



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
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Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
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Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
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Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
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Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
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Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well to you and through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, in your west gallery, Mr. Speaker, are my in-laws, Lorne and Noreen Knibbs. Could you stand up there please and just . . . Noreen, yes, I know. Noreen was a teacher in our province for just over 30 years, and Lorne was a business person and owned five fertilizer companies actually for a number of years.

I married their lovely daughter, and I hear from the family tree that I'm the favourite son-in-law. They only had one daughter so I guess I'm lucky with that one but . . . To everyone in the Legislative Assembly, for Noreen, we are now the hit on the afternoons; we've pre-empted Oprah and Dr. Phil. So I'd like to welcome you to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce to you 30 students who are seated in the west gallery. These students are from Prairie Spirit School. They are the West Senior Band, and they come together from various communities around in the Biggar constituency and also outside; I believe Dalmeny. They come to Asquith to practise and perform.

Along with the students are teacher Ms. Kendra Worman and chaperones Curtis Crabb, Carol Crabb, Brian Cole, and Craig Sparrow. We got together and had pictures taken, and we got together in room 218, had a good discussion about politics and how government works. So please join me in welcoming these students to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a wonderful program that we have MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] participating in every year, and it's called the Saskatchewan legislative internship program. And this year again, we have members from both sides of the House participating in the program.

The program provides for up to five university students or recent graduates a unique educational experience each year, of which one position is dedicated to a First Nations or Métis applicant. The seven-month program will give participants the opportunity to use their theoretical knowledge of government

and parliament in a practical setting. They will get first-hand experience with the day-to-day work of elected representatives from both sides of the House. And some of the things that they get to participate in are such as the economic summit, the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention, a visit to Government House, and this week they get to participate in the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention. So there is lots of activities that they get to undertake.

This year I have the privilege of working with another one of such interns, and his name is Justin Redekop. And he is sitting in the Speaker's gallery. And perhaps he can stand and take a bow and so everyone can recognize him. Thank you.

And Justin was born in Herbert, Saskatchewan, where he attended elementary and high school. His family operates Marnie's Coffee Shop, so we can all go for a good cup of coffee in Herbert when we stop by. Following high school graduation, Justin enrolled at the south Alberta institute of technology in Calgary. He received a diploma in architectural technology, specializing in building development.

But Justin didn't stop there. He has many talents. In 2003 Justin returned to the province because he realized his ways, and attended the University of Saskatchewan. He has completed a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in political studies. And he has been a member of the Political Studies & Public Administration Students' Society at the University of Saskatchewan. Throughout his life, Justin has been very actively involved in sports — volleyball, curling, track and field — but he has a true passion, has been mostly involved in playing baseball and hockey.

I'm sure his parents are very proud and his family are very proud of the accomplishments that he has achieved so far. He has clearly demonstrated great ambition and diversity. So I'd like all the members of the House to welcome Justin to the program this year. And I'm sure he looks forward to working with the member from the government at the middle of April when he switches sides. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a group from my constituency, the Westhill Park Baptist Church. And there's 20 members that are here today, and they are accompanied by Reverend Henry Friesen. So please do welcome them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley in welcoming our guests from Westhill Park Baptist Church and Reverend Henry Friesen.

I look up and I see a lot of friendly faces that have known me since I was probably a babe in arms, and it's with a lot of pleasure that I look up and to see those very friendly faces.

I know that the Speaker shares a great interest in the doings at Westhill Park Baptist Church via the youth pastor at Westhill Park. And certainly my brother had been the youth pastor at Westhill Park, and certainly Henry had served as his mentor when he was studying for ordination. And it's a great bunch of people, and it's so great to see you in the gallery today. You bring back a lot of great memories, and I know that you're a very vital congregation and still have a lot of fun with my sister and my niece.

So I'd ask all members, Mr. Speaker, to join with me and the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley in welcoming this very special group to the legislature today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Greystone.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some distinguished leaders of Saskatchewan's business community.

I'd like to introduce Mr. Dave Dutchak, president of Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. I'd like to as well . . . Ms. Marilyn Braun-Pollon is here, vice-president Saskatchewan agribusiness for the federation of Canadian independent business; Ms. Virginia Labbie, who also is with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Mr. Steve McLellan is here, CEO, [chief executive officer] Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Alan Thomarat is here I see, CEO, Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association. Mr. Tom Mullin is also here. We'd just like to extend a warm welcome to all these individuals.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — As the critic for Enterprise and Innovation for Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, I would like to join the member opposite in welcoming these business leaders here. I know many of them have made long contributions — not to suggest that any of them are getting older — they have made long contributions to economic life and cultural and social life in the province of Saskatchewan. I want to join with the government in welcoming them here to the legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — As well I would like to just acknowledge the three other interns that have joined Justin. We have Avery and Dwayne and Patrick as well sitting together with Justin. And welcome to the chambers this afternoon.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in this time of unprecedented and overflowing resources in the province of Saskatchewan, I am very pleased to represent a petition on behalf of my constituents that by expanding and renovating the Moose Jaw Union Hospital, this facility will be in a better position for success in retention and recruitment of health care professionals and provide better services for Moose Jaw and surrounding area. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to provide funding for the expansion and renovation of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, I gladly present this on behalf of Moose Jaw citizens.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I stand to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wotherspoon: —

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to develop, announce, and implement a plan to address school closures.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to honour their commitment to obtaining a fair equalization deal for Saskatchewan to retain the earnings of our non-renewable resources similar to the deal of other provinces such as New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the residents of North Battleford and Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to present several pages of petitions, and the prayer reads as follows:

We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan urge the new government to withdraw both Bills and hold broad public consultations about labour relations in the province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitions are signed by the people of Indian Head, Sinaluta, Regina, Kronau, Alida, Redvers, Carnduff, Maryfield, Wauchope, Manor, Yorkton, Saltcoats, Esterhazy, Gerald, Whitewood, Foam Lake, Ituna, Wynyard, Ebenezer, Saskatoon, Moosomin, Bredenbury, Qu'Appelle, McLean, Odessa, Melville, Springside, Rhein, Canora, Willowbrook, Wroxton, Churchbridge, Theodore, Goodeve, Tuffnell, Grayson, Neudorf, Duff, Kelliher, Leslie, Kamsack, Roblin, Bangor . . .

[13:45]

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the members to allow the member to present his petition. Thank you. Member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Tuffnell, Grayson, Neudorf, Duff, Kelliher, Leslie, Kamsack, Roblin, Bangor, Sheho, and Veregin. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — According to order a number of petitions regarding school taxes presented on March 10, 2008, have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 16(7) are found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Recruitment of Nurses

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I was part of a trip to the Philippines as part of a delegation with representatives from five health regions — the SRNA [Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association], SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses], and the Ministry of Health. During this nine-day trip, I had the opportunity to meet and speak with many wonderful people and gain an understanding of the Philippines.

One gentleman I spoke to, Archie Redula, last month his wife Beverly arrived in Regina to begin her new life as a nurse here in Saskatchewan. This will provide her with an amazing

opportunity as she goes from making \$10 an hour to . . . \$10 for an eight-hour shift — let's clarify that — in the Philippines to \$23 an hour here in Saskatchewan. And if everything else goes well, Mr. Redula and their three children will soon join Beverly here in Regina. It should warm all of our hearts to hear stories like these about young families that have a chance to move to Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Beverly Redula will soon have a lot more company. Our trip this month was incredibly successful, and we were able to offer jobs to nearly 300 nurses.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Ross: — By this summer our government will be well on its way to fulfilling its promise to hire 800 additional nurses. These nurses are trained with American standards curriculum, taught in English, and will be certified to Canadian standards. Soon residents in health regions across the province . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Regina Citizen of the Year

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, recently I was privileged to attend a special luncheon in honour of my constituent Dr. Roberta McKay, the 2007 CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Regina Citizen of the Year. When he announced that Dr. McKay had been selected as the CTV's Citizen of the Year, Dennis Dunlop, the vice-president and general manager of CTV Saskatchewan, said, quote:

Dr. McKay's history of volunteer service is exceptional. And her commitment to the well-being of the community is ongoing.

In addition to her busy practice as a dermatologist, lecturing at times for the College of Medicine, and serving as president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association, Dr. McKay over the past 22 years has helped served the needs of many community organizations including Women of the Dawn, Regina Transition Women's Society, Regina Rescue Mission, Regina & District Food Bank, and the Regina Open Door Society. Dr. McKay is also a founder of the Saskatchewan Health Care Excellence Awards and helps to support AIDS South Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in extending congratulations to Dr. McKay for being named the 2007 Regina Citizen of the Year and also to convey our thanks for the contributions she continues to make to our community to make this a better world. Join me too, Mr. Speaker, in applauding the efforts of CTV in recognizing our outstanding citizens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Saskatchewan Business Success Story

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the *Leader-Post* business columnist Bruce Johnstone wrote an article about Regina-based company Ozonator Industries and their new ozonator machine, an invention used to reduce the cost of processing bio-hazardous waste while preventing the release of toxins and greenhouse gas emissions. The article detailed the company's first shipment of an ozonator to a Terre Haute, Indiana hospital.

But, Mr. Speaker, what the article didn't mention is that this device was manufactured by a Weyburn firm. Mr. Speaker, Stewart Steel, based in north Weyburn, is an ABEX [Achievement in Business Excellence] award-winning firm, and they were hired by Ozonator Industries to manufacture the machine valued at over \$1 million.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending, this past December, the official unveiling of the machine along with officials from Terre Haute Union Hospital and company officials from both Ozonator Industries and Stewart Steel. Mr. Speaker, this machine will provide a more environmentally friendly alternative to the current practices of incinerating medical waste. Both Ozonator and Stewart Steel are optimistic that this will be the first of many machines that will be manufactured — a machine described as the best medical waste technology in the world.

The work of both Ozonator Industries and Stewart Steel serve as another Saskatchewan business success story, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, I offer my congratulations to Brad Stewart, sales manager Del Croissant, and their employees who worked so hard over the past year to bring this Saskatchewan solution for a worldwide problem to fruition. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

High School Boys' Curling Championship

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I had the privilege of bringing greetings to the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association boys' curling championships held at the Granite Curling Club in Saskatoon. In the 50 or more years that this event has taken place in the province, this is the first time the event was held in the city.

Playoffs were held throughout the province, and 16 teams emerged to represent the divisions in the tournament. Bishop James Mahoney High School was the host team for the event, while Marion Graham Collegiate won the city division and represented the city of Saskatoon at the tournament.

Competition during the three-day tournament was tight, but Langenburg High School curling team capped an undefeated run with a 6-5 victory in the final Saturday afternoon game. The team won the A event by going 4 and oh in the preliminary round. The Kirk Muires rink of Muenster took home the silver. Congratulations to the Langenburg team skipped by Kody

Hartung; third, Tyler Hartung; second, Cole Thorpe; lead, Derek Haberstock.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give special recognition to Dwight Harnish, a teacher from City Park High School in Saskatoon, who headed up the organization of this championship event. I would also like to recognize the countless volunteers and family members who made this event the huge success that it was for both the participants and the community.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is known as the volunteer capital of the country, and this championship tournament is an example of the spirit of volunteerism that has built this province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Recognition of Ms. Josie Der's Long Service

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today to ask members to join me in recognizing Josie Der, a long-time employee of a hotel in Saskatoon.

Ms. Der is a resident of Saskatoon, and she has for the last 30 years worked in the kitchen of the Hilton Garden Inn. That hotel was originally incarnated as the Holiday Inn, later a Ramada Hotel, then after that the Quality Inn, and for last seven years the Hilton Garden Inn. She used her income from that job to put her son, Balfour Der, through law school, and she enjoyed her work there so much she continued for a long time afterwards.

She has worked very hard over the last 30 years, is very competent, highly regarded. This in and of itself is not terribly unusual. Mr. Speaker, what is unusual is that Ms. Der started working at the Hilton Garden, in that hotel, when she was some 57 years old, and she is now working full-time at age 87. Now, Mr. Speaker, last year we passed legislation in this House doing away with mandatory retirement. She voluntarily went past her retirement age some 22 years ago when she reached her 65th birthday. I think all employers would be well served by looking for employees like Ms. Der.

I offer my personal congratulations and would like to ask all members to join with me in congratulating Josie Der and seeking another 30 years of employment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Month

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, racism is far too often an ugly reality faced by many residents of our province. The city of Saskatoon has declared March as Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Month. This is a month in which we are encouraged to examine our thoughts and actions, to challenge the influence of racism in our broader society, to reaffirm our resolve to

stamp out racial discrimination wherever it exists, and to celebrate and embrace the diversity.

An important event kicked off Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Month in Saskatoon. On March 3 I joined the members from Saskatoon Riversdale, Saskatoon Meewasin, and Saskatoon Centre in attending a special signing ceremony between the city of Saskatoon and the Saskatchewan Humans Rights Commission. This event signified the beginning of a partnership designed to promote ethnic diversity through public education. Unfortunately no government members took the time to attend this special event, but the Minister of Justice was kind enough to send along written greetings.

Mr. Speaker, among the many people who attended the event, there were some particularly special guests in the chamber that morning. I want to recognize the great contribution of Ms. Laliberte's grade 1 and 2 class from Confederation Park School. This highly diverse group of students assisted Mayor Atchison in the hoisting of a special flag at city hall to celebrate diversity and promote equality.

I ask all members to join me in observing Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Month as we work together to build a more harmonious society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Wood River.

Spending on Staff Salaries

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm almost starting to feel a little sorry for the Leader of the Opposition, and I must say almost. On the first day of session he doesn't even get to lead off question period. And then when he does get up, someone has set him up with bad information.

Yesterday the former premier accused the new Premier of outspending him on staff salaries. Turns out the former premier was dead wrong. The fact is, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, the new Premier is spending about \$50,000 a month less than the former premier was spending. And based on the quality of the research we saw yesterday, we seem to be getting a lot better value for our money.

Now the Leader of the Opposition says he wants to do a freedom of information request to find out more. Interesting, Mr. Speaker. It was his own numbers he had wrong. I guess he should have done a freedom of information request on his own office when he was still premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is now admitting that his numbers were wrong and that he may have been, quote, "mixing up some oranges in the apple crate." Mr. Speaker, I don't think he should be worried about oranges. I think he has some bad apples in his caucus trying to make him look bad just before the NDP [New Democratic Party] debates a leadership review at their convention this weekend.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Communication Regarding Plans for Education

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it's decision day today. Our Regina school board will be deciding the fate of schools tonight. Many other boards will soon be making the same decisions.

Today the Premier told SARM delegates, and I quote, "In the meantime our government has contacted every single school region to say these changes are coming."

But according to today's *Leader-Post*, the Deputy Premier said he did not send out notice to every single school division.

Regina parents deserve to know that the government did its due diligence, that they shared the plan equally with all boards. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education: whose statement is correct, the Premier's or the Education minister's?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been an interesting time having to discuss school closures and the goals of boards of education throughout this province. I've had a great opportunity to meet with boards of education, public boards of education to convey the same message that the Premier conveyed to his own school division board by way of a letter to his own board.

As I indicated before, Mr. Speaker, I have not sent out a letter to any of the boards of education because I communicated with them at a meeting here in Regina at the Burnett Centre and had an opportunity to talk about the momentum in this province and the growth that was occurring.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also had the opportunity to encourage boards of education, who are autonomous boards of education, to take a step back, to take a look at what was happening in their school division and to determine what that course of action will be, based on the boards of education's decision.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well, Mr. Speaker, to date the information on the Sask Party school closure plan has been shared selectively. This creates an inequity and hurts communities, school boards, and families.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation, with his privy information as a cabinet minister, has shared information with his constituents that was not made available to others. In the story posted on DiscoverMooseJaw.com on February 1, the minister told constituents that the plan would be released, and I

quote, “in the next few days.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, this plan has not been released. My question to the Minister of Education: why has he chosen to withhold releasing the ministry’s plan that his cabinet colleague said would be ready for release more than a month ago?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, it’s interesting that the Leader of the Opposition stood yesterday with information that was far less than factual. And, Mr. Speaker, it’s interesting today to note that the member opposite asks a question about the changes to The Education Act.

Mr. Speaker, those changes are coming. I’ve indicated that. I’ve also indicated that the plan to arrive at those changes started a long time ago. There have been stakeholder meetings with all of the people involved. There has even been a draft of that material sent out to the SARM delegates, to SUMA, to SOS [Save Our Schools], and there is now a preparation of a second document.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite that the changes to The Education Act will be coming. Stayed tuned. We’re going to be delivering them, but we’re going to be delivering the changes that are required and needed for all education in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it’s unfortunate. There’s a rather urgent circumstance going on in our province, and I guess waiting for change is something that school boards and communities might . . . might not sit well with them.

What has been released to date has simply incited confusion. A short time ago in *The Southwest Booster*, it reported that the Premier told his constituents that the process for closing schools must be, and I quote, “much more rigorous.” The Premier is also on record on the necessity of reforming The Education Act. The statements of the Premier and absence of a clear plan has caused confusion, dismissed the efforts and sincerity of school boards, and disrespected our communities by offering false hope.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Education minister is: can Regina schools expect the same treatment as the boards in the backyards of the Premier and a couple of cabinet ministers? Or will the solutions be as inequitable as the communications to date?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to do one thing. He needs to dig out The Education Act and he needs to read section 87 of that Act which describes the powers of a board of education.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — He would then know, he would then know that very specifically the Act does not apply to cities in terms of school closure because they don’t have school districts. That is the distinction, Mr. Speaker, between the city of Regina, the city of Saskatoon, and all of rural Saskatchewan that have school districts. Mr. Speaker, that has been made very clear. That has been made very clear to boards of education.

The Speaker: — I call the members to order. I would ask to allow the minister to respond to the question. The minister has 10 seconds to respond.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, as we indicated in our election platform, there needs to be an expansion of the rules that are in place for school closure and grade discontinuance. And, Mr. Speaker, we’re going to do that. We have consulted, and we’re going to put in place a plan that is going to deal with those school divisions that have school districts. The city of Regina is not involved in that particular section of the Act.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Labour Relations Board

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just seconds after accusing the outgoing Labour Relations Board members of being, and I quote, “legacy” appointments of the NDP, the member from Greystone admitted there was an obvious connection between the new Chair of the Labour Relations Board and the Sask Party.

What’s so interesting is that the Sask Party not only bypassed standard hiring practices in appointing a connected member of their party, but they’ve also decided to significantly increase the salary of the new board Chair. According to the government’s own cabinet documents, which I’ll table immediately, the new Chair will be making \$180,000 per year. I also want to table a document showing that the previous board Chair had a salary of \$121,632 after having been with the Labour Relations Board for close to a decade — a \$60,000 increase for one of their pals.

Mr. Speaker, how can the member opposite assure us that a more qualified candidate couldn’t have been found for this new job at a substantially reduced cost?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education and Employment.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. That salary has gone up. And what we’ve done is we’re moving

to one Vice-Chair. That way we're actually going to save the taxpayers' dollars.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, they're going to speed up the process with one less Vice-Chair, which they complained about prior to the election.

The Speaker: — Order. I call members to order and ask members to allow the member from Saskatoon Nutana to place her question.

Ms. Atkinson: — . . . talk about the \$60,000 pay hike for one of their buddies. How much will the taxpayers be on the hook as a result of these firings? We know that we now have to pay \$180,000 for one of their political friends. We know that litigants and people with cases before the board will likely have to pay additional legal fees. Can the minister tell us what the Sask Party vendetta against the Labour Relations Board is going to cost the people of our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. What we've promised to do is establish a fair and balanced labour environment in this province, and obviously that's what we're moving towards. Mr. Speaker, you can see that in the legislation, that we're moving forward, and you can see that in our recent appointments. We see experienced, qualified candidates that have taken over the helm of both the WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] and LRB [Labour Relations Board] and, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will be well served with both individuals.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, prior to the election the members of the Sask Party were complaining about the need to increase the time that it took to make decisions at the Labour Relations Board.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister now says that firing the Chair and the Vice-Chair and replacing with two people is going to speed up the process, and I have some bad news for him. A hearing was scheduled for yesterday; that hearing did not occur. There is now a tremendous amount of uncertainty regarding the 30 cases which are before the board.

To the minister: was there any consideration whatsoever given to these 30 cases before the decision was made to terminate the Chair and the Vice-Chair? And does he honestly expect his appointment of two people is the best way of speeding up decisions before the board?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for advanced employment and labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we have great confidence in the individuals that have been appointed. What I can say to the member opposite is that if we take a look at our immigration file, we've increased production by 36 per cent over the last year since she was responsible for that file, Mr. Speaker. So I anticipate that it will be done as a matter of course.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well you know, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this to the member. The minister yesterday told this House that verbal instructions were given that cases could continue. Does the minister still stand by that statement that he made in this House? Can he clarify what verbal instructions were given, who gave the instructions, and even did the minister give those instructions?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what we see once again is that the member opposite misses the point. The point that the people of Saskatchewan want to hear about is that 13,300 new, full-time jobs have been created. More people are coming to the province of Saskatchewan. A more fair and balanced labour environment is being created. And, Mr. Speaker, what I can guarantee is that communication was directed, and there were instructions given to ensure that the cases that were already under way did continue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the member wants to talk about the record of our government, and they're flying on our coattails, and he doesn't want to answer the question.

But you know, the reality is that he didn't answer the question. He said yesterday in this House that verbal instructions were given. I was told that one of the dismissed Vice-Chairs had had a discussion early last week with one Doug Emsley, a key member of the Sask Party transition team, and their discussion centred on her role at the Labour Relations Board. Two days passed; she was fired in the middle of a hearing. From what I understand of as of this morning, she still has not had a single discussion with the government about continuing hearing open cases before the board.

So to the minister: what really happened leading up to your government's decision to terminate the Chair and the two Vice-Chairs at the Labour Relations Board?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what we can go on the public record on is to simply say on November 7 the people of this province elected a new government. That new government makes changes to agency, boards, and commissions. And, Mr. Speaker, obviously the changes that have been made to these two boards, we've made sure that we have capable, qualified individuals at the helm of these two organizations. This way we can ensure that our growth continues, Mr. Speaker. We can ensure that we're looking to the future instead of being held up by the past. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, obviously what we're focused on is sustaining the growth and sharing the benefits of that growth with the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well either the member from Greystone is refusing to answer these questions or he plainly doesn't know the answers to the questions. He can't explain why the firings happened. He can't explain how much it's going to cost taxpayers. He can't explain what's happening to the cases presently in front of the board. And he can't explain how much the inevitable appeal process will cost. I'm starting to think he had nothing to do with the decision.

The Deputy Premier is someone who does consider himself an expert on the political independence of the Labour Relations Board. It's his name that's on the cabinet document firing these people. It's his transition team that's carrying out the political purge of the civil service. And will the Deputy Premier admit that he's the fellow behind the recent hiring?

Can he answer any of these questions and can he, at the very least, take some of the heat off of the minister that clearly the Sask Party has allowed to be hung out to dry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what I said yesterday — and perhaps the member opposite missed it — I am not going to refer to any of the specific cases, not in this House. That is not the purview of the ministry.

And as far as the signature, I will just simply say that last week I could not sign that because I was attending the funeral of my father-in-law.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Deputy

Premier, who refuses to answer the question, he's on the Sask Party transition team. He's the fellow that asked questions about the Labour Relations Board when they were sitting on this side of the House. He's the fellow that has time and time again said there should be no political interference in a quasi-judicial board. Yet his fingerprints are all over the order in council and his transition team fingerprint . . . One Doug Emsley has been talking to the members of this independent, quasi-judicial body.

I ask the Deputy Premier: he is leaving his minister to hang out to dry. Can he not come clean and tell us why they decided to fire these particular people and replace them with a person who I understand has only had six cases before the board — he's more of a tax expert — at a cost of \$180,000 a year?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I've been having great difficulty out of my right ear hearing the question. I would ask the member to place her question.

Ms. Atkinson: — Oh, there's a question and there's going to be a lot more questions.

Mr. Speaker, this is the Deputy Premier that has his fingerprints all over the order in council and the transition team. Can he not tell us why they really decided to fire the Labour Relations Board and replace them with a \$180,000 political friend?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

[14:15]

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I think we heard very clearly from the minister as to why his signature is not on that document. The fact that he was in Ontario attending his father-in-law's funeral should be enough for the member opposite, but it's not.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about transition in 1991. I want to talk about the former premier who's quoted on the front page of the October 23 *Leader-Post* as saying this.

He said "If they are politically incompatible with an NDP administration, it makes the person not competent to carry out the job."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — That's the quote of that member opposite. That is the feeling over there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read a couple of entries into the record. November 29, 1991, "Government fires deputy minister of Social Services." November 29, 1991, "Sedco, STC, Crown Management Board presidents dismissed."

Mr. Speaker, this is a long list of people that were dismissed. And I'm sure that the member opposite will provide me with an additional question so I can get these on the record, Mr.

Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Consultation Regarding Labour Legislation

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has spent at least a year in their backrooms . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has spent at least a year in their backrooms studying and drafting legislation that could affect tens of thousands of Saskatchewan workers.

Only after introducing their legislation in the House did they begin to meet with workers and labour unions to discuss potential changes to the province's labour legislation.

We saw it first in Domtar, Mr. Speaker, and now we're seeing it again with essential services and changes to The Trade Union Act. This is a government that shoots first and only asks questions later.

Can the minister outline to this Assembly exactly how consultations on this legislation took place? Can he tell us who he met with? And can he tell us, what was the outcome?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I appreciate the question. Eighty-four invitations were sent out. Over 100 ads were placed. I personally met — either myself or the deputy minister — with almost 100 people. Twenty meetings were held. And I'm happy to provide a list of those that we met with. What I can say, it wasn't just with labour, it wasn't just with business, it wasn't just with community-based organizations or post-secondary institutions. We heard from right across the policy community. We heard helpful, constructive ideas about how to bolster and improve the legislation, and I appreciate the time that everyone took during those meetings.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, since the government first introduced their two Bills, my NDP colleagues and I have been meeting and discussing the Bills with our constituents and stakeholders. We have heard concern, we have heard anxiety, and we have heard apprehension. Workers are still concerned about the scope of the government's essential services legislation, and they are concerned that the amendments to The Trade Union Act will disrupt the strong relationship between

employers and employees that has led to record job growth and a great standard of living.

I thought that the minister's meetings were an attempt to listen to those concerns and to substantively address them, but apparently not. My question to the minister: did he actually intend on listening to and negotiating with the working men and women who voiced their concerns about these private consultations? Did he not hear any of these criticisms during his closed-door meetings, or did he just choose to ignore them?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, when we think about essential services, and I want to be really clear because obviously the members opposite are having a little bit of challenge regarding figures. So what we can say is nine out of ten provinces have or have tabled essential service legislation. We've added our number to that so we can say it's across Canada. What we can say is two-thirds of the people of Saskatchewan support essential services because they know that the right to strike should be balanced with public safety. Regarding the democratization of the workplace, we promised in our platform that we would act on that. Mr. Speaker, we will go forward but we will go forward being mindful of the communications and consultations that we've had. I guess the bigger question is really, will the members opposite, will they actually vote against public safety and vote against the essential service Bill?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, we know what we will vote for but, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to know what to believe with this government. They said a couple of weeks before the election that they wouldn't legislate essential services and now they're doing just that. They said they'd meet with stakeholders and now it seems that, while they have met, they certainly haven't listened. Mr. Speaker, we're dealing here with a government that thinks it can govern with impunity, a government that makes up its mind before consulting with anyone. Both labour Bills 5 and 6 are wide-ranging, open-ended, and unnecessary, and both raise a lot of questions that the government has yet not answered.

There's only one way for the government to answer the concerns of the public: come clean and hold meaningful public consultations.

Can the minister explain why he's so afraid of holding public consultations? Is it because he knows if he did he might be reminded of his broken promises?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for advanced employment and labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised. The word unnecessary — the only provincial jurisdiction in Canada not to have essential service legislation at least tabled, and he says it's not necessary.

Why would we stand back and say 400 people per day being turned away from the Royal University Hospital? That's not acceptable to the people of Saskatchewan. Why would we say that during snowstorms, snowplow operators wouldn't clear the streets? Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable. Why would we be afraid of making sure that secret ballots can be used, Mr. Speaker, so that people can vote their conscience?

Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit surprised at the language of unnecessary. In fact these are the very steps that it will take to help ensure that growth and security is a part of Saskatchewan's future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, what is the minister afraid of? Mr. Speaker, with the minister unable to answer questions here in the House, it's no wonder he doesn't want to go out and hold public consultations. It's no wonder he doesn't want to meet out in the open with people who have valid and serious concerns. And it's no wonder he doesn't want to take the debate outside the legislature and into the open.

Onlookers are left wondering why he even bothered to hold private meetings in the first place. We know that he met with groups who have serious reservations about the legislation, and we know that their concerns have not been addressed. Did his meetings really mean anything? Did he initiate the meetings knowing full well that he wouldn't budge on his position? Can the minister explain why his consultations were nothing but window dressing?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very impressed with the member opposite. Obviously he can see into the future. The problem is he can't see clearly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to revisit a matter that I first raised in the Chamber back on December 18 and on which you ruled, Mr. Speaker, on December 19. It's a matter that has to do with members' statements and government members perhaps misusing this for purposes as ministerial statements.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today in member statements, the member

from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley — who is the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, with recruitment and retention as her responsibilities — used members' statements to outline government policy with respect to nurse recruitment and retention and, in fact, did not mention her constituency or her constituents at any point during her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, your comments when I raised this issue earlier in December with regards to comments made by the member from Cannington, Mr. Speaker, your ruling stated:

. . . I recognize the view that the minister's statement could leave the impression that he was addressing a matter that falls within his ministerial jurisdiction. In reviewing the record, the minister was not technically out of order. However in order to avoid confusion, ministers may want to make a clear distinction that their statement is not related to their ministerial responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, I argue that a Legislative Secretary to a minister with responsibility for a specific issue is doing the work of a minister and therefore, Mr. Speaker, the rules relating to ministerial statements apply as opposed to the rules relating to members' statements.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, to respond to the point of order.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if members of this Assembly listened closely to the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, Regina Qu'Appelle's member statement this afternoon, they would clearly see that she was speaking about an issue that is very important to her and all people of Saskatchewan.

The people of this province have laboured under a shortage of nurses created by those members opposite when they were government of this province. And she, as everyone in this Chamber and in this province, should be rejoicing at the fact that this government under the leadership of our Premier has been able to successfully recruit almost 300 nurses to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that's not only of an interest as a minister or ministerial assistant, it's of an interest as every member of this Assembly, and I think the member is justifiably proud of the fact that Saskatchewan has achieved this result today and it's a very appropriate statement.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I thank the member for that, from The Battlefords, for his point of order and the Government House Leader for his points. I am aware of what was brought to the member's attention back last fall regarding ministers. As has

been pointed out in the past, the members' statements have a period of time where members can address issues pertinent to their constituencies. However, members' statements have also been used to be relating to government activity by private members in particular, away from ministers, and I don't . . . I would suggest today that outside of ministers, all members have an opportunity to relate to and discuss issues that are of concern to them and particular interest to their constituents. Thank you.

Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you a couple of constituents of mine, Ron Risling and Scott Haas, who are taking a break from SARM convention today. Ron is the administrator of the Saltcoats RM [rural municipality] which I was part of before, and Scott is a councillor. And I ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly I'd like to . . . Two guests who are sitting in your east gallery, the president of the Federation of Labour, Larry Hubich, and the secretary-treasurer of the Federation of Labour, Marvin Meickel, I'd ask all members to welcome these two gentlemen to our legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 5 — The Public Service Essential Services Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act be read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, today I speak to the legislation that will ensure Saskatchewan people have access to essential services during labour disruptions. In two prominent labour disputes in 2007, the people of our province were put at unfortunate risk. Snowplow operators walked off the job as a result of the SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] public service strike last winter, and as many as 400 patients per day were being left without adequate medical care during the CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] strike at Saskatchewan's two universities.

[14:30]

Our government will not sit by and allow the interruption of essential services as the result of these types of work stoppage. We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of the Saskatchewan people in event of strikes like these. This said, our government respects and will continue to respect the collective bargaining process. This legislation balances the rights of unions and workers with the need for essential services to ensure public safety, and it is similar to legislation passed in every other province in Canada except Nova Scotia, where the legislation like this has been tabled.

We know that any strike can affect the lives of Saskatchewan's people, but this legislation will ensure that lives are not jeopardized in the process. The legislation defines four categories of essential service. They are: danger to life, health, or safety; destruction of equipment or premises; serious environmental damage; or disruption to the courts. While the Act defines categories of essential services, it is up to the employer to determine the number of employees required to deliver those services. That said, it also provides for an adjustment if that number changes due to circumstances. This legislation is about our commitment to the health and safety of the people of Saskatchewan, and to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill was introduced in the Assembly on December 19, 2007. At that time I undertook to gather feedback from concerned parties and to provide the public with an opportunity to make submissions and to provide advice on the issues raised by the Bill. During January and February, my officials and I had the opportunity to consult with nearly 100 representatives.

These were representatives of stakeholder groups during 20 face-to-face meetings that either myself or my deputy minister were part of — stakeholders from the unions like SUN, CUPE, SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations], SEIU [Service Employees International Union]; stakeholders like Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business], and the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce; stakeholders from our universities and the health sector. Mr. Speaker, this is by no means a comprehensive list of individuals and groups we heard from on this legislation.

As a result of our advertisements that ran in daily newspapers like *The StarPhoenix* and the Moose Jaw *Times Herald* and the Prince Albert *Daily Herald*, we received submissions from the

public at large — ads that also appeared in weekly newspapers, alternative, and First Nation publications and coincided with our website explaining what the legislation would include. In response, we had 68 letters and emails back providing feedback and insights and ideas about this legislation. This consultation, this consultative process, was broad, constructive, respectful, and a necessary part of moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the people who took the time to meet with me and my officials, and the individuals and organizations that provided written submissions. During the consultations we received some important and valuable feedback concerning this legislation. In response to that feedback, our government will be proposing some House amendments when the Bill proceeds to committee — House amendments that will help to clarify the spirit of the legislation without affecting its intent.

Mr. Speaker, our government's public service essential services Act will ensure that the safety and health of the public will not be put at risk in the event of labour disruptions. A prosperous and safe future for all Saskatchewan people is a commitment that this government will not hesitate to keep. Once again, I move second reading of Bill 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading of Bill No. 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill No. 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act. I understand that shortly the Assembly will move into committee to discuss supplementary estimates. In the interest of time and to ensure that my full remarks will not be interrupted later when we move to committee, and to preserve my place in the speaking order, I move that debate on Bill No. 5 be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is the motion agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 6 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2007

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 6, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2007. Through these amendments to our legislation, we're keeping our promise to foster a fair and balanced labour environment in Saskatchewan. These amendments aim to promote co-operative, productive, and healthy work

environments for employers and employees while ensuring that Saskatchewan is competitive with other Canadian jurisdictions.

We are proposing amendments to section 6 of the Act to require a secret ballot vote before any union is certified as the bargaining agent for a group of employees. The amendment to section 6 will also require that a union show 45 per cent support in the proposed bargaining unit before the Labour Relations Board will order a certification vote.

Secret ballot votes are already required for every union certification in Alberta, Ontario, and British Columbia. Secret ballots are also an integral part of the democratic system, and I don't think it should be necessary to trumpet their virtues in this Assembly where all members have been chosen by secret ballot.

As well the requirement that a union show 45 per cent support in the proposed bargaining unit before the Labour Relations Board will order a vote is within the bandwidth of legislation in Western Canada. Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario have a 40 per cent threshold; in British Columbia, the requirement is 45 per cent. Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. In Western Canada the threshold is between 40 and 45 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan can only maximize its great promise and potential if we are competitive with other Canadian jurisdictions. We are experiencing growth in this province right now, and we want to sustain this economic expansion by ensuring that we are moving forward with moderate, progressive legislation. The 25 per cent threshold currently required for a certification vote in Saskatchewan is a curious and now antiquated anomaly.

Mr. Speaker, we're not amending section 8 of The Trade Union Act respecting the quorum of votes. Right now certification of a union requires that a majority of employees who actually vote favour a union in its workplace, and that will remain.

Regarding amendments to section 10.1 and 10.2 concerning certification and decertification after an unfair labour practice, this amendment will also require 45 per cent threshold of employee support.

Mr. Speaker, the next change to The Trade Union Act we are proposing concerns section 11(1) of the Act. We clarify the right of employers to communicate with their employees at all times, including during union organizing drive. Fundamentally this is about responsible communication. This communication will still not allow for interference, for restraint, to intimidate, threaten, or coerce an employee.

It's an unfair labour practice anywhere in Canada for an employer to interfere with, restrain, intimidate, threaten, coerce an employee in the exercise of an employee's right. Similar prohibitions exist for unions. This amendment makes it clear that an employer has the freedom and responsibility to lawfully communicate facts and opinions to his or her employees.

Let me be clear. Our government will defend the right of employers to engage in responsible communication. We believe that open, two-way communication can help to ensure both workers and employers are able to make informed decisions.

Currently in Canada federal employers can express a personal point of view to employees. British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario allow employers to communicate with their employees in some fashion or another. Again, however, it must be done without threatening or providing influence.

Let me reiterate, Mr. Speaker, in Western Canada, open communication is the norm.

Several sections have also been added to the Act within the proposed legislation. Section 12.1 has been added to impose a 90-day deadline on employers and unions for filing application alleging an unfair labour practice. This will ensure that parties bring their concerns to the board in a timely matter.

Section 21.1 is added to impose a six-month deadline on the board to issue a decision following a hearing. If the decision is not issued in that time, either party can apply to the court for an order requiring the board to issue its decision; and from both employers and bargaining units, we heard that there was a consensus on this. They wanted more rapid decisions from the LRB [Labour Relations Board].

In recent consultations with unions, employers, and interested stakeholders, we saw this consensus come to the fore. As well, to promote transparency for business, section 21.1 has been added. It requires the board to submit an annual report containing the details of cases heard, the time between filing of the application and hearing, and the time between the hearing and issuing a decision.

Section 21.2 will require details on each member of the board respecting the matters heard and the average length of time between hearing a matter and rendering a decision because what gets measured gets done, Mr. Speaker. We want greater transparency, Mr. Speaker, and so do the people of Saskatchewan.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the fourth amendment we are proposing is to section 33 of the Act. Members will know that section 33 limits the effective length of a collective agreement to three years. In the past, employers such as IPSCO and Shaw Pipe have requested and received legislation allowing them to enter into collective agreements that are longer than three years. The most recent example of this was The Collective Bargaining Agreement Expiry Date Exception Act passed in 2005. No other jurisdiction in Canada has a legislated limit on the length of collective agreements, other than Quebec where first collective agreements only are limited to a three-year term.

Further, as of 2005, there were approximately 50 collective agreements in force in Saskatchewan that ran longer than 36 months. The obvious question that arises is how desirable is it to maintain an arbitrary limit of three years duration for collective agreements when there are already 50 exceptions in place? So we're removing that arbitrary limit by repealing the related subsections of section 33.

Our government is committed to ensuring Saskatchewan has legislation that is clear, effective, and sensible. Mr. Speaker, I believe this package of amendments is both timely and appropriate. Mr. Speaker, we live in a democratic province in a democratic country. Unions themselves are also democratic

organizations. Nothing in the amendments intrudes on the rights of either unions or employers, and the changes are rooted in long-established democratic principles — principles that our province and country value and respect.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments will help to ensure a fair and balanced labour environment for workers and employers alike in Saskatchewan while keeping us competitive with other Canadian jurisdictions. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 6, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour has moved second reading of Bill No. 6, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2007. Is it the privilege of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill No. 6, An Act to amend The Trade Union Act. Mr. Speaker, if passed in its current form, Bill No. 6 will have very serious consequences for the working people of Saskatchewan, consequences that the Sask Party government seems not to have considered. Mr. Speaker, as poorly written, unnecessary, and severe as Bill No. 6 is, in many ways it should not be a surprise to anyone. In many ways it's absolutely consistent with everything that the Sask Party has always stood for.

As you will recall, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party was formed by a union of rabid right wing Conservatives too determined to allow a little scandal to deter them from their attempts to impose their ideological views upon the people of Saskatchewan and Liberals, Mr. Speaker, Liberals willing to forsake any of the views they had subsequently professed in order to change their political fortunes. These types of Liberals were the types not principled enough to remain relevant to the people of Saskatchewan.

Of course only a person of particular grace and vision could have led such a group, Mr. Speaker, which inevitably led the party to a man too severe, too conservative, too interested in political success to remain involved with the beloved Reform Party. It was under the leadership of this man that the Sask Party first introduced the idea of boot camps for young offenders, the notion that private, for-profit health care was the best option for Saskatchewan, and of course the idea that our great province was a labour . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask . . . Order. I would ask members to allow the member from Regina Walsh Acres to continue her statement.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. And of course the idea that our great province was a labour dictatorship. It wasn't long however before the leader and his Sask Party realized that few people in Saskatchewan shared their hard, right wing ideology and, under the leadership of the current Premier, they softened their image. Soon the people of the province began to hear that the Sask Party intended only to rebalance labour legislation without ever mentioning what it was that led them to believe that any imbalance existed at all.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a few short months after an election, we see that the Sask Party had anything but balance in mind. It should now be clear to everyone that the Sask Party members were simply willing to say anything they thought the public wanted to hear before the election and then do things entirely different after the election. In light of Bills 2 and 5, it seems that the Sask Party is allowing itself to regress or perhaps its members never believed in its more moderate image at all.

Mr. Speaker, the true Sask Party is back, and it's not going to allow simple facts or public outcry to interfere with the imposition of its misguided ideology. Bill No. 6 clearly proves that one of the few promises to the people of Saskatchewan that the Sask Party intends to keep is the promise to go to war with labour.

My colleagues and I will have much more to say on this topic, Mr. Speaker. But I understand that shortly the Assembly will move into committee to examine supplementary estimates. In the interest of time and to ensure that my full remarks will not be interrupted later when we move to committee and to preserve my place in the speaking order, I move that debate on Bill No. 6 be now adjourned.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Walsh Acres has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to allow the important work of the committees to go forward this afternoon, I move this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved the House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:43.]

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