



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

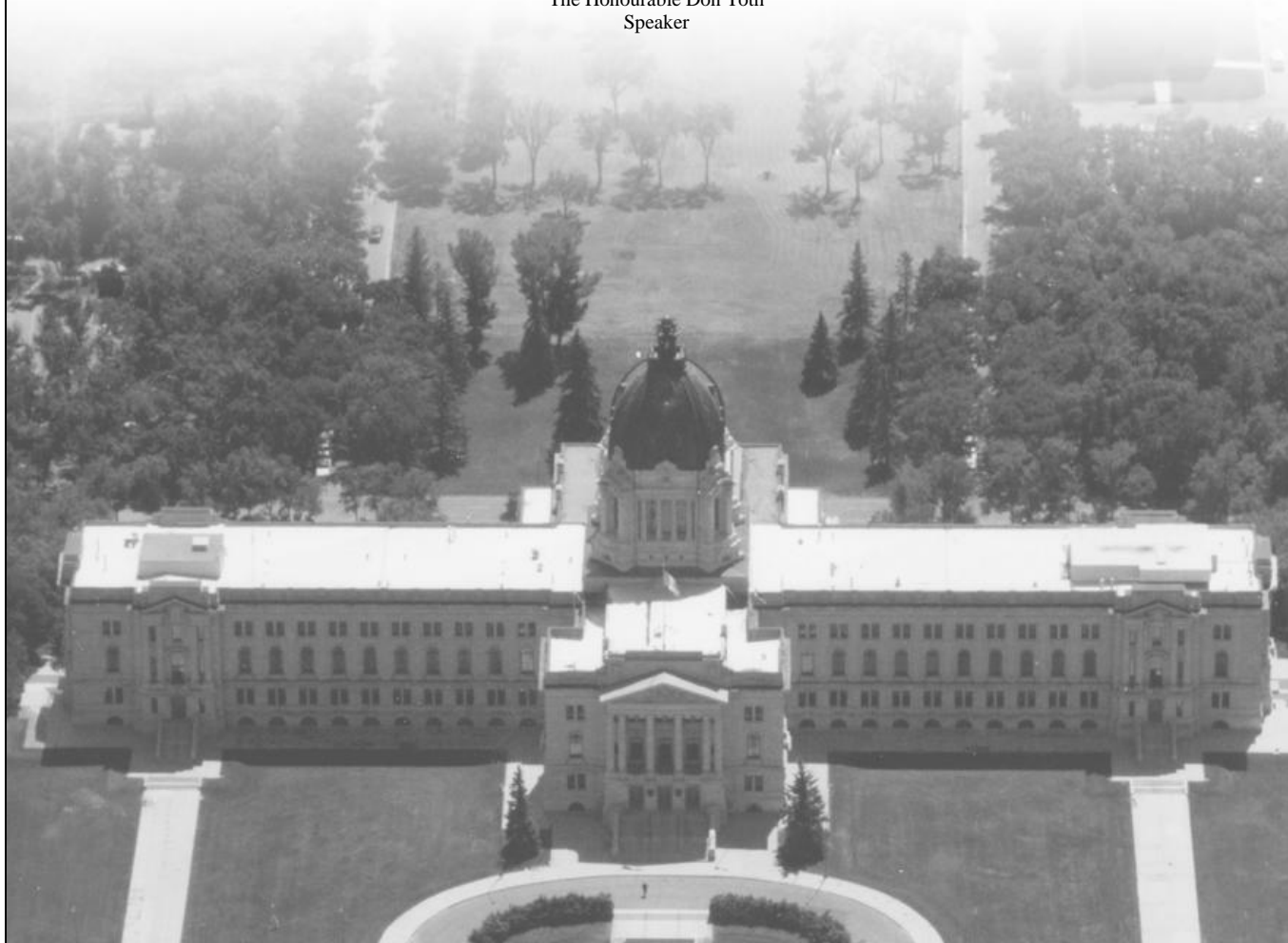
of the

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

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

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, to request leave of my colleagues to make a statement of a personal nature.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. I recognize the Premier.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues here in the Assembly for leave.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday an old videotape came to light. I hadn't seen the video before but there I was, saying unacceptable things about a former premier of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Romanow, speaking in a bad Ukrainian accent. That afternoon I spoke to reporters here at the Legislative Assembly and I apologized for those words and for that conduct.

I have since spoken with Mr. Romanow and offered him directly an apology. That afternoon, I drafted a letter — it was sent the next day — of an apology to the Canadian Ukrainian Congress, to their Saskatchewan division.

Kathy Young, who now works in Executive Council of our new government, has also apologized for comments she made about some labour leaders at the time, 1991. She has apologized to them directly as well as to current SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] leadership.

As well last Thursday, my office spoke with Dr. Lynda Haverstock, who is also referred to by someone on the tape — though not working currently with the government — in a disparaging way. An apology was offered as well.

I have today instructed legal counsel to end any challenge of what I believe sincerely was a mistake made on behalf of one particular media. Such an ongoing action, Mr. Speaker, I think would simply detract from whatever small things I hope to achieve with my remarks and what big things that we will be able to achieve together as a province in the wake of last week.

Mr. Speaker, though, because I have a great deal of respect for this institution, I repeat all of those apologies to members of this House. I repeat all of those apologies to people here today in the Assembly, and through this House to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that younger version of me that was seen on the video has since become a dad. I have worked hard to be a good husband, to be a good citizen. In my public life or in my

business endeavours, I have tried to conduct myself with honesty and with integrity, without discrimination or malice or guile. When I look back at things that I have said and things that I have done, I know that I have certainly not always met those standards.

And more to the point, like the younger version of myself, Mr. Speaker, with respect to those standards, I fall short still today and make mistakes still today. So I spent a lot of time thinking over the weekend about the standards for serving in public office, the standard for the office that I have the great privilege of holding today.

While all of us in Saskatchewan should obviously try not to do things or say things that are hurtful or offensive, I do believe there is a higher standard; that there is an added duty for elected officials, especially for the Premier, to lead by example. I can only give the people of this province that I love my solemn commitment, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to strive, that I am going to work very hard to not let them down, to not let my family down. That is my motivation.

I did a lot of thinking over the weekend as to whether any good can come from the events of last week in Saskatchewan. The answer of course is yes, but that will depend on us all. As for our government I know now, today, that every single ministry can and will carefully reconsider all of its service and all of its function in the light of the question, are we doing everything we can to not only prevent discrimination, Mr. Speaker, but to foster more understanding and to better Saskatchewan?

This is especially true for the Ministry of Education. Our best hope to find our better selves and to build a better province is not in this room today. It is with our kids. It is with future generations. Our curriculum, the tools, and the encouragement we give our teachers to be at the vanguard of that effort, as they have been in the past I would point out, Mr. Speaker, must be reinforced and must be properly resourced by this government.

What about each of us as individuals? Can we join in this effort? For who among us have not either told a joke or perhaps uttered some intolerance or perhaps simply just stood by quietly while someone else did, without stopping them, without interjecting? So we know that we can each make a change for the better. We can ourselves stop engaging in any sort of a joke or comment or intolerance. And though in ways it may even be more difficult, we can also gently and without condemnation stop others who we hear that are doing it.

Imagine the force and the effect on our Saskatchewan for good, of such a stand by us as individuals, combined with the waves of goodwill and understanding and, ironically, maturity that are coming from our kids, from our schools, from future generations.

As for Tami and I, I know that we're going to do this. We are going to accept this challenge personally.

But, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake. I do not seek, and I don't believe the people of the province seek some humourless, colourless Saskatchewan that is dimmed by some great, grey, crushing Orwellian political correctness. I also want the kind of

Saskatchewan where it's okay to laugh at ourselves, and yes, sometimes with each other. I think anyone who knows me, Mr. Speaker, will know that I'm probably the first one to poke fun at myself, even my own heritage, Low German or Mennonite heritage. There are some stereotypes of that heritage that I seem to exhibit from time to time and am reminded of it from time to time and joke about myself.

I hope that within good taste, at the expense of no one, that we can always do that. I hope that we could understand the distinction today, Mr. Speaker, between what is intolerant and what might be good-natured humour that comes at the expense of no one. Because our resolve to deal with the former, Mr. Speaker, need not take away our ability to enjoy the latter. And I admit, Mr. Speaker, sometimes — and I thought about it this weekend — sometimes it's hard to know, well where do you draw the line, where is the line between what would be intolerant and what might be good-natured humour?

Well I have some suggestions. If you're not prepared to see your remarks on the 6 o'clock news, they are probably wrong. If you're not prepared to say it to the individual, to their face, they shouldn't be said. I wouldn't have said these things to Mr. Romanow directly, obviously, so they should not have been said. They were wrong. They should not have been thought. And maybe, Mr. Speaker, shining down through the centuries, there's even a clearer line for us who wonder, where is this line? It's the golden rule. What are you willing to accept said of yourself or done to yourself in terms of what you should say or do to others? There is a line, and we can know it.

Some people have noticed that views have changed a lot in the past 17 years. That's not an excuse for any of the comments that were on that tape. They were wrong in 1991 and they are wrong today. But this fact should give us great hope, Mr. Speaker, because if our Saskatchewan, if our society is more enlightened today about race, about gender, about sexual orientation than it was 17 years ago, then we have every right to expect and resolve that it will be that much better 17 years from now. We are moving in the right direction, maybe too slowly, but we're moving in the right direction.

And while we are still less than perfect, it is also still worth remembering the reason that so many people came to our country and our province. The reason that so many people are still coming to our country and our province today is because for many they are fleeing intolerance. They are fleeing oppression and hatred in their part of the world. And when they turn their gaze to Canada, they see a radiant beacon of hope shining a simple but profound message — you are welcome here; you are equal here.

Maybe some will say that if we seek some utopia, some level of perfection, that we will fail. No we will not, because we will find an even better Saskatchewan in the attempt. Success will come in the endeavour. Success will come from mistakes if lessons then are learned and practised.

No, it's not perfect here, Mr. Speaker. The events of last week have proven that. But you know what? It's pretty good. I believe that beacon of hope shines brighter today than it has, and I believe with our resolve it will shine even brighter in the years ahead. So to those who will ask, will Saskatchewan live

up to her creed, her potential, and her motto which is, "from many peoples, strength," the answer is yes. And in 17 years from now, the answer will still be yes.

I don't remember the last time I thought as much about all of these things as I have this weekend and maybe, Mr. Speaker, therein lies some of the problem. I don't remember what personal inventory I might have done or what my state of mind might have been on these things prior to last Thursday. But today I know that I boast in nothing, neither wisdom nor character. I claim nothing, neither grace nor forgiveness. Today I seek these things, and I hope that we will all seek these things — forgiveness and wisdom and character and compassion.

And I hope that we will receive these things, that we will find them, in a measure, in a proportion that our pasts may not warrant but that our future demands. And as for grace, thank God it's amazing. Any other kind wouldn't be enough.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my honour today to introduce to you a group of teachers who are here in the legislature to attend the 10th annual Saskatchewan Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy.

The institute started on Saturday and will continue through to Wednesday. Although this group has met with the Chief Electoral Officer, members of the judiciary, and observed an educational outreach mock parliament in the Legislative Chamber earlier today, they are scheduled to meet with House leaders, caucus Chairs, caucus Whips, private members from both sides of the House, and cabinet ministers, as well as government, caucus, and legislative staff.

I would ask as I introduce these teachers that they might give a wave as I mention their names. We have here today: Theresa Eppich, Gull Lake School, Gull Lake; Karen Fehr, Hepburn School, Hepburn; Cyril Flores, Lakeview School, Cole Bay; Geoff Glasspell, Regina Christian School in Regina; Kurtis Hamel, Spiritwood High School in Spiritwood; Carmen Kingsbury, Hepburn School in Hepburn; Bryce Krawetz, William Derby School in Strasbourg; Tracy Laverty, Royal West Campus in Saskatoon; Robert LeBlanc, Humboldt Collegiate in Humboldt; Brent Loehr, Humboldt Public School in Humboldt; Liana McKinley, Lashburn High School in Lashburn; Dennis Ogrodnick, St. Mary High School in Prince Albert; Douglas Panko, Vanier Collegiate in Moose Jaw; Tammy Patterson, F.W. Johnson Collegiate in Regina; Cindy Ramier, Wynyard Elementary in Wynyard; Laurel Reimche, Estevan Comprehensive School in Estevan; James Sifert, Leader Composite School in Leader; Erin Signarowski, Regina Christian School in Regina; Delores Syrota, Wynyard Elementary in Wynyard; Kendra Syrota, Jonas Samson School in Meadow Lake; Edie Tarasoff, Wynyard Elementary in Wynyard; Craig Tilstone, École Vickers School in Prince Albert; Courtney Waugh, University of Regina; Wendy Willis, University of Regina; and Ted Zurakowski, St. John Community School in Prince Albert.

[13:45]

I would like to make special mention of our steering committee, composed of two officials from the ministry of Learning and three teachers who attended past institutes. From the Ministry of Education, Gerry Craswell and Anna Schmidt; and our teachers, Ryan Hughes, École Vickers School in Prince Albert; Larry Mikulcik, William Derby School in Strassbourg; and Delise Fathers, Riverview Collegiate in Moose Jaw.

Members, this group will be observing the afternoon proceedings with great interest. I ask all members to welcome our teachers to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we certainly join with you in welcoming the teachers in the institute to the Assembly today, but it's not why I'm on my feet. It's a great pleasure for me to be able to introduce very special guests who are seated in your gallery, with whom I had a brief chance to visit before the proceedings began.

We have with us today a group of outstanding young university students from the newly renamed Paul J. Hill school of business at the University of Regina. Attending with these students are a number of their professors, including the acting dean, Anne Lavack, and the associate dean, Sylvain Charlebois, who's here today.

Mr. Speaker, members will know that the university was recently renamed and received a significant and generous donation from the Hill family as well as forged a partnership with the Ivey business school. And I think that partnership is already serving the province and the students at the University of Regina very, very well.

But I want to say that they're here today because 44 students from the Hill business school participated this semester at the 2008 Jeux du Commerce West Competition at the University of Lethbridge. The competition attracted 500 students from around 13 universities across the West.

JDC [Jeux du Commerce] West is the largest, most prestigious business competition that is held, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say that the University of Regina, the Hill School of Business students finished second, only behind the University of British Columbia. They outpaced 11 other universities. And they insisted when we met earlier that I point out that yes, one of those schools they outpaced was the University of Saskatchewan, the Murray Edwards school of business although — here's a great Saskatchewan success story — they actually finished third in the competition.

So we want to just welcome them to their Assembly, thank them for all the hard work they've done for representing our province so very well in this competition. We know exams are coming up; it's the last week of classes. We wish them well in that. And maybe more importantly on behalf of all of us we say, there is a lot of work to do in Saskatchewan, so we want all of you to stay after you've graduated and help build our province. Welcome to your Legislative Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to welcome the students from the Hill school of business from the U of R [University of Regina], congratulate them on their accomplishment, and wish them all the best as they spend time here in the legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce a couple of sets of people. First of all, seated in the eastern gallery are two good friends, Mr. Wayne Wilson and Dr. James Parker, both of them educators, both of them tremendously active volunteers within the broader community. And it's good to see them here today in their legislature. So please join with me in welcoming these individuals, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — I would like to also draw attention in the Speaker's gallery, two individuals seated right beside the clock. I'm sure they're keeping time of things, Mr. Speaker. That is the president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, president Robert Doucette, and executive director Geordy McCaffrey from the Gabriel Dumont Institute. Please join me in welcoming these individuals to their legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Parks, Culture, and Tourism.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you and to the rest of the Assembly a well-known Saskatchewan artist and businesswoman who is seated in the Speaker's gallery. It is my pleasure to introduce Ruth Smillie, the artistic director and CEO [chief executive officer] of the Globe Theatre, Saskatchewan's largest arts organization. With Ms. Smillie is Mr. Andrew North, the general manager of the theatre.

Ms. Smillie is celebrating a milestone in her career, Mr. Speaker, at the Globe Theatre. It is her 10th year as artistic director of the Globe Theatre. The member from Biggar will be reading a member's statement to the Assembly regarding Ms. Smillie's achievement during her tenure at Globe Theatre. I ask the House to join me in welcoming her and congratulating her on her 10th anniversary at the Globe Theatre.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly I'd like to introduce some people, trade unionists who have joined us in the Assembly today.

In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, President Larry Hubich, Gary Schoenfeldt, Marlene Brown, and David Winters. In the east gallery we have Greg Mosiuk, Debbie Hubich, Judy Henley, Carrie McCosham, Carol McKnight, Tom Graham, Ann St. Denis, Will Bauer, Erin Morrison, and Frank Menten.

I'd like to welcome all these trade unionists to their Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to the members of the House, I'd like to introduce a gentleman that's sitting . . . your gallery today, a gentleman that's well known to the House here, that's spent many years here, Mr. Gerald Muirhead. I represented his old constituency which he represented very well for many, many years. So I would like all members to welcome Mr. Muirhead to his Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join you in re-introducing an individual that you already introduced. It's not often that we as the elected members in this Legislative Assembly have the opportunity to introduce family.

And I want to ask all members to join me in welcoming my son Bryce who has already been introduced as a teacher at Strasbourg school. Bryce is in his seventh year teaching in Strasbourg, and with his mom leaving after 35 years of education, he still has 28 years to go. So I'd ask all members to welcome Bryce to his Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for First Nations and Métis affairs.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce two respected individuals who have Métis descent sitting in your gallery.

We have Geordy McCaffrey, executive director of the Gabriel Dumont Institute at Saskatoon. And we have Mr. Robert Doucette, president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

We're honoured that you're in your gallery today. We, the Government of Saskatchewan, appreciate your friendship and equally your commitment to the Métis Nation of this province; welcome to your legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I'd just like to make a comment in regards to what may transpire in this Assembly for sake of the members, and I know it doesn't affect members, but it impacts each and every one. I've been informed that there has been someone taking photos since we've started proceedings today. And according to the rules, photographs are not to be taken in the Assembly by anyone without the authority of the Speaker. So just for the sake of down the road, people will be mindful of that.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of Moose Jaw and area residents that, if followed by the government, would help support improved health care in our area. And the prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to present several pages of petitions to the Legislative Assembly today on behalf of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan concerning the withdrawal of proposed essential services legislation and the withdrawal of the proposed amendments to The Trade Union Act. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitions are signed by people from Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Regina. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition that has been signed by residents of the city of Saskatoon, from every neighbourhood in Saskatoon calling upon the government to reinstate funding for Station 20. Mr. Speaker, I will read the petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station 20 project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of affordable housing in Saskatchewan. These petitioners have concerns about the current task force. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to ensure that the task force on housing affordability hold open public consultations for all Saskatchewan citizens.

I do so present. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, somewhat distressed, but I rise to present a petition on behalf of the employees at the South Hill liquor store because of their shabby treatment . . .

The Speaker: — I believe that under the new rules a member can only present one petition on any given day. Order, order.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Paragon Awards

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, there was a full house at Regina's Turvey Centre last Thursday evening to honour the nominees and recipients of the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce ninth annual Paragon Awards, celebrating business excellence. There were 24 businesses and organizations nominated in nine different categories including young entrepreneur, where the winner was Rachel Mielke of Hillberg & Berk; community involvement, won by Sun Life Financial. The Jack FM bike-a-day-in-May campaign won the Community Alliance Award.

The Marketing and Promotional Achievement Award was won by the Saskatchewan Roughriders Football Club. Partners in Motion won the Export Achievement Award. And MicroAge won for community service excellence. The Diversity Award went to Employment Network Canada Inc., and Trino's Men's Wear is the New Business Venture of the year. The Business of the Year Award went to Dutch Growers Garden Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the evening also included the presentation of the University of Regina Award of Innovation to a team from the university's engineering department, including Dean Paitoon, for work on CO₂ environmental technologies.

Please join me in congratulating Tim and Karen Duyvendyk of Dutch Growers Garden Centre and all of the winners of the Paragon Awards. And join me also in recognizing the excellent work of the chamber of commerce in organizing this event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Saskatchewan Tartan Day

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to inform the Assembly about Saskatchewan Tartan Day, which actually took place yesterday on Sunday, April 6 on the anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320, when Scots asserted their independence. Tartan Day was declared a day of recognition for Scottish clans in Saskatchewan by an Act of this Assembly in 1992 and is celebrated across Canada. My friend, the learned member from Kindersley, was responsible for the initiation of this legislation, and I and all Scots thank him for that.

The impact of the Scottish clans on Canada has been considerable — from fur trading and establishing trade routes to the West, to helping found Montreal and becoming involved in all aspects of Canadian life.

[14:00]

One such Scot was my own grandfather. Alfred Barclay Chisholm immigrated to Canada at the age of 17 years. After a few years of working in the mines of Nova Scotia he moved to what became Chisholm Farms, our fourth-generation family farm. From 1920 to the mid-'50s, Chisholm Farms was the dairy that served the town of Maidstone.

The stories of my grandfather are an integral part of our family's and our community's history. During the depression, it has been relayed to me on a number of occasions, that if children resided in a house they would receive their daily delivery of milk, regardless of their ability to pay.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a Scot with our rich history both locally and around the world. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Spring Fling Fundraising Event

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, Saturday the Regina and District Association for Community Living held their annual spring fling. This annual fundraiser brought together more than 500 supporters. Mr. Speaker, this annual gala raised tens of thousands of dollars to fund projects to assist individuals with intellectual disabilities in and around Regina.

The organizers have held this event for more than 20 years and have dedicated many years to improving the lives of those who

live every day with an intellectual disability. These organizers and volunteers have made a difference in our community. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of us I would like to thank the organizers for the commitment on this very important issue.

Special thanks to Voula Danakas, who has spent more than 20 years making the spring fling a reality. Mr. Speaker, our province is a better place because of the many volunteers who make this event a success each year. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Artistic Director Celebrates 10 Years with Globe Theatre

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise to recognize Ms. Ruth Smillie, the artistic director of Regina's Globe Theatre, on the occasion of her 10th anniversary at the theatre. Under Ms. Smillie's leadership, starting in 1998, Globe Theatre has achieved a prominent place among the top-regarded theatres across Canada, earning a national reputation for the excellence of its productions and programs. Among the programs initiated during Ms. Smillie's tenure at Globe are the Shumiatcher Sandbox Series and the Globe Theatre school.

Globe has seen tremendous growth during the past 10 years. When Ms. Smillie arrived at the Globe, the total attendance was 30,000. It now has approximately 60,000 people attending the performances in a year. To accommodate this growth, the theatre, with the support of government, business, and individual donators, has undergone two renovations and an expansion in the facilities at the Prince Edward Building.

We are truly fortunate to have a professional theatre of this calibre in Regina. Its presence in downtown Regina adds immeasurably to the vitality and attractiveness of our downtown area, and it plays an important role in generating tourism revenue.

We congratulate Ms. Smillie on her 10th anniversary with the Globe Theatre and on the growing success of this great theatre in our community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

World Health Day

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is World Health Day. This year's focus is on the need to protect global public health from the adverse effects of climate change. The World Health Organization selected this theme in recognition that climate change is posing ever-growing threats to global public health security.

Without mitigating factors the world can expect more injury, disease, and death related to natural disasters; heat waves; higher rates of food-borne, water-borne, and vector-borne illness; and more premature deaths related to air pollution.

Large populations will be displaced by drought and famine. As well the productivity of arable land will change. A small example of the effects of climate change on our local population might be the extension of the West Nile virus season due to higher temperatures in Saskatchewan.

Many of these impacts can be avoided or controlled by reducing pollution, more efficient land use, and better water management. Clean water and sanitation, safe and adequate food, intervention of sound health practices at a young age, immunization, and disaster preparedness are all critical components of public health practices and need to be strengthened.

The impacts will be disproportionately greater in vulnerable populations which include the very young, elderly, medically infirm, poor and isolated populations. We have the power to control to some degree this threat at home with partnerships across the various sectors of society. We need to prepare ourselves now if we wish to moderate the severity of these effects.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Junior Achievement Awards

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, on Friday night the Junior Achievement of Saskatoon held its awards ceremony. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this time to announce to the Assembly the names of the winners: the Salesperson of the Year, Nicole Hoffos, sponsored by the Saskatchewan Research Council; the human resource management, Stacey Leek, sponsored by SaskTel Pioneers; the IT [information technology] initiative, Bryan Tkachuk, sponsored by Freedom 55 Financial; achievement in production imitation, Sheena Quan, sponsored by Saskatchewan Research Council; VP [vice-president] finance, Vaike Lepnurm, sponsored by KPMG; President of the Year, Nishi Jerath, sponsored by RBC Royal Bank.

Katie Bleakney won the first year achiever's award by Saskatchewan Research Council. Spirit of JA [Junior Achievement], Aaron Simpkins and Tanis Cheston, sponsored by SaskTel Pioneers and Saskatchewan Research Council. Volunteer Appreciation Award was by Jarome Chomos; production excellence, Bryan Wan, sponsored by SaskTel Pioneers; the individual inductee was Barry Remai from the Remai Group; Nimi Jerath from professional leadership awarded by Cameco Corporation; and the Achiever of the Year was Colin Mark, sponsored by Canpotex Limited.

Mr. Speaker, we ought to be proud of these young people. They are our future. I look forward to the day when they will become our leaders. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Community Walk to Support Station 20 West

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday morning in Saskatoon over 2,000 citizens stood up for what they believed is the right thing — Station 20 West. Called the Community Walk for Station 20, citizens were asked to show their support — and they sure did.

In fact *The StarPhoenix* had this to say. The sidewalks around the block designated for Station 20 West were filled with a throng of people taking part in the largest demonstration in recent Saskatoon history. It goes on to say:

Between 2,000 and 2,500 people gathered on the lot at the corner of 20th Street West and Avenue L on Saturday morning to protest the provincial government's recent decision to take back \$8 million in funding for the development.

Which was to feature dental, medical clinics, public health, nutrition programs, and a co-op grocery store.

"It's not about politics. It's about the community," said Sheila Pocha, co-chair of the project's board of directors.

"We are worth it,' 'Build communities, not walls,' and 'Say yes to Station 20 West,'" were the messages bobbing down the street as the crowd stretched from the lot and around three corners of the city block in a seamless line of supporters. Cars honked and pedestrians heading in the other direction often joined the tide of people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating the 2,000-plus citizens of Saskatoon for standing up for what's right and attending the community walk in support of Station 20 West. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Station 20 West

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question follows up on the member's statement that has just been made. As the member pointed out, on Saturday this past week over 2,000 — 2,000 to 2,500 — people gathered to protest the Minister of Health's recent axing of an \$8 million commitment to the Station 20 West project.

Mr. Speaker, these folks came from across Saskatoon. They came from across the province of Saskatchewan to call upon the Minister of Health to reverse this ill-advised cut. And the fact is, Mr. Speaker, while thousands were present there at the protest in Saskatoon, they are joined with letters of support, emails, cards that are coming from all corners of the province. And so today, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Will he listen to the public voice? Will he hear the outcry that his decision has cost? Will he reverse this ill-advised decision?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. And certainly on behalf of the government, we understand very much the sentiments that were expressed and respect them that were expressed with respect to the rally that has been referred to in a member's statement and now in the preamble to the Leader of the Opposition's question.

I think what those people want — although they have certainly expressed it very specifically with respect to Station 20 — is they want to make sure that core neighbourhood issues in the province of Saskatchewan are the highest priority for its government. And I can assure them through you, Mr. Speaker, and through the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for the area, the Leader of the Opposition, that that is precisely the case.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, our budget increased funding for school-based lunch, anti child-poverty and hunger programs by \$500,000. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we've added \$5 million in new funding for organizations like the Saskatoon Food Bank, so they can better engage in delivering life skills and employment skills training. We will continue to move on the affordable housing issue, Mr. Speaker. We have heard that message, and we will continue to make progress.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims to know what the people of the inner city of Saskatoon want, but they tell him. They want Station 20.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — They want their dream, their vision to become reality, Mr. Speaker. We're not talking about money from this year's budget; we're talking about money from last year's budget.

All along the march route, citizens of the inner city of Saskatoon, some of whom could not join the group, were saying to the group, thank you for standing up for us. Thank you for taking up our cause. We see the comments in today's *Star Phoenix* from those citizens.

My question now then is to the Premier: will he listen to the people? Will he listen to the people who were there in the rally? Will he listen to the letters and the emails that he's getting? But more importantly will he listen to the voices of people who live in the inner city of Saskatoon and reverse this decision that he and his cabinet have made? Will he reverse the decision?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to say first of all — and I think this is a very important point — that the largest portion, and many would argue, I think, that one of the most significant portions of the Station 20 project has been the housing issue. That work will be done. That work is going to be completed and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . well the work is nearing completion. It will continue. So too will be the library project.

What we are talking about here is housing for a grocery store and a clinic, not an additional clinic, Mr. Speaker. Let's be very clear. I've heard members opposite say, well this means more access to additional health care. It does not. It means the relocation of the Westside Clinic to another facility.

We have made the decision that when it comes to investing, Mr. Speaker — and we are investing as I've already highlighted in the previous question — we will work with groups like the Westside Clinic. We will work with groups like the food bank. We will focus our attention on St. Mary School. We will deal with those issues in the core neighbourhood not in exactly the way that the hon. member would like, but in an effective way on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — I'm extremely pleased to hear the Premier say they've reversed their other ill-advised decision, and it appears now we are going to build St. Mary School from what the Premier just said.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Again, Mr. Speaker — again, Mr. Speaker — it would appear that the Premier and the Government of Saskatchewan today are making this decision based on ill-informed information, Mr. Speaker. The Premier now stands in his place and indicates that there will not be an expansion of health services when in fact there will be an expansion of health services in the Station 20 concept, Mr. Speaker.

Now just last week, Mr. Speaker, just last week the Premier said, and I quote, "I've seen a lot of decisions change by governments and even by opposition, even after a press conference where emphatic statements have been made, because people get on the phone and contact their representatives."

Well, Mr. Speaker, people have been on the phone to offices, to MLAs. They've been on the streets. They're sending letters. Will the Premier authorize the Minister of Health to do exactly what the Minister of Social Services did a week ago and reverse the decision and put the money back for Station 20 West?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, it's interesting that the Leader of the Opposition would ask these questions only days after he voted against a half a million dollars more for school-based hunger programs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And he voted against \$5 million investment for food banks, significantly the Saskatoon Food Bank as well, Mr. Speaker, that will certainly benefit from that and provide programs.

It's also more than passing strange to hear from that member who, while he was premier of the province and represented that constituency, immediately after another premier represented that constituency, after that record, Mr. Speaker, which featured the highest child poverty rates in Canada under his government, which featured, Mr. Speaker, the fastest growing rate of food bank usage, which featured the neglect of St. Mary School, not just while he was the MLA, but while he was the premier, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

[14:14]

Intolerant Comments

Mr. Calvert: — A question, new question on a different subject, but to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, new question, to the Premier, on a new subject.

Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier chose to send a very strong message to FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] leaders that he does not accept intolerance and that he would take steps against intolerance, and for this position, he has been applauded.

Today the public of Canada is focused on intolerant comments that have been made by the Member of Parliament from Regina-Lumsden-Lake Centre. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are watching closely to see the Premier's response.

On Thursday of last week, we called upon the Prime Minister to strip Mr. Lukiwski of his caucus duties. Over the weekend, more voices have joined for that call. Today I understand opposition parties in the House of Commons are joining in that call.

My question to the Premier: will he join the opposition parties in Ottawa? Will he join our caucus? Will he join citizens of Saskatchewan and call on the Prime Minister to take action on

these intolerant comments? What exactly will the Premier advise the Prime Minister to do, and will he put that advice in writing?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I note, Mr. Speaker, that the party of the individual in question, the leadership of the party of the individual in question seem to have . . . well more than seem to have, certainly have stated that they accept the apology that's been offered by that individual and further that they obviously truly believe that the views expressed in the videotape 17 years ago by that individual have changed.

As views . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well one of the members is laughing at this, the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow. As views have changed . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Members are not to draw other members into the debate. Mr. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — As views have mercifully and gratefully changed right across the country and here in our province, I accept the statement of the individual that he made last Friday. I take it as its face value. I accept it on its merit. His colleagues in the House of Commons have done the same thing, his leader has done the same thing, and, Mr. Speaker, we won't be taking any further action in this regard.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Apology

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, this week, this past weekend has been an occasion for reflection. Members of my constituency and my community have contacted me and expressed their hurt about the comments made by the Premier. Mr. Speaker, my constituents are saying this has dredged up old pain.

I understand that the Premier has sent an apology to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and today apologized to the Assembly. But, Mr. Speaker, this apology may not reach all members of the Ukrainian community, and it may not reach all people outside of our community and this legislature. Mr. Speaker, people need to hear that such attitudes and behaviour are not acceptable.

To the Premier: will he commit to sending his apology as an open letter to all newspapers in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I certainly wouldn't have a problem with that. I've also stood in the Assembly today before routine proceedings and offered exactly those same comments,

that apology. I've also said on Thursday that this was never meant. This was an impersonation of a specific individual — not acceptable, but that's what it was. It was never made then or when it's been done since or before that as any kind of aspersion to any group, to Saskatchewan Ukrainian people or to people of Ukrainian descent from wherever they come from.

For what it's worth, I have done other poor impersonations, including my own heritage, and used accents of that. Mr. Speaker, again it is never meant in disrespect. And as I have said to the extent that anybody, anyone would take offence to that, especially Ukrainian Canadians — including my colleague, the Deputy Premier — then I state the apology again. And I certainly wouldn't have any problem with it being published in any newspaper in any part of the country.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Liquor Store Closure

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, late Friday afternoon without warning, the government issued a news release stating that the South Hill liquor store in Moose Jaw would be closed effective immediately. The news came as surprise to many in the community, including to the store's staff and many patrons. With so little notice, I can only assume that the decision was made on rather short notice.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister Responsible for SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority]. When was the decision made to close the South Hill liquor store, and what was the motivation for this hasty decision?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to answer my first question in the House as a minister of the Crown.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, we take the role of Minister Responsible for SLGA very seriously and the operation of the corporation and its employees equally seriously, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this decision was not taken lightly, and it certainly wasn't taken on the spur of the moment. And fact is the original recommendation for the closure of the South Hill store occurred in 1994-95 under the previous administration. Mr. Speaker, the reasons for this decision taking place were financial. There is a significant savings to be made in changing the operation of SLGA within Moose Jaw. There are two stores in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker, and the store that remains is more than adequate to handle the operations within Moose Jaw.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members opposite with their alleged new-found commitment to the Crowns wouldn't take this decision lightly. What I don't understand is what evidence the decision was based on. The store has been profitable for many years. The building is owned by SLGA, and it has some of the lowest overhead costs right across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a very proud location . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the store has been profitable for many years. The building is owned by SLGA and overhead costs are among the lowest in the province. And it's also a very proud location and home to a mural celebrating Moose Jaw's Ukrainian heritage. Add to this the fact, Mr. Speaker, add to this the fact that on March 30 they finished painting the interior of the store. Mr. Speaker. It's not giving the impression that this store was on the brink of closure.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why did he decide to close the South Hill liquor store when all the facts point to a store that was viable and profitable? Was the decision political retaliation against an NDP riding?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Government Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this decision was made strictly based on the financial position of that particular store. There was a new store built in Moose Jaw in 1999 that has almost 13,000 square feet. The previous store which the government closed was just over 6,000 square feet. This store is just over 4,000, for a total of just over 10,000 square feet. There is now 20 per cent more capacity in Moose Jaw than there was with the two previous stores, Mr. Speaker.

The employees in question, there's 1.5 FTEs [full-time equivalent] being impacted here. They will not lose their positions. They will simply be moving over to the other store. As per their options under the agreement which will take place over 90 days, they have a choice of whether they wish to retire, move to a different location, Mr. Speaker. The expectation is they will move over to the Moose Jaw store. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if this is an example of the business acumen of the Sask Party, I would be appalled. They own the building. That store has been profitable and made money for SLGA. It's in a very good location, has some of the

lowest overhead costs in the province and, Mr. Speaker, they just painted the interior. If they had made a decision a month or two ago during budget, why would you repaint the inside of the store with the job being finished four days before they announced the closure? No notice to staff. No notice or consultations with the citizens of Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister making this political decision?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Government Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite mentions good location. It's right next door to a daycare, Mr. Speaker. That's the social responsibility of the members opposite.

The members opposite spent 14 years keeping this store open while they were closing schools and hospitals around the province because it was in the former premier's constituency and in the minister of SLGA's constituency thereafter, Mr. Speaker. They were the ones that kept this store open for political reasons — not in the best interest of SLGA, not in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan.

We are taking a responsible fiscal decision for the people of Saskatchewan and not simply playing politics like those members have been for the last 14 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this just speaks to the incompetence of this government. You shut down a profitable store that is owned by SLGA, that has low overhead costs, and then you paint it right before you close it down.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite ran on a promise that they would not privatize . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite ran on a promise that they would not privatize Crown corporations or SLGA, but here we see a store being closed with little rationale. To the minister: is the closure of the South Hill liquor store in Moose Jaw part of his privatization plan, and what other stores are on the list?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Government Services.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It amazes me that the member opposite is concerned about painting the store. If you're looking to rent the building out

afterwards, you need to have it in good shape.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — The members opposite opened the hospital in Oxbow on April 1, Mr. Speaker, and then went in there and closed a brand new hospital 14 days later, Mr. Speaker. That's how they operated, Mr. Speaker.

This is an important decision for SLGA for financial responsibility. There is no consideration being given to privatizing Sask Liquor. And the last time a store closed in this province was in 2006, and closed by that member when she was the minister.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

The Legislative Sessional Agenda

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today as we look at the blues in front of us, we see that the government is claiming that they do not have enough time in this session to get all of their legislation passed. Mr. Speaker. It begs the question: whose fault is that?

I have seen, Mr. Speaker, the legislative calendar, Mr. Speaker, a legislative calendar set out by the Legislative Assembly back in May of this year. It has the session indeed starting earlier than the session actually started this year, Mr. Speaker. The sessional calendar would have given members of the legislature more time to debate legislation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, all MLAs were informed that we would be starting the spring session earlier than we actually did.

So to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: who made the decision to start the spring session of this Assembly as late as we did, and who in government failed to realize that this could create the problem that they're claiming exists today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the question from the Opposition House Leader in regard to the work of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite says, whose fault is it that we have to work harder? Well it's quite simply no one's fault, but let me point out some of the realities of a new government after an election.

We called this Assembly together in a shorter period of time between the election and the meeting of this Assembly than any other government in the history of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, we did that in cognizance of the rules of this Assembly that said in order to

have the critical agenda items for the government placed to a vote in the spring session, we had to bring them and introduce them so that the public would have ample time to scrutinize them over the period of the intersessional period coming up to this session.

Mr. Speaker, what we now want to ensure is that that opposition has sufficient time to do their job. I don't know why they're hesitating to do their work.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

[14:30]

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The government knew back in the fall that getting all of their legislation passed this session was going to be difficult. In fact, the Minister of Labour went so far as to even ask his own department for help and advice.

Now I know seeking advice doesn't come very easily to the Minister of Labour, but don't worry, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Minister of Education will come to order. Member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Labour, true to form that we've seen in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, did not take the advice of his own department. I have a document, Mr. Speaker, prepared by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour in response to the minister's request for how do we get Bill 5 passed in 20 hours. When confronted with this question, Mr. Speaker, about how do we get it passed, what was the ministry's solution to the problem, Mr. Speaker? They said, start the session earlier.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Labour: why did he ignore the advice of his own department in this regard and — come to think of it — why did he even bother asking them in the first place if he was going to ignore them?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is an agenda that a new government has to bring in front of the legislature of the province of Saskatchewan, and that quite simply is what we're ensuring happens in this session. Mr. Speaker, as a new government we have a responsibility to ensure that we do everything we can to deliver on the promises and on the budget that we tabled in this House.

We are ensuring that the opposition has 75 hours of time to scrutinize the budget. We will ensure that the opposition has up to 20 hours per specified Bill. We will ensure that the opposition has up to five hours to deal with budget-related Bills. And we are hopeful that we will provide sufficient time so that Bills introduced into this session also will receive the scrutiny

that the opposition is entitled to perform.

Mr. Speaker, we're ready to do the work. What's the problem with the opposition?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've said before, I understand one of the basic functions of any government is to arrange to have legislation written, presented to the Assembly, and then passed. And whether it's passed in May or in October, Mr. Speaker, we understand that the government has the ability to do that, and the opposition will do their job. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the only major function of government certainly is the legislation that they bring forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, the government opposite has dropped the ball on this matter. I don't understand what the Government House Leader is thinking when he proposes a rule change halfway through the legislative session. Why did he not arrange to have the necessary time to debate the government Bills to begin with? How has he managed to mismanage this basic function of government?

So I ask, Mr. Minister, to the Government House Leader: given that all he needs is 20 hours of debate on any piece of legislation, why does the Minister of Finance, the Government House Leader, have trouble counting to 20?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Government House Leader clearly understands, the 20 hours isn't for the total of the legislative agenda; it is for each of the specified Bills.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, in addition to that there is a requirement under the rules to have five . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — In addition we have the requirement to provide five hours for each of the budget-related Bills. We have the requirement for 75 hours as scrutiny of the estimates. All of those things take time, and so far this opposition has not indicated any willingness to be reasonable and be proactive and to move some of this along in a more timely fashion.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, given the record of the opposition, we had no choice but to ensure their democratic rights, to make sure they had enough time to do their job, and we certainly on this side of the House are willing to do the necessary work and

effort so that we can have completion date on May 15. This session will end on time, and the opposition will have the time they need to do their job if they choose to.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, fortunately the Opposition House Leader chose to ask some questions that actually pertained to the rationale for the motion that we are introducing today.

Mr. Speaker, there is a competing balance in this Chamber in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the government and the roles and responsibilities of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. We each have our role to play in this whole process. And certainly we are mindful, as a new government, that we have a responsibility to set an agenda and to match that agenda with specific legislative pieces and, as well, with items that are tabled with the budget. We also understand that as a transition to a new government, it is extremely difficult to have all of these things happen in a very timely way.

As one of the individuals that was involved with the negotiation of the rules that we've established for the House, it was recognized in the fashioning of the rules that this was an issue, potentially, going forward. And so there was a flexibility in the initial session of a legislature after an election to provide some flexibility.

We attempted very seriously to meet those challenges. And certainly, as a government, we came together as a legislature in the shortest period of time in the history of this province, from when the election was held to the first sitting of the session. And we recognized we should do that in as timely a way as possible because the people of this province deserved to hear our response to the promises and the commitments that were made in the campaign. And that was a prime responsibility.

We also recognized that there needed to be adequate time for discussion and debate and consultation for the opposition on the critical Bills to our agenda. And so we tabled a number of Bills that have become specified Bills because of the fact we tabled them in the fall session, and that there would be the period of time between the fall session and the spring session for the opposition to contact stakeholders, to contact citizens in order to have those discussions and so that they may indeed exercise their responsibility as an opposition to hold us account for the items we are bringing forward.

Part of those rules also state that if a Bill is specified, before it is guaranteed to come to a vote in a subsequent session, there has to be provided at least 20 hours of time, if the opposition chooses to use that much time, but it has to be presented and made

available — per piece of legislation. Those are the rules that we agreed to.

And so we recognize that in this first session, that may prove somewhat difficult because if the opposition chooses to take all of the time that's specified under the rules, quite simply there will not be enough time to consider all of the agenda items that we have on the order paper.

We also recognize, in the rules, that the opposition has the right to scrutinize and hold to account the budget for a minimum for up to 75 hours and that the opposition has a right to say to us, we would like more hours for one ministry than the other. And we as a government have the obligation to try and accommodate the opposition in that regard as well.

We also recognize that there is legislation that's been brought forward in this session. And while we acknowledge that there is no necessity that that legislation will come to a vote, we're hopeful that if we provide sufficient time for the opposition to get the drafting of this legislation out to stakeholders so they may receive their comments and criticism, that as well could be considered in this session.

And I have to say that in the 12 years that I sat on the other opposite side of the House, we were very co-operative to ensure that the rights of the government were going to be properly recognized and that we were doing our job of holding people to account. And that when we had done that to the best of our ability, we certainly were going to be mindful of the fact we had a responsibility to the citizens of Saskatchewan as well to ensure we were not holding up the work of government because the people of this province had chosen a government and as such they had a mandate in order to exercise on that agenda.

So, Mr. Speaker, we believe that what we're doing is a very appropriate and responsible response to the dilemma that we face. I have discussed this with the Opposition House Leader last week, and I said, this is a dilemma. This is a problem I have. Can you help me with this by making some assurances that this could be addressed within the current sitting hours? And the solution that was suggested by the Opposition House Leader was just unrealistic and impossible to accommodate and so that we really had no choice but to say, okay you have the right. You have the right. You have indeed perhaps even the responsibility to make sure that there is twenty of hours of debate on each piece of legislation if you choose to.

My responsibility and this government's responsibility is to ensure that there's enough working hours in the time that's remaining for this session in order for you to exercise the democratic responsibilities you have as an official opposition.

And I'll tell you quite frankly, if you want to ensure that we don't sit any longer hours, if you want to ensure that we're done with the session on May 15, just start the debate and sit down and let it come to a vote after an hour or 20 minutes or whatever you think is fair. It's up to you. It's your choice. We certainly will be happy to accept that. But I mean if you're going to not be able to do that and if you're going to insist on using the time that's available to you, it's our responsibility to make sure that time is adequately provided for you. And that's the nature of the motion.

And so, Mr. Speaker, without taking any further time on the topic I would like to move the following motion:

That the *Rules and Procedures* for the sitting times of the Assembly and the sitting times for standing committees shall be varied on an interim basis for the remainder of the first session of the twenty-sixth legislature as follows:

1. Notwithstanding Rule 6(1), the ordinary times for the daily meetings and adjournments of the sitting of the Assembly on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays shall be 10 a.m. to 12 midnight, with a recess from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.;
2. Standing committees shall meet and adjourn at the following times when convened:
 - a. on Thursday: 2 p.m. to 12 midnight, with a recess from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.;
 - b. on Fridays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.;
3. By order, the Assembly and standing committees may adjourn earlier than the adjournment times specified by this sessional order; and further,

That the provisions of this sessional order shall come into effect the sitting day after its adoption and shall expire upon the adjournment of the Assembly on the sitting day preceding the completion day for first session of the twenty-sixth legislature.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Will the members take the motion as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to rise to speak on this very important issue before all of us in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, this is an issue about parliamentary democracy. It's an issue about the rights of the members of this Assembly, and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it's an issue about incompetence.

Mr. Speaker, we have today before us a motion, a motion that's brought forward by a government that cannot arrange the time within their agenda to pass their own — to pass their own — budget and legislation, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, the government has put forward a motion that clearly shows that they can't manage their own time.

They can't manage their own affairs, and they can't pass their political agenda, their legislation, and budget without changing the rules. And, Mr. Speaker, changing the rules unilaterally. Changing rules that they had agreed to. Changing rules that they were part of putting in place, Mr. Speaker.

They fully, fully understood what these rules meant and they fully understand what these rules mean to this legislature. But

what they don't understand is what the abuse of power that they're putting forward is about or how it reflects upon the democratic principles of our institution or how it reflects upon the rights of the citizens of this province to have the opportunity to have a voice in this legislation.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, I want to start my remarks by quoting from a book called "The Role of the Legislature" in Saskatchewan. And I'm going to go right to its conclusion, and in the conclusion it says:

The danger of royal absolutism is indeed past, and there is no doubt that the danger of cabinet absolutism is growing. Regardless of the party in power, the Premier's office endeavours as much as possible to control the legislature. The danger is that this desire for control fuels public cynicism and perhaps worse, cynicism among party members. This in turn contributes to the perception that all politicians are alike, and if they are, why should anyone bother to vote or get involved in electoral politics.

It goes on to say, "The erosion of the legislature continues, albeit perhaps somewhat more slowly than at times in the past."

And, Mr. Speaker, listen to this part very carefully, "The Devine Conservatives believed that they had a majority of the seats in the legislature so they could do whatever they wanted." Mr. Speaker, "The Devine Conservatives believed that they had a majority of the seats in the legislature so they could do whatever they wanted."

Mr. Speaker, this book, talking about the role of the legislature in Saskatchewan, points to a former Conservative government with a majority of seats doing whatever they wanted, regardless of the interest of the legislature and regardless of the interest of the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, history repeats itself. This is history repeating itself.

We had a government through the 1980s who ruined this province, who ran this province like they had absolute control, who cared little or nothing for the views of the opposition or the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing that again.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use the comments from a colleague of mine today who pointed out that it took the Grant Devine Conservative government of the 1980s four years to get a large demonstration against their government. It took them four years to have a large demonstration against their government — more than 2,000 people. Well, Mr. Speaker, what Grant Devine took four years to do, the Brad Wall government has done in four months.

The Speaker: — Order. Members know they're supposed to refer to the members by their position or their constituency.

Before I recognize the member, I would ask leave to introduce a guest.

Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Thank you. Members of the Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce to you today my youngest brother, Jack. He's in from Calgary. He's looking forward to speaking to the Social Sciences Teachers' Institute tonight.

For the members who are going to be there, I think you will really appreciate his involvement in reaching out to youth in Calgary, and in fact it's expanding across Canada. And so I'd ask members to extend a warm welcome to my brother, Jack Toth.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for using the name of a member. I should have known better.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to the fundamental principle that that quote talked about. And that quote talked about the fact that when a government believes they can do anything because they have the majority in the House, when that government believes it can supersede the interests of in fact the other members of the legislature and supersede the interests of the public, then we have no respect for the institution. We have no respect for democracy, and we have no respect for both the members of the legislature and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we face today. We face a government that because of their mismanagement and their inability to plan, to not pass their legislative agenda, and perhaps they're concerned that they can't even pass their budget, Mr. Speaker. But they set the timetable, Mr. Speaker. They have the majority. They get to set the timetable. They get to set the agenda. And, Mr. Speaker, within the rules that exist, without having to change the rules, they could have significantly increased the number of hours the members of this Assembly would have to speak to issues.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out some of the obvious things that occurred here, Mr. Speaker. We didn't start the Legislative Assembly until early in December, Mr. Speaker, and we sat for a mere eight days. Mr. Speaker, we could have sat longer in December or we could have started earlier because the fall session is supposed to be 25 days in length, Mr. Speaker. But we sat a mere eight days. And in those eight days, Mr. Speaker, they brought forward supplementary estimates. They brought forward six Bills that they specified. They're specified Bills, Mr. Speaker. But they didn't, they didn't give any additional time to speak to those Bills, Mr. Speaker.

They didn't sit nights during the fall session. They shortened each day to the shortest possible time. And in many days we in fact shut the House down prior, prior to the hour that closure would have to occur, Mr. Speaker. In fact every Monday,

Tuesday we did. So four of the eight days we sat, we shut the House down hours before we had to. Why? Because the government wanted to. Mr. Speaker, they didn't want to work. So, Mr. Speaker, we lost three and a half hours debate time every Monday. We lost three and a half hours debate time every Tuesday. Mr. Speaker, that is seven hours a week. That's not to mention the days we shut down at 4:30 because they didn't have enough work on the agenda to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, we shut down and we didn't use — even the eight days we held session in the fall — we didn't use a total of 14 hours of debate time. Mr. Speaker, that 14 hours becomes very, very significant because for each specified Bill, you need 20 hours of debate. Well, Mr. Speaker, they didn't schedule 14 hours of debate time in the fall session — 14 hours of debate time which they control. Mr. Speaker, they didn't utilize that time.

Not to mention, Mr. Speaker, not to mention at all, Mr. Speaker, that we sat only eight days when we're supposed to sit 25 days, Mr. Speaker. Now, in all fairness — and I will be fair about this issue — we had an election last fall. But, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't mean, that does not mean that we couldn't have sat an additional four days prior to Christmas or started an additional four days earlier, adding an additional eight days to last fall. They set the agenda. They decide that, Mr. Speaker, but they didn't choose to sit. And, Mr. Speaker, that would've given enough time to pass Bills.

Mr. Speaker, let's go to this spring. We had a calendar sent out to us, and we were all told we were going to start on March 3. So we were all ready to start the Assembly on March 3. But lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, we didn't start till March 10. And why didn't we sit the week of March 3, Mr. Speaker? Well we don't know, in opposition, because we don't control the agenda. We weren't told. We simply got told, we're not starting till the 10th. Now why is that, Mr. Speaker? That denied us, that denied us, as members of the opposition, four days of this legislative sitting. And, Mr. Speaker, that denied us, that denied the members of this legislature, it denied us more than 25 hours of debate time, Mr. Speaker. Their failure to start the legislature when they should have and when we had agreed to and what the calendar said should be denied members of this legislature more than 25 hours of debate time.

Mr. Speaker, we were willing, we were willing to work. Mr. Speaker, the members of the government weren't. We were willing to work but we were denied that. And now we have a government who cannot get their agenda through because they didn't follow the rules — the rules that were there. They now want to change the rules unilaterally to push through an agenda. An agenda, Mr. Speaker, that, if it wasn't passed this spring, would only carry on to the fall and give the opposition — give the members on this side of the House — more time to consult with the public, more time to deal with the issues that are before us. Mr. Speaker, let's not kid anybody. These Bills would in fact pass next fall, and, Mr. Speaker, the world would not change.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to for just a minute review the six Bills, the six specified Bills, and talk about what they are. And, Mr. Speaker, what is the panic? Why are the members opposite so shocked that they need to push a panic button, change the rules

to get this legislation through? Well I'm going to tell the people of Saskatchewan what this legislation is so that they know and understand what these six Bills are, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 1 is An Act respecting Saskatchewan's Growth and Financial Security and repealing certain Acts. Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation does exactly, exactly what the previous piece of legislation did, Mr. Speaker; it puts in place a fund that is identical to the fund that was in place before. But, Mr. Speaker, they campaigned on that they were going to do things differently, so they gave it a different name, Mr. Speaker. They gave the Bill a different name, Mr. Speaker.

They could do exactly what they want to do with the old Act, Mr. Speaker. They could call it the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and they could continue the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in place. And if they didn't change this till next year, the whole world isn't going to fall upside down.

But, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to do that. Mr. Speaker, they decide they were going to pass a Bill with a new name. And they're going to pass a Bill with a new name because, Mr. Speaker, they decide to do something that wasn't allowed to be done previously. They took the financial benefit from the sale of an asset and put it in their General Revenue Fund.

But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if they had to, they could find a way around this for one session and, Mr. Speaker, these Bills could pass in October of this year. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? All they'd have to do is make it retroactive. So if this Bill didn't pass until October of this year, Mr. Speaker, it would make no difference because it would still be passed in this budgetary year, Mr. Speaker.

So, Bill No. 1, An Act respecting Saskatchewan's Growth and Financial Security and repealing certain Acts, Mr. Speaker, if this didn't pass till the fall, it isn't a panic. The world doesn't fall apart. Saskatchewan's finances don't come apart. The government can continue to act and undertake their budgetary promises. Mr. Speaker, it wouldn't make any difference at all. It wouldn't make any difference at all to the people of Saskatchewan. It wouldn't make any difference at all in the members' ability to carry out their function and role of government. It would not make a difference. So that's Bill No. 1 that they're making a big panic about.

I want to now go to Bill No. 2, An Act respecting Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, putting in place their new entity, Enterprise Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, again if this Bill didn't pass this spring, the world isn't going to fall apart. The walls aren't going to crumble on the Assembly. The government's not going to fall, Mr. Speaker. They could pass this legislation in the fall and make it retroactive if they chose, if they didn't have enough time to do it, and the world would continue on.

The only thing that this Act might do, that this Act might have some concern for members opposite, is this Act gives the ability for members sitting on Enterprise Saskatchewan, the board, to get remunerated whether or not, whether or not they're getting remuneration from the Legislative Assembly. For the first time it allows double-dipping. Double-dipping — one of my favourite terms, Mr. Speaker — one of the things that should never happen. But if that's their biggest concern, Mr. Speaker,

sad.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in Bill No. 2, An Act respecting Enterprise Saskatchewan, that has to be passed this spring in order for this government to operate or in fact for this government to operate Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So why the panic? Why is there such a great panic, Mr. Speaker?

And Bill No. 3 is my favourite, Mr. Speaker. It's An Act to repeal The Potash Development Act, a piece of legislation that's never been used, a piece of legislation that's been on the Bills for more than 30 years. Mr. Speaker, a piece of legislation that's been there for 30 years — never been used — so what is the rush to repeal this Bill? Mr. Speaker, it's meaningless. It means nothing. It's never been used. If it sat there for another six or eight months, is this a panic to the people of Saskatchewan? Is it problematic to the operations of government? Does it mean anything to the average citizen in Saskatchewan? The answer is no.

So, Mr. Speaker, why the panic? Why are the members opposite, why are the members opposite in such a panic, in such a panic to pass legislation? If it didn't pass, it would make little — and in this case — absolutely no, no impact on the people of Saskatchewan, the province, its operation, or its future.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go to Bill No. 4. Bill No. 4 puts in fixed election dates. It's The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2007. Mr. Speaker, this Bill sets November 7, 2011 as the next provincial election date. Mr. Speaker, that's only three and a half years away. So why does this Bill have to be passed now? Why does this Bill have to be passed this session, Mr. Speaker, when in fact the impact of this Bill is three and a half years away? Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat — this Bill has its implications three and a half years from now. It has no impact today, this year. It has zero impact for three and one half years, but this is the panic? Mr. Speaker, this very much looks like a government that wants to use its majority to bully, to bully, Mr. Speaker, the opposition and the people of the province.

[15:00]

I want to go back to, Mr. Speaker, to make reference again to what is contained in the book "The Role of the Legislature" in Saskatchewan. It talks about when we previously had a government who did that. We had that type of government in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. They used its majority to abuse its rights and abuse the rights of members of this legislature and abuse the rights of the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 4 has its impact on November 7, 2011 — three and a half or more years from now. And this is their panic. This is what the Opposition House Leader's worried about — not being able to get through this year. Mr. Speaker, not only is that shameful; it's abusive. And, Mr. Speaker, it's taking away the democratic rights of all members of this Assembly by unilaterally changing the rules, by unilaterally changing the rules in a shameful manner for a piece of legislation that has its impact three and a half years from now. The members opposite, the members opposite need to shake their heads, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Saskatchewan are not going to see the impact of this Bill for three and a half years. So if this Bill didn't get passed this year, it didn't get passed in the fall, it didn't pass in the spring session, there's zero impact on the people of Saskatchewan — zero impact, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, let's not kid ourselves. These Bills would carry on to the fall and they would pass. So why the abusive move forward with a unilateral change of the rules?

Mr. Speaker, now I want to deal with Bill No. 5. Bill No. 5 is An Act respecting Essential Public Services. Mr. Speaker, again, this piece of legislation, prior to the election, members opposite said it wasn't required, wasn't needed. They said it wasn't needed, Mr. Speaker. So why the panic now? We had the Health minister prior to the election, the hon. member from Indian Head-Milestone, saying we didn't need this, when he was in opposition. We had the now Premier, the member from Swift Current, saying we didn't need this. It wasn't in the works prior to an election.

And what do we see immediately after the election? We see poof, Mr. Speaker — poof we have a Bill all of a sudden that they've been working on, they say, for months, but they said they didn't need it when they were in opposition and before the election, because they didn't want to mention it to the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we've operated in this province without this piece of legislation for 100-plus years now. Mr. Speaker, if this piece of legislation didn't get passed till the fall, is the sky going to fall? Are the walls in this building going to crumble? Is the province going to fall apart? Is business and commerce going to stop? No. No, none of those things would occur, and the Bill would pass in the fall after adequate debate as it normally would. So what's the panic?

Mr. Speaker, the biggest problem is these members want to abuse their power. They want to show the world, including the opposition, they're the boss and we'll do it our way regardless how you like it. Mr. Speaker, that's a bully mentality. That's a schoolyard bully mentality — things that we should all strive against. We shouldn't want to abuse our power or take advantage, Mr. Speaker, of others.

Mr. Speaker, we all committed to the rules that are in place today. We all agreed to the rules. We jointly committed to these rules. We jointly understood what the impacts of these rules would be. Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing today is, quite frankly, totally and completely unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the government in power wants the opposition and the people of Saskatchewan to pay for their incompetence, their inability to manage the time, their inability to pass through legislation and budget within the time frames. Mr. Speaker, it's bad management on their part. And, Mr. Speaker, if these Bills didn't pass this session and they're carried on to the fall, there'd be absolutely nothing, nothing that would fall apart. The wheels wouldn't fall off the train. The Assembly would continue. The province would continue on. The economy would continue to flourish. The world would be the same.

Mr. Speaker, the final Bill, a specified Bill, is An Act to amend The Trade Union Act. Again, Mr. Speaker, the current

legislation's been in place for many years. The world won't crumble. The sky won't fall. This legislation will continue to be if this didn't pass till the fall.

Mr. Speaker, what is the panic? This isn't about the legislation at all, Mr. Speaker. This is about the abuse of power that a majority government has, and they're going to teach the opposition, we're the boss. And when you have that type of mentality, Mr. Speaker, that goes right back to what was said about the then Grant Devine Conservative government in the 1980s in the book "The Role of the Legislature," in its conclusion, that we had a government in the 1980s that abused their majority power. They abused that majority power against the interest of both the opposition and the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, that's shameful.

Mr. Speaker, over the next 12 or 14 hours I'm going to have the opportunity to talk about this legislation in detail but also, Mr. Speaker, about the process.

The government's attempt to unilaterally change the rules of the legislature is simply an attempt to cover up their own ineptitude, their own inability, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, their own incompetence.

Mr. Speaker, we all knew the rules. We all understood what would happen. We all understand that legislation can be carried on to the next session.

Mr. Speaker, as I've outlined already, the Bills that are the priority Bills of the government, if they weren't passed this spring, Mr. Speaker, it wouldn't be the end of the world. But, Mr. Speaker, with the time remaining they can pass over half of these Bills easily. They just simply have to manage the House. They have to bring these Bills forward so if there are one or two of these Bills that they want to actually pass, they can pass them.

But, Mr. Speaker, they have to know how to manage the House. They have to know how to control their own destiny. And, Mr. Speaker, if they can't manage that, that isn't the opposition's fault. It isn't the people of Saskatchewan's fault. It's their own incompetence, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they should learn that they have to manage the House to the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan, not to their own benefit.

Mr. Speaker, that is allowing the people of Saskatchewan the opportunity to be heard as well. We've asked for some of these Bills to go to public hearings and they won't do that. We've asked for greater consultation of the public on some Bills. The government doesn't want to do that.

These are Bills they said before the election they didn't need and after the election, they just produced the Bills. Mr. Speaker, they owe that to the people of Saskatchewan — to have those public hearings. They owe it to the opposition to have those public hearings.

Mr. Speaker, it's not the role of the opposition to allow the government to ram through something that hasn't been properly debated, hasn't had time for public consultations, hasn't been vetted in the population of Saskatchewan appropriately. Mr. Speaker, it's our job to see that those things are done.

And those rules that are there, Mr. Speaker, the rules that are in place are there to protect the rights of both the minority and the majority interest. In this case we have a majority interest who wants to pass their agenda. Mr. Speaker, the laws of our country, our very constitution, and the rules of our Assembly are there to balance both the rules of majority and the rules of the minority.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite were in opposition, they wanted these rules. They understood that there were implications to putting those rules in place and so did we when we were the government, Mr. Speaker. We understood that we had to be able to manage within those rules to pass an agenda and we knew that we had to — and we did — make deals with the now government when they were in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, they won't make any deals. It's their way or the highway. Mr. Speaker, that reflects an attitude of a little schoolyard bully. Mr. Speaker, if you're not willing to compromise, not willing to work with the opposition, we're going to do it our way.

And if we can't do it our way within the rules, Mr. Speaker, we're going to do it our way by changing the rules unilaterally. Mr. Speaker, that's shameful. Mr. Speaker, to unilaterally change the rules is shameful, particularly when you agreed to the rules, particularly when you understood the rules, and particularly, Mr. Speaker, when if these rules were not put in place, the change didn't occur and in fact this legislation carried over into the fall, there'd be absolutely no impact, no impact from what the status is today and, Mr. Speaker, it would still pass in the fall.

The sky wouldn't fall; the walls of this Assembly wouldn't crumble, Mr. Speaker; the economy wouldn't fail; things would continue on. There would be no, no dramatic impact on the public of Saskatchewan. There'd be no dramatic impact on the government, Mr. Speaker. They could continue on with their budget. They could continue on with their operations and, Mr. Speaker, it wouldn't make no difference.

But having said that, Mr. Speaker, they have brought forward six priority Bills. With very little or no work, they could pass three of these Bills if they just understood how to manage the House properly. And, Mr. Speaker, of these Bills, one doesn't take effect for three and a half years — fixed election dates. The next election, based on their own legislation, is November 7, 2011, more than three and a half years from now.

Mr. Speaker, the potash repeal Act put in place in the 1970s, never, never utilized. If that piece of legislation stayed in place to the fall . . . Nobody even knows it exists any more except for a couple of members opposite that want to make a point. Mr. Speaker, it has zero impact on the industry, zero impact on the province, and even less impact on the average person in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, why, why do they have to jam this Bill through, change the rules of the House to do so, and show that they're just . . . They're showing a bullying mentality, Mr. Speaker. To what end? To what end, Mr. Speaker?

And, Mr. Speaker, there isn't a single piece of legislation here

in these six priority Bills of theirs that if it didn't get passed to the fall it would make significant difference in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that's if they didn't get passed. But, Mr. Speaker, they haven't even made an attempt to pass these pieces of legislation yet. Some of them have not been called for the first time to be spoke on by members of this House. Some of them have not yet been called for the members of this House to speak for the very first time.

And it is shameful when the government hasn't even brought forward this legislation to allow members of government to speak for the first time on some of it, for the very first time on some of it, Mr. Speaker. Had to go in to change the rules. They're going to change the rules unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, to try to ram legislation through.

Mr. Speaker, not only is that contrary to the principles of democracy, not only is it contrary to the way this House has operated for many, many years, Mr. Speaker, it's contrary for the principles of good leadership. Mr. Speaker, they haven't even given us the chance to speak to some of these Bills yet for the first time. They have to go in to change the rules.

They don't know whether or not we're going to speak to these Bills for 20 hours or not. They don't know any of that, Mr. Speaker. When the opposition asked them for a few minor things in order to guarantee that their whole agenda would pass, they said, forget it; we're not going to deal with you. We got the majority. We're in power. We'll ram it through even if we have to change the rules.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I've been elected in this Assembly now for just about nine years and I know, as a member of the government for all the majority of that time, Mr. Speaker, that every year we had to make a deal with the opposition. Every year we had to compromise with the opposition in order to get our agenda through. We had to compromise with the opposition to get our agenda through because we weren't going to bully and use our majority mandate to do it.

Mr. Speaker, we co-operated with the opposition. When we asked the government for some co-operation to get their agenda through, what did they say? No. We have the majority. It'll be our way or the highway. So as a result they're unilaterally changing the rules, Mr. Speaker.

We could've made an arrangement that would've got their entire agenda through, Mr. Speaker. But no, they're not interested in making any type of deal. They're using bully tactics as they did during the 1980s as demonstrated in the book "The Role of the Legislature" and its conclusion to unilaterally pass their legislation through. Mr. Speaker, we don't have to deal with the opposition. You lost the election, we keep hearing. They say, you lost the election and you don't know you lost the election.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know, we know we lost the election. Mr. Speaker, we know we lost the election. We know we're Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. But we also know very, very solidly, Mr. Speaker, what the role of the legislature is, what

our role of members in opposition are, and what the role of the government is. And, Mr. Speaker, when you have a government, when you have a government that will not compromise, will not deal with the opposition to pass its agenda, then you know, Mr. Speaker, you've got what we're seeing today . . . [inaudible] . . . unilaterally change the rules to push through their agenda, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'll going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, when we were in government, every year made a deal with the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, it meant sometimes that some of the legislation we wanted passed in a certain year didn't pass until the next year, Mr. Speaker, to allow them to have further consultations, to have Bills taken out for public consultations, Mr. Speaker. That's because we were a government that believes in the democratic principles and what this Legislative Assembly is about.

[15:15]

We understood that the opposition had a role to play, and we understood that the opposition had a right to encourage and demand that certain pieces of legislation had greater scrutiny. Mr. Speaker, not only did we know and understand that, Mr. Speaker, we adhered to it. We allowed the opposition its right to speak to Bills. We allowed the opposition to force Bills to go out to public consultations, Mr. Speaker.

And we understood, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly works when all members of this House want to work in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan, when all members of the House want to work in the best interests of this Assembly and not simply in the best interests of the majority. Mr. Speaker, we understood the need to balance the minority and majority rights. We understood the need to ensure that the minority had the opportunity to ensure that the consultations were done prior to the majority exercising their right to in fact pass legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point something out, and I think it's something very important to the people of Saskatchewan and something very important to the members opposite as well. We exercised that discretion and that ability to manage the House and to pass our agenda with a one-person majority, Mr. Speaker — a one-person majority, a very slim majority. And we operated, Mr. Speaker, the Assembly with a one-seat majority the majority of eight years. In fact at some points we had equal numbers because we had a member off experiencing health difficulties and seeking treatment for a very serious illness.

But in those very difficult situations, Mr. Speaker, with a one-vote majority, we managed this House, and we never once tried to abuse our majority interests. We worked with the opposition to ensure that they had a right to have public consultations when they needed them, that they had a right to take the Bills to the public, to the people of Saskatchewan so that they could be heard. And, Mr. Speaker, that's fundamentally important.

Mr. Speaker, with a one-vote majority, with a one-vote majority we worked with the opposition. We never, never attempted to abuse our power, and, Mr. Speaker, we worked with them to ensure that they exercised the democratic principles that they

needed to exercise. And we didn't force through an agenda.

Mr. Speaker, the current government has a 19-vote majority. When a government with a 19-vote majority cannot pass their agenda without unilaterally changing the rules, that's abuse of power, Mr. Speaker. That's an abuse of our democratic rights as members of this Assembly. And, Mr. Speaker, the government should be ashamed of themselves for using their majority to change the rules unilaterally.

Mr. Speaker, the members on this side have a right and a responsibility to work within the rules, to work within the rules as we've all accepted and that we've all agreed to, Mr. Speaker. I want to repeat again, these rules that we all accepted, we all agreed to and, Mr. Speaker, they helped design. In fact when these rules were passed, they were in opposition, and they very much wanted the limitations that are in the rules today.

Mr. Speaker, we, we — when we were in government — lived with those rules. We accepted those rules, and we compromised with the opposition in order to pass our agenda. Mr. Speaker, today we have a government who not only will not compromise with the opposition; they've decided that they will unilaterally change the rules to pass their agenda. And, Mr. Speaker, that is simply, simply an abuse of power. Mr. Speaker, that type of abuse of power does not bode well for the province of Saskatchewan and does not bode well for the citizens of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, it certainly doesn't bode well for the future of the government.

Mr. Speaker, when a government will abuse its majority to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker, then democracy as it's envisioned in this province and living within the rules as is envisioned, Mr. Speaker, is gone. So there is no minority rights any more. The majority has abused those rights by changing them.

Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge that the rules have changed over the last number of years to extend the hours from time to time, but it was done by agreement. It was done through negotiations. It was done by agreement to move the agenda of the government forward. And yes, Mr. Speaker, it included compromise by the government each time. Mr. Speaker, it included Bills not going through that the government would have liked to pass in that session and required those Bills to be moved to the next session. For, Mr. Speaker, a government that believes in the rules, and believes in the rule of law, believes in democratic principles, Mr. Speaker, will in fact do that. If you believe in the principles of democracy and you believe in working with all members of the Assembly in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, then you will not abuse your majority interest, Mr. Speaker. You will simply, you will simply, Mr. Speaker, find a mechanism to work with the opposition to pass your agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to again just comment on . . . that if these six Bills, these priority Bills that the government's brought forward, if they didn't pass this session — all of them — what would the harm be to the people of Saskatchewan? And that's who we are all here, Mr. Speaker, to represent. Both on government and in opposition, we are here to represent the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go through these Bills one more time so that any of the people who have just turned to the legislative channel, who may not understand, Mr. Speaker, who may not understand what we're talking about, have the opportunity to understand the importance of what we're talking about because what is happening today with this proposed unilateral change of the rules, Mr. Speaker, is shameful. It's shameful for the government to propose it. And, Mr. Speaker, it takes away the rights of the minority opposition, Mr. Speaker, and it takes away the rights of the people of Saskatchewan.

And it takes away our rights because, Mr. Speaker, the principles of democracy and the agreement of the rules that are in place, Mr. Speaker, is being broken without agreement, Mr. Speaker. It's not being changed by agreement so that things can move forward as we did many times when we were in government. It's being done unilaterally, so the government can ram through its agenda of passing some Bills that, Mr. Speaker, if they didn't pass until the fall would make no difference, no difference to the province of Saskatchewan or to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And let me indicate why. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 1 is An Act respecting Saskatchewan's Growth and Financial Security and repealing certain Acts. Well, Mr. Speaker, today, today in Saskatchewan there is a piece of legislation that creates what's called a fiscal stability fund. Mr. Speaker, that fiscal stability fund, fiscal stabilization Act, as it was called, does the exact same thing this piece of legislation does, Mr. Speaker, with one exception — with one minor exception, Mr. Speaker. And if this piece of legislation did not pass till fall, Mr. Speaker, would the sky fall? Would commerce in the province of Saskatchewan crumble? Would businesses fall apart? Would investment be deterred? No, Mr. Speaker, none of those things would occur.

Mr. Speaker, the province could continue to operate as it's currently operating. Nothing would change, Mr. Speaker, if this passed in the fall. The world wouldn't fall apart, Mr. Speaker. The sky wouldn't fall, and things would continue on as they are. The economy would continue to hum along. We'd continue to grow as a province. Nothing would change.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 2, An Act respecting Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, if this piece of legislation, if this piece of legislation didn't pass, Mr. Speaker, until the fall, what would happen, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the members opposite, with just a little management, could pass at least three if not four of these Bills. And, Mr. Speaker, if they were prepared to work with the opposition, if they were prepared to work with us and negotiate with us and seek some compromise, Mr. Speaker, the majority of their — the majority — the majority of their agenda would pass, Mr. Speaker. And in the fall if we couldn't reach a compromise that met everybody's, they simply would then have the number of hours in and they would pass the one or two pieces of legislation that may not pass this spring if, in fact, they couldn't reach some arrangement with the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

And Bill No. 3 — this is my favourite. I want to talk to the people of Saskatchewan about Bill No. 3. Bill No. 3 is an Act to repeal the potash Act of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Now that

piece of legislation went in place in the 1930s, Mr. Speaker. It's never been used.

An Hon. Member: — In the '70s.

Mr. Yates: — Pardon me, in the 1970s. It's never been used, Mr. Speaker. It's been in place for 40-some years, 48, or pardon me, 38 years, Mr. Speaker, 37 years, Mr. Speaker.

And what's it done? What is the problem with that piece of legislation sitting on the Bills until the fall, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing. It has zero impact on the people of Saskatchewan, zero impact on the commerce of Saskatchewan, zero impact on the investment community in Saskatchewan, zero impact on the social policies, zero impact on anything, Mr. Speaker.

So if that piece of legislation didn't pass this spring, if that piece of legislation didn't pass this spring and was carried on to the fall before it passed, what would happen, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, it's shameful. It's shameful that we would have a government that would try to move and abuse a unilateral power of majority to pass legislation that has no impact on the people of Saskatchewan. Because we all as legislators and members of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, have a responsibility to act in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan — not to act in our own self-interest, not to use our majority power to abuse the interests of the opposition or the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We have a responsibility to act in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, how is, how is forcing a Bill that would have zero impact on anybody in this province, have zero impact on anybody in this province, by unilaterally changing the rules, in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, it's not in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not in the interest of the government either because when a government uses its unilateral power of majority to abuse the interest of minority, Mr. Speaker, that's simple abuse. And, Mr. Speaker, in any form, that's not acceptable in our society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about Bill No. 4 now. Bill No. 4 is the Bill that in fact would bring into place fixed election dates. Mr. Speaker, it's an An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007. And, Mr. Speaker, to amend this Bill, which would have zero impact — and I want to stress that, Mr. Speaker — zero impact on the people of this province for over three and a half years, to insist that we have to change the rules in order to pass this piece of legislation this spring, to pass this this spring, Mr. Speaker, is about the ego of the new government.

It's about their desire to show the opposition that we are in charge, that we will do anything to show you we are in charge. We'll tromp on your democratic rights, and we will in fact abuse those rights. And we will change if necessary, unilaterally, the rules of this Assembly to pass a piece of legislation this spring that has no impact for three and one-half years. Mr. Speaker, did the people of Saskatchewan elect a government to do that? Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. They

didn't elect a government to abuse the minority interests. And, Mr. Speaker, this goes to speak to the incompetence of this government. This government cannot pass their own agenda because they failed, Mr. Speaker, they failed to plan properly.

Mr. Speaker, Bills 5 and 6 — I'm going to deal with them each individually. But Bill 5 is An Act respecting Essential Public Services in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, what in essence this Bill does is restricts the ability of a trade union to carry out strike action without providing essential services, Mr. Speaker. But we have been able to survive in this province without this legislation for decades. Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to talk about the merits of the legislation because, Mr. Speaker, that's not what's at issue here. If this Bill did not pass until the fall, if this Bill went out for further public consultations which we've been asking for, Mr. Speaker, the government's still going to be able to pass this Bill. We're not going to be able to . . .

The government clearly has the majority. They have the ability to pass this legislation. Mr. Speaker, all the opposition has asked for is this Bill to go out to public consultations, public hearings, to use our committee process as we envisioned it, to send pieces of legislation to public hearings. Mr. Speaker, we — when we were in government — allowed the opposition to send Bills to public hearings several times. We worked with the opposition when we were in government, and we compromised. We compromised in the interest of the public. We compromised in the interest of minority rights. We compromised in the interest of having a legislature that worked; a legislature that was working for the people of Saskatchewan, not a legislature that used or abused its majority.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, we simply would like the minister and the government to allow these two Bills to go out to public consultations, public hearings by the committee; a committee that they arguably still have by far the majority, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we want them to sit with us and hear the concerns of both business and labour in the province and other interest groups, Mr. Speaker, and then look at this legislation and see if there are things that could be done better after we've had public consultations. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have not ever, ever passed a piece of legislation the same as prior to it went out to public consultations because we all learned many things during the public consultation process. And, Mr. Speaker, we amended legislation to reflect what we learned during those public consultations.

And that's a good process, Mr. Speaker. That's about using our democratic processes to bring forward the best possible legislation we can that reflects the interests of the population of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the gunshot and stab wound Bill that we passed just a year ago was a good example of that, Mr. Speaker. We went out with a particular piece of legislation to public hearings, an all-party committee — both members of the government and members of the opposition. We heard representations from police departments, from the police unions across the province, Mr. Speaker, and we made changes. We made changes to reflect what we heard, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, not everybody got everything they wanted out of those public hearings. And, Mr. Speaker, you hear opposing, you hear opposing opinions. You hear opposing views when you're going out for public hearings. Then we as members of the legislature have to sit down and debate those internally in the committee and then determine what changes may be necessary to be made to make the legislation even better. And it's in our interest, Mr. Speaker. It's in our interest to bring forward the absolute best possible legislation we can at any time.

So when the opposition asks for a couple of Bills out of 25 Bills to go to public hearings, Mr. Speaker, which may actually delay the implementation by just a few months, what is wrong with having those public hearings to get the best possible piece of legislation we can in the interests of all the people of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, that's what we're asking for. Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite would agree to send Bills 5 and 6 out to public hearings, Mr. Speaker, that goes a long way, that goes a very, very long way to reinstalling the principles and the faith that we had, as a legislature, in our processes, Mr. Speaker. Rather than take the opportunity to work with the opposition and put these Bills out to public consultation, which will only delay it a matter of a few months, Mr. Speaker, would delay it just a matter of a few months . . . Over the summer we could have public hearings on these Bills, public consultations, and bring the legislation forward in the fall in its final form.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's no co-operation from the government. They've decided they're unilaterally going to push this legislation through right now, right now without any public consultation, without public hearings, Mr. Speaker, without what is a very simple process that is contemplated in our legislative process, Mr. Speaker. It's not that it's not contemplated to happen.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we were in government, we agreed with the opposition and allowed this to happen many times. But this particular government, Mr. Speaker, they want to show that they're in charge, Mr. Speaker. They want to show that they have the unilateral ability to do whatever they want to do, Mr. Speaker, and they're just going to ram this legislation through.

Mr. Speaker, all we ask, on Bills 5 and then again on Bill 6, Mr. Speaker, that they send these Bills out for public consultations. In the interests of the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to have public hearings on these two Bills. Mr. Speaker, they would then would return to the Assembly in the fall, Mr. Speaker. There may be or may not be, may or may not be changes made to the Bills based on what we hear. And of course, Mr. Speaker, no changes have to be made unless they agreed. And I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker, because they have the majority in the committee too. So the minister doesn't have to worry about the opposition being able to change his Bill unless he agrees to change it as well because, Mr. Speaker, the minister and the government members on the committee still hold the majority. So it isn't like we can take these Bills out to public consultations and change the intent or change the context of the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we need to work, the opposition needs to work,

the opposition needs to work with the government, Mr. Speaker. And the government is at no risk; the government has absolutely no risk of any changes being made that they don't agree to. So the minister still has to agree to the changes, Mr. Speaker. It's not like the committee can unilaterally make the changes.

But we believe, Mr. Speaker, very strongly, that we put the processes we put in place for a reason. So we as the opposition are asking the minister to send Bill No. 5 out for public consultation, for public hearings through the committee process, and then listen to what we hear, and to read the submissions that would come from that public hearing process.

But, Mr. Speaker, he's at no — in case he doesn't understand the rules; he's new to the Assembly — he's at no risk whatsoever of a change being made unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, at zero risk of a change being made unilaterally because, Mr. Speaker, the minister's own members control the majority on the committee. Mr. Speaker, they control the majority on the committee so the minister's legislation isn't at risk.

Changes would only be made if the members from the government and the members from the opposition agreed that there is a better way to move forward with a particular clause in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. So the minister would have to agree as well, because of course it's his legislation. It cannot be changed, Mr. Speaker, without his agreement.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's a simple request. Would the world fall apart if we had public hearings on Bill No. 5? Would it? The answer is no. No, Mr. Speaker, the world wouldn't fall apart. This legislation amends a process that's been in place for decades, Mr. Speaker, but an extra few months is not going to make a significant difference.

I go back to point out to the members of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that prior to the election the Health minister — who was then the member from Indian Head-Milestone; still is the member from Indian Head-Milestone — but before the election when he was the Health critic, he said they didn't need this legislation. He didn't need this legislation and they weren't contemplating this legislation, Mr. Speaker. And I think to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, arguably the provisions of the health care of our loved ones, our citizens, it's the most important issue a government has. And I agree with that fully, Mr. Speaker, but the critic for the Department of Health in opposition said they didn't need this legislation.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if this legislation did not pass for an extra three or four months, did not pass for an extra three or four months while we held public hearings, is the world going to fall apart? The answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to point out that one of the things they say regularly is they have to implement their platform. They have to keep their commitments to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Well I want to point out to both members of the government who are trying to ram this piece of legislation through without public hearings, and to the people of Saskatchewan, this was not in their platform. This was not a promise to the people of Saskatchewan. This isn't something they have, should feel an obligation to have to do before this

fall, something that they have to ram through without public hearings. And, Mr. Speaker, all we're asking the minister is to work with us, to take Bill No. 5 out for public hearings, through a process in which he still controls the majority but a process where we all get the opportunity to listen to representations from both government and from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it's like the status of the artist, a piece of legislation that we very much wanted to pass which was very, very important to us when we were in government; very, very important to the artist community in Saskatchewan. But because the opposition then — members who are now in government — wanted public hearings on that piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, we allowed public hearings because we believe in the democratic process. We agree and we support the right, the right of the minority to be heard in public hearings as well, Mr. Speaker. And as a result that piece of legislation didn't pass and there are many out there in the arts community today that are unhappy with that, that that legislation didn't pass. But, Mr. Speaker, the democratic process was upheld. And, Mr. Speaker, that Bill went out for public hearings and the people of Saskatchewan had an opportunity, an opportunity to have their say.

Mr. Speaker, that's all that the opposition is asking for in Bill No. 5. Bill No. 5 is not even an electoral commitment by the government. It wasn't even in their platform, Mr. Speaker. In fact prior to them forming government, they never even spoke of this being a reality. They said in fact, both the now Premier when he was leader of the opposition and the Minister of Health, the minister arguably most responsible for the protection and safety of the Saskatchewan people, said it wasn't necessary. And, Mr. Speaker, members opposite are saying it's in their platform. If they could show me where essential service legislation is in their platform, Mr. Speaker, I would very much like to hear it.

Mr. Speaker, and finally I'm going to talk again about Bill No. 6. Bill No. 6 is An Act to amend The Trade Union Act. And I'm going to tell you that the members opposite in their time in opposition made it very clear that they would in fact amend this piece of legislation. They made it clear that in fact when they formed government, The Trade Union Act would in fact be a high priority for them to amend.

Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues is pointing out that in fact in our traditions going back hundreds of years, speakers were in fact, speakers were in fact beheaded for not living up to the interests of parliament, for not living up to the interests of the monarch. Well, Mr. Speaker, that goes back hundreds of years when we were in a very, very different period of time, when the rules of debate and the rules of parliamentarians were much, much different, when in fact many of them may have actually carried swords into the Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

So today we're much more peaceful. Our battles are with words and not with weapons and our battles are about the rights of citizens of the province, not about our own self-interest — or should be, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, in all honesty, the members from the then opposition, now the members of government, did indicate that if they formed the government they would amend The Trade

Union Act, Bill No. 6. Now, Mr. Speaker, what if this piece of legislation went out to public hearings and didn't pass till the fall? Would the world fall apart? Would business crumble in Saskatchewan? Would the sky fall? Mr. Speaker, none of those things would occur. Mr. Speaker, none of those things would occur.

So, Mr. Speaker, why will the government, why will the minister not, in order to come to a peaceful resolution without having to unilaterally change the rules, simply agree to send Bills 5 and 6 out to public hearings? Well I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. Because, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, Mr. Speaker, they say they already held public hearings.

They didn't hear public hearings. They may have consulted a few people. They may have given the opportunity for some people to send in representation, Mr. Speaker. But they did not hold public hearings where both the government and the opposition would hear from people at the same time and hear the same thing. Mr. Speaker, they're afraid to hold public hearings. They're afraid to allow the members of the opposition and the government to hear from the people of Saskatchewan at the same time.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, as I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, if we had public hearings we would not be able to as an opposition unilaterally change the Bills, Mr. Speaker. If we all heard, if we all heard — both members of the government and the opposition — the need for a change to the Bills, then we'd have to meet with the minister and try to persuade the minister to change the Bill, Mr. Speaker, try to get the minister's agreement that the Bill should be changed.

And, Mr. Speaker, if we could do that, as did happen several times when we were in government after public hearings, Mr. Speaker, then it's good legislation. It's good public policy and it's in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan.

The opposition cannot unilaterally change Bills. Mr. Speaker, we'll acknowledge they have the majority, Mr. Speaker. We simply would like to have public hearings. Mr. Speaker, public hearings which may delay the implementation of these Bills by a few months, Mr. Speaker, by a few short months. But it would allow both members of the government and the opposition to hear, Mr. Speaker, to hear from both members of the labour community, from members of the business community together, so then we can hear the concerns that the people of Saskatchewan have together.

[15:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out once again that when we were in government we afforded this opportunity many times, many times to members of the opposition. We didn't unilaterally force legislation through. And, Mr. Speaker, there were times when we actually didn't pass legislation that we would have liked to pass. Mr. Speaker, we didn't pass legislation because we afforded members of the opposition the right to have public hearings. Mr. Speaker, so we have today before us a motion, a Bill, a motion pardon me, that the government has brought forward to unilaterally change the rules.

I would like for a minute to go back to where I started this debate about a little over an hour ago to mention, Mr. Speaker, a quotation from a book that was written about the legislature in Saskatchewan. It was called “The Role of the Legislature,” Mr. Speaker. And I want to go to its conclusion because its conclusion is most profound, Mr. Speaker. Its conclusion very much speaks to what we are dealing with today. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with the particular paragraph in its conclusion — paragraph number two — and it talks about the erosion of the legislature in Saskatchewan in the 1980s. This book was written about the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, and the period in Saskatchewan between 1982 and 1991. And, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Broten: — To request leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of this legislature, I would like to introduce to you four very special people, Mr. Speaker. These individuals from left to right — perhaps they could give us a wave as I call their name — Arthur Abend, Eric Tufton, Mike Trevarthen, and Paul Stone.

Mr. Speaker, these guests are with us today from their home city of St. Paul in Minnesota. They are Americans, and they’ve come up to our province for a bit of work and a little bit of pleasure too with their visit to the legislature today, Mr. Speaker. The individuals in your gallery, they work with the John Deere corporation, Mr. Speaker, and they are with John Deere in Minnesota. And they have come up here for what’s called an AMS course, and that’s ag management solutions, Mr. Speaker.

And the topics that are covered in this course . . . it’s actually a fairly extensive day of training with a lot of time involved. And there’s people involved from all across the province and from the States attending this program. And with the ag management solutions, one area that they look at is the use of GPS [Global Positioning System] technology — global positioning satellites, Mr. Speaker. And this facilitates precision farming. It allows agricultural producers to do their farming in the most efficient manner possible, Mr. Speaker.

I had a chance to speak briefly with them in the hallway, and they thoroughly enjoyed the tour of the legislature. As always, the tour guides do a phenomenal job, Mr. Speaker, of introducing guests to the Legislative Building and giving them an idea and a snapshot of what it would entail with a regular day in the legislature, Mr. Speaker. And they enjoyed the history, they enjoyed the ambiance of this fine building, and they’re very thankful they were able to come here today for a visit to our legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming them to our legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to continue where I left off, and where I left off, Mr. Speaker, I was referring to and speaking about a book that has been written about the role of the legislature in Saskatchewan by Merrilee Rasmussen. She wrote the book talking about the years of our legislature during 1982 through 1991. Mr. Speaker, it says that:

The erosion of the legislature continues, albeit perhaps somewhat more slowly than at times in the past. The Devine Conservatives believed that they had a majority of the seats in the legislature so they could do whatever they wanted [Mr. Speaker].

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is what the reflection is of this particular author, Mr. Speaker, reflects upon the years from 1982 to 1991, Mr. Speaker, and all I have to say is history repeats itself. Mr. Speaker, we see today a government that has a majority in its first seating of the legislature, that rather than work with the opposition to pass its agenda, rather than show its competency and plan in order to put its agenda through, Mr. Speaker, has decided they will unilaterally change the rules. And, Mr. Speaker, all I can say about that is history does repeat itself.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to go on to just reference some remarks I made earlier today as well that talk about the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the Conservative government in the 1980s, it took them four years to get a demonstration against the government of more than 2,000 people. Mr. Speaker, they were the government for more than four years before they upset people enough to get a demonstration of more than 2,000 people against the government, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, what the Devine Conservative government of the 1980s took four years to do, the new Sask Party government was able to do in four months, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend there was a demonstration by the people of Saskatchewan in the city of Saskatoon of more than 2,000 people against the decisions and actions of this government, Mr. Speaker, because, Mr. Speaker, in that case they acted unilaterally without consultation of the community. They acted unilaterally without listening to the opposition, and they acted unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, in their own self-interests. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, the people of the community, the people of Saskatoon affected are upset, Mr. Speaker, and to show how upset they were, Mr. Speaker, they showed up in numbers. They showed up more than 2,000 people in the city of Saskatoon to tell this government that they need to listen to the people. They need to listen. They need to be part of the

community, that they cannot act unilaterally. They cannot act in their own interests, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to point out that in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, it took the Devine Conservative government a four full years before they faced a demonstration of that size. And, Mr. Speaker, this government faced a demonstration of that size in its first four months. Mr. Speaker, history repeats itself again, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not a good history to see the citizens of the province out demonstrating in such mass numbers against a government that was elected just four months ago.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to why we are in this particular situation, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party's unilateral decision to change the rules really has to deal with their own inability to manage the House, to manage this Assembly, and their desire to push through an agenda on their own terms without any willingness to work with the opposition. Their way or no way, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be their way or no way, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that is undemocratic, Mr. Speaker. That is unprincipled, Mr. Speaker, and that is abusive, Mr. Speaker. Clearly it is abusive, Mr. Speaker.

And it shows their own incompetence, their own inability to manage this Assembly, their own inability to play within the rules. Rules mind you, Mr. Speaker, rules that they agreed to. Rules that they not only agreed to, Mr. Speaker, but rules — rules, Mr. Speaker — rules that they asked for. Rules that they wanted, Mr. Speaker. Rules that they asked for, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were in opposition, wanted these rules, Mr. Speaker. And these rules balanced the rights of majority versus minority, Mr. Speaker. It put in place rules that in fact were in the best interest of the province of Saskatchewan, that we, when we were in government, agreed to. We agreed of the rights to certain amounts of deliberation on each piece of priority of legislation, Mr. Speaker. And we agreed to time frames for deliberation on the budget, Mr. Speaker. We did that to protect the interest of the minority, Mr. Speaker, which is a very important principle in law.

Mr. Speaker, a good government wants to protect the interests of the minority to ensure that the legislation that they pass and that the budget they pass is in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan because, Mr. Speaker, we're all elected by the people of Saskatchewan. And we have a responsibility to the people of this province to act in the best interest of those people.

Mr. Speaker, it is shameful. It is shameful that today we face the situation that the rules of this Assembly are going to be unilaterally changed, unilaterally changed in the interest of the majority versus the interest of the minority. Mr. Speaker, rather than work with the opposition to ensure that their legislation gets passed, they are pulling what is no more than the schoolyard-bully tactic, Mr. Speaker, and using their majority to abuse the minority.

Mr. Speaker, that's a well-known principle in law. It's a well-known principle in democratic institutions around the world, Mr. Speaker, that the majority have to balance the rights of the minority prior to using their majority. Well, Mr. Speaker,

in this particular case, in this particular case they have no interest whatsoever. They have absolutely no interest, Mr. Speaker, in protecting the rights of the people of the province of Saskatchewan or the minority rights of the members of this legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members opposite can be yelling from their seats. Mr. Speaker, they can be talking across the aisle. But, Mr. Speaker, the issue is clear and simple: do they believe in minority rights or don't they? And, Mr. Speaker, when the majority is going to abuse their rights to unilaterally change the rules they agreed to, Mr. Speaker, they don't believe in minority rights.

Mr. Speaker, so the members of the opposition and the public of Saskatchewan should pay for their incompetence, Mr. Speaker — their incompetence, their inability, Mr. Speaker, to balance their actions, Mr. Speaker, and the time required to pass their agenda, Mr. Speaker, with the hours available.

And let me go back and just point out to the people of Saskatchewan who may not have been here earlier that, Mr. Speaker, in the fall we sat only eight days. Mr. Speaker, we are supposed to sit 25 days. Mr. Speaker, we sat eight days instead of 25 days, Mr. Speaker, in the fall. And I'm going to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that we had an election in the last fall and that would cause some difficulty in perhaps sitting an entire 25 days. I will acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker, because I like to be fair and balanced in my approach, Mr. Speaker. And I like to be reasonable. I like to be reasonable in talking about the issues facing the people of Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not afraid to defend what I say publicly. I'm not afraid to defend the rights of the government perhaps to not sit a full 25 days. But, Mr. Speaker, we sat eight days. And, Mr. Speaker, those eight days, we didn't sit any Monday or Tuesday nights which denied members of the opposition, denied members of the opposition — because the government didn't have their agenda together — the opportunity of 14 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker, 14 hours of debate, which is two-thirds the time to pass one of their priority Bills, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, some of those days we didn't sit. We did not sit, Mr. Speaker. We did not sit, Mr. Speaker. We did not sit beyond the hours many nights.

So, Mr. Speaker, the members of the government, the members of the government could have, Mr. Speaker, the members of the government, if they knew they were going to have problems, Mr. Speaker, with time, could have made a deal with the opposition in order to sit those evenings on legislation. They could have. But did they approach us with any deal to sit evenings on those pieces of priority legislation of theirs, Mr. Speaker? They didn't. We didn't sit those evenings, Mr. Speaker, because they didn't want to work. And, Mr. Speaker, we sat only two weeks when we could have sat four. We could have started earlier or we could have stayed a week later, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, even more vile than that, even more undemocratic than that, Mr. Speaker, is this spring, we were supposed to start on March 3. In fact the calendar, a calendar was set out saying we start March 3. We were all told we would

start on March 3. And then we start on March 10. Were we consulted about delaying it, Mr. Speaker? No, we weren't. We were not consulted, Mr. Speaker. Members of the opposition were not consulted. So we lost, we lost 25 hours of debate time, Mr. Speaker, approximately 25 hours of debate time which would have been the passage of one of their priority Bills, if those Bills are so important that they would have to pass.

And, Mr. Speaker, even, even more irresponsible than that and incompetent than that, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that in the first two weeks that we sat this spring, Mr. Speaker, we didn't sit in the evenings, Mr. Speaker. We didn't use that time. We didn't sit Monday and Tuesday nights. So again we lost valuable time, valuable time that the government controls the agenda. They could've put those Bills up each day, Mr. Speaker, and they could've got 14 hours more of debate.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, so now we, the members of the opposition, and the people of Saskatchewan should accept a unilateral change to the rules, Mr. Speaker, a unilateral change of the rules so the government can ram through their agenda, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Speaker, so they can ram through their agenda, Mr. Speaker — whether or not it's in the best interest of the legislature, the members of the legislature, or the public, without, Mr. Speaker, us having the adequate time to consult with people. Because rather than going out and consulting with people, which is part of the role and responsibility of the opposition, we're going to have to be sitting here, Mr. Speaker, because they want to change the rules.

So it takes away the time and our ability to consult with the public and the people of Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, that is . . . Mr. Speaker, when we were the government, when the opposition said that pieces of legislation had to be carried over to the next year because they didn't have adequate time for consultation, Mr. Speaker, we allowed them to carry over. Because not a single Bill, not a single Bill that's before the House today, if it didn't pass till the fall, would the sky fall, Mr. Speaker? Would the walls crumble? Would the economy crumble? Would investment decline? Would the world change, Mr. Speaker? No, No, Mr. Speaker, the people of the public wouldn't even know. They wouldn't care, Mr. Speaker. It's simply a matter of the government using its majority to abuse the minority.

Mr. Speaker, because of their growing and stunning incompetence and mismanagement of the House, the Sask Party need to unilaterally make a change to the rules or else jeopardize their own agenda in their own minds. But, Mr. Speaker, it's only in their own minds because if this legislation, if this legislation carried on to the fall, Mr. Speaker, nothing would happen, nothing would fall and, Mr. Speaker, the world wouldn't change. We'd continue on in the fall, and it would continue on as it is today.

Mr. Speaker, but to point to the issue of incompetence, Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with the fact that they didn't even recognize this in the first two or three weeks of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, of this spring session. Mr. Speaker, they wait to now, midway through the session, to decide they have to change the rules; that they have to bully the opposition. They

have to push through this agenda without consulting with us, without looking for a negotiated deal that would allow them to continue with their program, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, each and every year we negotiated a deal with the opposition when we were in government, and it meant at times that some legislation was held up. It meant at times that Bills went out for public consultations that we, when we were government, didn't necessarily want to send out for public consultation. Mr. Speaker, that's what co-operation's about; that's what co-operation is about. And the world goes round through co-operation, Mr. Speaker. Democratic principles are there to ensure minority and majority interests and rights, Mr. Speaker, but they're also there to ensure that there is co-operation and work between the parties.

Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out more than once — I pointed out several times — that this legislation, their priority Bills, one or two of them went out for public consultations, where if they didn't pass until the fall, Mr. Speaker, the world wouldn't crumble. Things wouldn't change. The sky wouldn't fall and, Mr. Speaker, we might actually get better legislation as a result.

We might actually have amendments that all parties would agree should be made. We might actually have the ministers say that we end up with better legislation as a result. Mr. Speaker, when we were government, we sent out a number of Bills for public consultation and I will acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that some of those Bills were better and changes were made as a result of those public consultations.

What's the government afraid of? What's the minister afraid of? Why can't they send out Bills 5 and 6 for public consultations, Mr. Speaker? One of those Bills was not even in their platform. One of those Bills members opposite said they didn't need until after the election. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health today — the former Health critic prior to the election — said it wasn't needed, Mr. Speaker.

The member for the opposition that's ultimately responsible for health care, one of those fundamental principles that we all agree with in this Legislative Assembly, needs to be protected. The opposition critic said it wasn't necessary. The then leader of the opposition, now Premier, said it wasn't necessary prior to the election and after the election, wham, we have this piece of legislation. Well that's fine, Mr. Speaker, but to send that Bill out for public consultations, public hearings through our committee process is appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

We need as citizens of this province the right to be publicly heard on certain pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker. So to ask the government to send two pieces of legislation to public hearings is not unheard of. When they were in opposition they routinely asked for legislation to be sent out to public hearings, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these rules, these rules that we must all live by today, the rules that are in . . . The rules of this Legislative Assembly were agreed, were agreed upon by all parties. They were there to protect both the minority and majority interests, Mr. Speaker. And we had long discussions about balancing the issues of minority and majority interests.

Then today, today when they are government, the first time that they can't manage something and do exactly what they'd like to do, without any consideration of the opposition — or for that matter some members of the public, Mr. Speaker — they're prepared to change the rules and unilaterally, unilaterally ram through those changes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has put forward more than 20 pieces of legislation. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should have known they would have to negotiate and work with the opposition to move through their agenda with the rules that are in place, Mr. Speaker. But are they prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker? The answer's no.

Mr. Speaker, when they first became aware that we had some interest in some Bills going out for public consultation, did they come and talk to us? Did they offer to send those Bills out to public consultation? The answer's no, Mr. Speaker.

When we were in government, when the current Government House Leader was the opposition House leader, he and members of his opposition wanted Bills to go out to public hearings. And did we as a government agree? Yes, we did.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we didn't use our majority power to change the rules. We didn't use our majority power to change the rules. Mr. Speaker, we ask the same consideration of the current government. We ask the government to give us the same consideration they demanded when they were in opposition. We're not asking for anything they did not expect of us when we were government. We are not asking anything that they would not expect of us today if they were opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, they know that's true. They know, if the shoe was on the other foot, Mr. Speaker, they would be asking for the same things we are asking for today.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is one fundamental difference, Mr. Speaker. There's one very clear fundamental difference, Mr. Speaker, that when we were government, we listened. When we were government, Mr. Speaker, we cared. Mr. Speaker, when we were government, we cared. And, Mr. Speaker, the proof, the proof, Mr. Speaker, is there. Mr. Speaker, Bills went out to public hearings that they requested.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous examples of Bills going to public hearings when we were the government and they were the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, there's even an example of the government losing a Bill, not being able to put forward a Bill because they sent it out for public hearings at the request of the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, that is The Status of the Artist Act, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government, this government when we were government, did not . . .

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

Mr. Broten: — With leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — Before I place the question, I just want to remind the member that in introducing guests, we don't get into debate. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce to you a citizen of Saskatchewan sitting in your gallery. His name is Joe Schemenauer. And Joe Schemenauer, Mr. Schemenauer is a farmer from Lake Lenore area in the constituency of Batoche. Mr. Schemenauer was in town on other business today and was interested in what was happening in the legislature, so he thought he would come by and see for himself.

Like many citizens of the province, Mr. Schemenauer contributes in many ways beyond his actual activity of farming and family. He is the past provincial president of the Sask Wildlife Federation and the current third vice-president of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in welcoming Mr. Schemenauer to his Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to join with the other members and welcome Mr. Schemenauer. He's a friend of mine and a good member of the Batoche constituency. Good to see you here, Joe, and I'd like all hon. members to welcome him.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying prior to the introduction of guests that, Mr. Speaker, many times when we were the government and they were in opposition, the then House leader of the opposition, now the current Government House Leader came and requested issues and consideration, including sending Bills out to public hearings. Mr. Speaker, he got that consideration.

And in fact in one case, I want to inform members of the House that may not know that — Mr. Speaker, they may not know that — that one piece of legislation that was very important to the government wasn't passed because it went out for public hearings and as a result there wasn't time to pass it prior to an election.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we ask no less of the current government than they expected when they were in opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, we should expect no less. Mr. Speaker, if you believe in the democratic principles, if you believe in this institution, if you believe in the legislature of Saskatchewan, and if you believe in fairness, Mr. Speaker, you could give no less than what you asked. Because to do so, Mr. Speaker, is nothing less than hypocritical. Mr. Speaker, it is nothing less than hypocritical, Mr. Speaker, to expect when you're in opposition one level of consideration and to give another when you're in fact the government.

Mr. Speaker, to ask something of another government and expect it, and expect that level of co-operation, and then not to give the same level of co-operation when you're the government, Mr. Speaker, is hypocritical. And, Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing today is the very, very extreme height of hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, because they are doing just that. They are refusing this opposition the same consideration that they demanded when they were in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't use our majority when we were in government to ram things through without consideration of the minority interest, Mr. Speaker, and we have many examples of that.

Mr. Speaker, today we face a government who will unilaterally change the rules in their own self-interest to ram through an agenda without public consultations of Bills, without consideration of the minority interest, Mr. Speaker. They are simply using a bully tactic, Mr. Speaker, that this Assembly has not seen since the 1980s, Mr. Speaker; that this Assembly has not seen since the 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, I referred earlier to a book written about the role of the legislature in Saskatchewan and it in particular refers to the 1980s that talked about the Devine government of that era using its majority, using their majority to unilaterally do whatever they wanted to do without looking at the minority interests in Saskatchewan, without looking at what might be in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we're simply asking for public hearings on Bills 5 and 6. The opposition say no. Does that mean the government or the opposition can stop Bills 5 and 6 from going through? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. What this is, is about public consultation and public hearings on Bills to perhaps get a better piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker; a better piece of legislation that would in fact reflect the interests of all people of Saskatchewan, and not simply those who wrote the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is time in this debate, Mr. Speaker, for the members of the government to understand what they're doing is not as simple as they think it is. To unilaterally change the rules as they are contemplating doing, Mr. Speaker, is not something that they should do lightly and I want to say that very clearly, Mr. Speaker. It is something they should not do lightly.

Mr. Speaker, the balance between majority and minority interests in law and in this legislature is something that we should all value; something we should all take very, very seriously, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the inability, or the incompetence of the members opposite to manage their time and to manage this House should not be justification to be abusive, Mr. Speaker, and to unilaterally change the rules and unilaterally change the principles of democracy in our province. Our children should be concerned with this. Our elders should be concerned with this. But, Mr. Speaker, all people, all people in the province of Saskatchewan should be concerned about a government that will unilaterally use their position and their power to change the rules in their own self interest, Mr. Speaker. What else will they do? What's next?

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, we saw in the year, in the 1980s — that I don't think anybody in this province appreciated, Mr. Speaker — we saw a government that abused its power. In fact there were books written about this, about the government using its majority to abuse. Mr. Speaker, we don't want to see those days return in Saskatchewan so we as citizens of this province, we as citizens of this province should be concerned about this.

Mr. Speaker, any time in any type of relationship where there's a minority and majority interest, or in any relationship when one person uses power over another and abuses that power in their own self-interest, Mr. Speaker, it is not in the interest of the other party, it's not in the interest of society, Mr. Speaker, and it's not in the interest of fairness.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite fully knew, they fully knew and understood, Mr. Speaker — they fully knew and fully understood, Mr. Speaker — that their six priority Bills would each require 20 hours, 20 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker, each. They knew that those six Bills alone would require 120 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. They knew that last fall. They knew it when they were in opposition. They knew it at the start of this spring session, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, did we start on March 3 when we were supposed to? The answer is no. We started one week later, giving up 20 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, one of their members says opposite and one of their more senior members who should know and understand this, but because he's now asked the question, I have to answer and, Mr. Speaker, he needs . . . Although he might, he might have some responsibility for Education, doesn't understand, Mr. Speaker, so he needs to be educated.

Mr. Speaker, we have a calendar. We have a calendar that was agreed to and posted, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I think I could send a copy of that calendar over to the member opposite if he, if he can't find it, Mr. Speaker. We have a calendar that was published by the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, on May 24, 2007, Mr. Speaker. About 11, 10 months ago, Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Clerk published a calendar of next year's session because we had agreed, Mr. Speaker, we had agreed to a set of rules.

So, Mr. Speaker, on that calendar it showed the Legislative Assembly convening on March 3. So, Mr. Speaker, for the member opposite who I hope is paying attention now after he asked the question, Mr. Speaker, I hope he pays attention to the answer after he asked the question. He said, who said it was

supposed to start on March 3, Mr. Speaker? Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, who said it. The rules said it, Mr. Speaker, the rules we all agreed to, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, you're the one who notifies us, and I got that proper notification. I got the notification saying we were supposed to start on March 3. And I appreciate that notification, Mr. Speaker, as I think all members do because that is what's supposed to happen. And, Mr. Speaker, we all got notification it was going to start in March 3. We got it in the form of a calendar when we're supposed to be at work. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to accept the fact, Mr. Speaker, that all members of this Assembly are readers, Mr. Speaker, in their own right, Mr. Speaker, that all members of this Assembly can read, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, even easier than that, Mr. Speaker, the calendar that was sent to us is shaded, showing us when we're supposed to sit, Mr. Speaker. So you only have to be able to identify the numbers, Mr. Speaker; you don't even need to be able to read. So, Mr. Speaker, who said when we were supposed to sit, Mr. Speaker, and that the Legislative Assembly was supposed to start on March 3, Mr. Speaker? The rules said it, Mr. Speaker — the rules, Mr. Speaker — the rules we all agreed to. So, Mr. Speaker, we all should have known we were starting on March 3. But did we start on March 3, Mr. Speaker? No. We started on March 10.

And that starting on March 10 denied members of this Assembly approximately 25 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. And that denial, Mr. Speaker, has resulted in us now being faced with a motion by the government, a unilateral motion, not a negotiated motion, not an agreed-to motion which has been the practice when we've had extended hours in the past but, Mr. Speaker, a unilateral motion made by the government using its majority power to change the hours, Mr. Speaker. And why do we have to change the hours? Because they didn't start when they were supposed to. They unilaterally changed that, Mr. Speaker, which I would question, without a motion from the House, whether that would even be acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, they shortened the session by four sitting days, denying the members of the opposition, denying the minority interest 25 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker — and without consultation, I might add. Mr. Speaker, now they'll say, oh we'll give it back, they say. Well they'll give it back by changing the hours and unilaterally trying to ram through an agenda that we are now faced with due to their incompetence, their inability to follow their own rules, their inability to respect the rights of members of this legislature, their inability to consult with the opposition about changes, their inability to compromise, their inability to negotiate with us in order to fulfill their agenda and, Mr. Speaker, an abuse of their power, Mr. Speaker, an abuse of their power. And Mr. Speaker, there have been books written about the abuse of power by conservative governments in the past, Mr. Speaker. I guess history is repeating itself.

Mr. Speaker, they fully knew and fully understood that each priority Bill would require 20 hours of debate. And, Mr. Speaker, if they can't manage that time within the hours that are available, Mr. Speaker, that's incompetence. That is nothing less than incompetence, Mr. Speaker. And that issue needs to be

addressed by the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, if it's not incompetence — if you want to give them the benefit of the doubt and say it's not incompetence — then, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I would question their mathematical skills because they simply can't add 20 six times to come up with 120 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. And I hope, I hope it's not simply mathematical skills because my four-year-old grandson can probably come to that number, Mr. Speaker. My four-year-old grandson can probably add 20, 20, 20, and 20, six times and come up with 120. And he's only four years old, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the one, the one regret I might have about this long speech, Mr. Speaker, is that my grandson likes to watch, likes to watch the legislature, Mr. Speaker. He likes to watch and see his grandpa at work. And, Mr. Speaker, he may be sitting many, many, many hours watching his grandpa at work over the next few, few days. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, my grandson may not understand why he's spending so many hours watching the legislative channel. Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, one of the members would be willing to bet the price of a smoothie, and my grandson likes those too, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the rules that we all have to live with didn't sneak up on the members of the government. They weren't unknown. They weren't something that we put in place when we were government without consultation. These were rules we all agreed to. These were rules we all accepted, Mr. Speaker. They knew, they knew, Mr. Speaker, what the rules would mean with these six pieces of priority legislation and in fact what the rules would mean for their other pieces of legislation as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these rules didn't sneak up on anybody. They didn't bite anybody that wasn't aware of what the rules were, Mr. Speaker. They were plain. They were well understood by all members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, all members, all members of, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the members opposite are yelling from their seats, Mr. Speaker. And quite frankly they're talking about how the session, Mr. Speaker, that the session can change. Mr. Speaker, we'll fully agree the rules of the start date of the session can change. Mr. Speaker, the start date of the session can change but then you have to manage the hours you have available to you and plan to pass your agenda, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing in the rules that speak to the government using its majority to abuse the minority or the opposition, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing in the rules that talk about the government's ability to abuse the rules on the minority.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, they knew and understood. Mr. Speaker, when they were in opposition they knew and understood that they had to co-operate with the government, they had to negotiate with the government, and that we had to find a compromise in order to move the agenda forward. We had to work together, Mr. Speaker. What a concept, Mr. Speaker. The idea that you might have to work together, that the members of this legislature who are here in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan — not their own

interests, Mr. Speaker — that are here in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan would have to co-operate and work together to move forward an agenda; that you just can't unilaterally use your position of power to abuse the minority.

Mr. Speaker, when we were in government we fully understood that. We worked and co-operated with them in opposition. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the very things we're asking for we gave them, Mr. Speaker. We gave them public consultation on Bills, Mr. Speaker. We in fact moved legislation off to the next session if they needed further time to consult with their stakeholders and the public, Mr. Speaker. We did all those things. But if we ask for those very same things, Mr. Speaker, do you know what we get told? No. We're the government, we have the majority, we'll change the rules unilaterally if we have to, and we're going to ram through our agenda whether you like it or not.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, they say that's the way they used to do it. Mr. Speaker, they're absolutely right. That's the way the Devine government — Conservative government in the 1980s did, Mr. Speaker. They did that. That's what the Conservative government in the 1980s did. They did exactly that. They abused their position. They abused their power, Mr. Speaker. But for a number of years now, Mr. Speaker, we've worked co-operatively.

So today we have a government that wants to throw out those years of co-operative working together where we worked together to pass legislation in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan. We worked to get the very best legislation together in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan. Today we don't have that, Mr. Speaker. We have a government that has their own agenda. We have a government that's decided to unilaterally do whatever they want to do and, Mr. Speaker, we have a government who has no compromise in them.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think we as citizens and the people of Saskatchewan — citizens of the province of Saskatchewan; pardon me, Mr. Speaker — need to be concerned about this. And we as members of the opposition who represent the citizens of Saskatchewan as well are very concerned about this, Mr. Speaker. Because, Mr. Speaker, a bully is a bully, and when you do things without consultation, without co-operation, and unilaterally, what do you have, Mr. Speaker? When you abuse majority power, you're a bully. Mr. Speaker, we need to be concerned about the ideology of being a bully. We need to be concerned about what future impacts to that attitude and that ideology has on the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we saw this type of attitude in the past, and we saw what it did for the province of Saskatchewan. We don't want that, Mr. Speaker. We want to have a legislature that works. We all want to have a legislature that advances the interests of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, we will fully acknowledge as an opposition that the majority interests of the government should always, should always move forward, Mr. Speaker, but it should move forward with co-operation, and we should move forward with a timetable that is acceptable to both parties. And, Mr. Speaker, it should move forward in the interest of the

people of Saskatchewan, not in the interest of a few.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is what we strive for. We strive for an environment in which we can move forward in an environment of co-operation, in an environment where we can sit down and work with the government to bring forward the best possible legislation for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, can the opposition ever stop the government from fulfilling its agenda? No. But can the opposition help the government to bring forward the best possible agenda, bring forward the best possible legislation, Mr. Speaker? The answer is yes. The answer is yes. We need to work in the best interests of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, is it new for the opposition to ask for some Bills to go to public hearings, to have consultations through our committee process? The answer is absolutely no. No, it's not unique, Mr. Speaker. In fact many times when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, they asked for that. And many times, Mr. Speaker, they received that consideration.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we asked for that consideration on a couple of pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker, the answer is no. They won't even entertain it. In fact because they can't manage their time and the agenda in a manner which allows them to pass their legislation in a time frame that's appropriate within the rules, Mr. Speaker, they're prepared to change the rules, Mr. Speaker. They're prepared to change the rules without consideration of the minority interests, Mr. Speaker.

We're in this situation because of their own mismanagement, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there is a rule that says that they can change, in the first session of the legislature, the start time, Mr. Speaker. But there is an expectation, if they change that start time and they know their own agenda, they know their own legislation, Mr. Speaker . . . Because the opposition doesn't pick the legislation they put forward. It doesn't pick the number of Bills they make priority, and it doesn't pick when the session starts. That is the unilateral responsibility of the government. And they didn't consult us, Mr. Speaker, or else we would have helped them with the hours a little bit better.

Mr. Speaker, we would have helped them know that they couldn't do what they wanted to do without starting a little earlier, Mr. Speaker, and without giving due consideration to their own legislation. But, Mr. Speaker, they didn't ask us or we would have helped them. We really would have because we all have an interest in making this place work.

[16:30]

But, Mr. Speaker, we don't have an interest in unilaterally changing the rules. We don't have an interest in encouraging the government to be a bully. And we don't have an interest in encouraging the government to think that they can do whatever they want to do whenever they want to do without due consideration of the rules of this Assembly, rules that are there to protect the interests of both the majority and the minority, Mr. Speaker, and the interests of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Those are rules that are there to ensure that members of the

opposition have adequate time to consult with the public, have adequate time to talk to stakeholders about pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, they're denying, they are going to deny the opposition that by changing the hours so that there is no time to consult with members of the public on legislation that they've introduced in this session of the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

They are denying us that right to consult with the public and to consult with stakeholders. And, Mr. Speaker, that denial is a denial of the fundamental rights guaranteed in our democracy, guaranteed in the rules of which we have. And, Mr. Speaker, that denial is shameful. It's shameful for the interests of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, but, Mr. Speaker, it's even more shameful that we have a government that thinks that they can do that or, Mr. Speaker, even worse, thinks they should do that, Mr. Speaker.

They've introduced Bills up until the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker, and now they're going to move so that we sit from early in the morning until late at night, taking away the ability of the opposition to consult with stakeholders, to consult with groups, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that is shameful.

And, Mr. Speaker, rather than come and consult and rather than come and negotiate with the opposition to come to a meaningful resolution to this, this impasse, Mr. Speaker, they decided they're just going to unilaterally change the rules.

And, Mr. Speaker, do they have any consideration for what they're really doing? They're laughing about it, Mr. Speaker. They continually laugh about what they're doing. And, Mr. Speaker, that in itself is shameful, because, Mr. Speaker, for them to laugh about a unilateral change in the rules, Mr. Speaker, shows a total disrespect for the process, shows a total disrespect for our democracy, and it shows a total disrespect for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's shameful.

And, Mr. Speaker, even now, even now if the Government House Leader approached us with a willingness to negotiate some sort of . . . negotiate a deal that would move forward their agenda within the time frames, Mr. Speaker, we'd be willing, Mr. Speaker, because we believe in co-operation. We believe in consultation, and we believe in working together. We believe in working together in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, we don't only believe in those things when we're in opposition, Mr. Speaker. We believed in those things when we were in government as well. And the very things that we would like to see in a deal, Mr. Speaker, the very things we'd like to see in a deal, Mr. Speaker, we afforded to the members of the government when they were in fact in opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've now done about a page and a half of my notes of about 400 pages of notes so, Mr. Speaker, this could be a rather long debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, we not only know that the members opposite knew that each of their priority Bills would require 20 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. In December of this year, or in December of last year, pardon me, Mr. Speaker . . . In December of last year we made the government aware of our intent on two of those Bills; that we'd like those Bills to go out to public

consultations, Mr. Speaker, and we'd like those Bills go through the committee process to public consultation.

And, Mr. Speaker, so they shouldn't have this spring been at all surprised, been at all surprised that they were going to have to allow time for debate of those Bills within the time frame. And, Mr. Speaker, if their incompetence or their inability to understand and add up the hours of debate that would be required, that's not the fault of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. It's not the fault of the people of Saskatchewan. It's not the fault of stakeholders who like public consultations. Mr. Speaker, it's the fault of the government.

And so those people who want public consultations, those members of the public who would like to be able to participate in public meetings, and those members of the opposition who would like to see these Bills go to public hearings, we're not at fault, Mr. Speaker. The government is clearly at fault.

And then for them to want to unilaterally change the rules and ram through these Bills, Mr. Speaker — to ram through these Bills without due consideration and without allowing the opposition to exercise their democratic rights, Mr. Speaker, and to exercise their rights under the rules of this legislature, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Speaker, it's incompetence. It's fundamentally wrong and it's deplorable, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can any time reconsider, decide to negotiate with us, to come up with a compromise that will allow them to move forward with their agenda and meet our needs, our needs as members of the opposition. To meet the needs of the minority interest by sending those Bills out to public consultations, Mr. Speaker, we'll entertain that any time. Mr. Speaker, we could end this debate in just a few minutes if in fact they would agree to those types of consultations, Mr. Speaker, and to the other items that we said we needed in order to agree to pass their legislation in this . . . [inaudible] . . . without changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, without doing what is in fact Mr. Speaker, unheard of. The rules to be changed without agreement, Mr. Speaker, has not occurred in many, many, many years, Mr. Speaker. The last time we saw that type of unilateral bullying, Mr. Speaker, was in fact when we had the Grant Devine government, Conservative government in 1980, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government had ample time and ample opportunity within the current rules and structures to choose to put forward less legislation, Mr. Speaker, to choose what their agenda would be in order to get it forward, and through in the time that was allotted under the rules, Mr. Speaker.

We had to manage that many, many years, Mr. Speaker. We couldn't unilaterally push things through, Mr. Speaker. We had a one seat majority, and we managed this House for eight years, Mr. Speaker — eight years with a one vote majority. Mr. Speaker, they can't manage this House with a 19-vote majority except to bully through, to pass something unilaterally, to pass something that, Mr. Speaker, is not in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan, not in the interests of this legislature and not in the interests of democracy in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I note as I'm speaking that the noise continues to get louder and louder in the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, it's harder

and harder to, I'm sure for my own members, to hear my comments, Mr. Speaker. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite respect the democratic principles enough to at least sit and listen, listen to why we would speak against this rule change unilaterally, why we feel so strongly about insuring the democratic principles which, Mr. Speaker, which citizens of this country, Canadian citizens, Saskatchewan citizens fought and died for the right to have democracy in our country, for the right to have a parliamentary system, a legislative system in our provinces that balance the rights of minority and majority, Mr. Speaker, that ensured the rights and the balance between those in power and those in opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the members opposite respect those principles because those are fundamental principles that citizens of this province, citizens of our country fought and died for — the right for us to have a parliamentary democracy that balance the rights of minority and majority, that allow the majority to always pass their interests in the end, but allows for the rights of the majority to have certain rights and responsibilities and obligations.

And that in this case, in our legislature anticipates public hearings on some Bills, Mr. Speaker, what we're asking for. It anticipates those very rights for public hearings, Mr. Speaker. It anticipates the rights of the public to be heard when the opposition believes that better legislation, better provisions would come forward as a result of those public hearings.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we bring forward this very issue, as we bring forward in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan that we hold public hearings on two Bills, Mr. Speaker, what do we hear from the government, a government who, when they were in opposition demanded the very same things, Mr. Speaker? What we hear very clearly is no. No, it will be our way. It'll be on our time frame, and it'll be exactly as we want it.

Mr. Speaker, that's not democracy. Mr. Speaker, that is not democracy. That is not the rules as we anticipated in this province. This is not the rules as we agreed to, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that is not even fair play, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is not even fair. And the members opposite need to think about what they're doing.

I hope that they didn't make this decision to try to push this through unilaterally without considering the long-term implications because, Mr. Speaker, the long-term implications of what they've done have made our province less democratic and gone a long way to erase the balance between the majority and minority interests in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party ignored opportunities to sit in the evenings just two weeks ago. They ignored opportunities to debate these Bills when they had the opportunity to. Mr. Speaker, how do we as an opposition hold them accountable for not exercising their majority interest to debate these Bills when they could have within the normal rules of the House? Mr. Speaker, they chose not to. They chose to use their majority and adjourn, Mr. Speaker. Did they consult with the opposition? The answer is no. Mr. Speaker, they didn't consult with the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite are saying I'm starting to repeat

myself, Mr. Speaker. I am saying that they chose, they made a conscious choice, they made a conscious choice not to follow the rules, not present the opposition with the opportunities to debate these Bills during the evenings of the first two weeks, Mr. Speaker. And instead, Mr. Speaker, instead, Mr. Speaker, instead, Mr. Speaker, they chose to unilaterally today change the rules to propose a change to the rules rather, rather than present the opportunity for the opposition to be able to debate these Bills when we could have, Mr. Speaker, because the government controls the agenda. And now members of the opposition and the public are paying for the incompetence and the inability of the government to know and understand their own rules, Mr. Speaker, to know and understand how to manage their own agenda, Mr. Speaker. This brings into consideration, Mr. Speaker, the fundamental incompetence of this government, Mr. Speaker.

It brings into question in the minds of the opposition and members of the public the competence of the government that has to change the rules in order to pass their own agenda, Mr. Speaker, a government that must change the rules to pass their own agenda because (1) they won't work within the rules; (2) they won't compromise, Mr. Speaker; and (3) they think they have to be right about all things all the time, Mr. Speaker. And I hear them chirp from their seats they're always right. Well, Mr. Speaker, do the people of Saskatchewan know that they elected a government that thinks they're right all the time, thinks that they can abuse power, and thinks they can unilaterally change the rules, circumventing the democratic processes that we all agreed to? Circumventing the rules which we all agreed to, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. This is shameful.

And, Mr. Speaker, members opposite should take the supper hour when I conclude my remarks . . . or when we recess for the supper hour, to consider, to consider coming back with a compromise, that will consider coming back with a compromise so that Bills 5 and 6 will go out to public consultations and public hearings, Mr. Speaker, and so that some of the other things which this opposition asked for, which, Mr. Speaker . . . just so you're aware of the things that we asked for or we would need to have . . . are Bills No. 5 and 6 going out to public consultations, Mr. Speaker. And they're saying it will never happen.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when they were the opposition and we were government, when they asked for Bills to go out to public consultations, Mr. Speaker, it happened. We gave consideration to the needs of the opposition. We took into consideration that better legislation, better policy comes out as a result of consulting with the public.

And do you know what they say, Mr. Speaker? Do you know what they say as they yell across? That we won. We won the election. That's all they care about. They won the election, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, yes I'm not going to disagree. They won the election, but that doesn't mean that the legislation they bring forward in the form they bring it forward is the best legislation or best public policy for the province of Saskatchewan.

It doesn't mean it isn't either. All we're asking for is the right to take it out for public consultations, to hear directly as members of the opposition and members of the government . . . And by

the way, Mr. Speaker, in those committees, they would have a four-person to two-person majority. They'd have double the number of members the opposition would have in those public hearings. So could we the opposition change anything that they didn't agree to change? The answer's absolutely no, absolutely no. There could be no changes made without their agreement. Then, Mr. Speaker, will they, will they allow these Bills to go out for public consultations? The answer is no, and they say never, and they say they won the election.

[16:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, when they were in opposition . . . because we have rules that anticipate, and actually anticipate realistically, that Bills will go out to public consultations. When we were in government and they were in opposition, Bills did go out to public consultations, Mr. Speaker. But now that they're government, it's going to be nothing goes out. It's unilaterally one way, Mr. Speaker. It's about we have the power, and we're going to exercise it, and they have no interest in minority interests. They have no interest in the people of the public of Saskatchewan being able to make those presentations in public hearings.

Mr. Speaker, that's shameful. Mr. Speaker, once again members opposite are indicating very clearly they will not consider, they will not consider sending out Bills to public hearings. But when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, they asked for just that. And, Mr. Speaker, they were afforded, they were afforded those interests. They were afforded those interests.

And, Mr. Speaker, there was even a piece of legislation that we held very, very close to our hearts when we were government that didn't go through because, when allowed for public hearings, Mr. Speaker, there wasn't enough time between then and the election, Mr. Speaker, to pass that Bill. And we let The Status of the Artist Act go out for public hearings when the opposition demanded it, in the interest of democracy, in the interest of fairness, and in the interest of public consultations, Mr. Speaker.

Now the members opposite can yell from their seats all they want, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that is . . . The members of the artist community in the arts community in Saskatchewan know fair well that that Bill went out.

Mr. Speaker, we also sent out a number of other Bills. Mr. Speaker, we sent out a Bill dealing with gunshots and stab wounds, Mr. Speaker, and that was at the request of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. They didn't like the Bill that was there, so we sent it out for public consultations, and we listened to representatives of the medical community, representatives of the police community, representatives of the Aboriginal community, and many, many other public groups that had interests in that particular piece of legislation. And then we made changes, Mr. Speaker.

A novel concept that the people who have to use that legislation, the people who understand that legislation the most, would make presentations to a legislative body, and then we would actually amend legislation to reflect what those people wanted, Mr. Speaker. What a novel concept, Mr. Speaker, that the people of the province — who we all represent — speak,

and then we might make changes. We might make changes as legislators to reflect the interest of the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we're here for. That's what we stand for. And, Mr. Speaker, we, when we were in government, allowed those consultations to go on, Mr. Speaker, on a number of Bills. Mr. Speaker, the current government won't allow anything to go to public consultations.

And, Mr. Speaker, when they cannot pass their own legislation within the rules, Mr. Speaker, they're prepared to abuse the rules of this legislature, they're prepared to abuse members of this legislature, and they're prepared to abuse the public of Saskatchewan by unilaterally changing the rules. Mr. Speaker, that's not fair. And, Mr. Speaker, do they care? No they don't care. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this is sad.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite now, in a short 10, 12 minutes, are going to have the opportunity to recess for supper. And hopefully during that period of recess, Mr. Speaker, they'll have the opportunity to think about what has been said in the last couple, two and a half hours or so, Mr. Speaker, and have the opportunity to reflect upon what they're doing. And hopefully they'll take that opportunity to come to the Opposition House Leader and negotiate a process that will both allow for that greater consultation that's requested and the opportunity for them to in fact use their majority and pass the legislation as they should. But, Mr. Speaker, you don't need to change the rules.

And, Mr. Speaker, they keep yelling we don't know that we lost the last election. Well, Mr. Speaker, yes we know we lost the last election. But that doesn't mean that the principles of fairness, the principles of equality, and the principles of democracy are thrown out the door because you have a right wing government put in place, Mr. Speaker. The rules of fundamental fairness should not change because you have a new government, Mr. Speaker. The rights of the people of Saskatchewan should not change because you have a new government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the democratic principles which this legislature stands for should not change because you have a new government who has no respect or little respect for the rules. And they're showing that, Mr. Speaker.

Their answer to everything is, you don't know you lost the election. And, Mr. Speaker, yes, we fully know who won the election, Mr. Speaker. But the rules of this Assembly have not been changed unilaterally in the interest of a government, Mr. Speaker, since the 1980s. And, Mr. Speaker, we saw the impact of what happened in 1980s when a government chose to put their position forward in a unilateral way and to abuse their power, Mr. Speaker. And we saw the results.

And, Mr. Speaker, why should the opposition and members of the public, due to the incompetence, the incompetence of the government, because they couldn't plan a time frame in which to bring forward their agenda and pass it, Mr. Speaker — why should others pay for that? Why should members of the opposition pay for that and why should the general public pay for that?

Mr. Speaker, the rules are there are to protect this Assembly. They're there to protect the principles of democracy. And when

you have to change the rules, Mr. Speaker, because you're a bully, because you're the schoolyard bully, you want to change the rules and ram things through without the proper . . . But here, as to the rules of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that's fundamentally wrong.

And that's what we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're seeing. Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a government that has no regard for the rules. We're seeing a government that has no regard for the opposition. They won't negotiate with the opposition. They won't compromise with the opposition. They won't compromise in sending legislation out for public hearings, Mr. Speaker. It's their way or it's the highway, Mr. Speaker.

And as a result we're at an impasse. We're at a place when the members opposite care little or nothing about what the rights of the minority are, the rights of the opposition are. They care very little or nothing about what rights of stakeholder groups are. They are going to pass their legislation, they are going to pass their budget, they are going to pass their agenda without any consideration for the minority interest.

Mr. Speaker, this type of behaviour is shameful. This type of behaviour is unacceptable. And, Mr. Speaker, we saw that type of behaviour in the 1980s. It's an attitude, and that attitude resulted in some of the worst years of governance this province ever saw, both for this legislature and for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the members opposite need me to go back to where I started my fundamental speech, Mr. Speaker. And it's quoting from a book about the role of the legislature in Saskatchewan written by Merrilee Rasmussen. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go right to the conclusion because, Mr. Speaker, it sums things up rather nicely. And in that conclusion, Mr. Speaker, it says this. And this is talking about the period from 1982 to 1991, the period of the then Conservative government in our province. And it was talking about the erosion of the legislature and the erosion of the fundamental principles of democracy. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to just read this back into the record one more time for some of those members who weren't here when I introduced this topic. Mr. Speaker:

The erosion of the legislature continues, [and this is talking about the period '82 to '91] albeit perhaps somewhat more slowly than at times in the past. The Devine Conservatives believed that they had a majority of the seats in the legislature so they could do whatever they wanted.

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we are seeing today from the newly elected Saskatchewan Party government. They cannot get through their agenda in the time frame they want to get it through without changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, although they knew from day one they couldn't, Mr. Speaker. So they're unilaterally going to change the rules and ram things through, Mr. Speaker, without consultation, without consultation of the opposition, without any consideration for the interests of the opposition and/or the public which we need to consult on pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they're going to just unilaterally change it.

And they say they'll do the consultations. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a reason why you have an opposition. You have an opposition to ensure the interests of those people in the province of Saskatchewan that may not agree with the government. And the opposition has to have the right, the opposition has to have the right to go out into the public, Mr. Speaker. They have to have the time to go out into the public and talk to stakeholder groups away from the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government introduced legislation up until last week, Mr. Speaker. And then they're going to change the hours, keeping us in this legislature from early morning until midnight, Mr. Speaker, and so that members of the opposition don't have the time to properly consult with stakeholder groups about legislation, Mr. Speaker.

But do they care, do they care, Mr. Speaker, about the role of the opposition? No they don't. When they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, and they came to the government saying they needed more time to consult with stakeholders on pieces of legislation, what happened, Mr. Speaker? They got more time. They got more time, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Give us some examples.

Mr. Yates: — And, Mr. Speaker, they keep asking, give us examples. I'll give you an example, Mr. Speaker — The Ambulance Act, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they fundamentally disagreed with a portion of The Ambulance Act, as did some stakeholders in the province. Mr. Speaker. They asked for additional time for public consultations. They asked for additional time to speak to their stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. They asked the government not to force that piece of legislation through, Mr. Speaker. And what happened? We didn't, Mr. Speaker. We allowed them another session. We tabled that Bill and allowed it to continue on to the fall just as we're asking on public consultations on two Bills today. We allowed that to be carried on to the fall so they could meet with ambulance operators, private ambulance operators around the province, Mr. Speaker, to fully understand what their concerns were, to fully understand what their concerns were before ramming through a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Now that's how democracy should work. That's how the legislative process should work, Mr. Speaker. And on The Ambulance Act it did work, Mr. Speaker. We gave them additional time to go and meet with stakeholders. We held the Bill off until the next session, Mr. Speaker. They went and met with stakeholders on The Ambulance Act, Mr. Speaker. And at the end of the day there were amendments made to The Ambulance Act to reflect the interests of those stakeholders. That's what good public policy's about. That's what the legislative process is about, Mr. Speaker. It's about taking into consideration the interests of all. It's not about ramming things through. It's about taking into consideration the interests of all.

And when they asked for an example, Mr. Speaker, they get it. Now, Mr. Speaker, they say, oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. Like it's not important that, in fact, they got exactly what they asked for when they were in opposition on Bills — the same type of

things being asked for today on two pieces of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, there is a difference, Mr. Speaker, because, Mr. Speaker, previously you had a government who believed in the legislative process, Mr. Speaker. They believed in fairness. They believed in democracy. And they believed in the rights of stakeholders to have input in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. And the government prior to this government believed, Mr. Speaker, in minority and majority rights and the balance between them. Mr. Speaker, we don't have that today. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, we face a situation we're facing today.

Did we have the Government House Leader try to negotiate any type of resolution to the impasse? The answer's no. The answer's no. He never once. It was either his way or the highway. And we suggested he could make an offer to us, Mr. Speaker. This is exactly what happened, Mr. Speaker. They said they were going to move this resolution forward. And when we asked them to bring forward some consideration for the opposition in that, his caucus told him he couldn't, Mr. Speaker.

Did they make the opposition any type of offer or compromise or consideration on any of this legislation in order to work through this in a manner that was not unilateral, was not abusive or bullying in nature, Mr. Speaker? The answer's absolutely no. Did they bring forward any position to the opposition? The answer's no. He did not bring forward any position to the opposition.

And I challenge him to say he did, because he didn't. I would know, Mr. Speaker. I'm the Opposition Deputy House Leader, Mr. Speaker. And no, they did not bring forward any type of compromise. Basically they said, we're the government, we won the election, we'll do it our way and we'll do it on our terms, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they're going, hear, hear now. And that's a shame because, Mr. Speaker, they would not have accepted that. They would not have accepted that when they were in opposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, the difference was that you had a government then that had integrity. You had a government that wouldn't unilaterally use its power to abuse the opposition or the minority interest in the province. Mr. Speaker, you had a government that would work with the opposition. You had a government that believed in the democratic principles, Mr. Speaker. You had a government that believed in working co-operatively in the best interest of the province of Saskatchewan and its citizens, Mr. Speaker.

You didn't have a government, you didn't have a government that was so full of itself, Mr. Speaker, that they will do whatever they want to do and damn the torpedoes, Mr. Speaker, and forget about the interest and balance of democracy in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they didn't bring forward any, any proposal to work with the opposition to get their legislation through. Nothing, Mr. Speaker. No, Mr. Speaker, they can chirp from their seats and say, that's a lie. And that's unparliamentary language to use in this House, Mr. Speaker, but they're saying it.

Mr. Speaker, it's not . . . Mr. Speaker, they brought forward

nothing. They brought forward absolutely nothing to try to work with the opposition. Did they try to compromise? Did they try to deal with the opposition in order to look at the interests of the minority in this province, to look at the interests of the opposition in this province, Mr. Speaker?

No they did not, Mr. Speaker. They simply said, we won the election; we'll do it our way whether you like it or not, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The time being 5, this House is recessed until 7 p.m. tonight.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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