

EVENING SITTING
GOVERNMENT ORDERS
ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 9

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 9 — The Real Estate Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand tonight to address Bill No. 9, An Act to amend The Real Estate Act.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of our members, opposition members, have spoken to this Bill previously and have outlined some of the areas of concern with the Bill. And this concern was brought to our attention by the Saskatoon Real Estate Board as well as realtors from other areas of the province. And you know we recognize that the NDP (New Democratic Party) is calling this a housekeeping Bill, Mr. Speaker, and it's one that makes some fairly inconsequential — inconsequential, sorry — amendments, but there is still a part of this Bill that speaks to one of the major problems facing the province.

But first of all in relating to the housekeeping amendments, they have taken care of updating legislation that deals with confidentiality and information sharing within the real estate industry, and the official opposition has no problem with that, Mr. Speaker. There are also amendments that allow for interprovincial agreements between bodies and regulators, something that would be necessary when there are brokers and salespeople moving from one jurisdiction to another.

So overall we don't take issue with those amendments that talk about confidentiality and information sharing. And we also support those sections that strengthen agreements reached between regulating bodies and representatives.

Changes that require errors and omissions coverage are in themselves not negative — in fact the real estate group has indicated that they actually prefer that. It would only make good sense that they should have that kind of protection.

Changing the requirements regarding disclosure and reporting are also things we don't take issue with, Mr. Speaker.

But the one thing that we and the real estate community have a major problem with is the section that deals with specifying one insurance carrier and making this mandatory. This has the real estate business very concerned. It's almost as if they didn't know about that particular clause in the body of this Act.

In fact during his second reading speech, the Justice minister said that the government had consulted with the Saskatchewan Real Estate Commission, with the Saskatchewan Real Estate Association, and the Superintendent of Real Estate; yet we know that there have been a number of letters sent out, all of

them expressing concerns about the section that speaks of a specified insurance carrier. In other words, it looks as if the real estate community hadn't seen this particular Bill as it is written. Again, Mr. Speaker, lack of proper consultation on the part of the NDP government.

Why was the section of the Bill that specifies one insurance carrier necessary? There were no reasons given for this. Specifying one insurance carrier, Mr. Speaker, means funnelling more business to just one company and not leaving the market open — and this is the point that the realtors of the province would like to make. It's important to them to have freedom of choice to choose the insurance carrier that they choose. They don't want anyone determining this for them or having a mandatory stipulation put forward in this legislation where they should be told which insurance carrier they must go with.

Mr. Speaker, if a monopoly is allowed in that area, it would not make things easier or more commercial or more economical. In fact it would have the reverse effect. The Saskatoon real estate association and the Insurance Brokers Association of Saskatchewan have very clearly indicated that they do not support that particular section of the Bill. Businesses right now, Mr. Speaker, are overtaxed and they're over regulated as it is. The last thing the real estate community needs is to be told that they must deal with a specified insurance carrier.

In the words of the Saskatoon real estate association:

The only single insurer model our association has seen provided 80 per cent less coverage at 30 per cent higher costs to the registrant.

This certainly cannot be in the interests of the consumer or the real estate industry.

Insurance brokers have also expressed their concern with this section of the Bill. They too do not feel it would be in the best interests of all concerned if this section were allowed to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, we will be making an amendment to this Bill. At this time we are prepared to move it on to Committee of the Whole, but we certainly hope that the government takes very seriously the request of the real estate people in this province and the insurance brokers. The request that they're issuing to the government to make an amendment to this Bill to remove clause (q) . . . I'm not quite sure exactly, I'll have to just refer to that clause, Mr. Speaker. It's clause 83(1)(q.1). And that's the thing that they would like to be removed from this particular Bill. And the opposition will be moving an amendment during Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, I would at this time take the opportunity to table a number of letters of support for that particular clause being removed, by members of the real estate community. These brokers are from Saskatoon and Regina, and there is also some representation here from North Battleford. I would be pleased to table this on their behalf and would ask the minister to please review these and consider very seriously granting the request of the Real Estate Board in Saskatoon as well as, as I mentioned,

brokers throughout the province who are asking for this to be returned . . . rather, removed.

Mr. Speaker, there's in the Bill, there's the word mandatory used as well as the word compulsory. In this Bill it's, you know, the word mandatory is being used and there is a big difference between mandatory and compulsory.

Compulsory means that certainly all real estate brokers would have to have errors and omissions insurance. And that's pretty well been the consensus of the real estate boards. They in fact have passed bylaws that this would have to be the case. And so they've already seen to that.

To use the word mandatory, a mandatory specified insurer, really strikes a chord, a fear in their heart, that they're not going to have the freedom to choose their own insurer. And certainly this is something in a democracy that we as the Saskatchewan Party feel is important for people. It's important for people in business, it's important for everyone in the province to be able to do their business freely and to deal with the open market because they can determine best what is best for them and certainly for their clients.

So without a doubt, this particular clause of the Act to amend The Real Estate Act must be removed if we are going to guarantee people the freedom to choose as they should have in a democracy.

As I've mentioned, Mr. Speaker, I will be making an amendment to this Act during Committee of the Whole, and I now refer this Bill on to Committee of the Whole and I do table these letters for the minister responsible to review and certainly I hope he will consider it very seriously.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 53

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 53 — The Department of Economic Development Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In speaking to this Act very recently, I alluded to several things in the Act that required some further investigation, further questions to be answered. We've had a short amount of time in order to do that and I'm going to shortly allow this Act to move on to Committee of the Whole, but in the meantime I have a couple of other points that I would like to put on the record.

In this amendment to the Act, The Department of Economic Development Act, there is some positive things that I think we certainly don't have any problems with. I think the government-wide approach to the computer technology that they talk about in these amendments I think is a very positive aspect of this amendment. I think trying to get those kinds of

services into one department and being able to coordinate it from one department I think is excellent.

There is a couple of points that I think we have to be aware of and we'll discuss these when we get into the Committee of the Whole, but just to make the point I think we would certainly like to understand to a little more depth what is meant by one of the clauses in here called . . . referring to some out-servicing when the capability is not present in that particular department. I think that's an important understanding that we have to come to grips with.

There is another aspect in this Bill. When we're talking about purchasing of equipment, the Department of Industry and Resources will now be responsible for the IT (information technology), as I read it. And they have been given a larger limit, in fact a larger mandate to purchase the IT equipment for other departments.

I referred to this earlier, and I think this is something that we will certainly be pursuing in the Committee of the Whole.

When the departments do that purchasing, under whose budget will the purchases be made? Will they be transferred to the particular budgets or will it be absorbed under Industry and Resources in a new budget item of technology, information technology?

Those are the kinds of things that I think will have to be pursued because one of the important aspects of economic development in this province, or economic development even in any industry — and after all, this is an Act that was amending the previous Department of Economic Development, after which it became Economic and Co-operative Development — one of the essentials of economic development is, is it sustainable, is it predictable, and is it transparent. Those three items are very important, whether you're looking at a government department or whether you're looking at a corporate agency.

If they are not sustainable and they are not transparent, it's going to be very difficult to make sure that either the shareholders are satisfied — in this case, the people of the province — or in fact the banking institutions or the financial institutions, and in the case of government of course that at this stage means the borrowing capacity of the government.

So we don't want to belittle the fact that this is an important part of this Act because I think it has long-term implications that will have to be sorted through.

(19:15)

We also see that because the department has merged between several other departments, it becomes a very large and complicated department. The department of . . . Industry and Resources, rather, is now a compendium of several others, and it's a little confusing for people in this province in dealing with the government to know exactly which department to call for questions, for answers, and for assistance.

Mines and Energy has now been absorbed and merged into this department; some aspects of the forestry industry. As well it

puts a lot of material under the mandate of the minister and the minister's department. And we want to make sure that the accessibility to the departments is maintained — in fact increased — so that contacts can be continued and answers obtained.

There isn't a great deal of other material in this Act that is going to cause a great deal of concern with us because we think that bringing together, for efficiency reasons, things like information technology, as I mentioned, being an excellent start in the right direction. And as we move on in this Bill into Committee of the Whole, we'll be looking forward to asking those questions that I just referred to and we'll see if we can discover what the answers are.

So at this time we'll allow this Act, Mr. Speaker, to move to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 59

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 59 — The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I need to address some of the concerns that we have in the Saskatchewan financial services Bill, Bill No. 59.

What this . . . the key thing in this particular Bill, and along with a few other things on the sidebars, are that it integrates three major organizations that regulate financial services in Saskatchewan. And it's a bit amazing that the people that are best known for red tape would actually look at something like this because there is some movement finally on the part of the NDP opposite to reduce some red tape. And that's the thing they're noted the best for, they're noted the best for.

And I see the Finance minister already has his ears perked up and is listening carefully because as an individual who is sort of responsible for some of the business in the province and creating a business climate, the amount of red tape in this province is one of the key things that needs to be looked at. And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the red tape this government has created over the years, it is truly amazing. It is truly amazing.

The least they could have done, the least they could have done, Mr. Speaker, instead of just coming up with Bill No. 59 and just sort of doing a little bit of tampering here and a little bit of tampering there, is basically put in something like a sunset clause or something that would say any time that a piece of legislation, a piece of red tape, has been around for a certain period of time, it has to be looked at again. And we're very aware of a lot of communities and areas in our province where you have a piece of legislation that has been around for a long time, actually becomes antiquated and then becomes useless and becomes a problem in society if it was actually kept in place.

This NDP government is famous for that. And I recall about two, three years ago, Mr. Speaker, when I had an individual come to my constituency from British Columbia and wanted to set up a dairy in this particular province. And one of the first things he discovered was the amount of red tape, and Bill No. 59 addresses that. And I think we have to give some examples dealing with the amount of red tape the NDP have. And I imagine because they're NDP that's why the term red tape is being used. But they've created no end of that.

And he came to Saskatchewan, having run a dairy in British Columbia with his father, and his father basically said, well land prices are very high in British Columbia and there's limits on how much in the valley area you can develop a lot of these industries. So we just can't set up another dairy in the valley area so Saskatchewan would be a good place to come to, and he did. And he came to Rosthern constituency which is about the best place in Saskatchewan to come if you want to come into a vibrant area that still has some semblance of health care, that still has schools that are still growing and those positives are out there.

And so as he started to set together this dairy, Mr. Speaker, he found out that there was no end of red tape. And the very frustrating thing — the very frustrating thing, Mr. Speaker — was that as he tried to work his way through this red tape there seemed to be absolutely no end to it. There also seemed to be no beginning to it because if you can find the beginnings of it you can fairly easily trace it through to the end. But it was just one big jumble of it and he'd be attacked someplace. Well where's the beginning? Where's the end?

This government could have very easily, Mr. Speaker, set up a single window for agricultural investment. If this person could have come to Saskatchewan, contacted a key person who would have said, okay you're involved and interested in dairies; here's where you go, this is what you have to do, here are the things you have to take care of, here are the people and the phone numbers, the offices you have to contact. When you go ahead and sort of jump through those hoops you're finished, and if you can jump through them successfully you're in business.

But that isn't what happened in his case. He went ahead and contacted all the people that he thought he should contact once he found them — and he called my office for a few of those. And then when he was partway through the project all of a sudden he finds there's a few other things that he hasn't done. No one had told him about it. No one had told about it.

It's unbelievable that in this province we have an NDP government, Mr. Speaker, that actually claims that they're trying to help business and growth and development in this province, that they wouldn't have thought of that very basic concept.

Somebody comes here to open a dairy — this is the person you contact; all the red tape will be laid out in front of you. You know what you have to do. But no, the individual had to scrounge and scrounge to try and do it. And he wanted to do it right because he knew that governments don't like to go ahead and make special applications in situations for people who are already partway through a project and then find out that it doesn't quite meet their regulations, Mr. Speaker.

So he worked his way through those, and as I said, he continually came up with one difficulty after another one. And that's what this NDP government is noted for.

We've had a number of Bills in front of us already this spring session, Mr. Speaker. Where we look at the Bill . . . and the ethanol one is probably one of the best examples of that. When you read through the ethanol Bill, and my colleague from the southwest corner, Cypress Hills, went through that in detail last time and showed us very plainly that there really isn't a whole lot in that Bill. Everything that's in there that should be of consequence is left over to regulation.

Now how in the world are the people of the province being made aware of legislation? They can't watch the channel as some people are doing tonight, and I am amazed at how many people are actually watching this. But I found out, Mr. Speaker, the reason that they are actually watching this channel and that visibility is going up, and that virtually every time I go home and I've done something on TV, I have a number of people who come up and say, saw you on television, liked what you said.

And I keep asking them, you have nothing better to do than to watch the legislative channel? And invariably, Mr. Speaker, invariably they say this is the closest look we get at government and we keep watching because we know, we know, Mr. Speaker, that this NDP government's going to fall flat on its face one of these times.

They're teetering, they're tottering, they're just about over, and they know that one of these times they'll be watching and it'll be a big collapse of the NDP government. And they want to see that moment, Mr. Speaker, because it's going to be one of the most glorious moments in this province when this NDP government actually finally falls. This finally is going to fall and they want to watch that.

So basically, as I was saying, Mr. Speaker, they can't, they can't watch the channel and find out what happens in regulations. They can go ahead and watch this channel, Mr. Speaker, and they can go ahead and hear what we're discussing about Bill No. 59. They could hear the member from Cypress who did a great job — Cypress Hills — did a great job of going through that ethanol Bill and explaining what it actually doesn't say. And they have that information.

But how do they find out what happens in regulations? They don't. Because this NDP government in its true socialist manner, Mr. Speaker, goes behind closed doors, makes decisions and doesn't tell anyone, and then waits, and then waits to see if they can ambush someone that hasn't made the right decision. That's the way this group operates this province.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, industry finds this government so difficult to work with, because they have miles and miles of regulations. But people don't know about it. People get caught up in it. And anyone coming here has a very difficult time in finding out what it all is.

They can't go through the Bills that have been passed in the last 10 years and say, I'm going to find out what applies to my particular area, because it's not there. It's not there. It's hidden someplace in regulations. And that's not the way a good

government should operate.

A good government should operate in such a way that all elected representatives could debate all important facets of every piece of legislation and the laws and the rules that are going to apply, and how business and individuals operate in this particular province, Mr. Speaker. And this NDP government's been a total failure. They've been a total failure.

Now this particular one integrates the three major organizations that regulate financial services in Saskatchewan. Here are the three that they're putting together. The Saskatchewan Securities Commission, financial institution section of the consumer protection branch, and the pension benefits branch of the Department of Justice.

Now here for the very first time — for the very first time — the NDP is going to create a single point of access. Now why has it taken till we're in the second year of this millennium for this government to start to do what other governments, progressive governments across this world, have been doing for decades — have been doing for decades?

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, if you go to Ireland and see what's happened there and a lot of the good things that have been occurring, they don't run a government that has fluffy little Bills and hides everything in regulations.

Those companies that came there and created those jobs over the last 10 years, they came there, that government was open, the information was there. They had no problem finding under the rules and regulations under which they would have to operate.

But you get into this Saskatchewan situation where the NDP for the last half century — this last half century following the *Regina Manifesto* . . . And these people aren't far away from the *Regina Manifesto*, let me tell you.

Because one of the things that's in the *Regina Manifesto* — and you, Mr. Speaker, would be very aware of it, and I know that everyone across there, all the NDP, they've been teethered on the *Regina Manifesto* — says very plainly that government needs to be in control of all the means of production. And I'm paraphrasing because I'd hate to read the thing often enough to know it word for word.

And we've just seen that, Mr. Speaker. We've had a committee going in this building, Mr. Speaker. We've had a committee going dealing with agricultural changes, agricultural changes to ownership. And what have we had? We've had a few people particularly from Saskatoon; we've got a member from Saskatoon right now smiling. He voted in favour of having no change. He wants to change this back so we have communes and everybody else works for . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The question before the Assembly is Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act, and I would ask members that are speaking . . . wish to speak to this Bill to do so and to try to contain their remarks as they are relevant to the Bill.

(19:30)

Mr. Heppner: — Another one of the aspects on Bill No. 59, and it's probably an effort of this government to sort of move into a global economy, but it's something they're doing very, very poorly.

And we need to go back to that particular agricultural piece of legislation and the committee that was working on that. Boy, they'd love nothing better, Mr. Speaker, than to limit every farmer in Saskatchewan to 160 acres. To 160 acres, that's what they love, because that way they've got a better chance of controlling all the means of production in this province.

Would they think of opening it up and let somebody else with some money come in, bring up the price of land so individuals could go ahead and have more equity in their land to go to their financial institutions and say, here's the value of my land, now I have the opportunity to diversify? No, not these people.

These are the people that have said for years, need to diversify, and yet every single policy they put in place for agriculture decreases the price of land, decreases the value of the things at the farm gate, totally destroying agriculture.

And then they'll stand up and say well, we're . . . we'd like to see some growth and development.

This particular Bill is the first very small step they're taking. Unfortunately they're two to three decades behind the rest of the country — as they always are, Mr. Speaker, as they always are.

This NDP loves nothing better than . . . build walls around this province. This is the first crack in that wall. And as I said, the people of this province are watching to see this NDP government topple. They're also hoping to see the walls topple that these socialists have built around this province.

Mr. Speaker, the short direction that this particular Bill goes is something that we support. Unfortunately it is so little in so big a problem that I'm not sure we're going to notice a difference, but maybe we'll have to give them credit for at least going a small way down that road.

So I recommend that Bill No. 59 move over to Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 60

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 60 — The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Consequential Amendment Act, 2002/Loi de 2002 apportant des modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Saskatchewan Financial Services Commission Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This particular Bill, Bill No. 60, relates in a large part to the Bill that we just discussed. It's basically respecting consequential amendments that come out of the Bill No. 59 that we just spent some time

on, and therefore this one may as well follow the other one down to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 63

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 63 — The Members' Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2002 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the first question that comes up when we look at Bill No. 63 is why in the world we have this Bill in front of us. We did that briefly in Bill No. 59 when we talked about the red tape. Now we're talking about Bill No. 63, The Members' Conflict of Interest Act (No. 2). Why do we have this in front of us?

I'll tell you very specifically why we have this in front of us, Mr. Speaker. We have it in front of us because one of their cabinet ministers that sat in exactly that chair some very few years ago found himself in trouble because he had been kicked out of this legislature by his electorate, Mr. Speaker, as will most of those people sitting there right now.

As I look over the group sitting across over there, I can see a whole lot of people that aren't ever going to be back in here after the next election — a few of them by choice, a few of them by choice.

I see the Minister of Justice, and when I watched the news this evening I found out that, by his own choice, he is not going to be here.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't blame him. I don't blame him. Being on that side of the House, in the mess they're in, and I'm sure he has a TV in his house and he has watched very carefully what has happened in the news in the last week or two, he has decided to pull the pin. And do I blame him? No, no one blames him.

The surprising thing is that a man of his intelligence would have stayed here that long. He tried to take over this NDP Party and make some sense out of it. Unfortunately, unfortunately the people over there that are so out of touch with the individuals of Saskatchewan wouldn't give him that opportunity. They gave it to the present person, who calls himself the wee Premier of a wee province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how degrading to the people of this province can you be than say, you're just a wee province. We're a great province, with great people. And yet our present Premier will choose to call this a wee province. Well that is suitable then for him to call himself a wee Premier in that case.

So as I said, we had the Minister of Justice, who has now decided to pull the pin. He's decided to pull the pin. Apparently it has got to be some time in about July 1 he is going to be out of here, which is going to make some interesting situations over here, Mr. Speaker, very interesting situations. Because you remember last year when supposedly, according to the media,

the Sask Party hid in a few bushes and almost defeated the government, but defeated them on some of their own motions, Mr. Speaker — the most embarrassing moment of their lives, the most embarrassing moment of their lives.

I remember the Whip, who now sits at the back, Mr. Speaker, with a sheet of paper, and these members have to ask him whether they can go to the washroom because they're so paranoid about leaving, so paranoid about leaving.

So when they lose that Minister of Justice on July 1, Mr. Speaker, on July 1, their chances of suffering another defeat in here are a whole lot greater, and as I said earlier on, that's why the people of this province are watching.

We heard that the member from Cumberland was on television as well, saying he wants to go out and get an education. We've been trying to give him an education in here for a long time, Mr. Speaker. We have told him many things but he hasn't listened, so he wants to go to the great halls of learning and get an education, and we admire that; we wish him well. The only unfortunate thing is he didn't tell us when he was going.

Then we have another one of the members who's apparently going to go and take over head of the labour department in Saskatchewan. Ms. Byers is now gone and you have one of your members, NDP members is going to go over and take over that job. Now that's going to leave them a pretty decimated group. They'll be as decimated in members, Mr. Speaker, as they are in ideas right now. They're totally barren of ideas; they're getting pretty barren of members as well.

Bill No. 63, the question comes, why? It comes back, Mr. Speaker, to that minister, that minister of Agriculture, who sat there three, four, five years ago. His constituency kicked him out of this place. And as I've said, that's going to happen to quite a number of those people. Then before you knew it, Mr. Speaker, he had his feet back in the trough of the NDP socialist government. He was ripping off the taxpayers of this province by using opportunities that he had made, connections that he'd made as a minister. That's why we . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I just would caution the members in the language they're using with respect to particularly people who the Assembly and the Speaker have the duty to protect because they are not in a position where they can enter the debate in this particular legislature. So I would just ask the member to be judicious in his remarks when referring to people outside of the legislature, be they former members or not.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a result of that misdemeanour we now have Bill No. 63 in front of us because when the people who investigated that situation, they said by the fine letter of the law — by the fine letter of the law — nothing illegal had been done but it was basically wrong.

Now a couple of things we have to remember over here, Mr. Speaker. That piece of legislation that was in place that this individual tried to circumvent was created by that group of NDP right over there. They created that legislation in such a loose way that when they lose an election they can get back into the trough in a real hurry, Mr. Speaker, in a real hurry. So the

individuals who went through that particular case and looked at it came up with Bill No. 63 and said we have to tighten this up. We have to tighten this up because there's been too much misuse by ex-NDPers. And heaven knows, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of ex-NDP MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and there will be a whole lot more. There will be a whole lot more.

Let's just recall one other thing that happened not long ago — Channel Lake, Mr. Speaker, Channel Lake. If we check through that carefully, if we check through that carefully . . . and now, Mr. Speaker, chirping from across is the member who represents a constituency of a former premier. And he tries to do that with pride and dignity. But he should remember it's that former premier, Premier Blakeney, who created half the debt we have in this province, Mr. Speaker. He created that in the '60s and the '70s. And when the '80s came along and we had those horrendous interest rates that we remember, we were paying those horrendous interest rates on the NDP-CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) debt from those years. We paid 18, 19, 20, up to 22 per cent interest on that socialist debt. But he forgets that. But now he's quiet back there because he's thinking about it, something he doesn't do very often. We assume that when he's quiet he's thinking, Mr. Speaker. That in itself says a whole lot.

We look at Channel Lake. We look at Channel Lake, and as we went through that, Mr. Speaker, we found out that there's a certain amount of money, a substantial amount of money that basically just remained unaccounted for. Unaccounted for. But where had it gone? It had gone through the hands of a former NDP MLA. It had gone through those hands, Mr. Speaker. And suddenly the money disappeared. Suddenly the money disappeared. So we worked through weeks of committee meetings to try and find out what had happened in Channel Lake. And when the thing ended up getting fairly hot for the NDP, they wrote the report behind closed doors. And fact is they even had the report written before the committee had ceased to sit. It shows the way that group over there works, Mr. Speaker. You can't trust an NDP, you can't trust a CCF because that's what they were.

The committee is still in process and they have the report written. They do that all the time, Mr. Speaker. They do that all the time. They write the report and then say, well let's be sanctimonious, set up a committee, and the public will think we're actually looking into something. They're looking for an excuse but they're not looking into anything. So we went through this Channel Lake thing. It was a disaster.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's look at a few more things how these individuals handle situations and mishandle them. We had the Minister of Justice today get up and make a statement that because his Justice department had made such a total disaster of the situation and made so many wrong decisions, they were going to have to pay an individual an amount of 1.3 million which had been agreed to, and give him an apology.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that individual well deserves that payment and he well deserves that apology. There's another eight to ten more people out there, Mr. Speaker, who also suffered injustices in exactly the same situation, and it's the one, Mr. Speaker, that came out of Martensville some years ago.

But this Justice department, this NDP Justice department, mishandled that in such a bad and serious way. Now they've settled with one individual — one individual. And just think of what that person has suffered for the last seven, eight years. And I know there's no way the amount of money that he's getting can buy back what that person has lost — his dignity, his friends, possibly his family, his health, his job. All that's been taken away from him by the way this government mishandles its responsibility, Mr. Speaker. It's a total shame.

That's the Martensville case. We've settled one; now there are eight to ten more to go which could go on about the same sort of way. And we'll have the Justice minister . . . and I don't blame him for wanting to leave and go pick up another job. Whoever they'll get out of the back rows to be the next Justice minister is going to have to do a lot of apologizing in the same case.

Then we have the Milgaard case — another place where they messed it up. Let's take something a whole lot more similar, Mr. Speaker, and that's the whole Klassen situation . . .

An Hon. Member: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

(19:45)

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North. What is your point of order?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I've been listening for the last several minutes, Mr. Speaker, to the debate from the hon. member for Rosthern who I would remind the House is speaking to the Bill, The Members' Conflict of Interest Act, Bill No. 53 which I have in my hand here, Mr. Speaker.

And for the life of me I'm having a difficult time. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I'm having a difficult time understanding the relevance of the comments to the Bill. Mr. Speaker, when I look at the content of the Bill it has to do with the enforcement of . . . Mr. Speaker, if the hon. members would allow me to continue, it has to do with the enforcement of contractual relationships between former members and the executive government.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard a fair amount of what I would call casting aspersions on both former members of the House, as you've just cautioned the hon. member just a few minutes ago. I certainly hear the casting of aspersions on the character of current members of the House.

And, Mr. Speaker, what I'm not hearing are what appear to be debate that's relevant to the content of the Bill before us. And I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you'd call the hon. member to order and direct the hon. member to direct his debate in the context of the Bill before the House.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order I believe that the member from Rosthern was working his way to the points of the Bill, Mr. Speaker. He had already been addressing how they affect both past members, Mr. Speaker — how this change will — how it will affect current members, Mr. Speaker, and how it will affect future members of this House, and how they relate their future employment . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Members, the House leaders are attempting to keep the House working in an orderly fashion and I'd appreciate, and I think everybody would appreciate, if they were allowed to make their points of order in a succinct way and that people would give attention to the points of order.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member was pointing out how important it is to all members of this House that they know and understand and follow this legislation, Mr. Speaker. The previous legislation to this had flaws in it which allowed for errors to occur. This will be correcting it.

And the member, Mr. Speaker, is showing how, in broad examples, this Bill will correct the problems that we have already faced in this legislation, Mr. Speaker. So the member is speaking to the points of this Bill.

The Speaker: — I thank both members for their . . . raising the issue. Members, on second reading debates we usually do allow considerable latitude. I will however ask — as I was paying attention to what the member was saying, and he did occasionally stray perhaps for longer and farther than is the usual custom, and the usual tradition in the House — and I would just simply ask him to continue to speak, but bring his remarks and relate them directly to Bill 63.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 63, and let's deal with the specific, and then I think we have to look at the situations as they have developed in the past, and what we're trying to make sure that it doesn't happen again, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 63 basically extends the six-month limitation period for prosecution to two years — to two years. And if I'm going to paraphrase the purpose for this, and I asked that question when I stood up as you will recall, Mr. Speaker, and that is why . . . the why for Bill 63, puts in restrictions disallowing former cabinet ministers to be in association with another person for the purpose of circumventing this Act.

So we're dealing very specifically — very specifically — with former cabinet ministers circumventing the Act. That's what had happened, Mr. Speaker; that's what had happened. That's what the investigation showed, and that is exactly what Bill 63 is all about. It's to end that circumvention of what is in place.

Circumvention, honesty, truthfulness, veracity, Mr. Speaker, those are all . . . come to the heart of what Bill 63 is about. So let's just check and see what's happened in the past and maybe Bill No. 63 will be able to go ahead and correct that.

I just happen to have with me, Mr. Speaker, '99 election platform, building a bright future together. It doesn't really say who this is . . . oh, right there in fine print. It's in fine print; I think they must be hiding it. It says the Romanow New Democrats.

Well let's just see what this Bill might be referring to when it talks about people trying to circumvent; to go ahead and put something in place which doesn't really exist; to try and get

people to go ahead and think that something's going to occur that's not occurring.

So we'll just turn to page 3, Mr. Speaker. And the statement made comes right down to circumventions, to veracity, to all those sorts of things. One of the commitments — '99 election, Mr. Speaker — 30,000 more jobs. Well, Mr. Speaker, we haven't come anywhere near that.

So we have a government over there that promised 30,000 more jobs but they haven't come anywhere near it. How can we trust them with anything? We need pieces of legislation like Bill No. 63. We need tough pieces of legislation to keep those individuals when they're kicked out of government, especially the cabinet ministers, and that's what this one applies to, Mr. Speaker, very specifically applies to cabinet ministers. It comes as a result of what NDP cabinet ministers have done — NDP cabinet ministers and only NDP cabinet ministers — and that must be known and must be understood. That's why Bill 63 is there.

Then we get another statement. We're going to lower taxes, the NDP said back in '99. The premier said that, in fact — the premier. The premier said that. You see that, Mr. Speaker? Platform. Romanow New Democrats. Lower taxes.

Well the very first budget we had, Mr. Speaker, taxes actually went up — actually went up. They included a whole lot of things that hadn't been in there before. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we need a Bill No. 63 because it's the NDP and their cabinet ministers and this leader in government that can't be trusted. It's because someone broke that trust. It's because, Mr. Speaker, an ex-NDP cabinet minister broke that trust with the people of this province that we have Bill No. 63 in front of us.

Let's look at this again and see if there has been some more examples. It's this sort of thing, Mr. Speaker, that laid the stage, put down the groundwork for misdeeds that brought about Bill No. 63 which is exactly what we're discussing today, Mr. Speaker.

Better health care. Hire 500 more health care providers. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that statement wasn't so sick, it would almost be humorous. Hire 500 more health . . . What have they done? The waiting lists created by this NDP government are longer than they've ever been in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker — in the history of this province. And we wonder about the veracity, the believability, of what the NDP cabinet ministers and their leaders do. That's why we have Bill No. 63 in front of us.

Let's keep going, Mr. Speaker. There is a whole lot more commitments made here. And as we see that one after another of those commitments have been broken, it becomes more and more obvious why Bill No. 63 is a result of the investigation done on an ex-NDP cabinet minister, the Agriculture minister. Remember that. It was a point of great embarrassment to this government, not that they're not used to embarrassment, Mr. Speaker. In fact, as I have to admit, I'm surprised they don't look like the British House of Lords and wear these wigs to hide the blushing from the embarrassment. I could tell one or two of them need them more than others do.

Better health care. Okay. Then we'll go to rural opportunities. We're going to continue to fight for fairness for farmers. Well let's just take a look at what our wee Premier said he was going to do. He was going to set up this committee, and he was going to call people in from other provinces, and we were going to show the feds what was going to happen. And the feds saw our Premier. Nothing happened.

Well he thought I'm going to jump on an airplane, and I'm going to go down East, and I'm going to tell these gentlemen what they have to do for Saskatchewan. That's what he told us he was going to do. Remember, Mr. Speaker, we're about believability, we're about circumventions, we're about veracity. That's what Bill 63 is all about.

So he jumps on this airplane, he goes down to Ottawa, he's going to get something for the farmers of Saskatchewan. He came back with absolutely nothing — absolutely nothing. And yet back in, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrat's election platform, 1999, they were going to help rural Saskatchewan. They didn't.

Well there's two more we'll take out of that list. Balanced budgets. This gets to be very important because Bill No. 63 comes . . . deals about money. NDP Agriculture cabinet minister in the past who made money from the taxpayers in this province that he shouldn't have made. The investigation said it shouldn't have been made. It shouldn't have been made.

And by the way, Mr. Speaker, we again have some chirping from the member from the past premier, Regina Elphinstone, talking about days gone by.

All the work we're doing today, Mr. Speaker, is because of mismanagement and misuse of public funds by NDP cabinet ministers, people who worked hand in hand with the present NDP cabinet ministers. That's what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker.

It's that kind of activity from these NDP that we're trying to close the door on so they can't misuse public funds again. That's what we're talking about — that's what we're talking about.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — And how do we know that whole row over there won't be wanting to do the same sort of thing? Bill No. 63 tries to close that door.

So after the next election when almost all of these NDP cabinet ministers are going to be out looking for work, they can't — as this Bill is trying to do — try to circumvent the old Act.

This Act puts something in place that it extends the six-month limitation period for prosecution to two years. So they just can't run and hide under the bushes for six months — maybe a cold winter, no one's looking for them — and say guess what, we made it, we didn't get caught. Six months, we just escaped.

Well they're going to have to go ahead and try that trick for two years. And I'm not sure they have the skills and ability — devious as they are, Mr. Speaker, devious as they are — to go

ahead and hide those kinds of misdeeds.

The individual that caused this managed to hide it for six months, managed to hide it for six months. And, Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we talk about the length of time because that's the crux of Bill 63. It opens it up from a six-month limitation period to prosecution to two years.

Okay, we had the balanced budget bit. Well we know what's happening to these balanced budgets. They're anything but balanced. In fact this year's budget is going in the glue. On a weekly basis it gets worse, either because we find out that some of the information isn't correct or that this government didn't reveal some information or that they have expenses they tried to hide or that they took money from various funds, as they've done.

One example, just one example, Mr. Speaker — the Victims' Fund. The Victims' Fund, set up very specifically, Mr. Speaker, for victims of crime in this province to be helped. But who helped themselves to the Victims' Fund, Mr. Speaker?

The Minister of Finance, to balance his budget, helped himself to the Victims' Fund to the tune of \$750,000. And we've got victims of crime throughout this province that can't get help from this government — can't get help from this government because they went ahead and took that money away from those helpless individuals to try and balance their budget. And I underline, Mr. Speaker, the word try, because it wasn't balanced.

This, Mr. Speaker, comes from the platform, 1999, another situation where we have to look at what do they say and what do they do. It comes to the very crux and the hub of Bill No. 63 and what it's all about.

Less crime. Oh, we had a specific number there, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes, you know, political promises from the NDP are vague, will have things such as, well we won't have nuclear power, we'll have wind generators. Who knows who's going to buy it, but we'll give them money so they can buy it from themselves so we can say it's working. All kinds of . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member seems to be re-fighting an election past. I would ask him once again to relate his remarks to Bill 63.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's true, Mr. Speaker, I did speak to some extent about the last election promises just to check on the veracity of the people across.

But the problem seems to be when these individuals, these NDP, these socialists who tell the people of this province they have a social conscience, the minute that they're ousted from this government by the electorate of this province, the social conscience is gone, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have Bill 63.

(20:00)

We have this Bill very specifically because the electorate of this province booted out a member of cabinet and that member of cabinet misused the information and knowledge that he had to try and get himself a good-paying job. That's why we have Bill

No. 63. It's a very important Bill. It is, Mr. Speaker, one of the very few Bills this government has presented that we have to say is a good Bill.

Because anything that keeps ex-NDP cabinet ministers from fiddling around with the knowledge they have and trying to make some money out of it, as happened in this case that led to this Bill, that's a good thing. That's a good thing. The information and the influence they have.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at a lot of the companies that come from some nebulous places that this government drags into the system to say well we have a source of investment, or we have some companies that want to do business with government — as soon as that happens it's very important, very important, Mr. Speaker, to check who is at the helm of those companies.

And whenever we find some past NDP cabinet ministers and MLAs in control of those companies, we know that something devious is about to happen. It did last year, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have Bill No. 63. That's why we have Bill No. 63.

The intent of Bill No. 63 is primarily and only, Mr. Speaker, to force these NDP cabinet ministers when they stop being cabinet ministers — which could be very soon, it could be very soon — that the people of the province know that their investments in the government of this province, and in this province, will be well taken care of and won't be tampered with and won't be misused.

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, as I said, one of the key purposes of Bill 63 is to make sure that no one is going to circumvent the Act as happened with the situation when we had that six-month limitation. It also expands the scope of a cooling-off period that prohibits former ministers from lobbying governments for 12 months.

Mr. Speaker, we have some very interesting situations going on right now, where we have past NDP cabinet ministers who have been hired by companies to lobby the NDP government. I don't know what scent we get from that when we sniff the air, Mr. Speaker, but where I come from it's not a very pretty scent. It's not a very pretty scent at all.

That's what this is all about, is to prohibit former ministers from lobbying governments for a period of 12 months. Hopefully by that time their influence, the knowledge they have, will be so little that it won't do them very much good, Mr. Speaker.

Now on the other hand, there is one particular situation why Bill No. 63 probably isn't going to do any good, Mr. Speaker. Because Bill No. 63 is exactly created to keep past NDP cabinet ministers from lobbying present NDP government. After the next election, Mr. Speaker, there will be a lot of past NDP cabinet ministers but there will not be an NDP cabinet, so all of those people will have to go back and find some other jobs. And I wish them well.

The member from Cumberland is going for a better education. That's good. The Justice minister is going to go back to university and do some teaching, and that's fine. And we're going to have the minister from . . . that was involved in Health

some years ago, going to go back and work in the Labour department, and that's fine. So there are jobs there for them, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that Bill No. 63 does, Mr. Speaker, it expands the scope of inquiry, the conflict of minister . . . commissioner to mandate the commissioner to include comment on the conduct of any former member or any current or former public servant or Crown corp employee. Now that is critical, Mr. Speaker.

We have very often in this House, Mr. Speaker, raised questions about Crown corporations. Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) and all the rest of that sort of thing will get up and he'll say, I don't micromanage. And then we want to go ahead and talk to the Crowns. Well is the minister supposed to be in charge? So they play these silly games, Mr. Speaker, where they hide these Crowns in an open never-never land because we can never ever seem to find out what's going on.

This says very specifically, Mr. Speaker, that the Conflict Commissioner, it can mandate that commissioner to include in his investigation comment on any former member, current member, public servant, or Crown corporation employee. So now when we want to check out what past NDP cabinet ministers have done, we can go ahead and use what's been occurring in our Crown corporations, which is the ultimate hiding place for most everything that the NDP government does, Mr. Speaker.

They hide their debt there, they hide their past ministers there. They won't hide all of the backbenchers there because some of them probably couldn't find a job over there, but they do hide most of them or as many as they possibly can.

We can finally do that, and that's important. And I said earlier on, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 63 is a good piece of legislation — it's a good piece of legislation. And it's a total shame, Mr. Speaker, that the individual, the minister from whose office this comes is going to be leaving cabinet on July 1. The best piece of legislation comes from an individual who once wanted to be in charge of this NDP Party. They kicked him out, they wouldn't let him do that. Now he wants to leave, and having gone ahead and presented the one best piece of legislation that we've seen this year, Mr. Speaker.

Also under Bill No. 63, former cabinet ministers may apply for exemption under the 12-month cooling-off period, but it's up to the commissioner to grant or not to grant it. So if there is a particular reason that looks like it might have some concern, they can present it to the conflict of interest, that commissioner can look at it and say, okay this is on the line but when I look at it you stand absolutely nothing to gain from this relationship that you have. Go ahead and do it.

And I think that's good. That's good, Mr. Speaker, because just because an NDP gets close to the trough doesn't necessarily mean they're going to have both feet in it. This Bill covers that exactly.

This is a good Bill, Mr. Speaker. We approve of it totally and we're quite prepared to let it move on to Committee of the

Whole, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 65

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Lorjé that **Bill No. 65 — The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure this evening to get up and say a few words about this Act, Bill No. 65, An Act to amend The Forest Resources Management Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that we were led to believe, when the minister first brought this Bill forward, that the government is looking at some sense of diligence in this Bill. We're certainly amused that this government has suddenly found a sense of diligence. It's certainly something we haven't seen from this government as long as I've been here, since September of 1999.

And what actually we've noticed quite often, Mr. Speaker, is that there's been complete lack of diligence by this government and all we had to do was witness the management of the province last week by the Premier. Rather than look after the farmers of the province, he was putting out fires in his own house so to speak. In the meantime the rest of the province is burning.

So we get a Bill that it is alluded to as being progressive and looking after management of the forest products in this province and alludes to diligence. Diligence, Mr. Speaker, from a government that the member from Rosthern who just finished speaking about quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the complete lack of diligence of this government and why some of the Bills have had to be brought forward by the Minister of Justice in order to clean up to a large degree the complete lack of diligence by this government.

Now as we get into this Bill, Mr. Speaker, we have some extreme concerns. And certainly as we move along in the next few weeks we're going to have a chance to be able to speak to the minister from SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) about this Bill and why things are being brought forward as they are. Certainly we're very curious as to why they want to approach this.

We certainly notice some areas of this Bill that are very, very regressive, Mr. Speaker, regressive to the point that it reminds you of a time and place in our world where complete control of society was managed by government and the people were certainly left out of that, and we'd hate to see that process brought into Saskatchewan. And we see that it could be something like that in this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

And that brings a lot of concern to this side of the House, because on this side of the House we have a more open attitude

that the people of Saskatchewan know what they're doing, know what they want, and are able to do that in a prudent, in a prudent manner, Mr. Speaker, and a forthright manner that will bring about the safety of the province; that our resources will be there for our children and our children's children.

But when we read a Bill like this, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 65, we don't see that in there. We're very concerned that it talks about a government wanting to become even further involved, even further involved in our resources in areas of the province that private management has been very successful in for many, many decades, Mr. Speaker. And we're wondering why all of a sudden this province is starting to look at this . . . this NDP government is starting to look at managing areas of this province where it is already been well managed by the private sector.

It talks about in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, a management of the forest lands and it describes, it's trying to describe the forest lands. And in its description, Mr. Speaker, of the forest lands, it talks about Crown land. It talked about the Crown land very clearly.

And certainly we've come to understand in this province that the Crown lands are the responsibility of the government, and certainly they're going to be managed much better once this . . . the opposition party attains power after the next provincial election, which as the member from Rosthern clearly indicated to us, it'll probably be in the very near future with the departures that are being discussed already on the government side. And we're certainly looking forward to accruing power and the opportunities that are going to abound for the people of Saskatchewan when that happens.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at a Bill such as this, Bill No. 65, that talks about management of Saskatchewan's resources and specifically the forest resources in this province, Mr. Speaker, we know and have come to accept on this side of the House that the Crown lands are certainly the responsibility of the provincial government.

And there's some clauses in this Act, Mr. Speaker, that are a great deal of concern to us. That first off, on one hand they're abrogating power and on the other hand they're trying to expand that power outside the provincial forest.

In fact their definition of the provincial forest . . . this NDP government's definition of the provincial forest, Mr. Speaker, leaves us very much unsure as to the direction they're going. It talks very clearly about the Crown lands, but it also adds in there the term of forest . . . or provincial lands.

Then does that . . . We need a clear definition of that. And sometime in the future we're going to have to get that from the minister, Mr. Speaker. Because does this NDP government refer to provincial lands as all the land in the province? And if so, how is that going to affect this?

We need to take a look at this because when we take a look at this Bill, if this NDP government is referring to provincial forest lands and they're talking about primarily ecosystems that are primarily forested, and what they want to do in those areas; is that going to mean privately owned forests, Mr. Speaker?

And then it gets you to wondering, and certainly on this side of the House it's got us very much concerned what business this government has in the management of private ownership in the forest.

Because what we know, what we know on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, very clearly is when it comes to . . . when it comes to the operation and the management and the pure prudence of looking after forests, is that private ownership in the southern part of Saskatchewan has worked extremely well.

(20:15)

And I want to give you an example of that, Mr. Speaker. In fact I need to give you two examples. I too have some property in this province. And on some of that there's a portion of land that is rather low-lying. It's not very good agricultural land if it comes to growing the primary grain products in this province, whether it be canola or wheat or barley. And certainly is not very good at all for those newer crops, the pulse crops, in this province. And so what I've done, Mr. Speaker, is I've left that land forested. It's lower land; it's often under water in the spring. But what it does, Mr. Speaker, is that it does provide protection for my cattle herd when I was running cattle. It provided protection for them on hot days in the summertime, and it certainly provided protection for them when it was raining — they were able to get out of that driving rain. So then it was very useful for me.

But it is a smaller tract of land although there is several hectares there, Mr. Speaker. It begs the question then, should the Department of Environment and Resource Management become concerned about that small tract of land? Then are they going to have the right to be able to help me manage that?

And I'm not sure I want that, Mr. Speaker. In fact . . . well I know I don't want it, Mr. Speaker. I don't want this government coming on my land telling me how to manage my small private forest because what I've noticed . . . what I've noticed, Mr. Speaker, over the many years that I've been there is that that forest continues to renew, to regenerate. We harvest it in a very responsible manner. The forest will be there for many years to come. The old trees that become diseased and are dying off, I'm the one that's looking after that, making sure that the disease in them isn't spread to other trees by harvesting those trees.

But under this Bill — we have a lot of concern, Mr. Speaker, over this — is that under this Bill then when this government talks about provincial forests and provincial forest ecosystems, is that going to be . . . is that going to be included in this picture, Mr. Speaker? And that raises a great deal of concern on this side of the House.

I have another very good example also, Mr. Speaker. A very close neighbour of mine — a fellow of some renown certainly in the woodworking, artistic community — has some property very close to me. A long, long-time family friend, a man who is well known for his artistic work throughout the world, and he makes use of a small private forest on his lands. Again a gentleman who controls his forest in a very forthright manner, who looks after the management of those trees in a manner to ensure that that forest is going to be there not only for his children's children, but his grandchildren's children.

And I think that's important, Mr. Speaker, is that in Saskatchewan, on these type of lands, is that the people of Saskatchewan are already doing an outstanding job of looking after the small private forests that already exist. And it would concern us a great deal on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that this NDP government feels as though that they may need to step into these areas and start to manage that for us. And we certainly on this side of the House do not want that.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, there are other members on this side of the House who own farm land that have small forests on them, and they too have those concerns.

Now it may be, Mr. Speaker, that members on the NDP side of the House, they already have acreages or plots of land and there are forests on them and they don't know how to manage those forests in a responsible and forthright manner and they need their own government to do that for them.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't need the government to do that. If they need help to do that we know very well that there are private consulting firms in this province that will be able to help them out with those concerns. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, we know very well that there are small logging operators that will be able to provide those . . . that advice at a very reasonable rate and we don't need the government in here doing that for us.

Now they've tried to hide this. What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that this little section has been hid and using the term of the spruce . . . not the spruce budworm, pardon me, Mr. Speaker, but they're talking about Dutch elm disease.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly amused on this side of the House, talking about Dutch elm disease on Crown land because as we all know — those of us on this side of the House, maybe members on the other side of the House don't know this quite as well, Mr. Speaker — is that Dutch elm disease does not exist in the wild forest.

Elm trees are not native very much to the, certainly to the northern two-thirds of the province. There is a few wild elm in the southern part of the province. But generally elm in this province have been brought in and planted, Mr. Speaker. Certainly around homesteads they make great hedges and certainly the worm that's involved with the Dutch elm disease is highly mobile and is certainly getting around and is a great deal of concern to all of us, probably even more so to those of us on this side of the House.

So we're very concerned that trying to hide a management . . . trying to hide management of forest in this province and using the term the Dutch elm disease has a great deal of concern for us.

But certainly just as prudent management, again, in this province would control that rather than having the government come in and start telling us how to manage our elm trees in this province. But more importantly — more importantly — we need to remember, Mr. Speaker, that what they're doing is using this disease, Dutch elm disease, to gain control of private forests in this province. And we're very concerned about that on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Because we know on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that there is actually more — there is actually more than Dutch elm disease in our forests. The one community very near me is Candle Lake. It has often been overrun in the last few years by spruce budworm, by spruce budworm, Mr. Speaker. I don't see that term in this Act at all, in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, this Bill No. 65.

Now spruce budworm, as those of us on this side of the House are very aware . . . maybe the others on the other side don't know quite as much about it, and so I'll help illustrate this to some degree, Mr. Speaker. I really think it's important that the members on the government side of the House understand the danger of not protecting our provincial forests.

And certainly when you have an Act that talks about, Mr. Speaker, forest resource management, is that forest resource management must revolve around all of the problems and all of the diseases in the forest and not just simply Dutch elm disease, which is more of a southern Saskatchewan problem than it is in northern Saskatchewan.

And certainly in my community of Candle Lake the spruce budworm problem, outbreak, is causing a great deal of concern; and we know that the provincial government, the present provincial government, is turning a blind eye to that. This community is spending tens of thousands of dollars every year to try to protect the few trees that are inside the resort village, and we applaud them for doing that. They want to protect that greenery. It is a great resort spot, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Mr. Speaker, there actually is members of this House who actually have property at Candle Lake. And the prudence of the resort village to be able to protect that resource, that tourist resource, needs to be applauded.

But the problem exists not only inside the resort village. The problem exists outside the resort village. And that problem rests solely in the hands of the Department of Environment and Resource Management, Mr. Speaker. And their attitude towards this problem, when it comes to forest management is, well nature's way is just to let the bug reproduce and destroy everything in sight. Well that's not exactly how nature works, Mr. Speaker.

What happens in old-growth forests, and we certainly have a lot of that in this province; we have a lot of forests that are 80 and 90 years old. And we certainly know on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that a 80- or a 90-year-old forest is an old-growth forest in this province. And actually when forests actually get to be 100 years old or 110 years old, they actually become extremely dangerous and are more like a tinderbox waiting to explode.

But when you get those kind of ages in the forest, nature has its own way of taking care of that, Mr. Speaker. It controls the spread of the spruce budworm in the provincial forests. And what it does, Mr. Speaker, is a fire will go through and it will clean up the old growth and then new growth, a new growth will start again. It cracks open the cones laying on the floor of the forest. In no time at all we have a new forest coming along.

Well of course with today's modern efficiencies — and we need to congratulate ourselves and we certainly need to congratulate

those people in Environment and Resource Management who diligently look after our provincial forests, to save them for all generations — is that we're now seeing forest accruing to a larger . . . becoming quite a bit older now, Mr. Speaker. And it is because of that that we need to learn how to manage these older forests. And until this government learns to do that, we're going to continue to have these massive problems surrounding the spruce budworm.

Now we certainly know on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that a plan can be put in place to harvest those mature trees in a prudent and effective manner, and we'll certainly be doing that. But what it is going to allow is to ensure, to ensure, Mr. Speaker, is that a new forest will be generated for generations to come. And that's the position of this party. It's too bad that the NDP government isn't able to understand that and is simply going to allow old growth forest in this province to deteriorate.

And there are actually areas, Mr. Speaker — and one of them is very close to the city of Prince Albert — where there is a disease in that forest and nothing is being done about it, Mr. Speaker. That forest is aging; it is dying. It is dying as we are speaking here tonight, Mr. Speaker, in this debate.

And what is going to happen on that horrifically sandy soil is that in the next few years what we could end up is nothing but sand dunes next to the city of Prince Albert. And that would be because of the lack of vision and the lack of effort by this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, to provide the appropriate forest management in the provincial forests. And that's a shame on them, Mr. Speaker, because we know very well that without due diligence in the provincial forests is that we could very well lose them, and that would be a shame, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is another area of this Bill that is providing a great deal of concern to members on this side of the House, and that's in regards to the forest operators in the provincial forest. Now, Mr. Speaker, I've already mentioned earlier that on Crown lands it's the accepted way of life in Canada that provincial governments are the watchdog and certainly the managers, and should be the managers of those Crown lands and the provincial forests.

Now we see a set of clauses in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and as we followed through with the speaking notes . . . explanatory notes that came with the Bill, and certainly listening to the minister in the explanation surrounding these clauses, is that we have a great deal of concern on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is that this government in its complete lack of direction, who are more interested in putting out fires in their own cabinets and caucus, is that they're completely losing direction for where our provincial forests need to be managed.

We see today, Mr. Speaker, where instead of the government setting direction and establishing how our provincial forests should be harvested and managed in a responsible manner, this government in their complete lack of wisdom and their complete lack of due diligence, is that they are actually turning that responsibility over to someone else.

Now what's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about this direction that we see in this Bill is that on one side of the coin this government wants to abrogate their responsibility for

managing of the forest, but on the other side of the coin, they want to remain holding the hammer, so to speak, over everyone's head in order that it will hold operators in the forest to a position where they're going to be left guessing as to whether they're going to be approved, Mr. Speaker, to operate in the bush.

Now certainly in Saskatchewan's provincial forest is that what we see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we have a couple of very large forest operators who provide a lot of jobs, a lot of employment in this province. We also see a couple of very large operators who because of this, a large tax base is created for this government. This tax base comes through royalties, it comes through personal income tax, it comes through corporate capital tax, and it comes through corporate income tax.

And so there's a lot to be gained by having these operators, these two very large operators, operating in Saskatchewan. And certainly we applaud their efforts to wanting to even be here, Mr. Speaker, under these extraordinary, adverse economic conditions that this government applies to business in this province.

(20:30)

But I think it's important that we just take a few seconds to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These large operators, even though it's very regressive to operate multinational corporations in this province, they're still willing to come here. They know there's opportunity here and we suspect maybe even, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they're waiting for a change in government so they'll be able to provide the high-quality employment and opportunities in Saskatchewan that we know could exist in our provincial forest.

But what's being expected of people who . . . of business who operate in our provincial forest, Mr. Speaker, as we see according to this Bill, is that right now as it stands, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the large forest operators must provide to this government a 10-year operating plan.

And what they also must do is inside that 10-year operating plan, there must be a 5-year operating plan. And that 5-year operating plan has to be updated every year — it has to be updated every year, Mr. Speaker.

Well it seems rather odd, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and certainly it confuses us on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why we would have private business telling the provincial government how to look after the provincial forest. Now on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's quite clear in our mind who is responsible for the provincial forest. The government is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this weak and ineffective NDP government.

But clauses such as this in this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, indicates very clearly that we have a government here who does not know how to look after this province. In fact what we see because of this, it begs the . . . it reminds us very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we have a government over there than can't even manage . . . they can't even manage, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their own caucus. So if they can't manage their own caucus it very clearly understands why they have to have Bills

such as this where they're expecting private individuals to tell the government how to look after the forest, because certainly if they can't look after their own caucus, how in the world are they going to look after our provincial forest.

And that is a great deal of concern to us because we certainly know very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when the members on this side of the House become government after the next provincial election, we certainly know that the member from Rosetown-Biggar is going to be in much better command to be able to manage his caucus, and therefore his caucus will be in a much better position to be able to manage the provincial forest with the help of people such as myself and the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood.

And it is because of people that are on this side of the House that opportunities are going to abound in the northern provincial forest, and the people in northern Saskatchewan can hardly wait — can hardly wait, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that day. And we know that to be a fact because we've spoken to people and it doesn't matter whether they're from Prince Albert or whether they're from La Ronge, or whether they're from Big River, or whether they're from La Loche we hear the same story over and over again, there will be no economic opportunities in Saskatchewan until the NDP government is replaced.

So what is this government going to do now when we take a look at this clause? Well, they're already forcing the two large corporations in this province who harvest a product in our northern provincial forest to come up with these 10-year and 5-year plans. So how does that going ... what is this government's plan then? Well they want to extend that plan to everybody, they want to extend that to everybody.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's take some of our small forest operators. And these are not full-time forest operators, these are small ... some of them are only part-time operators. They do some logging in the wintertime or they also may do some other ... have some other opportunities that they have going for them. Many of them in the forest fringe also run ... do some farming.

And so then this government, because of this clause in this Act, has this ... to a great deal of concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they're going to force this issue of managing the provincial forests on these small logging operations. Can you imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, someone who harvests maybe 50,000 cubic metres per year is suddenly going to have to be forced by this government to have to come up with a 10-year and a 5-year plan — and a 5-year plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has to be renewed on an annual basis before he's going to be allowed to harvest in the forest.

It brings us back then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we look at something like this, these small logging operations are some of the most efficient that we have in the province. They also manage the forest in a manner where they try to find forest that is old-growth and harvest that, in a timely fashion. But what they also like to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to be able to — on the other side of the coin — be able to harvest the forest in a timely manner that it falls in line with market conditions of the day.

Now we can take today's situation today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we know that the price of finished forest products is lower than it has been in the past. And many of these smaller logging operations would prefer to harvest smaller amounts of wood in the forest. And certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know on this side of the House — and maybe members on the other side of the House that don't understand the cycles of business — but we know on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the price of lumber's going to rise. No it may not rise this year and it may not rise next year, but then again, Mr. Speaker, maybe it will rise this year and maybe it will rise next year. But we need to allow these small forest operators the opportunity to be able to take advantage of those situations.

Now when you force a small operator who maybe only harvests about 50,000 cubic metres per year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what it's going to do is create an even bigger problem for this province.

Because we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under this trade injury softwood tariff that the United States has put upon our province and our logging operators, forest operators, is that one of the problems that our competitor to the south, the United States of America, has seen in this province is that the two larger operations in this province are forced to harvest lumber ... forced to harvest timber in this province even though they have no sale for it.

Even though they have no sale for it and are unable to sell it to anyone, this provincial government insists that they continue to harvest ... continue to harvest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's provincial forest.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the United States of America then see this as an unfair trade advantage because it's forcing these two large logging operations, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to sell lumber simply to get rid of it. They need to sell their forest products simply to get rid of it because they're forced to harvest it under the 10-year management plans.

So what's that going to do to the small logging operator, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Does this mean then that because of a clause such as this where they have to come up with a 10-year and a 5-year plan — and a -year plan again I must remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has to be renewed on an annual basis — is it going to force then small forest operators to harvest at times when forest product prices are, so to speak, at the bottom of the barrel?

And what is that going to do to the small logging operators? Well they can't afford to operate under these kind of conditions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They need to be able to, because of the small profit that's involved in this, they need to be able to operate in a timely fashion.

So when prices are up they need to be able to have access to timber in the provincial forests. And when prices are down they need to be able to have that opportunity to be able to back off a little bit and maybe do something else rather than try to harvest timber that is unsaleable.

And so we see then, with this government coming up with this plan, these 10- and 5-year plans, is going to unfortunately force

these small logging companies, probably in all likelihood, out of business, Mr. Speaker. And that would be a sad loss, a great loss of jobs, a great loss of tax base to this provincial . . . in this province that we've come to enjoy.

And certainly we take the few people that are involved in this, you know, they also have to pay corporate tax and personal tax. They're buying inside Saskatchewan. They're buying Saskatchewan products to operate their businesses. And losing them . . . losing them is simply not an option.

There's just too much loss to the province of Saskatchewan. And it begs the question then do the people in Regina truly understand the impact that a clause such as this is going to have on forestry operations in Saskatchewan. Whether it's the forest fringe in my area of the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or even farther north. Whether you move up towards Denare Beach or upwards towards La Loche, Buffalo Narrows, Ile-a-la-Crosse, or maybe even Beauval. And that brings a great deal of concern to this side of the House.

There is a second concern for the small forest operators, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're asking men and women in this province who subsidize their farming income or maybe even use farming to subsidize their logging income to suddenly become the overall manager of a portion of the provincial forest. These small operators — I have to repeat this, Mr. Deputy Speaker — these small operators are suddenly going to become the overall managers of a small portion of our provincial forest.

Well it begs the question then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the department doing? What is the department doing then, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And now the member has appropriately pointed out to the rest of her members on her side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the member from Saskatoon Nutana — is that she doesn't know what the department does, and certainly then the other members on the other side of the House don't know either what's going on inside that department.

We have a department set up. One of their responsibilities is to manage the provincial forest. So why aren't they? Why can't they do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why is it that they are forcing forest operators in this province to actually manage the forest for them? We think it's important that if we're going to be the owners of the forest, and certainly the members on this side of the House understand that very clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if we're going to own that forest we're going to take responsibility for it. We'll set the guidelines.

This government needs to set the guidelines so that the people who operate in the provincial forest know what they are, they can go to work. We'll set the guidelines, we'll police them. That's what they're asking for. They want to know what the rules are.

But do you know what this Bill is showing very clearly because it's saying that this is what they're going to do, they're going to have the small logging operations suddenly become the manager of the provincial forest it actually does not say how they're supposed to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's a great deal of concern to those of us on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Give someone who may only harvest 50,000 cubic metres a year, he's supposed to come up with . . . or he or she is supposed to come up with a 10-year plan and then a 5-year plan to be renewed — a 5-year plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be renewed on an annual basis is supposed to guess — supposed to guess — what the Department of Energy . . . or Environment and Resource Management wants them to do. Now why . . . it would work much better in reverse. Why doesn't the department manage the forests? Tell the forest operators what they have to do; here are the rules, you know, and that's all they're asking for.

In fact what they're telling us . . . We're hearing from the forest operators . . . or actually we're hearing it from all the operators in this provincial forest is that we can set . . . we can set stringent rules for protection of our provincial forest. We can set stringent rules for renewal of the provincial forest. We can set stringent rules so that harvesting in our provincial forest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will protect our waterways, will protect our lakes. And you know what? They would welcome that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But is anything like that in this Bill? No there is not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This Bill tells about downloading, downloading the responsibility of protecting the provincial forest on those people who make very little profit out of what they're doing. It's going to increase . . . it's going to increase their workload for no return. It's going to put financial burden, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on these small operators that is going to probably, in all likelihood, force them out of business. We're going to lose jobs. We're going to lose taxes. We're going to lose spending power. We're going to lose spending power, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our communities, and that is a great deal of concern to us on this side of the House.

Now what we're doing on this side of the House is what is considered, Mr. Deputy Speaker, due diligence. We are taking this Bill out to the people that it's going to affect. We've taken it out to a lawyer who is involved to a large degree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in providing quality legal advice to those people who operate forest operations. And that's important that we get a good legal advice on what this Bill is going to mean. So we're doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What we're also doing . . . what we're also doing, members such as myself and other members on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we're sending . . . we're sending this Bill out with the explanatory notes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out to those people who would be most affected by this. Now certainly we know that the large operators in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, already fall under these guidelines, so it's of no value to be asking for their opinion.

(20:45)

But what is important . . . what is really important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that those smaller operators, small- and medium-sized operators, who do not fall under these guidelines are going to have to be consulted. They need to know what this government is thinking about how this Bill is going to affect the small logging operations in this province. And it's extremely prudent and that's why due diligence is being done on this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ensure that the people

who are most affected by this Bill are going to know how this Bill is going to affect them and see this Bill before it comes into effect, and maybe even — maybe even, Mr. Deputy Speaker — offer some suggestions, offer some suggestions for this government, that maybe they could bring about an amendment or two to this Bill.

Now certainly we need to talk to these small logging operators and medium-sized logging operations in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to find out what . . . how they're going to feel about it and whether . . . maybe they would like to bring some amendments to it. Or maybe they would feel it would be more timely simply to wait until after the next provincial elections and simply have the next government, a Saskatchewan Party government led by the member from Rosetown-Biggan, actually scrap parts of this Bill and maybe strengthen some parts of this Bill so that the people know what the playing field is in this province, the people who already operate in our provincial forests, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Plus, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know very well that there are entrepreneurs in Canada that want to come here and do business. They want to come here and do business, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we want to ensure that that happens. And we want to ensure that the regressive clauses that we see in this Bill are actually not done by the logging operators but are actually going to be looked after by the Department of Environment and Resource Management, that the government will take responsibility for our provincial forests rather than become a behind-the-doors, in the dark-of-night regulator, bringing forth regulations that no one's ever going to see until the last minute. Regulations that are going to affect the small logging operators of this province, Mr. Speaker. Regulations that these small logging operations are not going to get to see until they guess them — you have to guess what they are — and that is really unfortunate.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the due diligence on this side of the House and the work that it . . . because this Bill is so new and we haven't got all our responses back yet, it's most appropriate at this time that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 72

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 72 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak on Bill No. 72, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2002. This government and this Bill . . . really there is one word that is out there in the public's mind is accountability and the problems with accountability with this government and with this Bill.

We have seen that they . . . there's accountability . . . accountability seems to be a problem widespread in the government but particularly with WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) and the accountability of the fiscal management of WCB — accountability to the stakeholders, the

accountability to the employers and the employees, and of course accountability to the government and the people of Saskatchewan.

And I stress this last point in terms of the information given during June 3 Labour estimates, where once again the NDP minister stood in this House and gave the people of Saskatchewan incorrect information when I was asking the minister questions.

And the minister was asked, and I quote. The question I asked the minister was:

. . . what percentage of workers in the province does the \$48,000 cap cover?

And the answer from the minister was, and once again I quote:

. . . There is approximately about 300 injured workers that are frozen or at the income replacement level at the cap of \$48,000.

Three hundred workers she said, with all of her advisers sitting right there with her during estimates, including the CEO (chief executive officer), Mr. Peter Federko.

Well I've heard all kinds of numbers thrown around as to what these amendments would cost and the significant point at this time. Because of the huge mistakes in this actuary adjustment for the year 2001, which estimates the future costs of claims received in that year, a huge mistake, a \$69 million mistake.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after getting various numbers tossed around concerning cost of these amendments, we realized that things weren't adding up in many aspects, but in WCB there seemed to be rampant problems. We are getting estimates of between 35 to \$100 million projected for these amendments.

And after submitting a written question to the government requesting the exact number of workers who are at the \$48,000 cap, we found out that there weren't 300 injured workers, there weren't 400, there weren't 500, there weren't 600, there was actually 2,140 claimants in the year 2001 who are affected by this cap.

And I thank the Minister of Labour for giving us the correct information in the end, although we would think that her officials, in full knowledge of this impending legislation change, would know exactly how many workers this would affect and what the cost would be on June 3, the day the question was first asked.

And I would like to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I also submitted several other written questions concerning the projected costs of the wage cap amendment, and only to have these questions converted.

And as we discussed and asked questions in question period today, there is a record number of questions being converted by this government. And again we've had a number of questions converted just today after, well it was almost a hilarious answers from the government during question period concerning their claim that we don't ask a lot of questions.

And in reality we ask many questions, a record number of questions in question period, also a record number of questions for written questions. And the government has set a new record of its own by not answering the written questions in record numbers.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm wondering if the minister converted these questions to withhold this information from us and the very stakeholders of the Workers' Compensation Board or if she converted these questions because she and her WCB officials really don't know the answer?

Perhaps you don't know what this legislation . . . legislative changes will cost, and if the minister doesn't know why would not she answer these questions? It only strengthens our case as to the poor fiscal management of WCB. And if the minister doesn't know the cost of significant . . . that again strengthens our case as to the poor fiscal management of the WCB.

Although these amendments rise out of the committee of review . . . and it's interesting we speak of reviews. There's been at least five, I believe, reviews and studies of Workers' Compensation in the last two years. The Dorsey report, the committee of review every four years, and a number of other studies and reviews that take place. And it seems that the government likes studying Workers' Compensation but they have little interest in making the changes that bring accountability and fairness into the system.

As I was saying, these amendments rise out of the committee of review and in some cases perhaps are long overdue in terms of bringing Saskatchewan WCB in line with other provinces and market costs and so on.

And I must emphasize that the timing is particularly bad for business owners who will be likely facing a premium increase at the end of the day. The timing is bad, very bad indeed, because this NDP government has just recently increased the minimum wage. Another cost, employers must bear the burden at a time when the Saskatchewan economy is hurting. The NDP's answer to that is to sock it to the business owners of this province, to drive even more business owners out of their province by increasing the cost of doing business in Saskatchewan.

And it escapes me to see how this helps workers. How does this help workers? Now instead of receiving 10 hours a week they're clawed back to 5 hours at a little higher wage.

And I would like to note on the record that there is a delicate balance that a government must achieve in terms of making policy that's good for both workers and business owners, a delicate balance.

So it's not that we dispute the fact that burial costs have increased. It's not that we dispute the fact that the increase in the maximum wage cap was last done in 1985. Our concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the WCB is not accountable to the stakeholders, the employers and employees. Our concern is the fact that the government is imposing these amendments and the related cost increases at a time when WCB has made a \$69 million actuary mistake. Our concern is that our constituency offices are inundated with calls from workers and employers

with complaints about the system.

And I also note, Mr. Speaker, that we receive many calls from — particularly in my situation — from constituencies in Saskatoon where the NDP constituency associations tell people that have workers' compensation problems to give my office a call and I'll gladly look after their concerns. And a number of my colleagues also receive these calls from people right across the province. And the NDP MLAs are not looking after their own constituents, and they are just deflecting the criticism and the troubles onto the opposition.

And like I say, we are glad to look after their problems and point them in the right direction to try to get help with this government's problems with the workers' compensation.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, it's really an accountability problem with the people of Saskatchewan concerning the government's handling of the workers' compensation, and this affects both employees and employers.

Our concern is the fact that the government is imposing these amendments and the related cost increases at a time when WCB has made this \$69 million actuary mistake. And as we know, the many concerns from workers . . . As we know, even today there is a gentleman protesting on the steps of the legislature concerning how he has been treated by the Workers' Compensation Board in the past. And there is a number of people that have phoned my office saying that they will be arriving to demonstrate in front of the legislature. And I believe it's very important that the government take a look at bringing in amendments that address these long outstanding complaints from injured workers.

If the system worked properly, we wouldn't have a two-year waiting list at the Advocate's office before they even have an appeal. And if the system worked properly, we wouldn't have hundreds and hundreds of calls from injured workers coming into our offices asking for help.

Now what we see is a 48 per cent increase in WCB administration costs over a six-year period. And what we see is a \$69 million actuary mistake — a \$69 million mistake, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Yes, there is many problems within the WCB system, but I have to emphasize that the first order of business should be fixing the internal problems in WCB. Simply sprinkling money on these problems won't make them go away.

There seems to be a deep-rooted problem within the system, many of which were identified in the committee of review's report. And although the Chairperson, John Solomon, an NDP hack, says that these problems have been addressed, the calls to our offices from injured workers are not diminishing nor are the calls from the employers, nor is the backlog of appeals at the Advocate's office.

Mr. Speaker, it is very difficult to support this Bill without full disclosure of the costs involved. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very difficult to support this Bill without knowing what the WCB plans to do to address problems that exist within the system with a long-term plan and how will the efficiencies and

accountability to stakeholders be measured. It is very difficult to support this Bill when the government refuses to answer important questions concerning it.

Mr. Speaker, again I have to emphasize that this government either doesn't know what's going on in WCB or just simply . . . or simply is hiding information from the public until we're not sitting in the legislature to bring down their announcement of pending premium increases to the employers of this province. And I just like to emphasize that it is to the employers of this province, the employers fund WCB 100 per cent. So when the government makes mistakes with WCB it costs the employers of this province a considerable amount of money.

And that is an extremely important concern in the economic environment that Saskatchewan finds itself in when we need to be growing businesses, growing jobs, so we need to keep the costs to businesses under control. And again it speaks again to the accountability factor that the people of Saskatchewan so desperately want in many areas of government, and they are not seeing it in the WCB through the mismanagement of this Minister of Labour and this government and its hand-picked Chairman that really doesn't have a grasp of what is going on in WCB.

So before we will allow this Bill to move forward, we will need to do much more consultation with the stakeholders of this province and we certainly would like the written questions that have been asked to be answered. Unfortunately, we will have to wait towards the end of the session before we can debate these questions once again. It seems hard to believe after making all the statements today in the House that they converted a number of labour questions again and refused to answer these very important questions, so we can get to the bottom of where the inefficiencies are in Workers' Compensation Board and try to solve the problem in workers' compensation, not only for the employers of this province, but also for the employees of this province and the injured workers of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(21:00)

Bill No. 74

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lautermilch that **Bill No. 74 — The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few comments on this particular Bill. It may be one of the shorter amendments and it's about less than 40 words long, but it actually asks more questions than it answers. And so I'll be requesting that we move this Bill into committee.

But first there's just a couple of points that I think have to be made and put on the record. The Act, as you know, Mr. Speaker, The Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Act, this is, as we heard in the budget, an agency that is going to be wound down and particularly many of the assets will be

transferred over to Crown corporations. That in itself really begs a lot of questions about the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation or SOCO as it's known.

SOCO is a function of this government that has performed a function in this province unlike in other provinces where they also have lenders of last resort. For instance in Alberta it's called AOC — Alberta Opportunities Corporation. They in fact are an agency of the government but certainly of last resort. And not in wanting to take any equity they are mandated to allow the up starting company to develop a cash flow and a good track record and then mandate it to turn it over to conventional financing.

SOCO hasn't performed that mandate entirely and that's certainly a problem in my mind with how SOCO has been utilized in this province.

In order to be competitive it has to be transparent. And when the assets of SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) are transferred over to CIC and SOCO is being wound down, it asks the question: what is going to happen to that function of the government? What happens when CIC takes it over? If it's being wound down the question naturally then, Mr. Speaker, is who's responsible for the debt? Does it then become a function of SOCO under CIC? Is it a function of this particular government?

In the 40 words or so that is the amendment to this Bill, it basically is asking to strike out the words \$150 million and substituting \$170 million, which then becomes the borrowing limit of the Saskatchewan Opportunities.

Those questions are going to have to be addressed when we get into Committee of the Whole, because it's certainly not clear where this is leading to and what the implications are for people that have questions about SOCO and particularly for those investors that are wanting to and can invest in Saskatchewan, that can see a potential here and yet don't want to compete against investment, and equity investment particularly, through either government or CIC. That's a real question.

So if SOCO is being wound down, why is this amendment being put into this Act at this time? Other questions that we're going to have to have some response to when we get to Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker, will be things about the influence of SOCO and it's focus on the research parks in Saskatchewan, both Saskatoon and Regina.

I think the research park in these university facilities make a lot of sense. I think they do in fact add significantly to the potential. The questions that we're going to have to ask though in the committee will be things like, because the minister referred to the research park . . . loans for the research park rather, referred to them as not a grant or a straight gift from government, they would be loans with interest returned.

So we're wondering at what time will these research parks in fact be self-sufficient? Will they ever be self-sufficient? And if loans have already been made, how much is still outstanding? What kind of dollar figure is still outstanding in these particular loans to the research park?

Now there's going to be a proposal in the remarks of the minister that there's two buildings that will need to be purchased. Well purchased and loans seem to conjure up additional questions, especially when these research parks, as the minister claims, are 95 per cent full.

My question that we'll have to ask later on is what percentage of the tenants will, in fact, be private corporations and what percentage of the tenants are, in fact, the government or Crown corporation subsidiaries where rent is just being paid back to the Crown corporation?

Those are the questions that we're going to try to refer to when we get it to committee. Like I said, it's a very small Bill with a \$20 million increase in the limits of the lending capability of the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. And we're prepared now, Mr. Speaker, to allow this Bill No. 74 to move to committee.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

The Assembly adjourned at 21:08.