



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

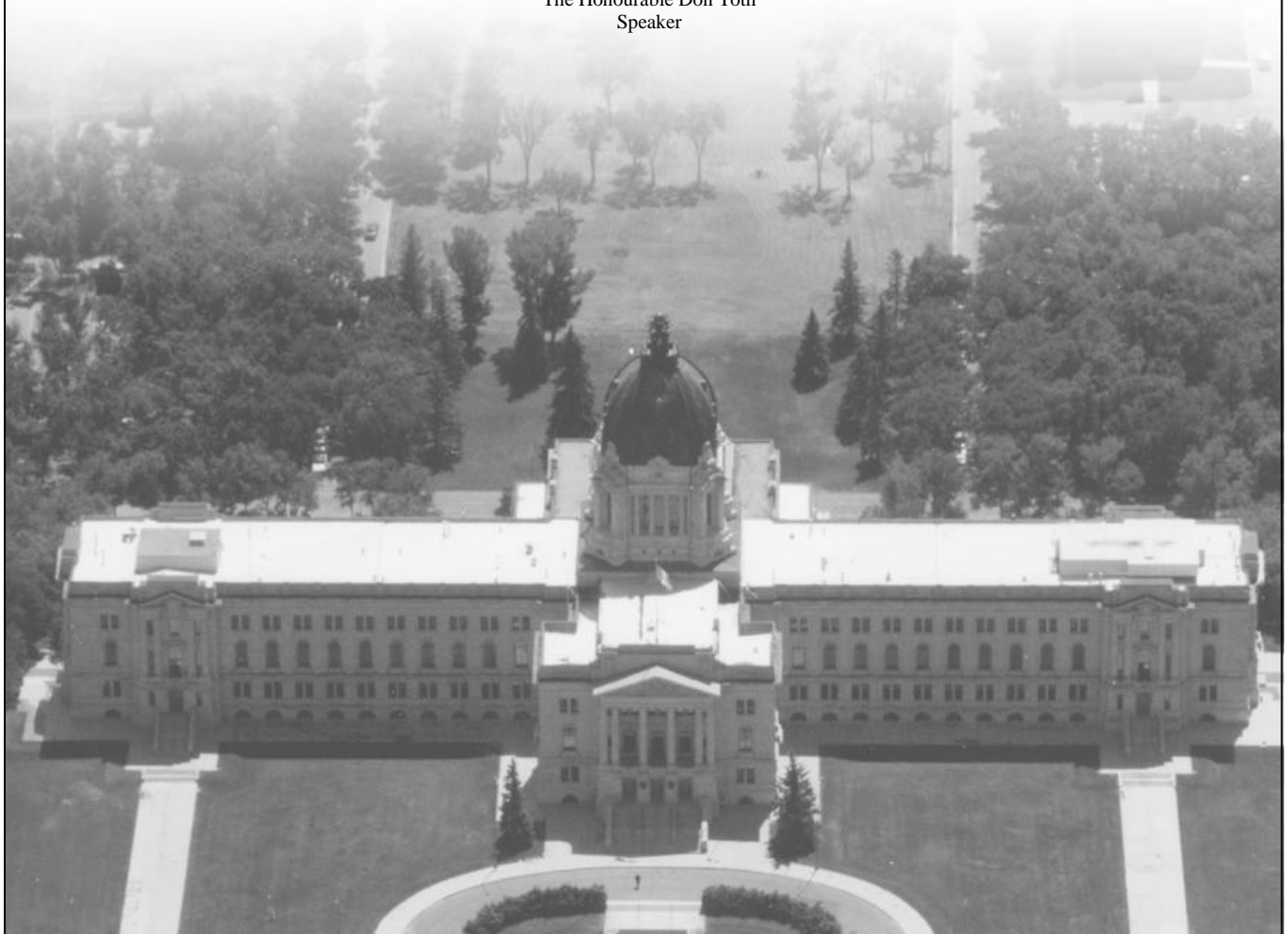
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
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
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
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
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
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
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
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 Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce through you and to you to all members of the House, a group from Moose Jaw. And this group of young people, there are 17 youths from the ages of 8 to 16 years and they're from the Victory Christian Academy in Moose Jaw. And the group today is accompanied by pastors Terry and Terri Murphy, by Jessica Towler, Joanne Grey, and Marilyn Daly. Now, Mr. Speaker, I had a very good visit with the group over lunch and I would ask that all members please join me in welcoming them to the legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you a group of senior citizens from Hague, Saskatchewan who is visiting us today. They were organized to come down here by Alma Neudorf and Ruth Fisher. And Justina and David Derksen are also seated on the floor of the Chamber. And I welcome them to our Chamber and I look forward to a good visit after question period today, and I ask that all members of the Chamber welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you in your gallery some good friends from Rosetown, representatives from the RM [rural municipality] of St. Andrews who are in town for the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention and broke away from the deliberations to join us in the Assembly today.

We have Reeve Ken Ogle, councillors Jim Wickett, Geoff Legge, Garry Nisbet, Kirk Fensom, and Kelly McFaull. And the rose between the thorns is Joan Babecy, who I had the good fortune to work with for about 10 years, who is now the very competent and capable administrator for the RM of St. Andrews.

So I'd ask all my colleagues to welcome them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery, I have four members that I would like to introduce to the House. They are from the Ahamdiyya Muslim Community in Saskatoon. Some of them are from my constituency of Saskatoon Southeast and some of them are from the constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland.

And I hope they will forgive me if I mispronounce the names. The first one is Musaddaq Hayqt. The second one, Munib Ahmed, Rafique Ahmed, and Fazal Ahmed. And I hope that's correct.

And I would ask that all members welcome them to their Assembly. They've come down for the day, and I hope to meet with them a little bit later on this afternoon. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon, along with my colleague opposite, it gives me great pleasure to also welcome the students of Victory Church in Moose Jaw, along with Pastor Terry and his wife, Pastor Terri, and the supervision members of the church into your Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Victory Church is an enthusiastic congregation who are looking to the future and are ready for growth, and sustaining the province's economic momentum for the glory of God and for the people of Saskatchewan. I too would like you to welcome into your gallery the members of Victory Church. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the welcoming announcements this afternoon by acknowledging the presence of three of my constituents in the west gallery. We've just been joined by Reeve Tim Geiger of Happyland RM; Reeve Ed Feil from Big Stick; and the administrator for the Big Stick RM, Quinton Jacksteit.

It's a pleasure to see these gentlemen here. They're in town for SARM, as you no doubt would surmise. But we don't get visitors from that part of the country very often. They're much closer to the Alberta border than they are to Regina. And we're happy to have them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you I'd like to introduce Michelle and Berlin Rideout and my wife, Ali, and our two daughters, Reilly and Grace.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I ask leave as well to join in the introductions. Thank you.

I'd just like to also acknowledge Alma Neudorf in the Assembly this afternoon. Pleased to see you, Alma. Bill and I certainly had a lot of good times together and many of the members remember Bill's presence in this Assembly. And also extend greetings from Eileen Larson. She was just wondering how you were doing. Welcome to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during this time when the government has expressed the need and their commitment to infrastructure renewal in the province, I'm very pleased to present a petition on the funding of the Moose Jaw Hospital and that expanding and renovating that hospital will add to the health care services in our area, better health care delivery, and reduced wait times. Mr. Speaker, I would read the prayer:

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 present this petition on behalf of the citizens of Moose Jaw.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to stand and present a petition concerning high tuition fees at post-secondary institutions here in the province. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to addressing the burden placed by high post-secondary tuition fees on Saskatchewan students.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are from throughout Saskatchewan and many of the signatures were collected at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina with the assistance of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union. Thank you.

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:

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 Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition on behalf of some of the residents of Saskatchewan, given that the government's proposal, Bill 5, constitutes an aggressive assault on the rights of Saskatchewan working people. The prayer reads as follows:

That we respectfully request that your Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan urge the new democratic . . . the new government to withdraw both Bills and broad hold . . .

I'm going to try that again. You know what? I'll try that again so that we can all hear it properly. So that the prayer reads:

That 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.

This petition is signed by the good residents of Regina and Moose Jaw. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Valley View Centre Open House

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past 50 years, Moose Jaw's Valley View Centre has provided long-term care for people with intellectual disabilities. The centre opened its doors in 1955, and over the years staff have worked hard to provide the supports and services that residents need in a home-like setting.

At its height Valley View cared for over 1,200 individuals, both young and old. And today Valley View is home to just under 300 residents from across the province. Throughout the year many events are held at Valley View, from birthday parties to the annual family picnic, but this spring Valley View hosted its first ever public open house.

The open house showcased the special services provided to meet the needs of residents. Staff and residents spent many hours putting together displays and were on hand to answer the many questions from visitors. Residents were a big part of the event and helped demonstrate the various services such as physiotherapy, occupation and music therapy, and dietary

maintenance. The definite highlight during the open house, Mr. Speaker, was when we were treated to musical selections performed by the residents' band.

I would like to thank the residents of Valley View Centre for opening their home to the public for the day and a thank you to the staff at Valley View for the important work they do each and every day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Regina Business Honoured by Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am proud to announce that a business located in my constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley has been named as Canada's best managed company. This past February the Brandt Group of Companies were awarded platinum club member status with Canada's 50 best managed companies.

Brandt has a proud history on the Prairies, and as they are celebrating their 75th year in business, over time they have grown to become the largest private corporation in Saskatchewan, along with having 22 dealerships across Canada and employing over 1,200 people that serve markets around the world. In fact, Brandt is the world's largest John Deere construction and forestry implement dealership.

As Saskatchewan takes its place as an economic leader, it will be led by dynamic and diverse companies such as this. It fills me with great pride to know that a local company can beat out hundreds of others across Canada to be awarded and named one of the top 50 best managed on that list. Brandt's longevity and award-winning management are shining examples to budding entrepreneurship throughout this province.

As a corporation located in my constituency, I am proud to note their tremendous achievement, and I hope that other members will join me in congratulating the Brandt group.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Showcase 2008

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation for their very successful organization and delivery of Showcase 2008. Showcase 2008 — a series of two-day, multi-session presentations — offered Saskatchewan's educators a place and process to come together, learn, share, collaborate, celebrate. I want to thank the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], educators across our province, and presenters for making this event such a valuable professional opportunity.

As Education critic, I thank our professional educators for their commitment to our province's youth. I ask my fellow members

within this Assembly to join me in extending congratulations and thanks.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

Moose Jaw Salvation Army Anniversary

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure we'll all agree that we are blessed to live in a land of remarkable abundance and opportunity. And now we're also benefiting from the governing party who has a positive agenda for growth while securing the future for all Saskatchewan people.

However, throughout our history and even today, there are those who are less fortunate, and their needs are being met through the ministry and volunteerism of the Salvation Army. In my own constituency of Moose Jaw, the Salvation Army was established just six years after the community was formed in 1882. Their goal is simple: to provide a spiritual and practical support to the most vulnerable of our society. Perhaps they're best known today for their Christmas hamper program, though they are dedicated workers 365 days of the year.

This past Saturday, the Moose Jaw Salvation Army celebrated its 120th anniversary. The event was marked with an afternoon celebration and an evening concert featuring the Edmonton Temple brass ensemble which my wife and I had the pleasure of attending.

[13:45]

The Moose Jaw Salvation Army continues to provide spiritual assistance through their church and their living necessities through their sorting centre and the thrift store in Moose Jaw. They also provide support in time of crisis and emergencies and are known to entertain the community from time to time with their musical talent.

In the honour of their 120th anniversary, I ask the members of the House to recognize and to pay tribute to the Moose Jaw Salvation Army for the noble work that they do. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Provincial Day of Student Action

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, February 28 was the provincial day of student action. I want to congratulate the students' unions at both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina for organizing such successful student rallies.

Mr. Speaker, students across the province are facing real challenges that are not being addressed by this government, so the U of R [University of Regina] students organized a freeze for the freeze. On the night of the 27th, the member from Regina Rosemont and I — along with many students — camped out on campus for the night. The students talked with

us about how rising tuition costs are a barrier to access and they asked us to petition the government to maintain the tuition freeze for at least another year.

On the 28th at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], the members from Riversdale, Centre, Meewasin, and Nutana and I joined with students for the unveiling of a large snow fort to raise awareness about the student housing issues. The tight rental market has been very challenging for students seeking stable and affordable accommodation. With an increasingly hot housing market, students are concerned that it will be even more difficult to find housing this fall. Many students at this rally signed petitions calling on the government to aggressively work with stakeholders to increase the supply of both on-campus and off-campus housing.

Mr. Speaker, since I didn't meet any government members at either of these events, I assured the students' unions that I would bring these important issues raised at these rallies to their attention and ask the government to act on them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Solving the Nursing Shortage

Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, when the member for The Battlefords was minister of Health, he didn't think we had a nursing shortage. He also didn't think we should set any targets because he was afraid we might not reach them. As a matter of fact, that member and his colleagues in the NDP have been in denial of a nursing shortage for quite some time.

On March 24, 2006, the headline in the *Leader-Post* read, "Taylor refutes nursing crisis allegation." The same month the member for The Battlefords was quoted as saying:

I don't think the province needs 600 more nurses. That's what the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses wants.

Mr. Speaker, our government has only been in power for four months and already we have made significant progress towards meeting our promise of adding 800 more nurses. We are not afraid of setting targets, Mr. Speaker, because that is how success is measured. I can see why the members opposite would be afraid of numbers because they've been wrong on all their numbers thus far in the Assembly.

But rest assured the Saskatchewan Party is not afraid of numbers. We're not afraid to take steps towards seriously correcting our nursing shortage in this province. And we will continue taking those steps, Mr. Speaker, because solving the nursing shortage is a critical component to ensuring the safety of the Saskatchewan people now and into the future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Provincial Heritage Property Designated in Saskatoon

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, during Heritage Week in Saskatoon, February 17 to 23, Dr. Lyell Gustin House was formally designated a provincial heritage property. The house lies within Saskatoon Nutana constituency at 512 10th Street East and was home to Dr. Lyell Gustin, a well-known and much loved music teacher who gave music lessons to students in our province for almost 70 years.

Dr. Gustin was also a founding member of the Saskatchewan Registered Music Teachers' Association, and it's in this spirit of Dr. Gustin that really makes this house such a treasure. As a nurturing music teacher, Dr. Gustin always cultivated the creative strength of each of his students. Musicians and audiences in our province are and were the beneficiaries. As an interactive museum, the house continues to host programs, recitals, master classes, and meetings of organizers, reminding audiences of the great contribution that Dr. Gustin made to Saskatchewan culture.

This heritage designation also includes the Trounce House, located in the backyard of Gustin House. Erected in 1883 and now the oldest building in Saskatoon, Trounce House was moved to the Gustin property in 1920 to be used as a garage and storage shed.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to live in a constituency, Saskatoon Nutana, to serve as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for an area that is so rich in historical, architectural, and cultural integrity and treasure. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Labour Relations Board

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again the Minister of Labour claimed yesterday in this Assembly that members of the Labour Relations Board were notified that they could continue on with their current cases after being fired. He said this on Monday. He said it yesterday, and I quote him today. He said, "I can guarantee that communication was directed to those members." Outside of the House the minister confirmed this guarantee, and we have learned that this guarantee isn't worth a lot.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he also, when pressed by reporters, he admitted that he had absolutely no clue as to whether such instructions had been delivered to all fired members on Monday. He has now had more time to check with his officials. And does the minister stand by his statement of Monday and yesterday that all officials from the fired Labour Relations Board have been told that they could in fact continue with their deliberations?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister Responsible for Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. What I can confirm is that the Chair and the two Vice-Chairs were consulted about potential changes even before they were made. In fact the two Vice-Chairs then asked directly during that dialogue about the continuation of cases. So what I can say quite simply and clearly is in fact yes, that was made quite clear. There was no need for disruption. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well we'll see about that. It's been almost a week since the government decided that speeding up the Labour Relations Board process was so absolutely vital that they would fire the Chair and reduce the size of the board. The board has a meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning. I have a very simple question to the minister. Yes or no, can he promise this House that the Labour Relations Board hearing will occur? And if so, can he tell us is it the old Chair or the new Chair? Who is it, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the House has been a little bit noisy in the last couple of days, so again I want to be very clear. You know, this member is not going to comment about LRB [Labour Relations Board] cases in this House. That is the task and the responsibility of the new Chair. And so what I can say is you'll have to wait and see.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — . . . the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour, and I know he hasn't been on the job very long, but he does seem to have a tad bit of arrogance attached to himself. But, Mr. Speaker, he is saying that this Labour Relations Board firings were both appropriate and routine for an incoming government, while admitting the obvious connections between the new Chair and the Saskatchewan Party government and caucus.

I want to take the opportunity to remind members of the government of the words of the now Deputy Premier when he said, and I quote, "Every person should be concerned when there is a question of political interference with the independent body of government." The problem is that the Premier admitted two days ago outside of this House that he expects the LRB — and keep in mind this is a quasi-judicial body — to quote, and I want to say this very clearly, quote:

“ . . . consider what the government has said publicly in

opposition and in government that . . . we seek a balance”

. . .

Can the minister explain in what ways that government expects the members of a quasi-judicial body to take into account the ideological orientation of the government of the day? And does he find that entirely appropriate?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. Again, you know, one can only hope that the new Chair is attentive to what's going on because the amendments to The Trade Union Act include that the cases before the LRB will now have to be completed in six months. Some go back as far as 2004. And in addition, in addition, as well there will be annual reports where details from cases heard and the timing of hearing applications, as well as issuing of the decision, will actually be put within the report. We're going to try some transparency and accountability.

And I won't comment on some of the other comments.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we do know that the Deputy Premier and now the Premier have made it very clear that the new Labour Relations Board is to understand the Sask Party's way of thinking. And we do know what the Deputy Premier used to say about political interference. But it seems that once again the Sask Party says something before the election and does something quite different after the election.

A couple of months ago, the Provincial Ombudsman report entitled *Hearing Back* recommended, and I quote, “. . . a merit-based appointment system for all tribunal members [such as the Labour Relations Board] that includes a selection panel, a job description and an open competition.”

To the minister: can you tell us who sat on your selection panel for Mr. Love, who wrote his job description, and who participated in the competition?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the people of Saskatchewan need to know that we're focusing and obviously expecting that we're going to have an LRB that's more robust, responsive, and productive; that we're not going to have a lag in cases heard going all the way back to 2004.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to see, through the amendments, that we're going to have cases heard within six months, and then we're going to have an annual report submitted to this House so

that there's full accountability and transparency, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a minister whose only criticism of the board that was fired is that some cases weren't resolved quickly enough. What are they doing about that? And I want to review the facts.

They fire the Labour Relations Board members who are in the middle of a hearing. They hired a Sask Party friend. They threw uncertainty into the entire process, and they're replacing the two Vice-Chairs with a lone Vice-Chair.

Well if you believe that's going to quicken the Labour Relations Board process, I think that we have another thing to hear about. How on earth can this member say to us, three members of the Labour Relations Board fired; they're replaced with two that are going to earn more money. How can they expect, with the legislation that's pending before this legislature, that they are going to quicken the process and still give people a fair hearing?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — . . . Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what I can say is the people of Saskatchewan made a change. They sent the then governing party over to the opposition.

We've seen dramatic progress on a number of files. So we can only assume that this will set a precedent for increased progress on files that we're now overseeing.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to see increased productivity out of the LRB. For example, it doesn't have a computerized database, Mr. Speaker. Those are some small steps that can be taken to help enhance productivity.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's another question that the minister hasn't answered. When he spoke to the press last Friday and he was asked about who would become the new Vice-Chair, he said that the person needed to speak to the new Chair, Mr. Love. Well, it wasn't the Chair who fired the Vice-Chair, so I don't understand why he would defer to the new Chair.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to remind the members that a competition process was introduced in 1997, whereby the Vice-Chair positions would be subject to a competition process following established Public Service Commission procedures.

Oh and in the Ombudsman's report, John Solomon did go through a competition process. But anyway, check it out. Positions were advertised. Interviews were held. People were selected on the basis of merit and not political affiliation.

Now will the minister at least promise this Assembly that the Vice-Chair that he will soon appoint will at least go through a competition process as the Chair and the two Vice-Chairs of the Labour Relations Board did?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what I'm happy to say on this issue is that obviously the person that fills the Vice-Chair position will have qualifications and be competent to serve the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Recruitment and Retention of Nurses

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recruitment and retention of health care professionals is an issue that all parties feel is important.

[14:00]

We all believe that more nurses, more doctors, more LPNs [licensed practical nurse], more technologists, and other professionals are needed to improve health care in Saskatchewan. The government recently signed an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses with respect to the recruitment and retention of nurses. The plan includes a number of aggressive goals and actions as well as the creation of a recruitment and retention fund.

Mr. Speaker, what was not included in the MOU was a price tag. In order for the public to judge the plan, taxpayers need to know the cost. My question is for the Minister of Health. Please tell the public today what is the projected total cost of the MOU signed by the minister and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly welcome the question on nurse recruitment and retention, an issue that that opposition failed miserably on when it was on this side of the House. In fact it was so afraid of recruitment and retention it wouldn't set targets.

I find it very interesting a question coming from that member who was former president of the Saskatchewan Union of

Nurses, who couldn't strike a deal, couldn't work with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses over the last 16 years to deal with probably the most important issue facing health care in this province.

Three months into our mandate, our government, under the leadership of our Premier, has signed a partnership agreement with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses that will work to recruit 600 nurses to fill the vacancies and 200 more to top that off, Mr. Speaker — a huge accomplishment in a short time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, the minister can rest assured that that MOU will have . . . we'll be questioning that in detail at the appropriate time. But the question I asked him was, how much is the total cost? And I'm not surprised he doesn't have an answer.

Recently with the third quarter results, we saw the government put \$60 million into a fund that is outlined in the MOU. Mr. Speaker, this 60 million was described by the minister as seed money. On April 1, in just a few weeks, Mr. Speaker, the MOU outlines that the government and health regions will contribute the salary and benefit costs of each RN [registered nurse] and RPN [registered practical nurse] vacancy that existed on November 1, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, surely the minister has an idea of how much money will be transferred from his ministry to this fund in just a few short weeks, and surely he would not be afraid to tell the public what that amount is.

To the Minister of Health: what is the total amount of the funds that will be transferred from the Ministry of Health on April 1, 2008, to the SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] health region fund, and what is the amount expected to be transferred from the health regions to the same fund on that date?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly know that there's going to be a cost for recruitment and retention. We have set a bold and an aggressive goal of 800 more nurses into the province of Saskatchewan. We've signed a partnership to work with the union of nurses as opposed to against the union of nurses as that opposition did.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — But Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, more importantly, more importantly we knew that there was going to be bumps in the road with this partnership, and that's why we named the very competent and able Dr. Marlene Smadu to act as the mediator or the facilitator to make the partnership work. It will work; we'll reach our goal.

As far as the cost, now we have said that we're going to increase the number of nurses over the next four years. Our mandate, if we fill the commitment that we've made, they'll be no extra money going into the fund because the goal has been met.

Unlike that government who wouldn't set a goal, we've set a goal, and we plan on reaching that goal in partnership with all the health care professionals.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, it's all right to have goals, but the public expects them to be accountable with money attached to them. They have to have money attached to them.

So the minister has yet to answer the initial first two questions. I have a third question. As I've noted, the fund already has \$60 million in it, and it seems millions more will be transferred there over the next few months by the health regions and the government.

You see on May 1, 2008, the government and health regions will contribute 60 per cent and 40 per cent respectively of the salary and benefit costs of each RN and RPN vacancy that exists on April 1, 2008. I'd like to remind the Minister of Health that a Saskatchewan Union of Nurses news release from November suggests that in 2007 there were close to 800 nursing vacancies. So, Mr. Speaker, within a few months this fund could have over \$100 million in it, and citizens still don't know specifically what it will be used for.

To the Minister of Health: health care dollars are precious in today's health care system. Please outline specifically how this fund will be used and how it will ensure that there are more nurses working in Saskatchewan in four years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm proud to say that as of tomorrow there will be more nurses working in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say by the summer of '08 there'll be 300 more nurses coming from the Philippines that will be working in Saskatchewan. Never happened under that government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we have named Dr. Marlene Smadu to work through the process because quite frankly, between the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and the health organizations, determining the exact vacancy rate is an

issue. And that's why we have a facilitator to allow that work to happen. The exact cost of \$60 million that we've put in as seed money upfront is to show not only the health organizations but the people of Saskatchewan and the nurses on the floor that we're serious about this partnership. And we're willing to put more than words behind it; we'll put our money behind it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

School Closures

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, last night Regina Public Schools made the difficult decision to close three schools. The heartbreak felt by parents, students, and board members was evident. The Sask Party made a \$350,000 promise to deal with the issue of school closures during the campaign. They offered hope to parents and students, or so we thought. But yesterday the Education minister finally explained that his plan to address school closures was not designed to help those families facing closures in Regina and Saskatoon. It turned out to be false hope that he was offering.

Mr. Speaker, how does the minister defend a plan that leaves so many families in and around our two largest urban centres out in the cold? Why is there one rule for the friends of the Sask Party and another rule for everyone else?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. I'd like to thank the member for that question. And as I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, The Education Act and its provisions were in place during an NDP government that was in place for 16 years. The clause that I referred to yesterday is been put in place and has been endorsed by that group when they were in power.

It's very clear. I have never stated that there would be a revision to the Act that would involve cities. Very clearly cities are under the control of the Act. They are not listed under the section, and as I read yesterday, Mr. Speaker, powers of the board say this very clearly. It says that under 87(1) subsection (v), a school board may close:

with respect to any school that is not situated in the school district, close the school and discontinue one or more grades or years taught in the school.

It's not just Regina and Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. That's all cities in the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that's not the point. The Sask Party said they'd do something about this. The minister was asked yesterday by reporters if he thought Regina parents

were given false hope by his government, and the minister's response, he tried to convince people that he had been clear. Well that's a pretty bold claim since there's nothing but confusion in the public.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education: how is it that no one but the members opposite seem to know their plan was only for some schools and not others? Why did they not say during the campaign that they were only interested in helping some people and not others? Not mentioned in the platform, not mentioned in the Throne Speech. Why did the minister offer false hope?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the board of education here in Regina has undertaken a long and extensive review of whether or not schools will remain open, whether they will close.

What is the renewal plan for the city of Regina? Mr. Speaker, I dare say that if you ask any of the board members in the Regina public board of education they understand, they understand along with all public boards . . . is that the six-month closure plan that is in place in The Education Act does not apply to them.

Mr. Speaker, it has not applied to them in the decade of the '70s. It has not applied to them in the decade of the '80s, the '90s, and now into this new millennium. So, Mr. Speaker, for that member to stand and say that I gave false hope, I have never said anything else but dealing with schools within school districts.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I know that parents and teachers in Regina, in Saskatoon thought there would be some help coming from this minister for their schools. But instead the Sask Party has left those families, schools, and boards out of the plan. The only thing that is clear is the minister offered false hope.

To the Minister of Education: will the minister tell the students and parents of Saskatchewan what help is coming for them today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, school boards, school boards take their responsibilities very seriously. They are not going to be looking at school closures unless there is a need for renewal, Mr. Speaker, unless there is a declining enrolment, unless there are problems, Mr. Speaker.

For the member opposite who has been involved in education, I understand for a long time, he would understand that, Mr. Speaker. He would understand that the communities that are in

...

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask members to have respect for the member on their feet. I'll invite the minister to close his comments.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, boards of education across the entire province are dealing with a situation where we have 2,000 less students this year than we did last year.

Mr. Speaker, we respect the autonomy of those boards. And I've stated very emphatically at the very beginning that there will be no school closure moratoriums.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Response to Premier's Comments

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier recently addressed the SARM convention on the 11th, and he must have momentarily forgotten that he's Premier of Saskatchewan and not a private citizen. As part of his speech to the delegates he made an interesting boast. I quote from the Premier's speech, quote:

I took my 14-year-old daughter driving on a grid road south of Swift Current. Should I say that? She was driving for a while. She did just fine.

I'm sure she did do just fine, Mr. Speaker. But as we all know, in Saskatchewan, even with a parent in the vehicle, 14-year-olds are not . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Please allow the member to place his question.

Mr. Quennell: — As we all know, even in Saskatchewan, even with parents in the vehicle, 14-year-olds are not allowed to drive in the province. My question is to the Minister of Justice. Will he be asking for any agency to investigate the Premier's confessed unlawful activities, or does the Premier get a pass?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has practiced law in this province for a goodly number of years. He's well aware of the process. If he believes somebody is guilty of an offence, he's perfectly at liberty to make whatever references he wants to whatever police force or other investigating body that he thinks is appropriate.

He's been around the practice of law a goodly long period of time, and it's something he need not be looking for advice from this side of the House from. He's fully aware of how to deal with this type of thing if he thinks it's appropriate, and I leave it to him to make a decision whether it is in fact appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the minister's answer. He obviously has two standards for questions about investigation: one standard for him and one standard for other people.

But it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, even the Premier admitted that what he did was wrong. This is what he had to say to the media later that day about his speech, quote:

I've already admitted to allowing a 14-year-old to drive on dirt roads. That's enough illegalities for now.

So the Premier knows what he did was wrong, Mr. Speaker. We all remember the example of the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Danny Williams, who broke a provincial law by talking on a cell phone while he was driving and who admitted that he broke the law and who apologized. Premier Williams had the decency to apologize for breaking the law.

My question to the government is: will the Premier, will the government agree that the law, breaking the law is wrong, that bragging about it is wrong, and that the Premier should apologize?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to leave it to the Premier to . . . I wasn't there. I'll leave it to the Premier to canvas his own remarks. If the member opposite thinks there's a transgression, I leave it to him to decide whether he wants to do something with that or not. Perhaps the Premier had his tongue firmly planted in the cheek, was speaking figuratively, perhaps this took place in a field. It's not something for me to comment on or speculate on. If the member opposite thinks there's wrongdoing, he certainly has every right to proceed with this, as would any other citizen. And I leave it to him to do that.

[14:15]

And if the Premier chooses to comment, that's up to the Premier as well. But the member opposite knows full well what his remedies are. And I find it a bit shabby and a bit tawdry that we're dealing with it in the House today. This is Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Recruitment of Nurses

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure today to stand before my fellow members of the Assembly and extend a thank you to the Saskatchewan nurse recruitment delegation that went to the

Philippines. Most of them have been home since Saturday, and yesterday we shared in their success at a news conference.

Mr. Speaker, the good news is we have almost exactly 300, in total, nurses coming to Saskatchewan. They've been offered a job and it's great to hear that they've accepted. We expect them to start arriving in early summer, and that's a great time to begin a new life here in our province.

The recruitment of nurses is highly competitive right across North America. We're hearing of every jurisdiction who are looking for health care professionals — not just a few, but hundreds. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to say that Saskatchewan is in the running and competitive because we realize it's a priority.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this chance to recognize all the people who went to the Philippines and spent 12- to 14-hour days interviewing potential nurse candidates or meeting with various government or immigration and recruitment officials.

Mr. Speaker, the key players in this recruitment trip was the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, who is my Legislative Secretary for nurse recruitment and retention, along with the Saskatoon, Regina Qu'Appelle, Sunrise, Prairie North, and P.A. [Prince Albert] Parkland Health Region. It was really their trip. As I said at the news conference yesterday, it was the best of collaborations, and I think nothing speaks louder than success. I want to single out the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Authority for making all the arrangements for this trip.

Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely pleased with the people within the ministry who worked hard to make this trip happen. The Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, SUN, SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], and the college of nurses all participated with their support and their diligence during the trip. It was vital.

We know that filling our nursing needs with homegrown talent is important to achieve, but we also recognize that while we pursue a variety of other recruitment and retention initiatives and addressing the need for more training seats, we need to recruit outside of our province and outside of our country.

It really is a wonderful thing — 300 nurses in total coming to our province. In fact to some of the media gathered yesterday, that number seemed unbelievable. It is so easy to recruit . . . This is what one of the news media had to say. If it's so easy to recruit 300 nurses from the Philippines, they asked, why hasn't it happened before? Mr. Speaker, I had to tell them, I don't know. We've formed the government for three months, and we've accomplished it, I said. Why the previous government who held office for 16 years couldn't do the same, I simply have no answers.

Mr. Speaker, what I did tell them and what I am telling my fellow members today is that our government is committed wholeheartedly and completely to nurse recruitment and retention. Working in partnership with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, combined with educators, to retain and recruit and retain nurses, Mr. Speaker, our goal is 800 over the next four years. And with the work of all these important groups, we'll keep that promise.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased that the hard work started by our government is paying off today for Saskatchewan's health care system. In September 2006, the member from Saskatoon Nutana, as minister responsible for Immigration, visited the Philippines to begin the process of facilitating increased immigration of skilled workers from the Philippines to Saskatchewan.

On December 18, 2006, the Government of Saskatchewan signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of the Philippines to facilitate increased recruitment of Filipino workers to Saskatchewan under the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. The news release from the MOU signing specified, and I quote:

This initiative will focus on meeting critical labour market needs in occupations such as welding, metal fabrication, long-haul trucking, and health care.

This historic signing made Saskatchewan the first province in Canada, and indeed North America, to sign such an agreement with the Philippines, and other provinces such as BC [British Columbia] have followed. In fact, BC just put out a news release saying they're the second jurisdiction in North America, after Saskatchewan, to form a partnership for recruiting skilled labour from the Philippines. And this was in January.

Since the signing of the MOU, nurses from the Philippines have been arriving in Saskatchewan and have started work as early as January '08. Today we are seeing the results of the work undertaken by the member from Saskatoon Nutana and our government and the health care stakeholders, specifically the SRNA [Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association]. We look forward to seeing the nurses working in this system.

And I do congratulate the health regions and the government for following through on these important initiatives. And I hope that when the minister mentioned in his comments, in answering questions, that the nurses will be working by this summer, I'm wondering — June? July? August? September? — which month this summer?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 8 — The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2008

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 8, The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that first reading of Bill No. 8, The Natural Resources Amendment Act, 2008 be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 9 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2008

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 9, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that first reading of Bill No. 9, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2008 be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 10 — The Miscellaneous Pensions Statutes (Commencement of Pension) Amendment Act, 2008

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 10, The Miscellaneous Pensions Statutes (Commencement of Pension) Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that first reading of Bill No. 10, The Miscellaneous Pensions Statutes (Commencement of Pension) Amendment Act, 2008 be now read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Weyburn.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its second report. I move:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies be now concurred in.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

An Hon. Member: — Point of order.

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

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order to request that the Government House Leader, the member from Melfort, withdraw a comment that he made in question period yesterday and apologize to the House for his remarks.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, at some points during question period yesterday the Chamber was quite noisy, and not all the remarks that were made by members in the Chamber yesterday were heard during that question period.

However, Mr. Speaker, last evening when I was in my office reviewing question period and the amount of time that people were spending on their questions and those things that we do in the normal course of business, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help but notice that at one point, clearly on camera and audio on tape, the member from Melfort, the Government House Leader, made comments, Mr. Speaker, that simply appalled me. The member from Saskatoon Nutana had asked a question of the government directed at the Deputy Premier. There was a lot of noise when the Deputy Premier rose to reply and before the Deputy Premier made any comment at all, on the tape you can see the member from Melfort saying — and you can hear him say — oh, oh, now you're going to get spanked.

I find this remark, Mr. Speaker, to be quite offensive, not only to the member to whom it was addressed, but I find this also offensive to every member of this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, given

that we are hon. members, hon. members who do not take threats of any kind, Mr. Speaker, lightly.

So, Mr. Speaker, these remarks were made about 2:15 yesterday afternoon. I have asked the House to review that tape and, Mr. Speaker, therefore I ask, I ask the member from Melfort who knows exactly what he said, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the member rise, withdraw his remarks, and apologize to the Chamber. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to withdraw my inappropriate remarks and I would also like to apologize to the member and members of this House for any offence that was taken. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would like to thank the member from The Battlefords for bringing this noticed point of order to my attention. I would also like to thank the Government House Leader for his response to the point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 2 — The Enterprise Saskatchewan Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks today I will move second reading of An Act respecting Enterprise Saskatchewan.

This Act outlines the purposes, powers, establishment of Enterprise Saskatchewan and gives this new special operating agency the authority to operate and to carry out its mandate.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's economy is on a roll, driven by the strength in our oil, gas, mining, manufacturing, agriculture, advanced technology, and service sectors. Our province leads the nation now in a number of key economic indicators. Saskatchewan people are confident and optimistic about their future in our province.

Just last week we saw the headline, "Saskatchewan investment [Mr. Speaker] highest in Canada." We lead the provinces with the largest percentage increases of 37.4 per cent increase in residential construction to \$2.06 billion in investment in that sector, Mr. Speaker. Plus there is a huge spinoff effect from this industry.

Enterprise Saskatchewan will play a fundamental and vital role in creating and ensuring lasting and permanent economic growth for our province — growth that will mean security and a better future for all people in Saskatchewan.

Enterprise Saskatchewan represents a new, different, and better way of approaching economic development in this province. It represents a co-operative and collaborative approach, one that will ensure all stakeholders in our economy have an opportunity to share ideas, identify opportunities and challenges, and build strong relationships between government and business.

Mr. Speaker, Enterprise Saskatchewan will be a unique public-private partnership. It will focus on developing collaborative recommendations from a broad mix of stakeholder communities and interests. In this way it will bring the economic development process closer to grassroots input and priorities of key partners in the Saskatchewan economy.

[14:30]

The response to the establishment of Enterprise Saskatchewan from people who I've talked to in my travels across this great province has been very positive, encouraging, and it has been gratifying. The message has been, you're on the right track; keep moving forward.

Enterprise Saskatchewan will be governed by a 12-member board of directors. As minister, I will chair the new board when it is formed. As Chair, I will be the link between the board and cabinet. I will be responsible for taking the recommendations of the board to cabinet for its consideration. As Chair, I will not be voting except in a tie-vote situation.

Before the board is officially formed, it will operate as an advisory committee so the groundwork for Enterprise Saskatchewan can begin. I'm very pleased that my cabinet colleague, First Nations and Métis Relations minister and the member for Kelvington-Wadena will join me as the other government member on this committee.

In order to form the committee and our new board, more than 300 invitations were sent to stakeholder organizations, inviting them to nominate representatives. In addition all people of Saskatchewan were asked to participate through a newspaper advertisement asking for applications for the member-at-large position.

After a thorough and transparent review process, highly qualified, innovative, and forward-thinking individuals were selected to form the future Enterprise Saskatchewan board of directors. I announced the board appointments, Mr. Speaker, on February 29. I'm very pleased with the team that has been selected and with the process that led to that selection.

Appointed to the board, Mr. Speaker: the future Deputy Chair representing the business sector, Mr. Gavin Semple, owner and president of Brandt Industries; Foam Lake farmer, representing agricultural sector, Mr. Bill Cooper; the vice-president of corporate social responsibility for Cameco Corporation, representing the Aboriginal sector of our economy, Mr. Gary Merasty. Mr. Merasty was nominated by the Prince Albert Grand Council, the largest in Canada, representing 12 bands and more than 30,000 people in 28 communities. The CEO [chief executive officer] and president of Concentra Financial Services, representing co-operatives, Ms. Myrna Bentley. In the labour category, we have Mr. Hugh Wagner, general secretary for the Grain Services Union. The president and CEO of

Cypress Hills Regional College and selected from the nominations as our representative for post-secondary education, Mr. Mark Frison, Mr. Speaker.

In the resources category, the president and CEO of Keystone Royalty Corp. and Villanova Energy Corp., Mr. Craig Lothian; Fife Lake area farmer and president of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities who will represent rural areas and the North, Mr. David Marit; the CEO of the Saskatchewan Construction Association and a Regina city councillor who will represent urban municipal government, Mr. Michael Fougere; and a lawyer with Robertson Stromberg Pedersen in Saskatoon, who is our member at large, Ms. Crystal McLeod.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have a broad representation of some of our strongest Saskatchewan people to form our advisory committee and, in the near future, the very first board of Enterprise Saskatchewan.

Responses to the board appointments have been very positive. Comments such as these, and I quote, "These folks are truly quality people," and, quote, "a well-rounded board with the brightest minds in the province."

In addition to participation on the board, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people will also have the opportunity to participate in Enterprise Saskatchewan through sector teams and strategic issues councils. These will be established to provide recommendations on the competitive position of our key economic sectors. They will also suggest coordinated growth policies in crucial areas such as labour force development, accelerated Aboriginal participation in the economy, immigration, youth entrepreneurship, and regulatory modernization and streamlining.

Mr. Speaker, we will also establish a separate division within Enterprise Saskatchewan — Innovation Saskatchewan. Through an innovation council, this division will coordinate and focus efforts in innovation and commercialization, strategic management of research, spending and related infrastructure, technology transfer, and productivity improvement.

Mr. Speaker, through this new board of directors and through the sector teams, strategic issues councils, and innovation council, we will directly involve Saskatchewan people in coordinating and leading our province's growth agenda. We will accomplish this through a commitment to three core principles: (1) Mr. Speaker, central coordination, clear focus, and disciplined alignment of policies to support economic growth with coordinated responsibility beyond any single ministry, agency, or Crown corporation; (2) Mr. Speaker, greater emphasis on economic benchmarking and monitoring, clear goals and targets, comprehensive measurement both economic and social indicators of strategic importance, and regular reporting of the balanced scorecard of Saskatchewan's economy; and (3) Mr. Speaker, a shift in economic development responsibility, direction, and planning away from the backrooms and to open and collaborative forums for stakeholder representation and input.

Mr. Speaker, we will rely heavily on these stakeholders and our partner agencies to work with us in our efforts to attract

investment, strengthen existing businesses, promote Saskatchewan's advantages, and create more wealth and more jobs for the province and its people.

Mr. Speaker, this new model represents a bold and innovative approach to securing the future for our province and its people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — With Enterprise Saskatchewan, we will include the people of Saskatchewan — those who create the jobs, invest the dollars, and build and provide the labour force — in setting the course for economic development into the future. This approach is about shared responsibility for economic development in Saskatchewan and about sharing in the wealth and success that such collaboration will create.

This is a new day, Mr. Speaker, and we are ready and eager to continue our work on a new direction for Saskatchewan. Therefore I move that An Act respecting Enterprise Saskatchewan be read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation has moved second reading of Bill No. 2, The Enterprise Saskatchewan Act. Is the Assembly ready for the question? Recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be the first MLA from the official opposition to speak on Bill No. 2.

Mr. Speaker, the government inherited a strong economy when it was elected last fall. All of the economic indicators showed evidence of a booming economy. Job numbers were up, GDP [gross domestic product] was up, revenue from non-renewable resources was up, capital and private sector investment was up, as were manufacturing shipments, exports, retail trade, corporate profits, building permits, and disposable income. Thanks to good NDP stewardship and the hard work of Saskatchewan people, our economy is booming like never before.

At a time like this, Mr. Speaker, it is questionable why the Sask Party government is so eager to hand over the keys of our economy to what the *The StarPhoenix* has referred to as a "highly nebulous entity." Contrary to the Sask Party's rhetoric, Bill 2 is not about securing the future. Rather, Mr. Speaker, what the government is doing with this legislation is simply obscuring the future.

The Enterprise Saskatchewan model raises far more questions than the government has provided adequate answers for, and as such it delivers far more apprehension than it does clarity. Constituents of mine have asked me, how is this Enterprise Saskatchewan thing going to work? What control is the elected government giving up to this unelected body? Why are they giving up that control? Why do we need this new entity? What will it do? And how will we be able to hold it accountable?

At a time of such unprecedented economic success, my constituents in Saskatoon Massey Place and people across

Saskatchewan are wondering if our province can really afford the risk of handing the management of our economy over to an unelected and unaccountable body.

Mr. Speaker, as I have read through The Enterprise Saskatchewan Act, a number of glaring concerns have become apparent to me. These observations can be grouped according to three main themes: firstly, the Bill has a murky and highly questionable rationale; secondly, the Bill has a destructive design; and thirdly, the Bill is based on a flawed model.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier, the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* has referred to Enterprise Saskatchewan as a nebulous entity. And after reading this Bill and looking back to the Sask Party's rhetoric, I have to agree — it is nebulous. So much about it is still unclear, and the rationale behind this Bill is murky and highly questionable.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill has been introduced for one of two reasons: either the Sask Party government has no ideas of their own on how to keep our economy growing and therefore they have decided to turn over a significant amount of decision making responsibility to a group of appointees, or, Mr. Speaker, the government simply intends to use these appointees for political cover, to make decisions that the cabinet members are too afraid to make on their own.

The true . . .

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from Cut Knife-Turtleford has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce my reeve and my neighbour, Garry Taylor, who's in the front row of the west gallery and our RM administrator, Mr. Ken Reiter. Ken is evidently the second most clever son of the Reiter family. Please welcome, please welcome them to our gallery.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LeClerc: — With leave to do an introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Mr. LeClerc: — To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like

to introduce Mr. Ted Merriman, my friend and mentor, the past MLA from Saskatoon Northwest and who has taught me everything I know and most things that I had forgotten. And I would like everybody to give him a warm greeting.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 2 — The Enterprise Saskatchewan Act (continued)

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The true motivation for introducing this new model is indeed nebulous. It is unclear, and many Saskatchewan people are wondering what exactly is the intent that lies behind the creation of this unelected and unaccountable body.

Mr. Speaker, if we go back to various documents about Enterprise Saskatchewan that were printed by the Sask Party, the rhetoric was always about divorcing politics from decision making. Even as far back as 2004, the current Premier's on record as saying the Enterprise Saskatchewan model removes the politics from economic development.

The StarPhoenix pointed out recently that when the Premier, and I quote, “. . . first trotted out the Enterprise Saskatchewan idea as opposition leader, he made it sound as if the agency would consist solely of representatives nominated by the key sectors of the economy.”

Well that is clearly no longer the case, Mr. Speaker. Once elected as Premier, the member from Swift Current engaged in a pretty big flip-flop. Suddenly two cabinet ministers are to join the unelected and unaccountable appointees at Enterprise Saskatchewan table. If the government's hope was to remove politics from the decision-making process — which is what they repeatedly said — why have they done such an about-face on political involvement? Why is the Premier now including two of his politicians at the table? Even more importantly, why has the minister appointed himself as the Chair if the whole point was to remove politics from decision making?

So after listening to the Sask Party spout so much rhetoric over the years and then seeing them engage in some big flip-flopping as soon as they were elected, it's no wonder that so many of us are left wondering what the true motives are behind the creation of Enterprise Saskatchewan. Perhaps the Sask Party government simply realized that after all these years of making promises to the contrary, that maybe they need their own politicians on the board to massage the direction, the decision-making process, and guarantee cabinet's desired outcome. So now the Chair of what was previously pledged to be a politics-free entity is a Sask Party politician, and another Sask Party politician will sit with him at the board table.

[14:45]

Well if that's the case, Mr. Speaker, then if this legislation is passed, Enterprise Saskatchewan will be little more than an

expensive and convoluted puppet of the Premier and cabinet. Or perhaps they really don't have any ideas of their own on how to keep our economy growing, and they really are turning over control of our economy to an unelected and unaccountable body. As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's rationale behind this Bill is murky and could appear to some as disingenuous.

I would now like to move to my second theme of concerns, and that is the theme of how this Bill is destructive. The Enterprise Saskatchewan Act is destructive because it undercuts democracy. If the government really does have no ideas of their own on how to keep our economy growing and are just turning over decision-making responsibility to a group of appointees, that undercuts democracy. It undercuts democracy because it outsources some of the important decision-making responsibilities that belong with government and with legislatures.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, if the government simply intends to use this unelected body as political cover for difficult decision making, that too undercuts democracy because those decisions are not being made in a transparent manner and the decision makers cannot be held accountable for their actions.

So let's first look at the outsourcing of decision-making responsibility. Mr. Speaker, every member of this Chamber was elected by the voters within our constituencies to represent them here, to engage in vigorous debate and open debate, and to make decisions about the future direction of this great province. When decisions are made by elected MLAs, they're done through a system that is steeped in the democratic values of transparency and accountability. Our debates and our votes in this Chamber and in committee are a matter of public record.

As elected MLAs, we are directly accountable to the people who sent us here. Not only will we face our constituents through elections, but we interact with them regularly in our offices, on coffee row, and while out in the community. When decisions are made by elected MLAs, people know who to hold accountable and how to hold us accountable. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker, because it is a very important point for us all to remember. When decisions are made by elected MLAs, people know who to hold accountable and how to hold us accountable.

By outsourcing important decision-making processes to unelected and unaccountable group, the Sask Party government members are abdicating the responsibility that the people of Saskatchewan gave them last fall. I can't help but wonder, Mr. Speaker, if the Sask Party MLAs actually stood on the doorsteps of their constituents in the last election campaign and said, I'd like you to vote for me so that I can go to Regina and hand over my responsibility to make crucial decisions about our province's future direction to an unelected and unaccountable board. I wonder what their constituents would've thought if that's what Sask Party politicians had said on the doorstep?

As you know, Mr. Speaker, throughout the year, all of us have the opportunity to welcome school groups to the legislature. When I engage in discussions with students I like to ask them, why do we have elections? The response that I most often receive is something along the lines of, well, elections are the way we choose the people that will make decisions and pass

laws for us.

Mr. Speaker, students grasp the role of legislators. They understand that elections are held to select a group of people who are charged with the responsibility of decision making and governing. And students understand that these elected individuals are held accountable through the electoral process. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, these students appear to have a better grasp of the role of elected representatives than the Sask Party government members do.

Mr. Speaker, if those members on that side of the House would take the time to crack the spine of any first year political science textbook, they will learn that there are generally two different models concerning how elected representatives conduct themselves in relation to the electorate. The first is as a delegate, and the other as a trustee.

The delegate model is one in which the elected representative acts in such a way as to reflect the wants and needs of a majority of his or her constituents. With this approach the personal views of the elected representative would be considered secondary to the majority opinion of his or her constituency.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the trustee approach suggests that the electorate chooses a representative to act on their behalf. Those who ascribe to such an approach of elected representation would believe that it is difficult for constituents to have a solid understanding of all the issues, and therefore they believe that politicians are elected to exercise their judgment based on what they believe is best for their constituency.

While these two views are dissimilar in many ways — and each of us may identify with different aspects — both of these models share at least one common trait. In either approach the electorate knows who is making the decisions and the electorate knows that they can hold the decision makers accountable for their actions.

Back in 2004 the current Premier released his *Promise of Saskatchewan* paper, in which he admitted that, I quote:

... for the first time in Saskatchewan, government will cede significant control over the formation and implementation of economic development strategies ...

Mr. Speaker, as a new MLA, I spent a lot of time over the last several months contemplating and talking about the role of elected representatives. I take the responsibility that my constituents entrusted to me last November very seriously. I am deeply concerned to see the government ceding and abdicating its responsibility by outsourcing important decision-making power to an unaccountable body of appointees. But if, as it already explored, the government is not handing over control of anything any more and is now just using this elected body to provide it with the means to make difficult decisions that the government doesn't want to take responsibility for, if Enterprise Saskatchewan is just the Premier's expensive and convoluted puppet, that too is destructive, and that too undercuts democracy.

Transparency and accountability are fundamental to democracy. They are among the core values of our democratic system. Adding a shroud of secrecy to decision making at the government level simply makes democracy dysfunctional. There are many examples to cite of how, as some have put it, governments have lost their way when they've compromised on the values of transparency and accountability. It is indeed a slippery slope. Whatever the real motives are, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that this Enterprise Saskatchewan Act undercuts democracy.

Having covered two of the three themes I would like to discuss and being cognizant of our time constraints today, this might be a good time to pause. Mr. Speaker, I would therefore request to resume speaking when we return to Bill 2, and I would move that we adjourn debate at this time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 5

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 5 — The Public Service Essential Services Act**, be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on Bill No. 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act. I want to start out by just setting the stage a little by reading from the Minister of Labour's appointment letter. And I quote: "In your capacity as Minister of Labour, establish a fair and balanced labour environment in Saskatchewan that respects the rights of workers and employers . . ."

The second thing I want to read a little bit to set the stage is a quote from the Premier's speech to the Saskatoon chamber of commerce in Saskatoon on February 19. The Premier said, and I quote:

We need to ensure that our labour legislative environment in the province is competitive and our government is committed to that.

We introduced legislation that creates a labour legislative

environment in the province that is simply competitive. It is fair to employers, fair to employees, fair to unions, but competitive with other jurisdictions.

I want to talk a bit about debunking that myth. I want to talk about how the myth is that this is fair and balanced, and also that it is even needed now.

The definition of essential services is something else I want to talk about because currently in most sectors the determination of what services are deemed essential services is done by the union and the employer in the event of a strike. Essential is sometimes subjective. The employer would like to have as many employees on the job as possible, and the union knows its bargaining position is significantly weakened if there's no effect of their action on the services delivered.

The pressure of reduced services brings about a conclusion to the bargaining. No one gets everything they ask for in bargaining which is why it is called bargaining. There's give-and-take, with the balance of power on the employer's side until there is job action when each side has some power.

Bargaining is a stressful situation, and there is a real need for cool heads and respectful dialogue at the bargaining table. Heavy-handed interference like this legislation is bound to result in very bad relationships. It's a long way back from a bitter and acrimonious collective bargaining experience.

We need workplaces, Mr. Speaker, where workers are respected and valued and fairly paid for their services.

I can focus my remarks on bargaining from the perspective of being the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses president through two contract negotiations and as a SUN member through two more. During any negotiation when job action was required to come to an agreement, essential services were discussed with the employer and delivered by SUN members. SUN members worked, for example, in emergency units, intensive care units, coronary care units, neonatal intensive care units, and pediatric intensive care units, just as examples. The services provided were not 100 per cent coverage, rather only staffing for emergency-type situations.

I find the term essential services misleading, as most would agree that health services in general are all essential to someone's health at some time. As the Act is worded, it would allow the employer to designate virtually all employees as essential, and I could sure see this happening in bargaining with nurses.

And I believe SUN also sees this coming because I'm going to quote from their submission to the minister on February 8. They're talking about how:

That process has led to the successful resolution of literally thousands of collective agreements in Saskatchewan over the last 100 years, without Government intervention. Nothing [in their opinion] has changed in the last 6 months that would suddenly warrant such a wholesale disassembling of the public sector collective bargaining landscape.

They go on to say:

If [this Bill] . . . is enacted, in its present form, there will be a significant effect on SUN members, amounting to a denial of the right to strike, as well as a violation of SUN's rights to bargain collectively without governmental interference, restriction, or mandate.

And they go on to say that “. . . no one has talked to SUN about its view of what constitutes emergency services, and how those can and should be provided.”

They also go on to say that:

Given the fact that SUN members have always protected public safety, how has public safety ever been put at risk? What possible justification is there, again, given SUN's prior history of providing emergency services, to strip SUN members of their rights, including the right to strike.

Premier Wall said to Rosalee Longmoore that he wants to emphasize, in his view — and this is his, it's his quote:

. . . the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, on their own volition, has been responsible for protecting public safety by agreeing to provide essential services during a strike.

This is done basically by a:

. . . “Local Emergency Services Committee” who are best able to determine which nursing functions are emergent, who can provide these services and whether a SUN member will provide the services.

. . . In the past, Local Emergency Services Committees have directed SUN members to provide services in situations such as:

- where [there was no] out-of-scope nursing staff [to and] have been unable to [take] . . . rest breaks;
- where patients were . . . moved to another facility;
- where out-of-scope nursing staff do not have the requisite skills to provide safe patient care. . .

In essence, what's going to happen with this legislation, the government will be seen as siding with the employer during the collective bargaining process because they will determine what is essential.

To the best of SUN's knowledge [they conclude], there is no evidence to establish that public safety has been jeopardized by job action in Saskatchewan. If the government is privy to such evidence . . . [they would like to see it shared].

One of the *Sunspots*, or the *Sunspots* from the winter of '08 also goes on to talk to the members about how detrimental this will be to SUN members. They are talking about if they're . . . Section 7(2) specifically states that:

. . . the number of employees in each classification who must work during the work stoppage to maintain essential services [and this is bolded] is to be determined without

regard to the availability of other persons to provide essential services.

And they conclude that if passed, this legislation could amount to a denial of the right to strike for SUN members.

My question is again, why now? There is a shortage of virtually every kind of worker in this province. There is non-stop talk from virtually every sector about the need to recruit and retain workers. So why now for essential services legislation? Why alienate the very workers you're trying to retain? Why set up an adversarial, confrontational atmosphere in our workplaces? Who has asked for it?

[15:00]

It seems that this legislation is payback to some in the business community who worked hard to get the Sask Party elected and have for a long time tried to convince people in Saskatchewan that our labour laws and environment is what is holding us back.

I have some comparisons from other provinces because the minister has talked about being competitive. There is a comparison from Alberta in person-days lost due to health care strikes and lockouts in Alberta and Saskatchewan. This is between 1988 and 2007. In Alberta where strikes were banned, they have lost 287,625 person-days, while in Saskatchewan where we have the right to strike, the loss totals just over 200,000.

You have to kind of ask yourself, you know, why bother with legislation in the first place if we can seem to settle it without that?

The other comparison is that we have got comparisons between the private sector and the public sector for the same years — actually from '87 to 2007 — comparing the percentage of private sector settlements reached without work stoppage and the percentage of public sector settlements reached without work stoppage. In every case, except 1995 when they were even at 100 per cent, the public sector settlements reached without work stoppage exceeded the private sector settlements reached without work stoppage.

So you have to ask yourself, why now? This is a basically a Bill for public services, so it doesn't seem to be there is any need for that.

I do have some comments again that . . . I want to talk about a comment or a article written by Don Cameron, a lecturer at the Paul J. Hill School of Business in the University of Regina. He has talked about how destructive this will be and his views that there may be hidden consequences that come from using this legislation.

And he does go on to say, “There is a tendency for employers to designate essential services in excess of the requirements” which I have mentioned. And “. . . the proposed legislation does not permit the Labour Relations Board to alter the essential services” or the classification, only the numbers. So again that's something that's very . . . It's quite concerning for all unions.

There is a difficulty with the proposed legislation in “. . . that it requires every public service union and management subject to the Act to engage in a designation process . . . that is time consuming, complex and costly.”

We’re going to have a whole run starting — well right now SUN’s at the bargaining table — of health sector union bargaining starting the end of March, and SUN’s already at the table. If we think that this is going to help settle these agreements in a timely manner and in a less costly manner, I don’t see who’s thinking that.

There’s also some things that Mr. Cameron says, that he concludes by saying:

It is unfortunate that the [public services] Essential Services Act has been introduced in acrimony, described in some circles as a settling of old scores with the labour movement and of favouring one collective bargaining party over another. The creation of a toxic relationship between government and labour is not a proper foundation for protecting the people of Saskatchewan from threats to their health [and] safety . . .

In another article where he writes for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, he says that:

Essential services legislation was not a key priority for the new government in the recent election. Nevertheless, the proposed Act was introduced in the first sitting. Given that essential services continue in most sectors, there’s less incentive for the parties to settle, with the result that strikes are longer.

I also want to talk about public consultations. Consultation is defined as meeting with an expert in a particular field to obtain advice; the process of discussing something either with experts or with other participants and asking for their opinions or a discussion, especially in order to ascertain opinions or reach an agreement. This is the definition from Encarta World English Dictionary. The Sask Party has apparently written a new definition of consultation: nothing public, only by invitation, and only in private meetings.

This legislation is a major change in labour relations in Saskatchewan. Surely in the name of the fair and balanced promises from the Premier and the minister, we and the public want, we want to see a public debate. And I know that our Health critic has called for this. He has asked that the government hold a series of public consultations on its proposed amendments to The Trade Union Act and its new public service essential services Act. The government should be openly encouraging a broad public debate on its hallmark legislation rather than hiding behind closed doors. He also continues to say, what we need is meaningful consultations, not meetings where the outcome is predetermined.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say, as I conclude my remarks, that this Bill, as I have shown, is being introduced into a climate where nobody believes it’s fair. Nobody believes it’s balanced. It has come under scrutiny from all sides. I mean lecturers at the College of Business is pretty impartial and have said that it’s coming in an atmosphere of acrimony. And it’s hard for me to

see how, in this labour environment, when we’re looking to recruit and retain people, that this would be the piece of legislation that would somehow do that. So, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this legislation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Adjourning debate, adjourning debate . . . Why is the member from Meewasin on his feet?

Mr. Quennell: — To join in debate on the Bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Okay.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will save the majority of my remarks for another day to accommodate other . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . unless members opposite insist otherwise. But I want to accommodate other business in the House.

The only comment I would make today, Mr. Speaker, is that I think it’s, in my short experience in this legislature, a very remarkable incident, event that the government is speaking to amending its Bill within the second reading speech.

And I think there’s an admission on the part of the government that the Bill was not well thought out, perhaps not drafted by Justice lawyers, drafted by Justice lawyers. And I think an admission that more broad public consultations on this Bill are necessary than those that have taken place. But to accommodate . . . but perhaps to allow other members to join the debate, but I think certainly to accommodate . . . Perhaps to allow other members to join the debate at some point, but actually just to accommodate other business in the House, I move that we adjourn debate on this Bill today.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Meewasin has made a motion to adjourn debate. Is motion carried?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Motion agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In order to accommodate the sitting of committees, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has made a motion for the House to adjourn. Is that carried?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Agreed. The House is now adjourned until 10 o’clock tomorrow morning so that the committees can carry on their good work of today.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:08.]

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