backwards.

What I fear happening before we get to another election of course is that we go backwards so fast and so hard that no matter if you do change the government, you can no longer correct and catch

back up all of those businesses and opportunities that we will have lost in the interim. And surely we will lose a lot of businesses and we will lose a lot of potential of new businesses, because I can't see anyone coming into the province to try to compete in our labour market under the circumstances that we have.

Now I'm not going to for a minute say that it isn't nice for people who work in our province to have protection of all sorts and all kinds. The reality is though that if you have your province out of sync with the rest of the world, then businesses won't be here and you won't have the jobs. So naturally the working people suffer because they can't find work.

In view of those considerations, Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we make our case very strongly to the Minister of Labour. And we want to make our case based not on just our own philosophies and our opinions; as I pointed out the other day, we want to build our case based on the opinions of the people who have contributed to us the information and the ideas that they have.

And I've given I think a fairly broad cross-section so far of the business community and of the workforce of Saskatchewan. I've gone through examples from various companies as well as from various areas. One area that I hadn't touched on very much was private individuals and their specific ideas. And I think it's important that we include a few of those.

I have taken some pride in the fact that we have had a tremendous amount of correspondence on this issue, Mr. Speaker, so much so that I have been able to speak on this subject without referring to the same pieces of material more than once. And I think that that bodes well for the Minister of Labour to take account of the fact that there is so much material available to us that we do not have to repeat ourselves even after a long and deliberate debate in this Assembly.

So going on, Mr. Speaker, to some of the individual concerns that have been expressed, I would like to bring to the attention of the minister a letter from a private individual who also works as a mayor in the small-town community of Leader, Saskatchewan. And he has written us a letter outlining his personal concerns, which I think I'll quote a little bit of in order that we get it onto the **Hansard** so that the minister will know exactly where this individual is coming from and what his points are.

Now this was addressed originally to the minister, and by the sound of things, I seriously doubt if he ever had the opportunity to read it, because in his remarks it doesn't seem to reflect anything of this kind of input. It goes along:

Re: proposed labour legislation

Dear Mr. Minister: The comments that I'm about to set out in this letter are derived from watching legislation from the following positions. Number one, serving local urban

government in the town of Leader for 12 years as its mayor and nine years as a councillor at various times beginning in 1956; now the mayor.

Number two, operating a small business serving the electrical and the refrigeration and air-conditioning needs of the town and area continuously since 1953.

I have been in business under the government of Douglas, Lloyd, Thatcher, Blakeney . . .

I won't say the last premier from the previous administration, and of course he has the present Premier's name as well. He of course referred to all of the premiers from way back when right up to the present day.

The letter goes on:

There was not one thin dime's worth of difference between the whole lot of them from the perspective of the small-business operator or the elected official of urban government until now.

Well having heard that commentary, Mr. Speaker, one is naturally led to wonder what is different now. So I will go on with the quote from the letter:

The above-mentioned labour legislation is beyond doubt the worst piece of legislation ever to be introduced for first reading in the 89-year history of the province.

My consideration of the content indicates to me that it will circumvent all existing collective agreements, ensure conditional employment for all employees that are able to find any issue, substantive or otherwise, to complain to the department about thereby eliminating any possible lay-off or dismissal for any reason.

It will only hinder economic development, cause many problems for the very people that I assume it is intended to help. The cost to urban government and to business will be significant and almost impossible to accurately determine without perusal of the regulations.

Now here, Mr. Speaker, the writer of course alludes to those evasive regulations that we have talked about so much. And he has recognized the reality that the worst features of this legislation may not in fact be in the written form of the legislation itself, but in the regulations that can be set afterwards -- the regulations that come into power and effect as a result of the legislation becoming law.

And that means that after the fact, out of view of the legislature itself, out of view of the general public for the most part, the cabinet can pass regulations that become law, and they don't have to consult with anybody, and they might affect the legislation in a very adverse way.

The writer goes on:

Urban government and small business are right now having a very tough time just to get by without having to embrace any extra costs that will only retard, if not entirely stall, the limited easing of the economic upturn. Your bureaucrats (Mr. Speaker) are totally out of control.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what the writer is alluding to here is the fact that he feels that the bureaucracy has instructed the minister on what legislation should be drawn up and how this legislation should be put into place and what powers it should have.

I think the writer is saying that he doesn't believe that the minister is in total contact with the realities of the repercussions that this legislation will have on the province, and especially on small business and small towns, the kind and like of which this individual represents.

The writer goes on to say:

Do what is best for the province, Mr. Minister. Put the whole Bill into the trash can, then shred it and let the market-place and the law of supply and demand operate. Business will then be able to make a profit -- not a dirty word, but essential to the creation of jobs. Labour has not been abused in this province since the end of the '39-45 war. There is no one operating a business in this province that doesn't know that a good and content labour force is their greatest asset.

And it is signed by the mayor, one Mar Clary from Leader, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Clary, of course, is an individual who represents a small town, but certainly is not a person that hasn't been heard from by people in government over the years. He contributes regularly in an open and honest way to try to help people in our province's electoral positions to do those things that will make life better in the province of Saskatchewan for all people concerned.

Here is a man who has truly dedicated his life to the service of helping his fellow man as well as to be a God-fearing man, raising his family in the best possible way. And a tribute to this gentleman is the fact that he is still the mayor after so many years of public service.

I talked to him before presenting his letter and asked for his permission to do so, which he readily gave to me. In that conversation, he indicated a couple of more things that are of concern to him. He said that if you use the number of 20 people as the bottom line for how many employees you have in a business before you qualify for certain restrictions and regulations within the legislation, he said it appears that when you first read it that this is not a serious problem then for

small employers, for example, the town of Leader or the town of Shaunavon or some other small town like Oxbow, I suppose, or something like that.

What the reality is that Mr. Clary points out, is that this legislation very trickily says -- and this is a deception of sorts -- it says the number of T-4s that you issue represent the number of countable employed positions. In other words if you hired 10 students to clean trash up in your town for one day, they would all probably be issued a T-4 slip at the end of the year and you have 10 positions right there. If the next week you hired 10 other young people, students perhaps, to go out and pick stones off of a street, then you have 10 more. Immediately that you have one more employee you're over the magic number of 20 and you now become subject to all of the requirements of the legislation.

(1500)

And the mayor points out to me that there is such a program -- it's called the start program -- wherein towns like his have employed 20 to 30 students in the summertime. And he says that automatically when all of the implications of the new legislation become apparent to the town fathers of all of the communities in Saskatchewan, they are automatically not going to hire those students this summer.

He says their council right now is discussing the possibility of starting a program whereby they would employ students for the summer. And he said they are seriously in doubt as to whether they will hire any students at all at this time.

He says to me that if this be a fact in his town, how could it possibly be different in any other town where the same regulations will apply and where people are most likely discussing the very same issues. And it makes sense to me, Mr. Speaker, that most small towns are now going to seriously consider whether or not they will employ students for the summer simply because of this new regulation and new legislation.

So the point is well taken, Mr. Minister, that you should be aware of the fact that you are killing jobs in small town Saskatchewan and throughout the entire province as a result of your legislation. The very people that you claimed you were going to help with this legislation end up being the people who will suffer the most and who will lose their jobs and opportunities for the future.

Opportunities like this, Mr. Speaker. A student gets out of school; does he want benefits paid to the federal government or to the system for unemployment insurance and all that sort of thing? Absolutely not. He cares less about those kind of things. He wants cash, money in his hand, so that at the end of the summer he can go back to school and pay his bills. He doesn't care about all of the union needs and all of the highbrow philosophies of workers bargaining for rights and all that sort of thing. He wants a job that pays cash so that at the end of the summer he can pay his bills and go back to school.

And the less money that's chipped off for a check-off for this or a check-off for that or a check-off for something else means more cash in his pocket to spend on his tuition. And that's what confronts the students of our province today, is all of this extra charging that's going to go on, all of this extra book work and headache that's going to go on; the inability of people, as employers, to provide work; and of course at the end of the day, the inability of the employer to be able to give very much actual cash to the person who has done the work.

And so we have killed the goose that lays the golden egg, is what we're saying, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, we're destroying the job base and the potential for young people to have jobs in Saskatchewan.

Now having said that, we need to also consider some of the views of some of the other folks that have given us input. I'm happy to say that over the weekend we've received even more correspondence. And a few of these point out ... while somewhat similar in nature to some of the other business places, each one seems to have a bit of a different twist as to how this legislation is going to affect them in a very personal and real way.

I will use an example from Canadian Tire Associate store. We hadn't heard from any of those yet in our previous debate, and so I would like to get onto the record what some of their position is.

Here too we have a letter that was originally addressed to the Premier, that was given to us as a copy, and we're certainly appreciative of people doing that so that we can help them to voice their opinion on this matter.

Re the proposed changes to The Labour Standards Act.

For the past several months I was feeling good about the leadership of the provincial government. You were taking a middle-of-the-road attitude on most issues; you had set as a priority to obtain a balanced budget. Now with the proposed changes to The Labour Standards Act, my support for the government has greatly diminished.

If the proposed changes are implemented, we will probably use more full-time and we will only use students who are looking for employment for a short period as part-timers. The mature person who wants a part-time position will be the ones who lose out.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a little different twist to the position of small business than what we had heard from the other people that we quoted from. And so it's important that the minister take note of the fact that each individual business seems to have a different perspective as to how this legislation will personally affect their operation and be detrimental to them.

He goes on to say that:

You are adding considerable cost to the employers, particularly in the retail industry which has already had some very difficult years. Below are some areas I have concerns about.

First of all, the full benefits for part-time workers is extremely costly.

I think the minister probably already knows that but he needs to take note of the fact that this comes from a small-business man in the province of Saskatchewan who is pointing it out, factually, how it's going to affect him. He goes on to say that:

One week's notice for change in working schedules is not acceptable. We have several employees who only want a few days of work now and then. We call them when we need them and they come to work if they want to. It works both ways. We would not employ these people under the new legislation.

Simple as that. We would not employ them. Another job lost, another opportunity gone in the wind, Mr. Speaker, because the Minister of Labour simply has not listened to the people that he presumes to have consulted with. What he's forgotten is that consultation means also listening and not just preaching to the people.

And so we have this minister putting in this Draconian legislation that will take away jobs. And example after example from this business community and others, shows exactly how that's going to happen. So there can be no question in the minister's mind at the end of this day as to the reality of what his legislation is doing in a negative fashion to the province of Saskatchewan and to the people of Saskatchewan.

He goes on to say that:

The minimum notice requirement of six weeks after two years is far too extreme. What company will want to come to Saskatchewan and who will want to become a director of a company when the liability is unlimited, including liability for wages? Are you trying to keep industry out of the province?

A very fair question that this gentleman asks, Mr. Speaker, because that's what it appears to most people to be going on here.

He goes on to say that:

How can a business be run if employees have to absent for 12 weeks out of 52 before they can be replaced?

Now he goes on to say:

I apologize for coming on so strong in this letter, but I have a difficult time understanding

these changes. It is obvious that the government has had no input from the business community on this. I would request that the government take a much more reasonable approach to any proposed changes to the Act.

Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a very solidly clear message in that note to the Premier. Here he brings out the problem that he sees with the liability on directors for corporate entities.

Now I suppose for those people who support the present administration, they would say well, we believe in the cooperative point of view and the cooperative way of doing business, and we believe in cooperatives, we don't believe in companies. We don't believe in the multinational corporations, and we don't agree with what they do anyway, so why should we care what happens to their directors?

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, for the people of this province that you're in the very same boat. You're all in this boat together because cooperatives do have boards of directors. They have elected members that take control of the cooperatives. And they, in this legislation, will become just as responsible as anybody else.

And as individuals, I suggest before you run for a directorship with a co-op, any kind of a co-op board, any kind of a credit union board that you run for, you'd better think twice about how many dollars this might cost you if in fact that organization goes broke and goes into receivership.

And never fear, co-ops do go broke; they do go into receivership. We've seen an example of that with the machine dealership in Shaunavon, Saskatchewan, a few years ago, where all of the equity built up had to be cancelled to all of the patrons; people's dividends over the years that had accumulated had to be erased. They were no longer able to claim them or to expect to get them. And of course in the end the entire structure failed.

Now this legislation means that those directors would all be responsible for the losses in that circumstance. So they're in no different position than people at Canadian Tire or any other corporate entity.

And with that, I suggest that the minister ought to take a hard look at how he's treating the people in Saskatchewan who most likely supported his bid to become elected.

We have from another small group in the province a note from Seal Tite Systems out of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. It's also, "Re: The Labour Standards Act, Bill 32." Now here this individual writes to the minister, saying:

Again, I must write to you to express my deep concern about your government's labour agenda.

1) Prorated benefits to part-time employees: As

the Labour minister stated to me on February 3, 1994, about 65 per cent of all part-time workers only want to work part time. The vast majority of these people do not require benefits as they are covered by their spouse's or parents' plan. Students working part time in almost every small business in the province require the maximum amount of money an employer can pay them to help them with their education.

Now, Mr. Speaker, here again we have an individual who is recognizing that need for students to be treated in a different way than the normal, regular workforce. And this legislation has not clearly defined that there is any opportunity for that to happen.

The letter goes on to say that:

The additional costs related to prorated benefits, premiums, and administration will make benefit plans too expensive and impractical for the full-time employees to participate in them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here is the problem. This is the real nuts and bolts of the problem -- the costs of these benefits that people are going to be forced to take and to accept are simply going to be too much. In other words, the take-home pay becomes less attractive.

And what really is the bottom line when you say this? Well what it really means is that those jobs that are close to minimum wage, in reality, when people find that all of these deductions are taken off, they might just as well stay on unemployment insurance or welfare because they are actually probably netting more dollars of take-home pay that way than they will by working. And so we create in this province again a disincentive for people to work. In other words, we create an incentive for people to stay at home and not do anything.

What would be wrong with creating a program where we actually would encourage people to want to get jobs? How could it possibly hurt us to in fact offer a benefit of some kind, a package where people would be allowed to improve their monetary position by taking a job and actually being rewarded monetarily for getting off of unemployment insurance or out of the welfare system? Perhaps even a cash bonus or a monthly pay cheque of so many dollars on top of your new-found job wage scale that would give you a positive incentive because you'd be paid some cash money, hard, cold cash, for getting out of the system and getting to a job, and show the people that you appreciate their efforts to try to help themselves, and of course to help society around them.

The letter goes on to discuss item no. 2 in the letter:

2) One week's notice of change of work schedules: would you please explain to me how a business is able to predict one week in advance what the weather conditions will be like, what the sales volume will be, or what tourists and recreation volume will be? This

legislation will most certainly force businesses to service Saskatchewan from other areas in Canada.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, what the writer is saying is that people, even though they may do business in Saskatchewan, will locate their head offices outside of the province. And this is a terribly negative position for business to have to take from the point of view of someone like myself, who lives in this province and would like to see an expansion and growth of the business sector and not simply be served from the outside with the specific needs that we have. And it just simply means a loss of that much more tax base and a loss of that many more tax dollars.

The no. 3 item goes on to say that increased provisions for break-in period:

This provision of increasing the break in service from 14 days to 13 weeks will force employers to hire different, new and inexperienced part-time employees and will certainly discourage employers from hiring students for part-time work.

Again we have an attack on the student population; those people who very shortly will be looking for jobs in our province, many of which are already starting to look, with the university year in its closing days just at the moment. Now it goes on to say that

These are only three examples of the very poorly thought-out legislation. All of the changes will increase the cost of doing business in Saskatchewan, and will certainly discourage businesses from locating here and will force businesses to relocate to more competitive areas of the country.

As a result, our tax base will continue to be eroded, thus increasing the tax burden on the wealth generators who remain in this province, which today -- and the future's communications: telephone, fax, computers, and transportation -- it is very easy to serve Saskatchewan's small population from other areas of the country or the continent.

(1515)

In other words, Mr. Speaker, this individual now starts to look further afield and is suggesting that we could even see the head offices staying in the United States or Mexico or perhaps even Europe. In other words, you could have a distributorship for a Toyota car never even setting up a head office in Saskatchewan any place, never even setting up a parts depot in Saskatchewan. They might simply locate everything outside of our province and only have salesmen travelling through the province to sell their products.

That letter goes on to say that:

In a letter dated March 14, 1994 I received from (the minister's name is here), he stated that the

cost of the changes to The Labour Standards Act will be a minimal amount of \$9.5 million. Now this minimal amount certainly does not take into account the additional costs of administration to small business.

In other words, what this individual is saying, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister is using a very minimal figure of the losses because he's not taking into account a lot of the costs that will happen outside of the jurisdiction of the government itself; in other words, the cost of administration for the business places who in fact are the creators of jobs and the creators of our job base.

The Prime Minister of this country in a recent tour through the province of Saskatchewan made a deliberate point in his speech delivered in this very community, the city of Regina. He made a concerted effort to point out that it is small business in this country that will create the jobs for the economic recovery that we must have; it cannot be done by government, was his point.

And of course in Saskatchewan the government is saying: small business, we don't like you very much; we're going to slap such restrictions on you that you cannot financially exist.

Now it goes on to say:

It is discouraging for me to have to tell my children that they have a much better chance of finding employment in other provinces or states than they do in Saskatchewan.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, this was signed by Mr. Asher, the president of this small company. And the reality there being, Mr. Speaker, that he echoes some of the words that I have felt myself when it is very apparent that as a father you must tell your children that your opportunities in Saskatchewan are non-existent, that you must in fact leave the province if you are to find a decent way of life with dignity and honour and respectability and some measure of reward financially for your lifetime's chosen profession. It simply won't be in Saskatchewan and you will have to consider leaving, and my children have had to do that. And I see this person being very concerned as well about that fact of life that has become a reality for all of Saskatchewan people.

We want to cover a few more of these, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that the minister gets a full impact of how general the concern is throughout the province.

And so I'll quickly go on to some statements made by another individual, president of Nu-West Construction Products Inc. It says simply, addressed to all concerned.

As an employer and new business attempting to build a future for our company and just as importantly, a secure and prosperous future for our employees, I strongly oppose the proposed labour standard changes. Should these changes

proceed, as a company we will need to enact the following:

Stop our proposal to add a benefits package to our full-time employees; stop expansion plans which would require on-demand, part-time assistance; re-evaluate potential manufacturing expansion plans in alternate locations.

Now here again, Mr. Speaker, we have an individual pointing out from his point of view how this legislation will affect him, and even though in general terms it's much the same as everyone else, specifically here are concerns that this individual sees as being different from all of the other folks. It will specifically hit his business in those three specific areas.

And he tells you exactly what he's going to have to do in order to save himself from this legislation and how that's going to impact the very work that he does, the very profession that he's in, and the very people that work for him.

He's going to have to re-evaluate the potential manufacturing expansion plans and look at alternate locations. In other words, he may not manufacture his product here in this province. He may in fact be going to Alberta, Manitoba, Mexico, who knows; wherever it can be done so that he can financially exist with a bottom line that shows black numbers instead of red numbers.

And that's what business is really all about in the long and the short of it -- if you lose money, you go bankrupt. If you go bankrupt, you're out of business. If you don't want to go bankrupt, you don't lose money. So you must make money, you must have a profit in a business.

The only way you can do that, of course, is to be competitive with your competitors and you must be able to produce a product that you can sell at the same price as everybody else does or nobody will buy what you have to sell.

The man is pleading, pleading with the Minister of Labour to allow his business to continue to exist in the province of Saskatchewan so that he can provide jobs for Saskatchewan people and provide a tax base for this province. And he's being denied that. He feels very strongly about it -- so strongly that he's willing to write a letter to us and to allow us to discuss his problems in this public forum in the legislature of Saskatchewan.

The last line is very simple and straightforward. It says: please overturn this proposed action. Very simple request, Mr. Minister. Stop what you're doing before it destroys this individual's business and the province that he loves so much.

We have letters from people like the Graphic Arts printing. I see memos here from an individual, Perry Foster. I think I'll get to that one just a little bit later. Perhaps I should do that one right away so I don't mix

it up with the rest, Mr. Speaker, because it's addressed to one of the other ministers in the government. I'm sure that minister will recognize who they are, so I won't bother reading the name that it's addressed to.

It says:

Please forward if in Regina.

I have glanced at the proposed Labour Standards Act changes. Please do not proceed; they do not make sense. They are not needed and are unworkable. It would be a big step backwards in this age of national and international trade.

Some number of years ago I did work for you in what I believe was a turkey ranch towards Pike Lake. I ask you, could you hire with such laws; as almost as important, would you want to live with such laws? And would you have the heart and the time to comply? You have run a business and you will know it ain't easy. Thus I presume you will have a better insight than many of your fellow members.

Now I think that that is a very personable and real plea to a member of the present administration, a back-bencher in the government, who knows exactly what the business atmosphere in the province is and has to be in order for a small business to operate.

And this individual who used to work for the member is pleading for an opportunity to have his province continue as a place where workers can work and job creation can be the bottom line of what we are trying to do.

Another point of view from the Hundseth Line Construction Corporation re the revisions to The Labour Standards Act. This individual explains as follows, Mr. Speaker:

This proposed legislation will have a significant impact on our business. At a time when it has become increasingly difficult to maintain a positive bottom line, small business in Saskatchewan does not need another increase in its cost of doing business.

We are especially concerned with the changes with respect to the minimum notice requirements or requirements for pay in lieu of notice or termination notice or pay in lieu of temporary lay-offs, as well as the proposal to make the directors' liability for wages unlimited.

Contrary to the report of the consulting accounting firm, we believe that all of these proposed changes will have a significant cost factor associated with them. We strongly request that you reconsider these proposals.

A straightforward letter, Mr. Speaker, very short, very to the point, concisely telling the minister exactly

what's going to happen and what is wrong with the legislation. This person knows for certain that he's going to be cost impacted very significantly, and he too pleads with the minister for some kind of recognition, some kind of understanding of the problem that he will face as an employer in this province who needs the opportunity to be able to find a bottom line in his business that isn't red every year.

We have several references that are made through the news media, some of which I will allude to later, Mr. Speaker. But in particular I want to deal with the statistics that I mentioned the other day. I said I had this copy of statistical facts about labour relations in the province, and I mentioned at that time that I would take the opportunity to explain them and to go into them at some future time. And I think possibly this would be as good a time as any because today we have seen the introduction of yet another labour Bill. And the impact of that Bill coupled to what is going to happen with the one that we are presently discussing just magnifies the whole problem by tenfold.

We have Draconian legislation introduced today that, coupled with The Labour Standards Act, will make it almost impossible for businesses in Saskatchewan to survive. And we say why? Why do we bring in these legislations? Surely there must be a reason. And the folks say, well the union leaders want us to have these changes. So then we say, well what's broken with the old Act? Why do we need to have a new one? And of course the people in the business community say well, there is nothing broken, it worked just fine. And they offer these statistics as proof of their position.

And their position is quite simply this: that the labour relationship between management and business and labour in the province over the past ten years has been significantly better than it was during the period of the 1970s. And they make their point that during the 1970s the labour unrest in this province, which reflected into very high numbers of people in terms of days lost, of work lost -- it all happened as a result of the fact that we had very regressive labour legislation. The labour legislation which unfortunately almost reads line for line exactly the kind of labour legislation that we're bringing into effect right here, right now.

In other words, we're going back to the good old 1970s in labour relations. And here's what these statistical facts show, Mr. Speaker. From the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, work stoppages in Saskatchewan since 1978, by sector, the table 1, gross days lost. In the public sector we have from 1978 to 1982 under the number of disputes, we had 61. The number of workers affected was 35,768. Number of days lost was 359,183.

In the same categories for the years of 1982 to 1993, we had number of disputes was 50; with the number of workers involved here was 37,316; with the number of days lost was 252,107. Now the totals there were: number of disputes, 111; number of workers affected, 73,102; and number of days lost was 661,290.

Now that was public sector, Mr. Speaker, so we want to compare that now to the private sector.

In the private sector of 1978 to 1982, we had: number of disputes, 133; number of workers involved, 25,946; number of days lost, 658,586 days lost. And in the period from 1983 to 1993 -- that 10-year period -- we had number of disputes, 91 -- significantly less there, Mr. Speaker; with number of workers, 13,975; and the number of days lost was down to 322,851. Now the totals there ran across the board at 224 disruptions with 39,921 workers involved, losing 981,437 days of work. All stoppages for the period then were the 1978 to '82 period, 194; as compared to from '83 to '93, 141.

(1530)

Now if my counting is right, '78 to '82 is four years. We had 194 disruptions altogether. And in the period of 1983 to '93 -- that's 10 years; 10 years compared to the 4 years -- then we were down to 141 disputes. In other words, something like 53 disputes less over more than two and a half times the number of years.

And there has to be an explanation for why that occurred, why these statistics are important to us, Mr. Speaker. And the important thing there is quite simply that under the old labour legislation that we had through the 1970s, we had the conditions and the right atmosphere for major labour disputes that were non-existent when that legislation was revoked and changed in the early 1980s.

As soon as we got away from that Draconian legislation of dictatorial direction and allowed the workplace to settle its own disputes through the bargaining process, the collective bargaining process, and allowed it to work freely and independently of obstructions from government legislation, we had a lot more happy workers and a lot less disruptions of work altogether.

In fact a very, very significant percentage of less disputes under that legislation than we had under the Draconian legislation of the 1970s, the likes of which we are seeing reborn and recreated here today, the exact same kinds of dramatic changes in reverse happening again in 1994; back to the good old '70s, where we'll have everybody on strike and nobody's working and nobody wants to work and nobody can afford to pay the bills. And if you don't think it's going to happen, phone your Saskatchewan Wheat Pool agent today and ask him when he's going on strike because it's going to happen pretty quick.

So there you go, back to labour disruptions and labour disputes because you tried to legislate into a law the very things that people should be settling for themselves. Every time government interferes in people's lives, nothing good can happen of it, Mr. Speaker. Nothing can ever happen that is good when you have the government trying to run things, because quite frankly we don't have the very smartest people in the world getting into the political theatre all the

time. We've got an awful lot of people who don't know what they're talking about and don't know anything about labour relations trying to write legislation to rule people and to make them and force them to do certain things that can't work and won't work.

As we go into this area of debate, Mr. Speaker, I think now that it's only fair that we round out some of these personal and smaller business complaints with a couple from some of the umbrella groups that I alluded to earlier that I said I would save until the last of my debate, and my participation in the debate, because we need to round this argument out so as to allow people to know that we are taking a representative sample of not only the workers' concerns but also from individuals concerned from a business point of view -- small, independent businesses as well as the larger businesses.

So we have from the Saskatchewan Construction Association -- very well known to this government and to all governments, the head office located right here in the city of Regina -- a very detailed outline of exactly what is going on in this labour legislation. And it goes on to say:

Re: The Labour Standards Act, Bill No. 32

We are forwarding a brief interpretation of the amendments to the Bill we understand are forthcoming.

It has, in the briefing notes, changes to The Labour Standards Act, Bill No. 32, March 31, 1994. And I'll quote a little of this, Mr. Speaker, so as to give the Minister of Labour an opportunity to know what exactly it is that the construction association, whom I believe represents some 700 organizations throughout the province, a very large umbrella group representing a tremendous amount of employers and employees, it says that:

The Government informed business and labour on March 31 of the number of changes to Bill 32 which will be introduced as House amendments. These changes respond to a number of serious problems identified by business. There are still a couple of issues that were not addressed and it is not known whether they will be. We do not have the actual text of the changes, only brief explanations, but it appears there would be still some problems with some of the new provisions. The following is a summary of the changes to Bill 32.

Notice of workers' hours, shifts, meal breaks, section 13.1.

Subsection (1) changed to specify that employees who work 6 or more hours will have 30 minute meal break within the first 5 hours. Variance to be permitted by collective agreement or majority of employees.

Subsection (2) changed to require written

notice where reasonably practical only.

Subsection (3) clarified that a change would entail normal overtime only.

Subsection (4) changed to provide variance . . . through the collective agreement or by agreement of majority of employees, and approval of Labour Standards Director.

Subsection (5) changed to clarify "emergency circumstances" exemption to include where an accident, unforeseeable or unpreventable circumstance occurs.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is quite clear, after reading this analysis of the changes, that these people had studied very carefully the effects that they were going to have on the construction industry and the 700-and-some-odd people that they represent.

Now this letter goes on to explain in detail the changes to the legislation in all of the key areas: most available hours to part-timers on a seniority basis; the statutory holidays provisions; the group termination regulations that are set up or in amendments; no regulations -- that was a wrong term to use because we haven't seen the regulations nor does it appear that we will see them at all.

We also have a discussion here on the discipline for illness and injuries, the reassignment of disability . . . or disabled employees, and the benefits to part-time workers.

All of these issues are dealt with by this umbrella group that has a very keen interest and a lot at stake with what happens in this legislation: wage assignments, directors' certificates, minimum standards, existing regulations, and the fines, and they go into the whole gambit of the legislation and how it's going to affect the business community.

So, Mr. Speaker, the minister should be well aware that now we have not only the workers of the province, not only the small businesses of the province and the large business corporations, we have a cross-section actually of all of the people of Saskatchewan saying, right from local government right up to provincial government, right across the board, we've had educators in the educational system, we've got health people in health organization of our province -- all of these facets of our society have been contacting us, telling us that they cannot live with this legislation and do their job in the province of Saskatchewan, that it will be detrimental to business.

It will be detrimental to them and that in the end will be detrimental to the job base of Saskatchewan and to the tax base of Saskatchewan -- a whole cross-section of people in Saskatchewan, all delivering the same bottom-line message even though it is in a very different and very defective way of how it is going to affect them as individuals and their individual businesses and individual lives.

So while the legislation in a very sweeping way covers so much territory and affects so many people, in the end the bottom line is that all of those diversifications come together with one conclusion, and that conclusion being that this legislation is not good for the province and that it is not good for business and it's not good for employers and it's not good for employees. Students will suffer, elderly people will suffer, disabled people will suffer. No one is going to benefit except the union leadership that grabs off a small bit of power for itself in the scheme of things.

And is that why we're really in this province of Saskatchewan, to have a few powermongers at the head of the unions benefiting by the work that we do in this Assembly at a cost of millions of dollars a year, as we debate and pass legislation? Is that why we are putting legislation into effect, to appease the major union leaders; to give them power and control in the province while we are creating a detrimental atmosphere for all other people in every segment of society?

Every segment, right down to a law office I've got in here, from every segment in our society -- from farmers and ranchers, to mayors and all of those people that have contacted us, explaining how this labour legislation in its Draconian way will destroy the province of Saskatchewan. And only the member from Regina can smile in his seat because he has fought for the labour movement all of his life, and nothing else and nobody else ever mattered to this individual -- absolutely no one is important, just the labour movement. So you take your stand and enjoy it, because for a brief time you will have your moment in the sun.

But the devastation to the province will be so great, in my prediction, that this legislation will not be allowed to go on as it is written. I predict that the fallout from this legislation will be so severe in terms of loss of jobs, loss of tax base, and loss of tax money to the revenue, and loss of people to the province, that these people will leave this province in such big numbers that by the end of this year regulations will be so significantly changed in this legislation by necessity, the cabinet will see itself in a position where it will have to change these regulations so significantly that the labour union will turn on the government like a hungry pack of hounds and be ready to devour the government in the next election.

And that's exactly what will happen. Because they will turn on you just as quickly as anyone. Your adversaries are in front of you; that's me. I'm your adversary. Your enemies are the union bosses and they're behind you, sir. Watch out for them. They're the guys that'll get you in the back when you're not looking, because it's coming. They won't be happy when you change your regulations the way that you will be forced to change them, and then they will be after you, not me.

There are a couple of more points, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think I'll have to make here, from the Saskatchewan Construction Association. The Labour

Standards Act amendments. We have a bit of an alert and it points out some of the concerns that they had. I mentioned to you the specific areas of concern and now it goes into a little bit of detail of what to watch for. And I'll just quote and comment on that.

Bill 32 introduced in the legislature on March 11 has a number of provisions that must be changed or deleted before business can live with it. We have had many meetings with Ministers and their officials in an effort to get the necessary changes. Through the Saskatchewan Business Coalition we have consulted with other senior officials of other affected industries. We are enclosing our March 14th quick analysis as well as the March 21st briefing notes we developed through the Coalition. Our very recent meetings appear to have developed a compromise on all but three major issues. Two of these will affect most employers and one is a construction issue. The latter is a requested construction industry exemption from the notice of lay-off . . . (and I think it's, say) in lieu of notice provisions in Section 43. This should not apply where work is temporary, for the duration of a project or seasonal. Our industry is exempt in neighboring provinces. The other two major unresolved issues relate to part-time work, as follows:

Now, here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's important to note that we actually have an example being made of how we are out of sync with our neighbours in other provinces. And it's important for the minister to take note of this because we have tried to point out over and over to him that this legislation, while being a front runner and a leader, is in fact putting us in a position of being out of sync with our neighbours. And that, in this instance, is detrimental.

Whereas in some other areas, you might take some pride in being a leader -- for example, in health care and providing opportunities for people to have better medicine. Certainly it can be an advantage to be in a government that brings those things forward and you can take the applause for having done something good for society. But in this situation being a leader means that you are a loser because you're driving business out of the province.

(1545)

It says here that:

Section 45 which provides that the same benefits provided to anyone (including managers) who work thirty or more hours per week must be provided to all employees including part-time workers, including casual, seasonal, and student workers.

Section 13.4 which provides that employers will be required to make additional work hours available to qualified part-time workers according to seniority.

It goes on to explain:

Please review our analysis and the briefing notes and let your M.L.A., the Minister of Labour and the Premier know that you object to Bill 32 in the present form, and in particular with respect to the above three issues. We are enclosing a list of all M.L.A.'s and their Legislative Assembly and constituency telephone and fax numbers. If you need or want more information, call . . .

Now very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is an example of how we are out of tune with other provinces and of course with the other jurisdictions in North America, which a few years ago would not have had so great an implication as it does now. Because now that we have the free trade agreements both with the United States and with Mexico, we certainly have to be more and more aware of being in tune with our neighbours.

The Trade Union Act amendments it goes on to say:

We have been told that the Trade Union Act amendments will be introduced shortly. We are enclosing our brief comments on the amendments we have been advised are being considered and may be proposed. Please make your views known on these issues as well when you call . . .

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly the business community has seen the connection of these two Bills and how they tie together and how they have a detrimental effect on society more as a combined unit than each one as an individual. Because while each one is a terrible detriment to business in Saskatchewan, combined they become a Draconian drain on our system and a threat to the very existence of the province of Saskatchewan and its viability.

I want to throw in from a law firm here, Graff & Associates . . . It says:

For what it's worth, I'm enclosing a copy of our letter from Workers' Compensation.

Now a while ago we talked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about the results of regulations and how they affect legislation. This letter is a clear indication of how regulations put into effect with The Workers' Compensation Act that we saw here last year, an Act which we opposed because we said that it was going to do things in regulation that it didn't show on the surface in the law . . . the legislation itself. That the regulations after the fact would have detrimental effects on the community of Saskatchewan.

This letter goes on to explain a bit of how that worked and we are saying that exactly the same scenario will happen in The Workers' Compensation Act or The Trade Union Act and The Labour Standards Act. All of these Bills are affected after the fact by decisions that are made outside of the jurisdiction and debate forum

of this legislature.

It goes on to say that:

You will notice a 100 per cent increase for offices in 1994 and 200 per cent over two years with further increases possible. The rate increases are not justified by loss experience. We, Saskatchewan, are losing our competitive edge in attracting companies such as Crown Life and Babcock & Wilcox.

Second, there was a labour department flyer in the **Leader-Post**. How much is this political propaganda costing taxpayers? If you don't have a copy, I can send it to you.

We do have a copy, by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We found out, after some discussion with the Minister of Labour, that he in fact didn't just have the 1,500 original copies. He actually had 300,000 of them printed and there were scads of them laying in the garbage cans at every post office, so we were able to get an armful of them without any trouble at all. And we certainly don't agree with the tens of thousands of dollars that little project did in fact cost us, and I'm sure that this taxpayer who writes this letter will be very interested in finding that out.

Now, he goes on to say that certainly you are getting good coverage on this patronage angle -- and of course this letter was address to us -- and he goes into telling us in the rest of the letter how opposed and appalled he is at the kind of patronage that the government was handing out.

And while that has very little to do with the labour legislation, I think it's not necessary to go on with the rest of the letter because all it does is pat the opposition here on the back, and we appreciate that, but we won't make the minister suffer through this letter of congratulations to us. It simply suffices for him to know that in fact we do get those kind of letters occasionally yet, and it makes us very proud of the opportunity we have to debate in this legislature and to present the views of individuals in the province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have talked at length about issues in this Labour Standards Act. We have talked about the input from individuals and corporations. And now, just for a minute, I want to talk about the position that was taken by the news media people because they have an important role to play in our society, just as everyone else does. We have shown input from all cross-sections and certainly too we have many very, very pointed observations from people in the media.

We have the "Labour law juggling seen" as one of the top news stories just back here on April 5. It says here, "Sask. may bring new rules in back door" and of course it goes on to explain the whole process of how the regulation system works and how amendments are brought in. And the media of course is pointing out very clearly what can and will be happening to this legislation.

In another article -- "Labour legislation won't help very much" -- the headline again pretty well self-explanatory of how the article runs on through its entirety, basically condemning the legislation for not doing very much to help the province of Saskatchewan.

"Proposed work changes are under attack." Of course, here again pointed out by the media that there are several provisions that need to be looked at. It goes on to list the things, like provide the same benefits to part-time workers on a prorated basis available to full-time workers in the same establishment. It goes on to say, improved parental leave benefits by reducing the qualifying period for maternity leaves from 20 weeks to 52 weeks, increasing unpaid maternity leave to 12 weeks from 6 weeks and making adoption leave equivalent to maternity leaves.

It points out the good parts of the legislation in this article to begin with and then it goes on to bring some balance into it from the other positions of business on some of the other issues.

And I think that's good reporting. I think that's fair and reasonable because the business community and the people of Saskatchewan have said that there were some things in labour standards that were out of tune, out of date, needed to be revised, and certainly it is good to see that part done. However, the negative effect is so drastic that we have to take a position in general against the legislation.

Having said those things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and noting that I have several articles left, but knowing that I can get into this whole debate at a later time in Committee of the Whole, and that we in fact then will be able to pose these as questions that the minister will be obligated to answer on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, I think it's only fair that I make a few last-minute comments and then allow my colleagues an opportunity to talk to the minister about the Draconian legislation and the very terrible effects that it's going to have on Saskatchewan.

Section 72 of The Labour Standards Act seems to be of particular concern and interest to a lot of people, and I just wanted to bring that to the minister's attention. The amendments to section 72 of The Labour Standards Act is an unacceptable interference to the collective bargaining process. Not only are collective bargaining agreements taken as a package much more favourably to the employees collectively than are the individual requirements under The Labour Standards Act, but each specific type of benefit, i.e., overtime, public holidays, vacations, rates of pay, is more favourable than the Act.

The cherry picking that will be permitted under the proposed law, or proposed new amendments, offends the interests of those employers such as the city of Regina.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we now have the very support base of this government, the city of Regina, very

clearly in this document that they have delivered to us, pointing out to the Minister of Labour that this labour law is very, very detrimental to the city of Regina, to the people of Regina.

And we need to note that here we have a specific request from one of the two biggest cities in our province, specifically asking that on behalf of the people of Regina -- this comes from the city manager -- pleading with the Minister of Labour, pleading with the Minister of Labour not to do this legislation the way he's done it, not to affect all of the contracts that the city has with its collectively bargained-agreed partners, not to throw into disruption all of the fundamental activities of agreements with the workers in the city of Regina.

It's very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Minister of Labour take into account this one last plea from the very centre of its own support, from the centre of his own seat in this Assembly, the people crying to him, asking for his attention, pleading with him not to destroy the province of Saskatchewan with this Draconian legislation.

Here from the city of Regina we have the last message that I'm going to deliver to you today, because it rounds out the plea from all of the people of this province -- from the workers; from the small-business people; from the individuals; from the schools; from the municipalities, from SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities); from all of the educators; from all of the business people, both small, corporate, cooperative; all of the people in this province.

The co-ops have pleaded with you not to destroy this province's labour balance. Everyone in this province, Mr. Minister, has pleaded with you not to upset all of the good things we have in this province with this terrible legislation.

And it rounds up with one very important conclusion to you, the last piece of evidence that I will present to you that your labour legislation is out of tune with the people, and that is this letter from the people of Regina, from the very core of your existence as a politician, and surely you must take that into account.

And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think my colleague, the member from Maple Creek, has certainly delivered what I believe is a very close and thorough examination of this piece of legislation, and I believe he is correct in his assessment of the legislation that we see before us, Bill No. 32, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Bill 32 supposedly, the minister says, has the silent majority of people backing it. And yet we can't seem to find out from the minister who that silent majority is. All we can find is letter after letter, group after group, representation after representation, that says

they have difficulty with this legislation. And yet the minister suggests to the people of Saskatchewan that the silent majority is backing this.

I only have a couple of letters that I would like to provide as evidence against the legislation, and they come both from my constituency. One represents the . . . one is the town council of Kindersley and the other one is a small-business person in Kindersley. But I think they both point out the inadequacies of the legislation and what they believe will be the result of the legislation.

These people I represent. These are the people that I believe understand the legislation. These are the people that are paying close attention to the legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to read into the record the letter that I received from the town of Kindersley, the town council in Kindersley, and the minister has received a copy of this, I understand. In fact he received the original and I received a copy.

To the Hon. Minister of Labour: Re: The proposed changes to The Labour Standards Act. On behalf of the council of the town of Kindersley, I would like to inform you that this council is extremely opposed to the proposed amendments to The Labour Standards Act. The cost of these changes for small business and all local governments would be extremely high and would deter growth and development.

Local governments have been faced with revenue-sharing decreases, SAMA requisition increases (150 per cent in that case), and utility increases -- telephone, natural gas, and electrical -- over the past number of years, and we are trying our best to maintain a satisfactory level of service at reasonable tax rates.

However, unilateral labour changes as are being proposed only add to the cost of running our municipality and we find this legislation totally unacceptable. We therefore request that you reconsider this proposal and use a consultation process before any new amendments are considered. Yours truly, John Klein, Deputy Mayor, Town of Kindersley.

(1600)

Cc'd myself, the Hon. Premier, and the mayor of Kindersley. This was a resolution that was passed by the town council in Kindersley. And I think it highlights, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Mr. Minister, what the people of Saskatchewan, and in this case a town council in rural Saskatchewan, believes are the problems with your legislation: they are inappropriate, that they'll cost jobs and investment into Saskatchewan and therefore aren't needed. And one can only wonder why you are proposing this kind of legislation at this time.

The second piece of correspondence that I have had

from a constituent of mine was from a gentleman in Kindersley, Don Longmuir, who operates a small business in Kindersley. I'll just tell you a little bit about him, Mr. Speaker.

He operates a small radiator repair shop and he sells a number of short-line farm equipment pieces as well. It's a small business, not a big employer by any means. I think he employs three or four people, some of them on a part-time basis, some of them on a full-time basis, but nevertheless a very decent operation that he and his family and others have built up over the years to provide him and his family and the employees of his business with a very adequate living. And I think he would represent the views of a lot of small-business people in Saskatchewan.

And this is a letter sent to the Premier of Saskatchewan, cc'd to the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Labour and myself:

Dear Sir: In regards to Bill 32, amendments to The Labour Standards Act, if this Bill is passed as proposed, it will mean the death (and he's highlighted that, underlined it) of many Saskatchewan jobs and many Saskatchewan businesses. How a government which promotes job creation could even consider such legislation, is beyond me. The power of the Department of Labour over running of business borders on communism, with the government having full power while the individual small business trying to make ends meet has no say.

I was planning on hiring a new staff person this year, but with this legislation like Bill 32 planned, I will not be hiring (again highlighted and underlined). Sincerely, Don Longmuir.

And as I said, I think Don is a very sincere business person, not one that normally gets involved in the discussions, I don't think, on a day-to

_day basis of what's going on in Saskatchewan, but definitely is concerned about the piece of legislation we see before us and what it might do to his business and to the employees that he has currently under his employ.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it highlights the two different views of largely very different groups -- the municipal council, the town council, on one hand, and a small-business person. And I think these are only very small representations of the kinds of letters that we've been receiving, the official opposition, particularly the member for Maple Creek, the critic for Labour.

And yet we still have a government that believes that this is a proper piece of legislation and a piece of legislation that has the support of the people in Saskatchewan. And we can only ask -- who? Who supports this kind of legislation? We see a few union leaders sprinkled around the Chamber from time to time, and they claim to support this legislation, although they even have difficulty with it now, we understand.

We know the member from Regina Rosemont supports the legislation, even though it isn't strong enough in his view. And I understand he's going to be providing amendments to the legislation and we'll look forward to that kind of lunatic fringe view that he'll be bringing forward.

The Speaker: -- Order, order. I think the member knows that that kind of language is not really befitting of this Chamber and I wish he'd refrain from using it.

Mr. Boyd: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We only have to wonder who is supporting this kind of legislation. And we'll be looking forward to the member from Regina Rosemont when he brings forward his ill-informed contribution to this debate, Mr. Speaker.

Who is it going to help? Who is this legislation going to help? Who is it for? Who are you paying off? Who are you paying off? Is it Barb Byers you're paying off for her support? Is it George Rosenau for his support? People like that, is that the people you're trying to pay off these days?

They're a little uncomfortable with you folks, you have to admit though. Even it hasn't gone far enough for them, this legislation, and therefore I think they'll probably be withdrawing their support before very long.

So I think the question has to remain, who is out there in this silent majority of people that supposedly supports this legislation? We'll be looking forward to your help in that regard in telling us who all of this vast number of people within the silent majority of workers in Saskatchewan that supports this legislation. Because I have yet to receive a letter in support -- not one that I can recall, of support for this kind of legislation.

When it comes to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The minister is saying that part-time workers would be making representations to us, and yet I haven't received a letter from a part-time employee in Saskatchewan. I'd welcome those kinds of people making representations to us.

There's lot of people, Mr. Speaker . . . In the businesses that I'm involved in, the businesses that I'm involved in with part-time workers, none of them have come up to me and said that they need this kind of legislation. I've discussed it with them. None of them have said that this kind of legislation . . .

I'll tell you what they did say to me though. They were concerned that this kind of legislation may spell the end of their job rather than the continuation of their job. That was what they told me. They were worried about that maybe happening to them. They were worried that maybe employers would look at full-time employment and cut back on the number of part-time employees within their employ, Mr. Speaker.

And there's some problems with the legislation when we look at things like scheduling and all of that kind of stuff. Part-time workers are often hired on a very short

notice type situation because there is a substantial amount of business walks through the door at that particular moment and you need the help. That's why you hire part-time workers. You need the help at critical times of the day, and often those critical times are unforeseen. You don't know when you're going to need it, quite frankly, and that's why there's such a thing as part-time workers, Mr. Speaker.

I think this piece of legislation is a shoddy piece of legislation and it was brought in by a minister that's been ill-prepared for this type of legislation. And the only job loss that there should be in this province is that minister. That's the only job loss that should result from this piece of legislation after it's pulled. I think that minister should be taken to task for bringing forward such a piece of legislation that is so poorly drafted and so poorly accepted and so poorly consulted with prior to bringing this piece of legislation forward.

And I would expect that once this legislation is withdrawn that that minister will be resigning, because I think that's what the appropriate action that he should be dealing with. Just as the appropriate action was when the former minister of Agriculture screwed up the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program and had to . . . well he didn't exactly have to step down; he was simply relieved of his responsibilities and shuffled over to another department so that the people of Saskatchewan maybe wouldn't think that he was dismissed. But of course all farm families know different than that. They know very well that he was let go from the ministry of Agriculture. And I expect the same fate will face the Minister of Labour after this legislation is withdrawn.

And the member from Regina Rosemont, I suspect when he finds out that that's in the cards and that the Minister of Labour may have to do that, I wouldn't be surprised if he has to do some backtracking, some substantial backtracking as well when the people who he claims who support him out there are unhappy with his change of heart.

Mr. Speaker, why doesn't the legislation apply to businesses with 20 people or less? If this is such an important piece of legislation, if this is such an important piece of legislation, why doesn't it deal with people that employ 20 people or less? Are there only problems with bigger businesses than people that employ 20 people? Is that the rationale behind it, Mr. Minister, that only businesses that have 20 or more employees have problems? Or are businesses that have 20 people and less, do they have problems as well?

Are there only sexual harassment and discrimination and other work related problems associated with businesses of over 20 people? Is that what you're telling us, and that's why there's a benchmark of 20 people as the cut-off? Is there not those kinds of problems in smaller businesses?

If you felt so strongly about this, why didn't you simply say all businesses instead of . . . if you felt so strongly

about this, why didn't you put in a provision for all businesses instead of just businesses of 20 people or over?

And the minister says that the cost of bringing in this legislation and this piece of legislation will be minuscule, the cost. In fact, if the cost is minuscule and the businesses would hardly notice any changes, why doesn't it apply to every business? Why is it that small businesses with 20 employees or under are not participating? There's basically no cost, I guess.

What problem could there have been with Bill 32 if in fact these costs had been . . . or if these things made for better for everyone and at no additional costs? Why doesn't the minister just admit that he's exaggerating the crisis, and the costs to businesses are much higher than he claims? Why doesn't he just admit that Bill 32, as it stands, is a mistake and it should not under any circumstances be forced through this legislation, which will probably be the result of how the legislation does pass. At the end of the day they'll probably bring in closure and force it through the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it stands to reason that when the business community, municipalities, health organization, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, have major problems with Bill 32, that something is wrong with it, Mr. Minister. The minister claims that the silent majority is in favour of it. But how more out to lunch can he be than that observation? Who did the minister consult with on this legislation?

Mr. Speaker, it's hard to say, because there's so little evidence of any consultation whatsoever. Regarding health insurance benefits there was no consulting. The government did not talk to groups like the Great-West or Crown Life or Co-operators. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the NDP didn't even contact the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association out east until a week after the Bill was tabled. A week after they were already trying to push through this legislation, the government stopped and said, oops, I guess we'd better make a few phone calls so we can claim to have consulted on this one. That's this minister's type of consultation, unfortunately.

Even then, Mr. Speaker, it was more of a general inquiry rather than seeking advice. So no written response was given by the association. That's not consultation, Mr. Minister. That's Saskatchewan's intrusive heavy-handed NDP government that is not willing to listen, period.

Who did the minister talk to about the health benefits, about providing these services, about the pros and cons of the legislation? Well, Mr. Minister, I know for a fact that you did not consult with the two largest consulting firms in Saskatchewan. So just who did you consult with?

The minister responsible for Labour, in addition to whoever was providing poor advice to the minister, didn't even take the time to consult with the consulting firms that specialize in these issues. They

didn't even ask the advice of the professionals who know this issue from the insurance side, from the employer side, and from the employee side.

Further, Mr. Speaker, the organizations who have spoken against the legislation are not fly-by-night operations. They are not radical interest groups that enjoy stirring up the pot for no good reason. They're honourable, accomplished, concerned organizations who are completely objective.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about groups like the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, an organization of over 10,000 members -- 10,000 independent business people, Mr. Speaker, that employ thousands and thousands of Saskatchewan people. Do they think Bill 32 is acceptable? No, they don't. They have a number of concerns regarding Bill 32 concerning concerns that the minister tries to pass off by saying, we'll take care of all of those concerns in the regulations.

Well, Mr. Minister, I don't think that kind of answer is good enough. The people of Saskatchewan aren't willing to just trust you to do the right thing, because you so often haven't done the right thing. No wonder everyone wants to have first a look at these kinds of amendments, at the regulations, before Bill 32 can go any further. They want to see it in writing, Mr. Minister.

But then again this government's written commitment isn't worth the paper it's printed on. Just ask people like the judges in this province or the farmers or the civil servants or the people at the Co-op upgrader. The Minister of Justice has backed out on a number of times when he's made his solemn promise to people in Saskatchewan, and yet now the Minister of Labour is asking us to trust him.

But why should we trust you any more than the people of Saskatchewan, or the judges trust the Minister of Justice in this province? He isn't willing to uphold the law of this province and neither are you. And that's why the people of Saskatchewan aren't willing to support you on this type of legislation or this type of notion -- just trust us and we'll bring forward the concerns in the regulations, deal with the concerns in the regulations.

(1615)

These organizations, groups like the chamber of commerce, SUMA, SARM, SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations), all believe that you should be bringing forward those regulations prior to the implementation of this piece of legislation so that they can judge for themselves what the regulations are going to be and point out the inadequacies of them.

The Minister of Labour stands up and says, you'll just have to see them in committee so let's just skip right to it, is what he's suggesting. But he knows it is not quite that simple. All you'd have to do, Mr. Minister, is provide us with the regulations as you promised to do,

and groups that you promised to bring forward the regulations, so that they can all judge for themselves. They'd have further opportunity to judge this destructive piece of legislation, and that's why you don't want to do that. I think you want to push through this piece of legislation prior to anyone knowing what all is involved.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to be held accountable to the people it serves, to stop trying to arbitrarily run everything from the Co-op upgrader to the 7 Eleven corner store. It's time for the NDP to start taking steps to create jobs, not to make them disappear. And that's what will result from this legislation.

I think you have, in your own minds, honourable intentions. Unfortunately I don't think you understand the reality of what business people in Saskatchewan face today and how they will react to this type of legislation.

Have you considered that for a moment, about how people will react? We just look at letters that we receive, like that business person from Kindersley, and they suggest that they will not be hiring part-time help as a result of this kind of legislation.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite stopped their big-government mentality and start listening to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Bill 32 is a mess, and the minister knows it. It's a complete mess. And right now the only way to clean up this mess is to listen to groups like SUMA and SARM and SAHO and others who say Bill 32 should be pulled in order so that it can be tightened up, in order to provide proper consultation, which hasn't been provided so far.

They say it shouldn't even be introduced until 1995, to allow groups all over the province to have opportunity to have input into the legislation. The Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, Mr. Speaker, employ over 40,000 people in the province of Saskatchewan. And yet this government is unwilling to listen to them, Mr. Speaker.

As I have mentioned, members of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce employ thousands of people in Saskatchewan. It's probably very safe to say that they represent more than 100,000 people in Saskatchewan. And the government won't listen to the chamber of commerce either, Mr. Speaker.

Then there's the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, Mr. Speaker, who employ between 17 and 18,000 individuals as well, and the government isn't listening to them either.

So roughly, organizations that represent over 50 per cent -- over 50 per cent of Saskatchewan's workforce, Mr. Speaker -- not including unions who are against this legislation as well, in some regards, and the NDP

still keeps pushing and pushing and pushing this legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, over 50 per cent represents a majority in a democracy, so where is this minister's so-called silent majority -- so-called silent majority?

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add my voice with the official opposition to SUMA, to SARM, to the SSTA, to the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, and others who want this piece of legislation pulled. I'd like to urge the NDP government to listen to the people in Saskatchewan for once, to pull this legislation and take the proper time to consult and to redraft this legislation before it is given any further consideration in this Assembly.

It is imperative that the government listen, Mr. Speaker, because if they don't, jobs will be lost and students, single parents, and seniors will be hurt, Mr. Speaker -- the very people the NDP claim to want to help will see many of their jobs disappear.

Considering the number of people on welfare in this province equals the population of communities like Estevan, Lloydminster, Melfort, Melville, North Battleford, Swift Current, Weyburn, Yorkton combined -- all of them combined, Mr. Speaker -- 8 out of 12 of Saskatchewan cities, the creation of jobs should be the number one priority of this government, not pushing through legislation that is going to make part-time jobs disappear.

Considering the fact that there are 12,000 less jobs right now than when the NDP were elected, I'd say the advice of all of those groups like SAHO, SUMA, SARM, SSTA, the official opposition, should be heeded. Mr. Speaker, it's time that the government realized that there are people out -- and lots of people -- out there, that do not support this kind of legislation. They don't support it because they understand the implications of it.

And I don't think the government does understand the implications of it, Mr. Speaker. I don't think they understand that there could be job losses as a result of this legislation. They won't simply take the opportunity to talk to these people. I can't understand why that would be the case.

Why doesn't this government want to take the time to consult with groups like SUMA, and SARM, and SAHO, SSTA? They consulted with groups like SAHO when SAHO was in agreement with them on something. The moment anyone opposes this government, they all of a sudden become the radical fringe, as they call it, as the ... extremists, like the Minister of Labour called groups like SAHO, SUMA, and SARM.

Those groups, Mr. Minister, are not extremists. Those groups represent people all over Saskatchewan. Those people within those groups represent people all over Saskatchewan, people who are in large number in elected positions, on city councils, town councils,

and urban municipality councils, and rural municipality councils, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's those groups I think that the government, any government, should be willing to listen to, should be willing to consult with when they bring . . . prior to bringing forward any kind of legislation like this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation, as I said earlier, was very, very poorly drafted. They didn't take the opportunity to consult with the people of Saskatchewan. They do not have the support of the majority of Saskatchewan workers or Saskatchewan businesses, as they claim to, Mr. Speaker.

And because of that I believe that this legislation -- and I agree with groups like SUMA, SARM, and SAHO, and the SSTA -- should be pulled and should be redrafted and tightened up and not be reintroduced for at least a year, to give people adequate time to have the proper kinds of consultation with the government that there should have been prior to the bringing forward of this legislation.

And in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, when you see people, unsolicited, bringing forward resolutions, like the town of Kindersley, in regard to this legislation, and business people, small-business people -- very small-business people with one or two, three, four employees -- bringing forward correspondence to us, sending us correspondence suggesting this legislation is not the right kind of legislation for the environment of Saskatchewan today and for the business climate of Saskatchewan today, I certainly cannot see how a government can proceed with that kind of legislation.

I believe that the minister should withdraw this legislation. And I think that the majority of people in Saskatchewan agree with me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Swenson: -- Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that other members wish to enter into the debate today, but I do wish to make a few comments. As my colleagues have most ably pointed out to you, Mr. Speaker, particularly the member from Maple Creek -- the member responsible for labour issues in the official opposition -- that there is no question all around the province of Saskatchewan there's a tremendous feeling of let-down by people who thought that the rhetoric of this government was true and honest.

If you remember back to 1991, there was a lot of criticism of the former administration because they supposedly didn't consult with people in enough areas before they went ahead with legislative agendas -- legislative agendas that fundamentally affected the lives of Saskatchewan citizens.

And you and I can both remember a number of areas where there were very substantive and major changes occurring in our society. And I think back to the debate surrounding the privatization of the Potash Corporation, for instance, when many members of the Assembly took the opportunity to speak at almost

inordinate amounts of time, Mr. Speaker, about that fundamental shift. And there was a lot of criticism that those types of shifts should not occur in our society without people being consulted first.

So now we've arrived in 1994 with Bill 32. And the assertion by the member, the minister responsible for Labour in the NDP government, that he has embarked on a year and a half consultation with Saskatchewan people and the result of which is the necessitated changes.

And as my colleague from Maple Creek and my colleague from Kindersley and other colleagues have pointed out to this Assembly and to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, is that there is an overwhelming reaction by people in all walks of life against this legislation, absolutely overwhelming.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, a list of faxes that have come into my office that virtually cover the length and breadth of this province. They are from business groups; they are from towns and villages; they are from tourism associations; they are from regional tourism authorities. They in fact, Mr. Speaker, cover every segment of society in this province -- anyone that has anything to do with employing people -- SUMA, SARM, health organizations, and it just goes on and on.

It amazes me, Mr. Speaker, that a person supposedly could go around this province for that amount of time, supposedly in a listening mode -- not a speaking mode but a listening mode -- and not pick up on this.

I don't know if it says something about the attitude of the government, Mr. Speaker, or if it simply is the particular agency and department involved. But I just find it really strange, Mr. Speaker, in a province that today boasts one of the highest percentages of its population in Canadian Confederation that are on welfare rolls; that has had a continuing exodus of young people and skilled individuals out of the province; that today has almost nothing going on in the way of economic development in the entire province; that that type of a government you would think would want to listen more than they would speak, Mr. Speaker.

Because obviously there is a crying need out there for Saskatchewan to fit better into the Canadian Confederation than what it's doing. I mean here we are almost on a daily basis listening to the government opposite say that they are being short-changed by Confederation; that all of the woes that this government faces in life are always somebody else's problem. They are always somebody else's creation, Mr. Speaker.

And what I see before me in this pile of faxes and in another pile of newspaper editorials that I have here, is that this is a problem of their own making; that the ultimate responsibility for these changes lies squarely with this NDP government and with some of the people that obviously have more say in these matters than this large spectrum of Saskatchewan people who

are the major employers in the province of Saskatchewan.

I had one individual from a chamber of commerce meeting, Mr. Speaker, in a city in our province, tell me that the minister came out to speak one morning on this issue and gave them a long dissertation on American labour law in the 1930s and how the democratic government of the late Franklin Delano Roosevelt made some major changes in labour legislation at that time which helped American society rebuild itself from the Depression. And I think all of us that understand history recognize the fact that that took place.

But what the people went for that morning to breakfast, Mr. Speaker, was to understand how Saskatchewan in the 1990s, going into the next century, would fit into the North American trade concepts, how we would fit into the matrix that is rapidly developing around the world about how countries and people communicate with each other, how they trade with each other, how they share education, how they share science and technology, and how they reach out and do different things than they had in the past.

(1630)

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, that is the disappointment that people in this province are finding today with what they see before us, is that obviously the agenda was pre-set, that this whole exercise that Saskatchewan people had to go through with this minister and this government was a pre-set agenda that quite frankly could have been dealt with months ago, because ultimately the concerns have not been addressed. The concerns haven't been listened to.

These people have simply forged ahead, as they have so, and so wantonly to do in this Legislative Assembly, whether it be taking away the constitutional and court rights of individuals, groups. But they have simply forged ahead because the political agenda ultimately always speaks louder, always speaks louder than does the reality, Mr. Speaker, of people in the province.

For example, the requirements to reimburse employees for cancelled holidays, the improved maternity benefits, the extension of funeral leave to the death of grandparents, all of these things, Mr. Speaker, can easily be seen as progressive steps by most people in our society. And they are the type of things that I think everyone out there, Mr. Speaker, if they had been put in the proper context, would agree with.

But instead those things have been mixed in with a whole menagerie of other agenda items, other agenda items, Mr. Speaker. And you've heard my colleagues talk about them sector by sector by sector -- items that quite frankly put Saskatchewan out of step with the world that we live in; out of step with the Manitoba's and the Alberta's and the British Columbia's and the Montana's and the North Dakota's and the Minnesota's, the whole world that we deal with, Mr.

Speaker.

I mean here we have the Deputy Premier of our province going off down East to a conference to talk about the reduction and removal of interprovincial trade barriers, so that Saskatchewan can naturally seek out market-places, areas of expertise, so that we aren't hemmed in by some of the constraints that we have seen in the past in Canadian Confederation, so that our relatively small, industrious population here can do some of the things that it does very well and we won't be penalized by others for doing those things well; that we'll find our place in Canadian Confederation and by doing so will strengthen our dealings with people in the Pacific Rim, with people in the United States, people in Mexico -- that we will strengthen the very fundamental of our society here.

And instead we have a government bringing in legislation, legislation that will put Saskatchewan out of step with everyone else. I mean I have seen comparison after comparison of the labour standards legislation in this province and other areas dealing with how working people are treated, and you stack that up against others, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? In almost all the cases we're either first or second -- and first in a lot of areas. Because just like health care, Mr. Speaker, no matter what the stripe of government in this province, no matter what the stripe, if anything people have tried to err on the side of the people, i.e., spent large sums of money to ensure that people were protected rather than the other way. And that has been the tradition in this province, Mr. Speaker. It has been the tradition.

So I really wonder, Mr. Speaker, why do we take these steps when we have over 81,000 of our people on welfare, when we have young people continuing to flow out of our province, when our agricultural community is still under severe pressure in world commodity markets; why we come forward to try and drive ourselves so far out in front of the pack that we don't know where we're going.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, if there were a half a dozen projects going on around this province and there was empty union halls, as there was a few years ago when we had to import tradesmen into this province because we could not fill all of the job placements either in western Canada, it would be different for them to talk about these things, because those people would be employed, they'd be paying income tax, and our economy would have the opportunity to piggyback on the recovery of the North American economy. But no, we don't have that situation, Mr. Speaker. We don't have it going on anywhere in this province at all.

And we can talk about Ag 2000, and we can talk about this blueprint of cooperation with the business community that's supposedly there. But quite simply, Mr. Speaker, the jobs aren't there. We see no evidence that there are going to be significantly more numbers of taxpayers. We don't see any evidence that Saskatchewan's economy is going to take advantage of the changes that are going on around us.

Instead we have this sort of hope-and-pray attitude that agricultural prices will go up. The Minister of Agriculture reminds of us of it all the time, that the price of canola's gone up -- whoop-de-do. It can go down just as fast next year. The price of durum wheat can go down just as fast as it came up this year, Mr. Speaker.

And now the industrial sector in particular of our province, which has always had to fight and scrimp and scrounge to find its way to the market-place, is going to find itself now even under more pressure because they quite simply will be uncompetitive.

The issues, Mr. Speaker, that this legislature should have been dealing with, the concerns of people -- the part-timers who are having trouble collecting their wages; the people who can't get leave for bereavement -- those issues could have been dealt with in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, I say to you, in very short order.

But in effect, what we have seen this government do is bump every last contract in this province upwards. Contracts that were bargained for, I remind people, shifting that was bargained for; ways that people go to work that were bargained for, to help out the very people whose jobs are at stake. And now this government has the audacity to come in and effectively bump every one of those contracts upwards, and throw the whole collective bargaining process out of whack. That, Mr. Speaker, is not good legislation.

You can go through it sector by sector by sector where you will see agreements that people have arrived at after years of negotiation, and in some cases strike action, being dramatically changed because of what the government's proposing. And the Minister of Labour says, oh, no, that's not the case.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if he had been listening, if he had been listening, then the piles of faxes that were coming into my office and his on a daily basis wouldn't be arriving. You wouldn't have every major public sector and private sector group in this province talking about this legislation in the way they are if they had been listening.

The minister talks about \$14.2 million a year being small potatoes. This is from the **Leader-Post** of March 17. Well if it was only \$14.2 million, Mr. Speaker, we might give the minister the benefit of the doubt. And that's a lot of money to all of us, especially in today's province where everyone's finding a tough time.

But the simple fact is that in one sector alone -- and that being the hospitality industry, and particularly the restaurant trade in this province -- they alone just about, Mr. Speaker, can make up these kind of numbers. And when you look at the potential lay-offs, the people in this province that are going to have no choice but to join those already swollen, bloated welfare rolls because the hospitality industry can no longer employ them because of these legislative

changes, then I say to you the minister's quoted "small potatoes" are going to be one great big potato, Mr. Speaker; one great big potato that's going to land on the head of hundreds and hundreds of people around this province. That's going to be one headache, Mr. Speaker, that they aren't going to be able to live with.

So it seems logical to me that the minister would want to re-evaluate. He'd want to listen to all of these people that he supposedly consulted with and he would want to re-evaluate and think about how he could do things a little bit better. And if that means going around this province and going to every last chamber meeting and Rotary Club meeting and wherever he can find an audience to sit down and listen and not talk about American labour legislation in the 1930s or British industrial law from the 1830s, as he is wont to do, I think he would find the true reality of what is going on in this province. And he would understand that people in this province want to use their God-given talents to do what they do best, and that means they have to be competitive.

It doesn't mean, Mr. Speaker, that they have no heart, no soul, no compassion, but it means that they want to go out and compete. There is no way the member from Maple Creek could have stood in this Assembly for three and a half hours the other day and gone through it letter by letter, area by area, if it wasn't true, Mr. Speaker -- if it wasn't true.

The longer this debate goes on, Mr. Speaker, the more people are coming to the fore and they're doing their cost benefit analysis both in economic terms and in human terms, Mr. Speaker. And when they put those two together, they're finding that there is a loss on both sides. On the economic side of the ledger, they lose their competitive edge. And on the human side of the ledger, not one more employee in the province of Saskatchewan because of this legislation, but the reality is probably hundreds if not thousands fewer employees.

And I say to you, Mr. Speaker, why would you want to be the minister responsible for the Department of Labour and bring in a piece of legislation that effectively reduces the size of the workforce. Now if that isn't a contradiction, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what one is.

I mean we had the spectre the other day raised in this House, where the projections made by the Finance minister for job growth this year in the province, instead of working toward the 5,000 that she projected, it's actually going the other way. The first three months of this year we're in a deficit of 2,000 placements instead of going the other way.

Now the various ministers stand up and say, well in this sector or that sector there's a little more employment here or there. But the numbers don't lie, Mr. Speaker. The numbers don't lie. There's 12,000 less people working in this province today than there was in 1991 -- 12,000 taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, 12,000.

Nowhere in the minister's second reading speech, or in anything I've seen in the media, or his conversations with groups around this province, have I seen where the minister can indicate one more employee because of this legislation - _ one.

I mean there are a lot of groups in this province, a lot of towns, a lot of cities, that would say yes, I'll back you, Mr. Minister, because you're showing me some more employment. But nowhere has the minister shown us where he is not going to have anything but net losses, sector by sector by sector, because of this legislation.

It will be interesting in committee, Mr. Speaker, for the minister to bring his consultation process forward to this House where he can show the various groups who are expressing concern with him, where they are going to have a net gain in employment. Because I don't believe the minister can show us that. I honestly believe he can't.

(1645)

If the minister has the courage, he'll probably show us, Mr. Speaker, he'll probably show us some net losses. And I hope he has the courage to tell us the truth, Mr. Speaker, the truth about those net losses. Because then he will be delivering to Saskatchewan people the straight goods on this legislation.

I haven't had a chance, Mr. Speaker, to look at the piece that was introduced today. But I suspect that when you tack that one on top of what we've already seen here, that it's going to be even worse. Just what people are telling me about the changes that the member from Regina Churchill Downs, just the changes that the minister is proposing for the Labour Relations Board, Mr. Speaker, I suspect will mean that we will see even fewer employees. Because from what I'm told, it's going to make situations like the Woolco employees in my home city of Moose Jaw even more uncomfortable than what they are today with where the government's heading.

I've got a packing plant in my community, Mr. Speaker, that's been shut down now for approximately a year and a half. The entire boxed beef industry in this province, of which there was a significant one in the city of Moose Jaw, tied to the old Canada Packers plant, the entire boxed beef industry has shifted to Alberta.

Today, Mr. Speaker, in this province, if you're a farmer and you've got a cow that loses a calf and you decide to can her, you can't find a place hardly in this province that'll kill her. You've got to ship her off to Alberta. And by the time you pay the freight, Mr. Speaker, by the time you pay the freight, it isn't worth sending her.

But it used to be that she went into the Moose Jaw plant and into the boxed beef process and we supplied a half a dozen major chain restaurants in this province with steaks and various kinds of cuts because it was economical and you could compete.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in this legislation or in the legislation proposed today that's going to open that packing plant up, that's going to put that assembly line in place again, and the 30 to 40 people that used to work in the boxed beef industry in this province back on their jobs.

And I'll be interested if the minister can point that out, how those people are going to come back on those jobs and go back to work. And, Mr. Speaker, the minimum wage in that plant, as I understand it, was about ten and a half dollars an hour. And those people contributed to their community. Instead of bringing in legislation that would help solve those situations so that the boxed beef industry in this province thrives, the minister brings in legislation that almost ensures, Mr. Speaker, that it will never occur again.

This from a government that was going to create more jobs in agriculture, that was going to use the largest industry in the province of Saskatchewan to build on -- a building block. It's Ag 2000. It talks about red meat, red meat, red meat, all the way through, but when they have opportunities to make the red-meat sector grow and employ people in this province, what did they do? They bring in legislation that ensures that it will never grow.

Those are fundamental choices, Mr. Speaker. And you can't tell me, in this consultation process that the Minister of Labour, the member from Churchill Downs supposedly entered into, that somebody didn't come forward and tell them that -- that there is a major problem in the red-meat industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I only use that as an example because it's close to home and it means a lot to my community. There are a lot of farm families dependent on that packing plant as a second income that paid the mortgage, that helped them keep farming. Without the packing plant there, Mr. Speaker, they can't necessarily keep farming.

And then they have choices, Mr. Speaker. They have choices. They either enter into the welfare rolls of this province or they leave, because the opportunities aren't there.

Mr. Speaker, that's what legislation is all about. It's helping people; it's creating opportunity; it's creating employment, not driving it away, Mr. Speaker, not driving it out of the province.

The tourism industry, Mr. Speaker, identified as one of the potential growth areas. Large areas of our province that are still virtually unspoiled -- clear water, clear skies, no smog, industrious people. Most places in the world that have those things sell it and they sell it hard, Mr. Speaker, and they make good money off tourism.

I met with some of the board members from TISASK (Tourism Industry Association of Saskatchewan) the other day, and I know what they told the minister about this legislation. The whole entire Saskatchewan tourism industry said you're going to be a net loser on jobs, that the opportunities that are out there for

Saskatchewan people in hunting and fishing, family farm vacations, showing the best of our province off to the outside world, are telling the minister there will be a net loss. And because there's a net loss there will be a loss in profit and there will be lost opportunities because we aren't in the ball game any more, Mr. Speaker.

And they told the minister that; they told the Premier that; they told the Minister of Economic Development that. And yet this legislation proceeds a piece with no indication that the government is ready to shelve it and go back and relearn and restudy, and most of all listen to the folks that provide the employment in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it's an absolute travesty that this minister and this government would say to people, particularly part-timers in this province, that we aren't going to allow you, we aren't going to allow you to design your workplace at all. We're going to design it for you. And you will have no opportunity except to follow the rule from on high.

Mr. Speaker, in a lot of these industries, people work in them for various reasons. Number one, people like to work around their children's activities. There are many, many people in our province that choose to work certain types of shifts at certain times of the day, so that they can be there with their children in the morning and again when they come home from school.

Those changes, Mr. Speaker, were worked out in many cases business by business, occupation by occupation, because people value their time with their children. You will often see couples who are both working, designing their workload around the fact that when one is out of the home, the other one is in, so that they can be with their children. The necessity for two-income families is there; and they by choice, Mr. Speaker, work with their employer to make sure that those quality hours and days are spent with their children.

That's probably the number one reason, Mr. Speaker. Does this government recognize that? No. They are going to dictate how those workplaces are organized, Mr. Speaker, so that those people will not have that opportunity, so people will simply back out of the workforce.

The other thing that it does, Mr. Speaker, because so many Saskatchewan people are multi-talented, is that I believe the minister is actually helping out the underground economy. There are a lot of numbers coming forward today showing that because of the oppressive tax regime of the Canadian government and provincial governments, particularly this one, that a lot of people are working for cash. They say, rather than put up with the hassles imposed on me with taxes and utility rates and now goofy labour standards laws, I'm simply going to work, and I'll take cash, and I will manage my time because the government won't allow me to.

Mr. Speaker, that is all backwards from the way it should be. You should have people being able to work in their society and working out arrangements that allow them to be productive, and part and parcel of the workforce and paying taxes rather than doing everything they can to avoid it.

And that is the reality of what the minister presents to this province. Do you think for a minute, Mr. Speaker, that those 81,000-plus on welfare are going to be thrilled with what the minister brings forward; that their hope of getting off of the social welfare roll has changed? No. Because the minister will hamstring the employer to the point where he cannot work and design programs with these people. That is reality of this legislation, Mr. Speaker. That is reality. That is why so many, so many in this province, Mr. Speaker, band together and oppose.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I was flabbergasted the other day when SUMA and SARM and SAHO all came in at one time and said, we have very serious concerns with what this NDP government is proposing. The whole spectrum of public sector employment in this province, the real big ones, the urban and rural municipal councils, and our health area, Mr. Speaker, came in and they said to the minister, this is wrong.

And then, Mr. Speaker, they had to come down to the offices of the official opposition because obviously people weren't listening. And the minister says, well don't worry about it, don't worry about it; let's get this piece of legislation passed and then we'll go out and we'll design some regulations; we'll design some regulations that can be changed by cabinet -- nothing to do with this Legislative Assembly here -- that we'll simply do by OC (order in council) what we think is right to change the workplace.

And the folks that represent 50,000 public sector employees said: thanks, but no thanks. You expect me to go out and set mill rates, to plan, to set in place agendas, and then you are going to change by OC and I'm expected to live with the whims and vagaries of cabinet decisions. They want, Mr. Speaker, the right of this Legislative Assembly to view all aspects of this legislation.

And the minister . . . the member from Maple Creek asked the minister the other day, he said, come on, bring in those regulations, put them in this House; let's have a look at them and we'll talk about it. And we could have been in committee last week, Mr. Speaker. The minister can do it at any time. He can bring those regulations into this House; he can pass them across; we can all take a look at them; we can sit down and we can talk about it, and we can say what's right or wrong here.

And the folks that sent all of these faxes in can also take a look at them and say: yes, no, maybe. But the minister says no, trust me. Trust me. Well they trusted him for 16 long months, Mr. Speaker, when he went around this province and totally consulted with them. He was saying, trust me.

And what do they get at the end of the protest, Mr. Speaker? Do they get trust? No, they get absolute betrayal by the Minister of Labour. That's what they get, absolute betrayal. Absolute betrayal.

It's not too late, Mr. Speaker, for this minister to stop the process. I mean why would he want to bring into this legislature, into committee, this legislation, when we know at the end of the day we're not seeing all the goods.

We can have the legislation in front of us; at the end of the day the minister can do whatever he wants in regulations. Sector by sector, group by group he'll cherry pick his way through there because there's other folks in this province, Mr. Speaker, that do have an agenda. And they seem to have the minister's ear.

Now I don't know how you get that ear, Mr. Speaker -- there's lots of people in the province trying to figure that out. I don't know whether it's the door-knockers for the NDP Party or if it's other considerations, boards, commissions, I don't know -- they're pretty good at that type of thing, Mr. Speaker, maybe that's where it is, but there's some people in this province seem to have that minister's ear.

It's not the people that employ 50,000 public sector employees, it's not the tourism industry, it's not agriculture, it's not the industrial base, it's not the people down at Sears. I don't know who it is exactly, Mr. Speaker, but they're obviously ... somebody has the minister's ear.

Maybe they should send in some faxes and explain to us why they have the minister's ear, why the minister would carry out this charade for 16 months, Mr. Speaker, and tell us he consulted and at the end of the day there's no evidence of consultation anywhere. That's the question that has to be answered, Mr. Speaker. That is the question that has to be answered and that this minister has to answer it. Why Saskatchewan people have been put through this process at this time by this minister . . .

The Speaker: -- Order, order. It now being 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.