



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

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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
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Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
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Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
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Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
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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 resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING
GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased again to stand and enter and return to my comments on the motion before us.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by, as I mentioned earlier this afternoon that there's one little gentleman who likes to watch his grandpa on television and thinks it's his responsibility to sit and watch his grandpa the entire time that he's speaking.

And so I talked to my grandson here over the supper hour and he was wondering if grandpa would be getting back up tonight. So I said I would say a special hello to my grandson Liam, a very special young man in my life and one who brings joy to his grandpa at every opportunity. And he's a very special little boy that I call my angel so just wanted to say hello to him. And Liam, I hope you don't listen to grandpa all night and get a good night's sleep.

Well I would like to start my remarks by recapping where we were this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We started this afternoon, we started this afternoon talking about a motion, this particular motion that the government brought forward and how they decided to do it, Mr. Speaker. How they, because of their own incompetence, their own ability, Mr. Speaker, to manage the rules of the House and to manage their own agenda . . . we're in a situation where they moved a motion, Mr. Speaker, they moved a motion to unilaterally — unilaterally, Mr. Speaker — change the rules of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by quoting from a book called "The Role of the Legislature," written by one Merrilee Rasmussen, and I'm going to go directly to the conclusion, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this conclusion I think is very relevant to the debate we're in today, and it's talking about the role of the legislature and the erosion of the legislature in the period of time from 1982 to 1991.

Mr. Speaker, it says:

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, that's exactly the same situation we face today. We have a majority government elected just four months ago who believe they can do whatever they want because they won the election and they have a majority. Mr. Speaker, there is no

consideration for minority and majority rights. Mr. Speaker, there is no consideration for looking at what is in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, they have decided that they will do exactly what they want to do, and if they need to, they will unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to talk about legislatures and the responsiveness of parliaments and legislatures to the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Canada, and how people view some of these high-handed, unilateral-type moves.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start with a paper written by one Chuck Strahl, and it's talking about "Toward a More Responsive Parliament" in Canada. This particular paper is written by Chuck Strahl and it references Stockwell Day, who was at that time the leader of the official opposition in the House of Commons:

. . . [And Mr.] Day, the Leader of the Official Opposition, said during the recent election campaign, "Canadians are justly proud of our heritage of responsible government. But our parliamentary democracy is not all that it should be. Too much power is exercised by the Prime Minister instead of being shared by our elected representatives."

Mr. Speaker, that's very, very similar to the situation we are facing today. We're facing a situation where, rather than using the rules of democracy, the rules of the legislature of Saskatchewan, we have a government, through its Premier and its Executive Council, deciding that they are going to curtail the rights and abilities of the minority opposition here and in fact unilaterally change the rules to ram through their agenda on a time frame that's not possible to do within the framework of the rules in this legislature. And, Mr. Speaker, it's being done without consideration of the rights of the Saskatchewan citizens, the people of Saskatchewan, stakeholders, and in fact members of this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say about the time allocation for debates and that:

The excessive use of the rules to curtail debate over the years has diminished the effectiveness of debate in our parliamentary system. While the rights of the opposition are immediately and most visibly at stake, ultimately the threat is to the democratic rights and freedoms in general [in our country].

So, Mr. Speaker, we have Chuck Strahl, in a paper written for the House of Commons, talking about how a government using its majority to abuse the rights of the minority is in fact curtailing the democratic rights of parliamentarians in our country. In fact, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what's going on today. We have a government who is unilaterally using their power to curtail the democratic rights of the minority — in this case, the New Democratic opposition in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're doing it in a very high-handed way. Mr. Speaker, just a few months ago when we were in the

government, Mr. Speaker, if they, when in opposition, asked for the opportunity to send a Bill out to consultation or for a Bill to be considered by stakeholders, Mr. Speaker — they needed additional time to consult others — what did we do? Mr. Speaker, we granted them that time. We wanted to ensure that the principles of our democracy and the principles of our system of government were upheld. Mr. Speaker, we have an opposition today that still believes in those principles but a government that does not.

Mr. Speaker, there has been issues of conflict in legislatures for hundreds of years. Mr. Speaker, there have always been issues in debate, issues of conflict, and where there's disagreement. But, Mr. Speaker, the true test of a democracy and a true test of a legislature or true test of a parliamentary system is how you resolve those issues, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why you put rules in place.

You put rules in place to govern the debate in the legislature. You put rules in place to govern the outcome at the legislative level, Mr. Speaker. But when one side or the other unilaterally decides they're going to abuse those rules, Mr. Speaker, then you no longer have balance between the minority and majority rights. You no longer have the interests of the people at heart, Mr. Speaker; you in fact have your own self-interest at heart.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's what we're seeing today. We're seeing today a government that's using its majority power to unilaterally change the rules because, Mr. Speaker, because they could not, they could not get through their own agenda. They couldn't put a time frame in place. They couldn't put forward a workable schedule, Mr. Speaker, that would in fact allow them to move their agenda forward.

Mr. Speaker, that is pure incompetence, Mr. Speaker. They control when this session started, Mr. Speaker, and they also control what legislation and what they put forward on the agenda, Mr. Speaker.

These rules that we all live by in this Assembly were agreed to by all political parties, agreed to by all members of this House, and, Mr. Speaker, they knew what the rules were and they knew what to expect. And, Mr. Speaker, when you help make those rules, when you help negotiate what the outcomes of those rules should be and then, Mr. Speaker, when you're in opposition they're good rules for you but the minute you become government they're no longer good for you because they don't allow you to do unilaterally what you want to do, that's shameful. That's absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't work. It doesn't work. You can't, when you're opposition, demand one set of rules and say they have to be adhered to, and then when you're in government say oh well we don't like the rules anymore, and we're not going to adhere to them.

Mr. Speaker, and that all occurred over a four-month period. The new government was only elected four months ago. Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from this book again, "The Role of the Legislature." And it's says:

The conflict between the executive government and the legislature in Saskatchewan during the 1980s and the early

1990s has resulted in a permanent erosion of this democratic component of the institution of parliament in this province.

Mr. Speaker, what this book talks about, it talks about the unilateral use of power by the executive branch of government during the period of 1980s has permanently eroded — permanently eroded, Mr. Speaker — the democratic principles in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote again from page 19 of this book . . .

An Hon. Member: — . . . are you going to table those documents you're quoting from?

Mr. Yates: — Yes. Mr. Speaker, they asked if I will table these documents. I will certainly, certainly will table these documents, Mr. Speaker. I think it's very important that these individuals get the opportunity to read this book. I think it's very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, it says in here that . . . and this is coming from the Chief Justice, Bora Laskin, described it in this way, and he's talking about, Mr. Speaker, the difficulty of the abuse of power in Ontario in this particular case: "That there is no principle in this county, as there is not in Great Britain, that the Crown may legislate by proclamation or order in council to bind citizens where it so acts without the support of a statute of the legislature [Mr. Speaker]." So, Mr. Speaker, we have no rules here that allows a government to unilaterally do things that isn't reinforced by a statute of legislature, of the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have in this case a political party who negotiated a set of rules when they were in opposition, who not only write the rules but ensured that they were enforced in a way that they had the opportunity to send Bills to public hearings, that they had the opportunity to hold up legislation to get further consultations of stakeholders. And I gave examples this afternoon of both those circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

When we were in government and they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, we afforded them those rights and privileges which are anticipated in our rules, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they failed to give that same consideration, Mr. Speaker, when they became the government. And, Mr. Speaker, that's shameful. When a government decides to abuse its majority power in the interest of itself and take away the rights that are guaranteed within the rules of this legislature in order to move their agenda forward in a manner in which they couldn't do — they couldn't do — within the rules, Mr. Speaker, that's shameful.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know full well, they know full well what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. They have decided to unilaterally change the rules in this Assembly. They have decided that they are going to drive through an agenda whether it makes sense or not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about a review done in Great Britain. It's called the "Power to the

People.” It’s a report of power . . . an independent inquiry into Britain’s democracy, Mr. Speaker. And it’s talking about Britain’s democracy, which our Canadian democracy is founded upon, Mr. Speaker. As members opposite would know, that our parliamentary system is founded on the British system. And, Mr. Speaker, what they’re talking about in Great Britain would be very, very similar as to what is occurring today in Canada and in particular in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it talks about the things that are weakening our parliamentary democracy, and this is in fact talking about Great Britain, but it fits very well here in Saskatchewan as well. And it says one of the things that is weakening democracy is the weakening of effective dialogue between governed and the governors, Mr. Speaker. When you’re taking away the opportunity for people to have input into the issues that are important to them, when you take away the right of legislation to go out to public hearings for people to have input, Mr. Speaker, they’re talking specifically about governments who avoid taking things to public hearings, Mr. Speaker, or to public dialogue — governments who unilaterally bring forward agendas without consultation of either the general public or, Mr. Speaker, curtail debate in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about the rise of undemocratic political forces within Great Britain, Mr. Speaker. But that’s very similar here. That’s exactly what we’re seeing today. We’re seeing a political party move an agenda forward, Mr. Speaker, to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker. That is the rise of undemocratic processes, Mr. Speaker.

They also talk about the rise of quiet authoritarianism within the government, Mr. Speaker. Those are all things that we face here. Mr. Speaker, the things that make people cynical about the political process, that make people believe that the political process doesn’t meet their needs we’re seeing today, Mr. Speaker. It’s no different in Great Britain than we’re seeing right here in this legislature today, Mr. Speaker, when we have a government who’s using their majority to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, they’re doing that because of their own incompetence, Mr. Speaker — couldn’t put forward an agenda that would allow them to pass their own budget and their own legislation in a timely manner. And, Mr. Speaker, they clearly control unilaterally what legislation they put forward, Mr. Speaker. They control what gets put on the order papers each day and, Mr. Speaker, they control how many days the House actually sits. In this case, Mr. Speaker, they controlled it because they unilaterally shortened the number of days we would sit, Mr. Speaker, denying the opposition the right to debate the issues in a timely manner, Mr. Speaker.

[19:15]

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say that “citizens do not feel that the processes of formal democracy offer them enough influence over political decisions . . .” So what it’s saying, Mr. Speaker, is people don’t feel that they have enough input into political decisions. They don’t have enough input into things that actually affect them, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, when the opposition is asking that two

pieces of legislation go out for public hearing so that the public can actually come forward and make presentations, Mr. Speaker, what you’re trying to do is you’re trying to include the public in this process, Mr. Speaker.

What are they afraid of, Mr. Speaker? Why is the government afraid to allow the opposition and government members in the committee to take out two Bills for public hearings so members of the public and stakeholders can have their say, Mr. Speaker? What are they afraid of? Why are they afraid, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to include “. . . this includes party members who feel they have no say in policy-making and are increasingly disaffected,” Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so even in political parties where you have a government that has all its decisions made in the Executive Council, or for that matter all the decisions made in the Premier’s office, even members of that political party feel disenfranchised and disaffected by the decisions made by those in the Executive Council.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn’t work. And, Mr. Speaker, where you have a government that is willing to unilaterally use its power, where it’s willing to unilaterally change the rules of the Assembly in order to move forward their own agenda, Mr. Speaker, it isn’t democratic any longer, Mr. Speaker. And it talks only about the incompetence of the Executive Council, the incompetence of the Premier and the Premier’s office, for usurping and going outside our democratic processes and outside the rules of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is a time and a place for everything. And, Mr. Speaker, in the first session of a new government’s mandate is not the time for them to change unilaterally the rules of the Assembly, to decide that the rules that other governments have had to live by, the rules that they agreed to, no longer apply to them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the rules of the Assembly should apply to all. And they should apply to all equally, Mr. Speaker. You should not have a government who believes they do not have to follow the rules.

Mr. Speaker, the noise in the Assembly continues to get louder and louder. I can barely hear myself talk, let alone my colleagues hear this conversation or hear this debate, Mr. Speaker.

I’d like to say, Mr. Speaker, once again that the rules would indicate that the person with the floor should be able at least hear themselves, let alone their colleagues be able to speak, Mr. Speaker. And again it shows a total and complete disrespect for the rules of this Assembly.

I’m going to quote, Mr. Speaker, Robert Kennedy. Robert Kennedy said, “[Every] time a man stands for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope . . . [Mr. Speaker].”

Mr. Speaker, Robert Kennedy said that in 1966 and that’s as true today as it was in 1966. But today, Mr. Speaker, we have a government who is unilaterally changing the rules and saying

that it doesn't care what anybody thinks. But they're unilaterally going to do that. Mr. Speaker, that's injustice. That is injustice. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it is important that the members of this Assembly understand the importance of having rules that apply equally to everyone.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government move unilaterally to change the rules without consultation of the opposition, without negotiations of the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, I will admit that in the past many times we have changed the rules — the sitting hours as the session came to the end — through negotiation and in agreement of the House, moved by the government House leader, seconded by the opposition House leader. In a co-operative manner, we've moved to finish and complete the work of the Legislative Assembly in a timely manner. But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that was done through co-operation and through negotiation.

Mr. Speaker, this move by the government was done unilaterally, without discussion with the opposition, without any co-operation of the opposition. Mr. Speaker, they don't even want to talk to us. Fine, they say they'll do it their own way, Mr. Speaker. Now that in the end, Mr. Speaker, is an offence to all of us. Mr. Speaker, it's an offence to all of us. When the rules of this Assembly which we all agreed to cannot be held up by the members of this Assembly, then it's an offence to us all.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to look at this issue there's a number of things that I think are very important to be talked about, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to talk about the issue of competency. Mr. Speaker, we're in this situation because the members opposite decided that they weren't going to follow the parliamentary calendar, the legislative calendar that we had agreed to. And, Mr. Speaker, that legislative calendar was first printed and made known to all members of this Assembly in May 2007. It laid out what the calendar for implementation would be for the parliamentary session both last fall and this spring. Mr. Speaker, last fall it had us sitting 25 days. And I will acknowledge we had an election last fall and that would delay the introduction of the fall session of the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

But when we did go into the fall session, Mr. Speaker, all we did was sit for eight days, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we sat for eight days and eight days, Mr. Speaker, we sat. We sat for eight days, Mr. Speaker. And of those eight days, Mr. Speaker, five of them would have been budget debate, Mr. Speaker, which we didn't even sit in the evenings because the members opposite didn't want to sit in the evenings. And then we had the introduction of legislation and they closed the House down before we had the opportunity to debate any of the legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we had no opportunity, we had no opportunity in which to discuss that legislation. We had no opportunity to talk to people about that legislation, Mr. Speaker.

And lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, we were supposed to start on March 3 this spring. When did we start? We started on March 10. We started on March 10 because the members opposite decided — once again unilaterally — that we weren't going to open the House until the 10th, Mr. Speaker, because they

weren't ready. They weren't ready, Mr. Speaker; they weren't ready to do their own jobs.

So then, Mr. Speaker, because they weren't ready to do their own jobs, two weeks into this current session, Mr. Speaker, in which they chose not to sit any nights, denying the members of the opposition the opportunity to debate that legislation, Mr. Speaker, taking away a good 14 hours of debate in the first two weeks and a good 25 hours of debate in the first week we didn't sit, Mr. Speaker, denying a full 39 hours of debate for members of the opposition which would have passed two of their priority Bills, Mr. Speaker — two of their priority Bills, Mr. Speaker.

So now because they didn't do their job, and now because they didn't understand what their job is, Mr. Speaker, they're unilaterally going to change the rules, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, that goes directly, that goes directly to competence, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we're taking about competency, Mr. Speaker, while we're talking about competency, Mr. Speaker, I think we need to talk about a number of other issues about competency, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last four months we have seen from this government a number of things that bring into consideration their competency, Mr. Speaker, as does this unilateral change to the rules proposed.

Mr. Speaker, for a newly elected government who has been in power for just a little over four months, the Sask Party's racked up a number of issues around the issue of competency and mismanagement, Mr. Speaker.

This government — and I'm going to start with some of the most recent ones — axed the funding for Station 20, Station 20 West in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. A very innovative and popular program in the city of Saskatoon, and oh, they axed it because it was nothing but a grocery store in their own mind. Axed. People have problems in the community, Mr. Speaker, yet we saw over the weekend a rally of more than 2,500 people — 2,500 people in Saskatoon — asking for the funding for Station 20 to be restored, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I need once again to point out this: the former Grant Devine government took four years, four years in office before they could get a rally of 2,000 people or more against them; Mr. Speaker, this government managed to do it in four months. Now, Mr. Speaker, they might think that's a good record, but, Mr. Speaker, it speaks directly to their incompetence, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why did the members opposite rip the funding right out of the stakeholder groups in Station 20, Mr. Speaker? They never answered those questions, Mr. Speaker. They never consulted with individuals, they never met with the individuals. They still are refusing to meet with the founders of Station 20.

The Housing minister. This is really one that is a prize, Mr. Speaker. We had a minister of the Crown work on their budget, Mr. Speaker, sign off their budget. The minister was on Treasury Board, signs it off on Treasury Board, goes through cabinet, and then budget day comes along. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon the department meets and starts telling employees that there's going to be a fundamental change that's going to

affect 200 employees and there's going to be a transfer of some 200 employees — 140 of 200 employees — and about 75, 80 employees lose their jobs, Mr. Speaker.

The minister says she knows nothing about it, Mr. Speaker. The minister stands out in a press conference, in a scrum, saying, I didn't know anything about this, Mr. Speaker. Well how can you not know about it, Mr. Speaker? How do you not know about it when you've signed it off as the minister, when you signed it off on Treasury Board, when you signed it off in cabinet, Mr. Speaker? How can you not know what your department's going to do? And then she has the audacity to blame the officials, Mr. Speaker, that they simply didn't understand her position, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen incompetence from this government that is beyond acceptable limits, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they've been the government for four months, Mr. Speaker, and they still don't know what they're doing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have the Premier, the Premier on their website taking an endorsement from a blogger, you know, a prominent blogger here in Saskatchewan. Right? Called smalldeadanimals. It's called smalldeadanimals, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has an endorsement from the founder of a website called smalldeadanimals on the Sask Party website, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this radical individual from . . . goes out and says some comments that, of course, are very offensive to everybody. And then all of a sudden the Premier doesn't know anything about this. Doesn't know anything about this endorsement of this individual and, of course, after we raise the issue they remove it from their website, Mr. Speaker, but only after somebody else raises the issue, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they've got very short memories and very little understanding of what they're doing in most cases.

Mr. Speaker, let's go back to the first big issue that, just hours . . . Some may say just days after the government was elected, but I think it was just hours after they were in a position to make public comment, Mr. Speaker. We had the Premier of the province, the Premier elected at that time saying the province's finances were in stark condition. They were in stark condition, the province's finances, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, he was saying that when there was more than \$1.5 billion in the bank — \$1.5 billion in the bank, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if that's competency, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan need to check that for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they go and say on one hand the cupboard is bare, the finances are stark; and then they turn around and table a budget, Mr. Speaker, that's 10 per cent increase year over year, Mr. Speaker — 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they still have \$1.3 billion in a slush fund. That's a stark financial situation — \$1.3 billion, \$1.3 billion.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that shows their competency by firing senior civil servants, Mr. Speaker, that have worked for governments of every stripe over the last 30 years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these members who are now the government, who will unilaterally change the rules of this Assembly, believe they can do anything, Mr. Speaker. They believe because they have a majority government and they won

an election on November 7 that they can do absolutely anything, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's shameful. That's absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party's incompetence is costing the people of Saskatchewan money. It costs the taxpayers of this province money. It costs millions of dollars in severance pay. It's costing millions of dollars in reversing decisions, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it deals with the fundamental competency.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's just deal with the issue in front of us. Let's deal with the motion that's in front of us, Mr. Speaker. What's the impact of this motion, Mr. Speaker? What does it cost to extend the hours, Mr. Speaker? What does it cost? Let me just give you a rundown of what it'll cost, Mr. Speaker. It will increase the cost of overtime in the Legislative Assembly because people are going to have to work overtime in order to accommodate the extended hours, Mr. Speaker. That includes the Pages, the security personnel, the staff at the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, includes Hansard, includes those that are going to transcribe *Hansard* each day. It's going to significantly increase the cost of operating the legislature, Mr. Speaker. Have they taken that into consideration?

[19:30]

So their inability to plan, their incompetence, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers have to pay. The taxpayers pay because the government has decided they are going to ram through their agenda on a time frame that's unreasonable. And they cannot manage within the rules of the Assembly regardless of what the outcome is, Mr. Speaker, and regardless what it costs the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are having a great deal of difficulty understanding that what they're doing isn't (a) appropriate, and (b) isn't principled in our democratic society, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, they continue to chatter from their desks and make comment, Mr. Speaker, but they've chosen to move this motion, Mr. Speaker, and they have chosen to unilaterally bring forward this position. So, Mr. Speaker, they are failing to recognize the facts of this debate, Mr. Speaker, and they're failing to recognize that what they are doing is in fact fundamentally changing the rules.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take some time now and talk a bit about the history of the rules in our legislature, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of decades, Mr. Speaker, the parliaments have been modernized, the goal to make parliaments more efficient and effective, Mr. Speaker. A common feature of modernization is the parliamentary calendar, Mr. Speaker. So when this legislature puts forward a parliamentary calendar agreed to by all parties, Mr. Speaker, published, Mr. Speaker, for this session as early as May of last year, Mr. Speaker, what happens? The members opposite, we go through an election and they move from opposition to government and then, Mr. Speaker, they can't even keep, they cannot even keep the calendar, Mr. Speaker. They want to change the rules . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you very much. The member from Weyburn encouraged me to take a drink and I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, so as we modernize our legislature and we put in

place a calendar, Mr. Speaker, which is a common feature of a modern legislature, Mr. Speaker, what happens? The first opportunity, the members opposite unilaterally decide not to open the session on March 3 but move it to March 10, denying the opposition 25 approximate hours of debate, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, when they did that, Mr. Speaker, when they changed the rules, Mr. Speaker, they shortened the session. And in shortening the session, Mr. Speaker, they made it more difficult to move forward their own agenda within the time frame that's allowed within the rules, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — You guys agreed to it.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, they're saying we agreed to shorten it from the 3rd to the 10th. That's absolutely wrong, Mr. Speaker. They decided to do that unilaterally. They made the decisions. Mr. Speaker, they did that unilaterally. They did it without consultation, Mr. Speaker. And they did it in their own interest.

Then, Mr. Speaker, so that denied the opposition 25 hours of debate time. It would've passed one of their pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, had they followed the rules that they had agreed to, one of their pieces of legislation would, in fact, could have been fully debated at this time, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, not only did they do that. In the first two weeks of the legislative session, Mr. Speaker, we didn't sit evenings. We didn't sit in evenings, again denying the 14 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, they controlled the agenda, Mr. Speaker. They put forward what goes on the parliamentary calendar, Mr. Speaker, the legislative calendar each day, that what appears in the blues, Mr. Speaker. They decide each day what the issue of discussion is, Mr. Speaker. And they decided not, decided not, Mr. Speaker, to sit Monday and Tuesday nights the first two weeks.

Mr. Speaker, so we adopted a calendar and then they failed to use it, which has resulted in some of the significant problems they have in their time frame today. Mr. Speaker, the House of Commons in Ottawa adopted a parliamentary calendar in 1982, and I quote: "... in order to make the sitting and non-sitting times predictable."

Mr. Speaker, the reason, the reason that you set a calendar is in fact to make the sitting times of the Legislative Assembly predictable. And, Mr. Speaker, it was predictable when the now opposition was the government. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly not predictable today.

Mr. Speaker, the United Kingdom instituted a parliamentary calendar in 1992 as part of, and I quote: "a more sweeping modernization agenda," Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's working elsewhere. Why can't it work here? Well the reason it can't work here, Mr. Speaker, is that the government of the day, Mr. Speaker, either didn't understand the rules they put in place, Mr. Speaker, or they simply are incompetent and cannot function within the rules that they agreed to.

Parliamentary calendars have been instituted in Alberta in 1993, Manitoba in 1996, British Columbia in 2002. Mr. Speaker, they're working everywhere else. The only place you have difficulty is here under this government in Saskatchewan.

On May 15, 2006, the Standing Committee on House Services appointed a subcommittee to study delegation ... whose purpose is, and I quote, "... to study and make recommendations on the adoption of a legislative calendar and revisions to ... sitting times ... [Mr. Speaker]."

Well, Mr. Speaker, we had a subcommittee that then the Minister of Government Services sat on, and on this side, it was then the member for Regina South who sat on the committee. And, Mr. Speaker, they went all the way to Australia to see how things worked, Mr. Speaker. They went all the way to Australia.

An Hon. Member: — Do they work there?

Mr. Yates: — And they work well there. Mr. Speaker, they can't make it work here for some reason. And that's rather ironic.

The subcommittee was made up of the Speaker of the House, the opposition House leader and the government House leader and the member from Cannington and the member from Regina South. And it was a joint, co-operative, and collaborative effort between the government and the opposition, Mr. Speaker. And they all agreed. Mr. Speaker, they unilaterally agreed to the rules. On October 16 the Standing Committee on House Services, which was made up from members of the government and the opposition, unanimously adopted the recommendations of the subcommittee.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the rules were changed. The recommendations of the subcommittee were based on the experience of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan with an informal parliamentary calendar which we tried for a period of time — with an informal calendar — and we made it work, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because it wasn't the government of the day in charge.

Mr. Speaker, you had a competent government in charge. It was understood what you had to do to move forward your legislative calendar, your legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker, and by the way, managed to get its business done, Mr. Speaker, without changing the rules unilaterally. Amazing — it can be done, Mr. Speaker.

And I might point out, I might point out at that period of time, Mr. Speaker, that we had a one-person majority or one-vote majority in the government, where today they have a 19-vote majority, Mr. Speaker. And they still can't make it work. It's astounding, Mr. Speaker — absolutely astounding, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our changes were also based on reviews of what was happening in both Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, members of the subcommittee took the time to review the operations in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba as well and see how their parliamentary calendars were working and how the outcomes in the legislature worked for the benefit of the people of

Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that in those provinces they managed to make things work without unilaterally changing the rules.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the subcommittee also found out that the changes to the parliamentary calendar resulted in greater co-operation amongst members in the scheduling of Assembly and committee business. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's been a practice everywhere. And I would have to say, until now it's been a practice in Saskatchewan. This is the first time where there has been no co-operation, Mr. Speaker, where the government unilaterally decided that they were going to make a rule change, or in fact going to ram through an agenda without any consultation, co-operation, or work with the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

We have a new government that doesn't believe in the principles of democracy, Mr. Speaker — a new government that believes that might makes right, Mr. Speaker, that believe that you can bully people into moving forward with their agenda and their time frame, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that we have today in Saskatchewan a government that's heavy-handed, that believes that they can do whatever they want to do, and believes they can do anything on their time frame, Mr. Speaker; they can get away with absolutely anything, Mr. Speaker.

It was found out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the research that, if properly constituted, parliamentary calendars fix a number of problems. They fix the beginning and end dates of the session, and then there are far less days devoted to partisan manoeuvring by governments or oppositions. The subcommittee also found that a fixed calendar is a more efficient use of staff resources, Mr. Speaker — that you can plan the utilization of staff, Mr. Speaker, without incurring costs that you don't foresee such as overtime, Mr. Speaker. That is the rules, Mr. Speaker. Planning makes good outcomes, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately here we have a government that's not able to plan, not able to understand the rules, and must change them in order to unilaterally push through their agenda.

Mr. Speaker, it was also found that fixed sessions provided ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly and their staff more time to manage their own affairs, more time to consult with their constituents, more time to consult with stakeholders, and overall was more efficient and effective, Mr. Speaker. That's what parliamentary calendars do to benefit the outcomes of the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, that's not working here today. Today we are faced with a situation where we have a government who wants to unilaterally bring forward changes to the hours of work, Mr. Speaker, and bring forward changes to the hours of work so that they can in fact, Mr. Speaker, so that they can in fact ram through, jam through pieces of legislation that the opposition would like to see go out for public hearings, Mr. Speaker — denying the opposition the time to properly do their jobs, Mr. Speaker. And denying, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province the opportunity to be directly consulted on these pieces of legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members of the government should take into consideration what the needs of the stakeholders are, Mr.

Speaker, what the needs of the people of this province are, Mr. Speaker, and they should allow Bills 5 and 6 to go out to public hearings, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, prior to an election, Mr. Speaker, prior to an election the government today said when they were in opposition that there was no need for essential service legislation, Mr. Speaker. We heard it from the now Health minister, who was then the Health critic, said there was no agenda to bring forward legislation, Mr. Speaker, that would in fact curtail the rights of members to strike, that there was no need for essential service legislation in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We also heard it from the Premier, Mr. Speaker, when he was the leader of the opposition and then amazingly, Mr. Speaker, out of the blue, Mr. Speaker, when they become government they have this piece of legislation already drafted and say they've been working on it for some time. The minister responsible for the legislation said that this legislation has been worked on for some time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is about their credibility. This is about their competence, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not about the legislation, Mr. Speaker, because as we all know, Mr. Speaker, that the majority, in this case the government, has the ability to pass this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

All we're asking for is there be proper consultations, there be proper public dialogue on the Bills, Mr. Speaker, and that stakeholders, both business and labour, have the opportunity to share their positions, Mr. Speaker, that they have the right to be consulted, Mr. Speaker, and that maybe out of those consultations, Mr. Speaker, maybe out of those consultations we get a better piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. Maybe we get a better piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the government has no fear because in the committee process they also have the majority of seats, Mr. Speaker. They have four seats to the opposition's two, Mr. Speaker, so that any changes that were made would have to be made with the co-operation of the government in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. All we're asking is those Bills go out for consultations through the committee hearing process, Mr. Speaker, and both for stakeholders to have the opportunity to bring forward their positions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard very clearly as we were looking at the rule change process that parliamentary calendars help members balance their duties in the Assembly with their constituency and caucus responsibilities. In short, calendars make our lives much more predictable, Mr. Speaker, and make it much easier for us to do our jobs as legislators, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it also makes it easier on our families.

One of the major considerations for members of the government who are largely centred in some of the larger urban areas, Mr. Speaker, was the consideration for those who had long distances to travel and who are away from their families four or five days a week, Mr. Speaker. So one of the things we ensured was that in this process we shortened the legislative calendar from five days to four days per week.

And we actually increased the amount of potential time by allowing two subcommittees of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, to do the work of the legislature that we used to do in the whole Assembly so that we could have two committees sitting at one time. So even though we were shortening the time we sat each week by one day, Mr. Speaker, we're actually increasing the total number of hours in which we could debate the issues of the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

[19:45]

Now, Mr. Speaker, our opportunity to improve this legislature through the subcommittee was supported by all members of this Assembly. The subcommittee was firmly convinced, firmly convinced that a permanent parliamentary calendar, and I quote, will:

... make it easier for the Assembly, as a whole, to carry on its functions more effectively ... [and] that a permanent parliamentary calendar ... [was] the next step in furthering the modernization ... [process in our Assembly, Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, the committee continued its work. The opposition and government House leaders agreed on changes, and we implemented a permanent calendar, Mr. Speaker. Now the permanent calendar anticipated, the permanent calendar anticipated that we would in fact sit in this year from the 3rd of March through to the 15th of May, Mr. Speaker. Well lo and behold, we didn't start until the 10th, Mr. Speaker. So right off the bat, right off the bat, right off the bat we didn't follow our permanent calendar. Mr. Speaker, we started late by a week.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members of the public that are listening this evening that the Sask Party was not only part of the creation of the new rules, Mr. Speaker; they were in favour of the new rules, Mr. Speaker. In fact they led the charge, Mr. Speaker. And when they were in opposition, they wanted to ensure that there was a minimum of 20 hours of debate on priority legislation, Mr. Speaker. And they wanted to ensure the rules that are in place today are as they were, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in a press release dated October 16, 2006, the opposition House leader who is now the Government House Leader is quoted as saying, "These changes are about improving the way the legislative assembly works ..."

Mr. Speaker, that's a bold statement. It's about improving how the Legislative Assembly works. The now Government House Leader was the then opposition House leader that said that this is about improving how the Assembly works. Well how is it working for them, Mr. Speaker? It's working so well that he doesn't know how to manage their affairs, doesn't know how to count the hours of debate required, and put it in the legislative calendar in such a way that he can move his agenda forward, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that deals with fundamental competency, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on May 17, 2007, the same Sask Party member stood in this House and said I quote:

... I believe this is the first full session where we've operated under the new rules of ... [this] Assembly ...

[and] have been established and developed ... in balance [where] we have been very successful in bringing our Saskatchewan legislature to the forefront of parliamentary process, not [only] in this province but also in this entire country [Mr. Speaker] ... we can be all be rightly proud of all of the work that we've done to accomplish these changes.

These changes ... are for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan firstly ... the fact that there is more predictability also, in particular, benefits our constituents and the people ... of the province ...

Mr. Speaker, we have the now Government House Leader saying that these rules work, Mr. Speaker. Well they worked when we were the government, Mr. Speaker, because we know how to manage the agenda, Mr. Speaker. We know how to get our legislation through, Mr. Speaker.

It's amazing now that they're the government, the rules don't work. They don't work, Mr. Speaker. And they don't even have a full legislative calendar yet, Mr. Speaker. They've got about 20 Bills on the calendar, Mr. Speaker. That's about half a legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a half a legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker, and they still can't make it work, Mr. Speaker, not without unilaterally changing the hours.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of members opposite who by now must understand that something's wrong over there. Something smells a little bit fishy because how can they not, how can the members opposite out there, Mr. Speaker ... And I think a few of them are probably fishermen and have gone fishing a time or two, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, something is smelling a little bit fishy over there because they can't get anything done.

So what's the problem, Mr. Speaker? Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem is, Mr. Speaker, that they don't want to work with anybody. Mr. Speaker, the day they got elected, they thought that, you know, they'd hit a home run, if you want to use a baseball analogy. But we're using a fishing analogy, Mr. Speaker. They thought they caught the big one. You know, they caught the big one. They're the government now. They're out fishing. They caught the big one. They're the government now, Mr. Speaker.

But what they forgot, Mr. Speaker, not only do you got to get the big one the end of the hook; you got to be able to reel it in, Mr. Speaker. You got to be able to work your fishing rod, Mr. Speaker. And you got to be able to land that big fish, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they don't know how to land the fish. Mr. Speaker, they don't know how to get to the goal line, Mr. Speaker. They can't get the fish in the boat, Mr. Speaker. They can't get their agenda through.

Mr. Speaker, they can't get the agenda through, Mr. Speaker, and they're saying they don't have a big enough boat, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they say they don't have a big enough boat. They forgot they're fishing from the shore, Mr. Speaker. They don't know what the boat's for; that's the problem. Mr. Speaker, they're fishing from the shore, Mr. Speaker. They don't need a boat. They haven't figured that out either.

But, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't want to give them a rowboat or a motorboat or a sailboat or, Mr. Speaker, any type of boat. If they can't manage simple rules, we don't expect them to manage a boat very well. Mr. Speaker, their boat would have holes all . . . and then be filling full of water so fast because they don't know how to play by the rules. Mr. Speaker, this rule change that they're proposing is like their life jacket, Mr. Speaker. They're sinking, Mr. Speaker, and they're sinking fast, and they've got to try to find some way, some way to save themselves, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the problem is what they grab for a life jacket is made for an eight-year-old, Mr. Speaker. What they grab for a life jacket is made for an eight-year-old. It won't hold them up, Mr. Speaker. They're sinking right now, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, the members opposite are out fishing, Mr. Speaker. They fall in and they're trying to be held up by a life jacket made for an eight-year-old, Mr. Speaker. And they're sinking. They're sinking. They don't know what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. They're grasping at anything, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, what's this say about where we're at? Mr. Speaker, this says very simply that this government, this government, Mr. Speaker, can't manage its own agenda. They became the government four months ago, and they come into the first session of the legislature, Mr. Speaker. They introduce six priority Bills that require 120 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. They introduce a budget that requires 75 hour minimum debate in the estimates, Mr. Speaker. And lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, they put forward a legislative calendar that doesn't give them enough time to pass their agenda.

Now who's responsible for that, Mr. Speaker? Not the opposition. The opposition's not responsible for the government's calendar. That deals directly with the competence of the government, Mr. Speaker.

Then, Mr. Speaker, then what you would expect a competent government to do, Mr. Speaker? A confident government would come to the opposition and say, can we make some sort of deal, Mr. Speaker. Can we make some sort of deal that will allow us to pass our agenda even though, even though we made a big mistake, Mr. Speaker? They'd acknowledge for themselves they'd made a big mistake. This government won't acknowledge they made a big mistake, Mr. Speaker. They won't acknowledge the mistakes they made. They dropped the ball, Mr. Speaker, but they won't acknowledge they dropped the ball.

Mr. Speaker, in fact the fish got away from them; that's how bad it is. But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, these guys . . . How bad these guys are is they put a ball out for bait to try to catch the fish. That's how bad these guys are. They don't understand, Mr. Speaker, anything about fishing. They go fishing from shore and talk about the need for a boat, Mr. Speaker. They're fishing from shore, and they're using a ball as bait, Mr. Speaker. No wonder we have problems, Mr. Speaker.

And the minister responsible for labour and employment and post-secondary education keeps giving us ideas about their competency, Mr. Speaker. He's admitting they put a ball as bait on the fishing rod, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes well, Mr. Speaker, he's done a little mixing up over there

and that isn't, Mr. Speaker, that's not uncommon, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, getting back to the issue at hand, when the government found out that they didn't have the ability, that they'd mismanaged the issue of time in order to bring forward their agenda, Mr. Speaker, when they mismanaged that issue, Mr. Speaker, they didn't come to the opposition and say, look this is our problem; how can we fix it. No, Mr. Speaker, they didn't decide to do that. They didn't approach the opposition in an attempt to find resolution to the problem, Mr. Speaker.

They decided we're the government; we have the power so we're going to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely shameful. That is absolutely shameful that they would unilaterally decide to change the rules without any consultation. Mr. Speaker, that is their definition of democracy, Mr. Speaker. And that is shameful.

Mr. Speaker, we're faced with a situation today where we have a government that believes they can do anything they want, that after they won an election on November 7 that this Assembly is for their own agenda only, Mr. Speaker. They don't believe in the democratic principles or the rules of which we all passed and agreed upon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today we're faced with a situation where we have a government that's prepared to use their majority to unilaterally ram through a change to the rules, that's willing to in fact ensure that only the majority interest is upheld in this legislature, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they have other options available to them. They could have come to the opposition and tried to find a negotiated settlement to their particular problem, Mr. Speaker.

Or, Mr. Speaker, I would again like to indicate to the people of the province of Saskatchewan the legislation in which we are dealing with, the legislation that requires 20 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker, and what the impact of that legislation would be on the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 1, the first Bill they introduced is An Act respecting Saskatchewan's Growth and Financial Security and repealing certain Acts, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is to replace the financial fiscal stabilization Act, Mr. Speaker.

But this new fund does exactly the same thing the Fiscal Stabilization Fund did — with one minor exception, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it makes it legal, Mr. Speaker, to take the sale of Crown assets, Mr. Speaker, and actually put those Crown assets in the General Revenue Fund, Mr. Speaker, and use it as funds for general revenue spending, Mr. Speaker. Previously those funds had to go to either pay down debt, Mr. Speaker, or to be used, Mr. Speaker, in the Crown Investments Corporation.

But, Mr. Speaker, if this piece of legislation didn't pass this spring and continued on to this fall, it would still pass in this year, calendar year, Mr. Speaker, which would allow the government, Mr. Speaker, to (a) be able to have this legislation in place prior to the next budget. It would in fact could be implemented retroactively as much legislation is, but, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing saying that this Bill would not pass.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely nothing saying this Bill would not pass in the regular time frames, Mr. Speaker — nothing but the imagination of the members opposite. Mr. Speaker, this Bill at most requires 20 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. We still have five and a half weeks of sitting, Mr. Speaker. Five and a half weeks, which within each week they can pass one priority Bill, Mr. Speaker, if they have their act together, Mr. Speaker.

That's a difficult thing to ask them, to have their act together, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, if they had their act together, Mr. Speaker, these Bills, that particular Bill would pass in one week of the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

What's the second Bill that's so important to the members opposite? Bill No. 2 is An Act respecting Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It puts in place the new entity of Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Once again, Mr. Speaker, they can pass this legislation. Mr. Speaker, if the Government House Leader puts together an agenda and prioritizes the Bills, Mr. Speaker, he can pass this Bill as well before the end of the session, Mr. Speaker, and he can put this into law.

So he can put Bill 1 and 2 into law, Mr. Speaker, no problems at all by simply, by simply organizing his agenda, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker . . . oh we're having some, we're having some . . . Mr. Speaker, they didn't even pay the power bill. The lights are flickering and members on this side are asking, did they even pay the power bill, Mr. Speaker. People are concerned they couldn't even pay the power bill appropriately, Mr. Speaker.

But Mr. Speaker, getting back to the issue before us, Mr. Speaker, what's Bill No. 3? Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 3 — and I want the Government House Leader to listen very carefully — Bill No. 3 is An Act to repeal The Potash Development Act, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill was put in place in the 1970s, Mr. Speaker, and this Bill has never been implemented. Mr. Speaker, repealing this Bill makes zero difference, zero difference to any of the people in the province of Saskatchewan. It makes zero difference to the business community in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, it's simply on the wish list of the government. So Mr. Speaker, if this Bill . . . if you didn't get to debate this Bill for 20 hours because you didn't put it as a priority, Mr. Speaker, if the government didn't put this as a priority, what's the impact to the people of Saskatchewan? Nothing. Zero, Mr. Speaker. Zero, Mr. Speaker. Zero impact because this Bill has never been implemented and been on the books for more than 30 years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so now you can see why we're questioning, why we're questioning, why the government is saying they can't get their agenda through in the time frame.

[20:00]

Let's go to Bill No. 4. Bill No. 4 is a piece of legislation that amends The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, Mr. Speaker, and puts in fixed election dates. They have pushed in the next election date to be November 7, 2011, Mr. Speaker — November 7, 2011. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, first off, that's three and a half years or more away. So if this Bill didn't

pass till the fall, what's the impact to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? If this Bill did not pass till the fall, Mr. Speaker, it has zero impact. Until November 7, 2011, three and a half years from now, what would the impact be on the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Nothing. So what's the panic button?

So, Mr. Speaker, we're through the first four Bills, two of which they can pass easily, Mr. Speaker, and the other two it doesn't matter if they pass. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now deal with Bill No. 5. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 5 is An Act respecting Essential Public Services. Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill that didn't appear in their party platform, Mr. Speaker — didn't appear as a priority, Mr. Speaker, prior to the election. In fact prior to the election, members sitting in opposition said they had no intention to do this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, this Bill . . . Mr. Speaker, this Bill was not on the government's agenda. This Bill was not in their platform. This Bill was an afterthought . . . or that's what they would like us to believe. It was an afterthought, Mr. Speaker. But we heard the minister talk about this had been in preparation for months — for months. And, Mr. Speaker, they were saying that this Bill wasn't in the works, and then all of a sudden, presto, it's there. In fact I'd like to bring the attention of members back to . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's hard to see in here. Do you find it difficult to read?

Mr. Yates: — Yes, it is difficult to read. It is getting much more difficult to read. It's getting dim here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, but this particular piece of legislation was not a priority of the government when they were in opposition. In fact we had the opposition critic for Health say that they had no intention of doing this. We had the then leader of the opposition, the Premier, say it's not in the order books, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, it's continuing to get more difficult to see in here, Mr. Speaker. It's getting dim in here, and it's obvious that we're having some difficulty with the lights, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important to talk about this particular piece of legislation. This is a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that we've had stakeholders ask go out to public consultations, public hearings through our committee process — something that is anticipated as part of the deliberations in the rules, Mr. Speaker. It would be nice to have this piece of legislation go out for public hearings, Mr. Speaker.

But what did we hear from the members opposite? No. No. They're not going to take this Bill out for public hearings or for public consultation. And why, Mr. Speaker? Why are they not prepared to take this Bill out for public hearings and public consultations? They haven't given us a reason why other than they're just going to unilaterally ram it through, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why can we not take a piece of legislation that they said wasn't needed when they were in opposition out to talk to the business and labour stakeholders in our province to see if we can't improve upon this particular piece of legislation? What are they afraid of, Mr. Speaker? The members of the

opposition cannot unilaterally change this legislation, Mr. Speaker. It would take a majority of the members which . . . Each committee consists today of four members of the government and two from the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we now have covered five Bills. Mr. Speaker, and as I pointed out earlier, the government could pass four Bills, if they just managed the session, quite easy. And two of the Bills have no impact at all. Two have no impact. The Bill dealing with The Potash Development Repeal Act has no impact. And, Mr. Speaker, the one that in fact puts in fixed election dates, November 7, 2011, if we don't pass this till this fall — lo and behold — we'll only be three years ahead of time. We'll only be three years ahead of its implementation needs. Mr. Speaker, I can't understand what the big issue is.

Mr. Speaker, the final Bill that's a priority Bill for the government is An Act to amend The Trade Union Act. This in fact is a Bill that they made very clear when they were in opposition that they were going to amend, Mr. Speaker. But again this is a Bill that if they just stuck to the rules and they prioritize their debate, they could in fact pass, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, they've chosen not, they've chosen not to take the opportunity to follow the rules that we all agreed to, and they move forward with this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it is getting darker in here; it's getting more difficult to see. But, Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — What's the point of order?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, the member who has been in his place speaking now for some time has repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that it's difficult to see in the Chamber. It's apparent, I think it's apparent to all in the Chamber that a short while ago the lights dimmed appreciably.

And I wonder if, Mr. Speaker, would be so kind as to inquire from the staff that maintain the building as to how long we will continue to have to operate in this subdued atmosphere. I am not suggesting for a moment that the proceedings be halted. But I would ask, Mr. Speaker, to ascertain how long it might be before this problem is rectified so that we can carry on with debate in a normal fashion. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Point of order is taken into account. I recognize the member.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to speak to the point of order raised by the minister or the member opposite.

Mr. Speaker, clearly the lights flickered. They have not gone off. I mean, if there's any lack of voltage in this Assembly, it's on the other side of the House. But surely, but surely, surely this whole Chamber does not have to be held captive. I trust that you will rule that the lighting is more than adequate for us to conduct the business of this Assembly. And I would urge the members opposite to do just that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Order. The Speaker recognizes the point of order but feels that the light is definitely sufficient for the debate to carry on.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member from Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to continue my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, as I have clearly indicated to all members of this Assembly, that of the six priority Bills that the government is concerned about, Mr. Speaker, four of those Bills, four of those Bills may or may not have some immediate impact, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, two of those Bills have no — and I want to stress, Mr. Speaker — two of those Bills have no impact.

And, Mr. Speaker, so why do we have a need for the government to change the rules, Mr. Speaker? They could in fact pass those four Bills. If that was their desire, Mr. Speaker, they could pass those four Bills by setting the agenda in an appropriate manner and debate those Bills through the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why, why does the government feel, why does the government feel, Mr. Speaker — and this is a fundamental question — why does the government feel they have to pass two pieces of legislation this session that would have zero impact? Why do they feel they have to pass two pieces of legislation that would have no impact? Is it because the ego of certain members would be offended if they didn't get their legislation through?

Because, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 3, The Potash Development Repeal Act, Mr. Speaker, was put in place in the 1970s, has never been acted upon, Mr. Speaker, never been acted upon. And, Mr. Speaker, it's only an issue today, it's only in issue today if the minister responsible for mining in this province were going to implement that piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know why that same minister would put forward a repeal Act to get rid of that piece of legislation if he had any intention to act upon it, Mr. Speaker. So what is the real need to pass that piece of legislation this spring, Mr. Speaker? It's zero.

Mr. Speaker, if this Bill continued on and was passed in the fall, Mr. Speaker, it would make no difference at all. It would only make a difference in the point of view of their being able to say that they have accomplished their mandate, their agenda, on their timetable, Mr. Speaker, to show that they're really the bully that they're portraying themselves to be with this rule change, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and Bill No. 4, Bill No. 4, the one that puts in place fixed election dates, an amendment to The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, Mr. Speaker, what does that do? Mr. Speaker, that puts in place, Mr. Speaker, fixed election dates, and the first fixed election date in the province of Saskatchewan would be November 7, 2011, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, why do they need to pass that piece of legislation in this spring session? Well for only one reason, Mr. Speaker,

for only one reason. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well they say it's about keeping their word, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let me, let me assure the Government House Leader this, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me assure the Government House Leader that if he and his government pass that legislation this fall, they're still keeping their word, Mr. Speaker. They're keeping their word prior to the next election, Mr. Speaker, and in fact they are still accomplishing their agenda, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they are still keeping their word, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so two of the six Bills have no impact, Mr. Speaker. Two of those six Bills we'd like to go out to public consultation, so we've asked the government to consider that, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, if they don't agree with it, Mr. Speaker, they still have the ability, under the existing rules, to pass that legislation by simply following the rules that are in place today. But why won't they? Are they that insecure, Mr. Speaker? Do they not know that they have the ability to structure the daily activities of this Assembly? They have the ability to determine what legislation gets called, Mr. Speaker. All they have to do is put a single issue on the agenda for that day, and that's all we speak about, Mr. Speaker. We'll use all seven hours of debate that day on that issue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the principles of democratic reform. The Sask Party used to support broad democratic reform, Mr. Speaker. Now because of their own mismanagement, their own inability to handle their agenda, because of their incompetence, they're willing to throw away the democratic process, Mr. Speaker. They're willing to set aside the democratic process, Mr. Speaker, and unilaterally change the rules of this Assembly.

Less than two years ago when the Saskatchewan Party was in opposition, they negotiated the very rules that this Legislative Assembly lives with today, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, not only did they negotiate them; they were in opposition. And they negotiated very strongly to want to ensure that those minimum requirements for legislation and in fact, Mr. Speaker, for estimates were in place.

And we, when we were government, thought it's fair and balanced, Mr. Speaker. It was fair and balanced, so that the rights of the opposition, the rights of the minority were in balance with the rights of the majority, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it was fair and balanced when we were in government, but — lo and behold — when they become government, the balance, it doesn't work anymore, Mr. Speaker.

They don't seem to understand about fair and balanced anymore, Mr. Speaker. They only understand what they want to see, Mr. Speaker. Well as a result, as a result they want to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker. These rule changes were implemented in 2006, were the results of joint work and a joint committee by both parties. The committee was made up of both government and opposition members.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, key members of the opposition, now the

government, sat on that committee, including, Mr. Speaker, in the latter stages, the current House Leader for the government, sat on that committee, Mr. Speaker, along with myself and other members. Our current House Leader, the member for Regina Douglas Park, was key in the implementation of the rules, Mr. Speaker, and the negotiations of the final implementation of these rules.

[20:15]

Mr. Speaker, these rules were the result of studies that included a trip to Alberta, Manitoba, British Columbia, and — lo and behold — Australia. And, Mr. Speaker, they went all the way to Australia to study the rules. And because the opposition needed to do that — the now government when they were opposition — needed to go all the way to Australia to study the rules, we agreed to it because we wanted to be fair. We wanted to be balanced in our approach, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well that's true, the member from Regina Douglas Park didn't go to Australia. It was the member from Regina South went to Australia on behalf of the then government and the member from Souris-Cannington went to Australia on behalf of the opposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, years were spent, years were spent, on examining the rules and parliamentary calendars in other jurisdictions. And then after all that examination, Mr. Speaker, and looking at how they worked in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, we took the step here to implement a parliamentary calendar, Mr. Speaker, and rule changes. And these were rule changes that the opposition, now the government, wanted very badly. And, Mr. Speaker, we agreed to them, and we managed to make them work when we were government. When we were running the agenda, we made them work. Members opposite can't deny, members opposite cannot deny, we made them work when we were the government.

And all of a sudden on November 7 we have a change in government. We have an election and we have a change in government, Mr. Speaker. We moved to opposition and they moved to government, and all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — A good thing for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Yates: — They say a good thing for Saskatchewan, they're yelling across, Mr. Speaker; but I really question that, Mr. Speaker, because all of a sudden the rules that we made work easy when we were government they can't make work. Mr. Speaker, they can't make the rules work. Mr. Speaker, either they can't count, Mr. Speaker, or they're fundamentally incompetent, Mr. Speaker.

If they can't make the rules work, the rules that all members of this Assembly negotiated, the rules that all members of this Assembly agreed to, Mr. Speaker, and that the previous government could make work, well what's the problem? It can't be the rules because the previous government could make the rules work. It has to be the government, Mr. Speaker. It is to be their own inability — their own inability to understand and balance their own agenda with the time available, Mr. Speaker, and their own inability, Mr. Speaker, their own inability to work

in co-operation with the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, they don't understand yet, they don't understand yet that you cannot do things unilaterally, that changes need to be made in co-operation. That's the way to move their agenda forward, Mr. Speaker. And when they learn that, if they were willing to come over and work with the opposition, Mr. Speaker, I am sure we could come to an arrangement which would allow their agenda to move forward, Mr. Speaker. They could come and work with the opposition, and we would come to an arrangement to allow their agenda come forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, have they done that, Mr. Speaker? Have they made any attempt? The answer's no. We asked the Government House Leader to bring forward a proposal, Mr. Speaker. And do you know what his proposal was? A motion to unilaterally change the rules. That was his proposal. That was his proposal, Mr. Speaker — a motion to unilaterally change the rules which is an extremely heavy-handed methodology, Mr. Speaker, to try to change anything. Rather than the hours and months of consultation and work that went into the existing rules, Mr. Speaker, that we all agreed to and that the previous government could make work well — that we could make work well when we were government, Mr. Speaker — they're just unilaterally changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, without any consideration for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, any consideration for minority rights in this province, Mr. Speaker, and no balance, Mr. Speaker, no equality in looking at the issue at all, Mr. Speaker.

And rather than do the honourable thing when they found they had a problem and come work with the opposition to resolve the problem, Mr. Speaker, what do they do? They bring forward a motion saying they'll unilaterally change the rules. That was their bargaining position to us. Mr. Speaker, that was their position. When we asked them to bring us a proposal, Mr. Speaker, that's what they bring us.

Mr. Speaker, if that isn't heavy-handed, if that isn't the schoolyard bully showing that they got the majority, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what it is. When we asked them to bring us a proposal, Mr. Speaker, and they bring us a proposal to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker, so they can do whatever they want and to ram something through — that's my definition of co-operation, Mr. Speaker. That's democracy, Mr. Speaker. Yes, where do we see democracy like that, Mr. Speaker? Where you have a dictator. Where you have a dictator, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. McCall: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. It's my pleasure to introduce, seated in the Speaker's gallery, John Stratford Burton. John, if you could

give us a wave please. Okay there we are.

John was born at Humboldt, Saskatchewan on November 27, 1927. The Burton family settled in the Humboldt area over 100 years ago in 1904. They are Luxembourg-American in background. The family has always taken an active interest in public affairs. His grandfather was reeve of the RM [rural municipality] of Humboldt. John's father was active in farm, co-operative, and political organizations. He served as the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] MLA for Humboldt, 1938-1943; MP for Humboldt, 1943-49; and MLA for Humboldt, 1952-1956. I might add that his father was a breakthrough for the CCF in that 1938 by-election, I believe. His father served as a cabinet minister in the Thomas Clement Douglas government, 1952-1956.

John's mother was a schoolteacher who came to Saskatchewan in 1923 and later worked with her husband in working for a better life in pioneer times. John followed that family tradition. He took his Arts and Agriculture degrees at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon and has maintained a lifelong interest in agriculture and co-operatives. Indeed the first time I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Burton was in relation to a matter around the Wheat Pool, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

He took further studies at the London School of Economics and worked on industrial development programs for the Government of Saskatchewan and then in the Economic Advisory and Planning Board under Tom Shoyama, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who was later federal deputy minister of Finance and after whom the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Regina is now named.

John first entered the political arena in 1957, running against long-time federal Liberal minister of Agriculture Jimmy Gardner in Melville and very nearly defeated him, Mr. Deputy Speaker. While living in Melville, he met his wife, Zenny Wiwchar whose family on both sides were original Ukrainian settlers in the Canora area and celebrated a 100th anniversary family reunion in 1999. She is proud of her Ukrainian background and continues to maintain Ukrainian traditions which includes introducing them to people of other backgrounds.

John's got a very storied curriculum vitae, Mr. Chair of Committees; there's much more that I could share here. I see that you're giving me the sign to hurry up and finish my introduction, so I'll do that but with some regret because there's so much to talk about in terms of the great life and the great career of John Burton. Thank you very much, and thank you to the members for their indulgence in this matter, Mr. Chair of Committees.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Dewdney.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to pick

up where I left off talking about the incompetence of the government by unilaterally proposing a rule change, Mr. Speaker, rather than doing the honourable thing, the democratic thing, and the standard practice of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to rule changes. I wanted to just reiterate that, Mr. Speaker. We have had a long-standing, a long-standing, honourable, democratic standard practice, Mr. Speaker. We had a practice that would say, that when we made a rule change that we'd consult with the opposition, that we'd work together. Now, Mr. Speaker, that isn't what's occurring today. We have a government that's unilaterally trying to ram through a rule change and rather than work with the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think there are members opposite that are uncomfortable with what they're doing. I believe there are members opposite that are uncomfortable with what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. I think they have the ability, they have the ability, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, they have the ability, Mr. Speaker, to work with the opposition, Mr. Speaker. But they're saying they have no problem with unilaterally changing the rules, Mr. Speaker. But going outside the long-honoured tradition of working together on rule changes, Mr. Speaker, they're saying they have absolutely no problem with that.

Well that goes to the character of the people we're dealing with, Mr. Speaker. We've had long-standing traditions that they're just prepared to throw out, Mr. Speaker, with no regard, no regard for the minority interests.

In a couple minutes, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go into a study paper that talks about the law and the rules of reform and the rights of the minority in parliaments in Canada and legislatures in Canada, Mr. Speaker. But before I do that, I want to say this. I want for the record for people to know that there was absolutely no consultations with the opposition, no consultations with the opposition by the government. Mr. Speaker, it was their way or the highway, Mr. Speaker. It was . . . This is very, very unfortunate and, Mr. Speaker, very, very bad for the future of this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is how we saw the Devine Conservatives of the 1980s operate. This is how we saw then the deputy premier Berntson operate during that period of time. They were going to use their majority, and they didn't care, Mr. Speaker. They did not care at all about the interests of minorities. They didn't care about fairness, Mr. Speaker. And they didn't care about co-operation, Mr. Speaker, or consultation.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's make it clear. There were no consultations. But this isn't very surprising because, since this government came to power, Mr. Speaker, they've had no consultations on labour legislation. Mr. Speaker, as we have labour organizations asking for public hearings on this, Mr. Speaker, there's been no meaningful consultation, Mr. Speaker. There's been no listening to organizations, Mr. Speaker.

There was no consultation on Station 20 when funding was ripped away, no consultation with the people from Station 20, Mr. Speaker, the community leaders — no consultation at all. No consultation on these rule changes, Mr. Speaker, and surprise, Mr. Speaker, no consultation on how to resolve this problem, Mr. Speaker, no consultation on how to resolve this

problem. They just decided unilaterally they'll force through this undemocratic change, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Sask Party care at all about the democratic process? Well we say not, Mr. Speaker. So they only care when it's convenient for them. When they're in opposition, they cared, Mr. Speaker, because they didn't have the majority. As soon as they have their majority, Mr. Speaker, did they care about democratic process, the Sask Party? Absolutely not.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. Let's be clear. When they were in opposition, they cared about the rules. They cared about consultation. They cared about governments keeping their word. They cared about working co-operatively with the government. But the minute they form government, Mr. Speaker, that all goes out, out the cupboard, Mr. Speaker, out the back door, Mr. Speaker. And they no longer care because they have the majority. They have the power. And they're going to teach the opposition that might makes right, Mr. Speaker. They're going to use the old philosophy of might makes right. Mr. Speaker, that's the schoolyard bully all over again, Mr. Speaker. It is bullying in any, in any way you look at, Mr. Speaker, any definition of bullying. That's bullying, Mr. Speaker.

And is that in the best interest of the province of Saskatchewan? I say no. Is it in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan? I say no. But, Mr. Speaker, do they care? When we say that they should, they should have concerns, they should be willing to work with us to find resolution to the problem and not have to ram through this legislation, Mr. Speaker, they say they have no concerns. They have absolutely no concerns. Mr. Speaker, that clearly indicates again, they think that might makes right, Mr. Speaker, because they're the majority. They'll do exactly what they want, when they want, and how they want, without any consideration for the interest of the minority or any consideration for the interest of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when the rule changes were finalized in 2006, the *Leader-Post* columnist Murray Mandryk called the new Legislative Assembly calendar, and I quote "a magnanimous thing, and it may even be historic," Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we had made significant, significant improvement to our rules, Mr. Speaker. We had made significant improvement to how we wanted to move forward in this Legislative Assembly, how a greater era of co-operation and consultation would bring forward better outcomes for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Those were all things that the now government supported when they were in opposition. But today when they're the government, Mr. Speaker, do they have any concern about any of this? No, Mr. Speaker. They've decided, when they had the opportunity to work with the opposition and to come forward with some proposal to move, to get through this, this situation where they couldn't manage the hours, that they could come to us and work with us. Mr. Speaker, did they try? The answer's no. The only proposal they made was the proposal to unilaterally amend the hours, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious, very serious abuse of our parliamentary process, Mr. Speaker. It's an abuse in how we as

parliamentarians are able to in fact rely upon the rules to ensure fairness because, Mr. Speaker, you can only rely upon the rules to ensure fairness if all parties are going to play by the rules, that when the first time you have a problem, you're not unilaterally going to change the rules to your own advantage. And that's what we see today. The first time this government has a problem, they will unilaterally change the rules to ram through their agenda, Mr. Speaker. They will ram through an agenda, Mr. Speaker. They will ram through an agenda that has legislation that has no meaning. They will ram through an agenda with legislation that has no meaning, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't need to be passed in this sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker, in this session.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, they will ram through a Bill that has implications three and a half years from now that could pass this fall and still allow the government to say they're keeping their word and still allow the government, Mr. Speaker, to implement that legislation three years or more before it's required, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's a piece of legislation in their priority Bills that's been in place for more than 30 years — never been implemented, Mr. Speaker, and has no fear of being implemented by the current government. Mr. Speaker, their demand to get rid of that piece of legislation in this sitting of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, has absolutely no impact on the public, Mr. Speaker, and absolutely no impact on the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is what you would call, Mr. Speaker, abuse of power. And, Mr. Speaker, when you have a government that's prepared to abuse their power in their own self-interest, Mr. Speaker, well then we have a very serious problem with our parliamentary democracy in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now quote from Beauchesne's *Rules and Forms of the House of Commons of Canada*, 6th Edition. First chapter, Mr. Speaker, it talks about the principles of parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like the members to listen very carefully as we're talking about the principles of parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker.

Section one says this:

The principles of Canadian parliamentary law are:
To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority . . .

Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that. The first principle of parliamentary law in Canada is:

To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every Member to express opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time; to give abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken upon sudden impulse.

Mr. Speaker, the first rule of parliamentary law is to make sure that the majority does not abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker. And I talked about that earlier. That's the foundation of parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker. And what do the members opposite think is happening today with their rule change, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, they are using their majority to abuse. Mr. Speaker, they're using their majority to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker. Now that is very clearly, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, not what was intended in our parliamentary democracy — not intended in the first principle in parliamentary law.

Mr. Speaker, the Constitution Act, I want to just quote from the Constitution Act:

Without further elaboration, Canada thus was ensured a responsible cabinet system with the assumption that there will always be recognizable government with a legislative program. If the electorate so wishes, a system also presupposes an opposition ready and willing to attack the government in an attempt to have its legislation altered or rejected [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary system and our Constitution, both anticipates a government and an opposition and has roles for them, Mr. Speaker. And roles that are to be fulfilled within the rules of that Legislative Assembly or parliament, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, beyond the vast legacy of tradition implanted in Canada by the preamble to the Constitution Act, one section above all affects procedure. Section 18 permits the adoption in Canada of all of the privileges of parliament current in the British House of Commons. Few of these are of greater importance than the right to regulate the internal proceedings of the House or more specifically to establish binding rules of procedure, Mr. Speaker.

The reason that we have established binding rules, Mr. Speaker, is so that all members of this House have to adhere to the same rules, Mr. Speaker, and so that rule changes should be made in a consulted, co-operative manner, Mr. Speaker, through both opposition and government, Mr. Speaker, and that rule changes should not be made unilaterally by one party or the other, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to do so is an abuse of the majority power in section 1 of the rules, Mr. Speaker, of parliamentary law. Mr. Speaker, that's why we put in place an all-party committee that had equal number of members of government and opposition, Mr. Speaker. And we put rules in place; rules we all agreed to. And now, Mr. Speaker, we have a government who because of their own inability to manage the agenda cannot implement their agenda in the timely manner in which they'd like. So, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, they will unilaterally change the rules to try to force through their agenda, Mr. Speaker.

Is that fair to the people of Saskatchewan? Is it fair, Mr. Speaker, to the minority interest in the opposition, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, those are things that are still in question.

Mr. Speaker, under section 7 of the Written Rules, it says:

Standing, Sessional and Special Orders are the rules and regulations which the House has agreed on for governance of its own proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, we agreed on a set of rules that we all agreed we'd live within. We all agreed, Mr. Speaker, and I want to stress that — we all agreed. Both the government and the opposition agreed that we could live with the rules which we established, that we could live within those rules, and that we'd work to make those rules work in the interests of fairness and parliamentary democracy in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we made those rules to create a balance, a balance between the interests of the opposition and the minority with that of the majority, Mr. Speaker, the government. The government's always a majority.

And when you don't follow those rules, Mr. Speaker, and when you don't adhere to those rules or when you try to unilaterally change those rules, Mr. Speaker, you're abusing your power. It's abuse of power, Mr. Speaker, and that goes to the incompetence of this government. If they have to abuse their power in order to pass their agenda, Mr. Speaker, are they competent? And I say not, Mr. Speaker. I say not. I say any government that would have to abuse its power to pass its agenda because they cannot manage their own affairs is not competent, Mr. Speaker, and that's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

But Mr. Speaker, they should seek resolution outside changing the rules. Mr. Speaker, they should work with the opposition to find some resolution aside from changing the rules, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and they haven't tried. They haven't tried. I would challenge the Government House Leader to try to work through some resolution to this issue without changing the rules, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they should try to be co-operative and consultative, Mr. Speaker, but will they? The answer is no. Mr. Speaker, they believe they can be heavy-handed because they have the majority. Do they care about the fundamental principles of fairness? Do they care about the history of parliamentary democracy in Canada or, in fact, the parliamentary democracy or legislative democracy in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker?

When they were opposition, they cared, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when they were opposition, they cared. Mr. Speaker, when they were in opposition, they worked with the government and the government worked with them. But today, Mr. Speaker, when they're the government and they have the majority, do they have any interest in working co-operatively with others? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. They have absolutely no interest in working co-operatively with the government. Mr. Speaker, they have no interest in working with the opposition, to work co-operatively with us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it says under section 10 that "Sessional and Special Orders are normally moved by the Government after consultation with the Opposition parties," Mr. Speaker.

Well there was no consultation with the opposition parties here. Mr. Speaker, we have a government who decided unilaterally they knew what they were going to do without consultation of the government, without consultation of the opposition, Mr.

Speaker. They just unilaterally decided they were going to do what they were going to do, Mr. Speaker — unilaterally changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, without consultation with the opposition.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it says very clearly in the precedent and tradition of the Parliament of Canada, which in fact affects every legislature in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite want this material they can have it after, Mr. Speaker, to read. Mr. Speaker, they're more than willing to have it, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Atkinson: — With leave to introduce a guest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, I see that we've just had the arrival of a guest in the Speaker's gallery.

I'm pleased to introduce Gren Smith-Windsor who is the acting deputy minister of Health in the province of Saskatchewan. I've known Mr. Smith-Windsor for some time, and in fact I think he's married to the sister of a constituent of mine. So I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome Gren Smith-Windsor to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member from Dewdney.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to continue on with my comments about precedents and tradition in our legislative and parliamentary processes in Canada. Mr. Speaker, on page number 6 it clearly goes on to say:

Custom and precedent are basic to the parliamentary system. Parliament, and the manner in which it works, has developed over centuries and the written rules are relative newcomers to the procedural field. Indeed, increasingly, the written rules are being used, not to codify existing practice, but rather to trim and adjust historic traditions to modern needs.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's very true. Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say that:

Parliamentary Law is something quite different from the ordinary Civil Law or Common Law. Parliamentary Law is based on centuries of tradition and precedents which

have marked the evolution of parliamentary freedoms from the time that the first . . . [parliamentarians] were governed under the Divine Right of Kings to the stage of parliamentary sovereignty which we have now have acquired [Mr. Speaker].

So it's very important, Mr. Speaker, and it goes on to talk about those long-standing traditions. It's very important, Mr. Speaker, that when we collaboratively and co-operatively put in place rules that we all agree that we can in fact live by and that we agree that shouldn't be changed unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, that we follow through with that, Mr. Speaker. And did we see that in this particular situation, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely not. What we see today, we see a government who has unilaterally and high-handedly decided that because they have the majority number of votes, Mr. Speaker, that they are just unilaterally going to change the rules, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that people understand the historical perspective of this before I talk about the next issue. And it talks about unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, section 18 says, "Within the ambit of its own rules, the House itself may proceed as it chooses; it is . . . common practice for the House to ignore its own rules by unanimous consent."

Mr. Speaker, this is from "Proceedings in Parliament" and parliamentary law in Canada, Mr. Speaker. It says that it is "common practice for the House to ignore its own rules by unanimous consent," Mr. Speaker. Does unanimous consent imply unilateral actions by one party, Mr. Speaker? It doesn't. Mr. Speaker, unanimous consent talks about co-operation. It talks about consultation. It talks about working in tandem with the opposition to move forward its agenda. But do we have a government that's prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker? No we don't. Section 18 on "Proceedings in Parliament" very clearly says, "Within the ambit of its own rules, the House itself may proceed as it chooses; it is . . . common practice for the House to ignore its own rules by unanimous consent."

Mr. Speaker, it talks about the rules being changed by unanimous consent. And in the past, Mr. Speaker, that's how it's worked in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, that is what is intended under parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker, that rules be changed by unanimous consent. Mr. Speaker, but today we have in Saskatchewan a government that doesn't believe in the parliamentary traditions or parliamentary law in Canada, that believes that it can unilaterally change the rules without consultation and without agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read this one more time for the members opposite because this should be important if they believe in the traditions and parliamentary law in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And this is found in the library here. It's found in, Mr. Speaker, in Beauchesne's. It says, unanimous consent. It's under the topic "Unanimous Consent," section 18, Mr. Speaker, "Within the ambits of its own rules, the House itself may proceed as it chooses; it is a common practice for the House to ignore its own rules by unanimous consent."

[20:45]

Mr. Speaker, for the members opposite who believe in the

important role which they play, and they believe in the important role of this legislature, I think they should think about that. Mr. Speaker, they could have come to us and tried to negotiate some provisions. They could have tried to come forward with some proposal that allowed them to continue with their agenda, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is very serious. I think members should consider this because I know there are members over there that adhere and find the rules of this institution and its foundations as important as I do. Mr. Speaker, it says unanimous consent. That is section 18 of the proceedings of parliament which this Assembly also must adhere to. And, Mr. Speaker, we're not doing that.

We have a unilateral rule change in front of us, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that that is in the best interest of this legislature. I don't believe it's in the best interest of a new government to show that they're not prepared to live by the rules which they've agreed upon, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly don't believe, I certainly don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that it speaks well for us and our future or the future of this government because, Mr. Speaker, when you're not prepared to live by the rules, Mr. Speaker, then what are you prepared to live by?

Mr. Speaker, we're in this situation because the new government put forward an ambitious agenda — an agenda that they don't have to pass in this session, but they've chose that they will regardless and they'll damn the torpedoes to do it. And, Mr. Speaker, to do so they will break long-standing parliamentary traditions and long-standing parliamentary laws. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to make sure that all members opposite get a copy of section 18 about unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's something that, if they value this institution, if they value the principles of fundamental democracy, they have to read that.

You know, they can laugh about it and members opposite, some of them are laughing about it over there. But Mr. Speaker, we have a parliamentary democracy in Canada. We live in one of the greatest countries in the world because of our democracy and because of our parliamentary traditions and because of the rules that have allowed us to adhere to our values in our parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's shameful to want to change them just to ram through an agenda that has no impact if it takes a month or two — if it takes a month or two — to complete.

And, Mr. Speaker, I say regularly, Mr. Speaker, and I'm speaking through you although some members opposite — because this is very difficult for them to deal with; I can tell — some members actually care. I believe they care even though they pretend not to. They care because, Mr. Speaker, there are members on that side that I think very strongly believe, very strongly believe in the principles of democracy. They may not understand them, Mr. Speaker, because many of them have probably never taken the time to read some of these pieces of rules, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to ensure that we get them across to the members.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're in this situation because the government opposite is not able to get their agenda through, Mr. Speaker. And they're not able to do so because they didn't plan well. Mr. Speaker, that goes to their fundamental

competence, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not the only one or members on this side are not the only ones that are questioning today the government's competence, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to read from the *Star Phoenix*, Mr. Speaker, of March 29, 2008, Mr. Speaker. It says, "Rather than appear to be competent managers of the public purse, Premier Brad Wall's team has been extravagant in its spending, ham-handed in its communications strategy and incompetent in its delivery," Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a direct quote from the *Star Phoenix*, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're dealing with today. We're dealing with a ham-handed approach, Mr. Speaker, that's clearly showing its incompetency, Mr. Speaker. And rather than work with the opposition which is what is anticipated on our parliamentary rules, we have a government that's just unilaterally going to do what it wants to do — damn the torpedoes and without care for what the outcomes are, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, they've got to think beyond what's in front of them today. They have to think about what, they have to think about what the long-term implications of any government — any government — abusing the rules means for parliamentary democracy in this country and this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to quote, Mr. Speaker, from the *Leader-Post* on March 29, 2008. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is from the *Leader-Post*. It's under a title: "Avoiding suggestion of Devine influence." And, Mr. Speaker, it says, "How do you express a conservative's government natural inclination to build without drawing the inevitable comparison with the Devine government and the debt it built," Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this again goes to . . . we see a direct comparison, Mr. Speaker, to the abuse of majority power by the Devine government of the 1980s and the abuse of this government in moving forward a unilateral change to the rules, Mr. Speaker — a government that believed that they could do anything because they had the majority, Mr. Speaker. And we see the same thing today. And, Mr. Speaker, there are people already questioning that this government is headed down the same philosophical and decisional path of the previous right wing, conservative government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, which ended in absolute terrible tragedy and results for this province.

Mr. Speaker, I again want to quote from *The StarPhoenix*. It's about Station 20. These are articles from the March 29, 2008, Mr. Speaker, and it goes to talking about decisions that the government makes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it goes to, Mr. Speaker, to their ability to make decisions, Mr. Speaker, which is what this is fundamentally about, Mr. Speaker. It goes to what this is fundamentally about — a government who is not willing to work within the rules, Mr. Speaker, and to make unilateral decisions. Mr. Speaker, Station 20 was another unilateral decision.

And how do people feel about those unilateral decisions being made by government? That's what this all about, Mr. Speaker. So I would like to quote, Mr. Speaker:

It's too bad we cannot try something new to help a neighbourhood in need. It would not to take very long for the province to get a return on the \$8 million investment if it helps only a handful of kids in the area to lead productive lives instead of the taxpayers of the province supporting them with welfare or housing them in jail. This province will never be in a better financial position to try to be innovative and progressive. Too bad we cannot think outside the box [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, this is the exact same . . . Mr. Speaker, this is the exact same problem we face with this rule change, Mr. Speaker. They can't think outside the box.

Mr. Speaker, rather than work with the opposition and come up with some innovative solution to the problem that they can't get their legislation through, Mr. Speaker, rather than working with somebody — they won't work with the people at Station 20 in Saskatoon and they won't work with the opposition, Mr. Speaker — they decided that they will just do whatever they want to do, however they want to do, whenever they want to do it, Mr. Speaker. And how does that meet the needs of the people of the province of Saskatchewan? How does that meet the children in the inner city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker? And how does this unilateral rule change meet the needs of the people of Saskatchewan?

How does it meet the needs of those stakeholders who like to have input into decisions, Mr. Speaker? And how does this help the people of Saskatchewan when you have a government make unilateral rule changes, Mr. Speaker, that are contrary to the principle of unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, on the same Station 20 project, Mr. Speaker, we have individuals that say, I hope we've all learned a valuable lesson when it comes time to vote in the next election, Mr. Speaker. People who voted for the Saskatchewan Party who have already, have already decided, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the unilateral heavy-handed approach by this government is not in the interest of ordinary people, Mr. Speaker.

Now we see this coming from people about the decision of Station 20 in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. And what's the difference in that and the unilateral rule change, Mr. Speaker, without consultation of the general public, Mr. Speaker? What is the difference, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what are people going to say out there about the rule changes, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are continuing to make fun of this discussion, Mr. Speaker. They don't take it seriously, Mr. Speaker. So I think I need to go back, Mr. Speaker, and once again — once again — talk about, Mr. Speaker, the rule, the rule of parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go back to once again remind the members, remind the members of the long-standing practice, Mr. Speaker, and the parliamentary law which would . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I would like to remind the member that, when speaking to this topic, I am giving some broad range tying it in but repetition . . . Again I'm giving you a broad interpretation, but to re-quote the same article more than once, I will rule on that.

I recognize the member for Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Well, Mr. Speaker, okay, I won't, I won't re-quote the article, Mr. Speaker. But it's very simple, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite are always referring to the fact that it's funny. They think it's funny that they unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker. I want to, Mr. Speaker, to indicate to all members of the House that . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Why is the member standing?

Mr. McCall: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. I'd like to introduce an individual seated in the Speaker's gallery, a Mr. Glen Billingsley. Glen's a public servant, lives here in Regina, is very active in the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union, very active in local 1101.

But where I know Glen best from is the Regina Folk Fest. And I've seen this guy work at the Folk Fest in the thunder . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Order. The member has asked respectfully for leave to introduce a guest, and leave was granted respectfully. I will ask the member to introduce his guests and take his seat. Thank you.

Mr. McCall: — Indeed I am, Mr. Chair of Committees. So I'd like to say a big welcome to Mr. Glen Billingsley to his Legislative Assembly. He pays very active attention to the public affairs in this province, is very active in his community as a whole, and I'd like to wish him a very big welcome to this place. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Glen Billingsley to his Legislative Assembly. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — As I was indicating prior to the introduction of the guests, Mr. Speaker, it's very common in our parliamentary system in Canada for legislatures or the Parliament of Canada, for the House to in fact to change its own rules, Mr. Speaker. It's very common for the House or the legislature to change its own rules, but, Mr. Speaker, it's common, it's common with unanimous consent.

It's not common and it isn't routine practice, Mr. Speaker, for one party or the other to unilaterally change the rules, Mr.

Speaker, and it's certainly not common for the majority, Mr. Speaker, for the majority to use its power to change the rules, Mr. Speaker.

In fact section 1 of parliamentary law very clearly says that the most fundamental principle of our parliamentary democracy and the laws that surround our parliaments, Mr. Speaker, is that the tyranny of the majority using its power to abuse the minority is the fundamental, fundamental basis of our parliamentary law, that the majority should not be allowed — should not be allowed — to use its power to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's what a unilateral rule change does, and that is why rule changes have been done commonly in parliaments and in legislatures by unanimous consent of all members, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we don't have that situation here today. If this was a request to change the rules, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the . . . I would like to make . . . ask the Page to make a copy of this for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's that important. Mr. Speaker, this is very, very important about section 18 and unanimous consent. Mr. Speaker, I would like the copy to be made for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, so that they understand that it is common practice for the rules to be changed, but it's common practice through unanimous consent. And that isn't what we're faced with today, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it is very common practice for that to be done.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite have asked for copies of that, and I'd like to make it available to them, and then I'd like to have my copy back, Mr. Speaker, for further reference, further reference tomorrow or perhaps the next day as we continue this debate. And, Mr. Speaker, and I hope they take the opportunity to read it and take the opportunity to reflect upon it, Mr. Speaker, because, Mr. Speaker, it would not have been, it would not be there, Mr. Speaker, if it was not intended to be acted upon.

[21:00]

Mr. Speaker, it's now time to have a discussion about, what's the real impact of this, Mr. Speaker. Why did the government feel it necessary to propose such a rule change, Mr. Speaker? Now, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the government again to consider working with the opposition to find some way to deal with this problem, Mr. Speaker. To work co-operatively with us, Mr. Speaker, that is what is anticipated in our rules of order, Mr. Speaker. That is what's anticipated in parliamentary law in this country, Mr. Speaker. It is anticipated that the government and its majority would work with the opposition in minority to resolve the problem, Mr. Speaker. And it's even anticipated, Mr. Speaker, that rule changes should only occur through the unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to work with the government, and I think there is, I think there is a possibility of finding some resolution to these issues. But, Mr. Speaker, they have to be open minded.

You can't come . . . Mr. Speaker, it's like . . . you know, I had an opportunity many years ago in my life to attend at Queen's University, a two-week course on collective bargaining,

probably a decade ago, Mr. Speaker, a little more than a decade ago. And, Mr. Speaker, they used the analogy of people coming to the collective bargaining table with so many tools in their tool box, Mr. Speaker. But if you only come with a sledgehammer, Mr. Speaker, that's the only tool in your tool box is a sledgehammer, Mr. Speaker, you can only expect to get one result, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the government came, the government came with only one tool in their tool box right now, Mr. Speaker, they came with a sledgehammer. It's our way or the highway, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we urge, we urge the government to reconsider. We urge the government to consider its options, Mr. Speaker. And we urge the government to consider coming forward with a proposal that meets both side's needs.

That is in the spirit of what's intended in our rules, Mr. Speaker. Now what's in the spirit of what's intended in the parliamentary precedents in this country, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, we would expect the opposition, or the government, pardon me, to work with the opposition, to try to find a resolution to the problem, not to come and say their only resolution is a motion that's going to unilaterally change the rules. And better than that, Mr. Speaker, they're telling us it's in our interests, Mr. Speaker. It's in our interests to just let them unilaterally change the rules, so they can run all over the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, it's for their interest alone, Mr. Speaker.

Rather than working with the opposition in a co-operative manner, Mr. Speaker, they have unilaterally decided just to be high-handed, Mr. Speaker, use their sledgehammer — the only tool they brought, Mr. Speaker — to use the only tool they brought, their sledgehammer and say, hey, it's our way or the highway.

Mr. Speaker, we hear members opposite saying very derogatorily just to shut up and let them do their business. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's an attitude, Mr. Speaker, and fundamentally a poor attitude. If that's their attitude, Mr. Speaker, I think members of this House should be ashamed. I am surprised. Just shut up and let us do what we want. That's their attitude, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yes they're the government and yes they were elected to govern, but they were also elected to use good judgment, Mr. Speaker. They were also elected to show that they had the ability to show good judgment, that they had the ability to compromise, that they had the ability to work with others, Mr. Speaker.

And how are they demonstrating any of those abilities to work with others, to work co-operatively, to bring an agenda forward and move it forward in a co-operative manner, Mr. Speaker? When they've had that opportunity, what have we seen, Mr. Speaker? We have seen absolutely none of that. We have seen absolutely none of that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a continual heavy-handed approach — that we were elected government on November 7 and get the heck out of our way, that we have a divine right to do anything.

Well the last time we saw a divine right it was led by a guy named Devine, and what did it result in for the province of Saskatchewan? Total disaster, Mr. Speaker, total disaster. Both

financial disaster, Mr. Speaker, this province went in debt billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's the last time we saw that type of heavy-handed attitude, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this government has an opportunity, as it has two or three times in the last month, to admit they made a mistake, Mr. Speaker, and to approach the opposition and come up with a compromise which meets both sides' needs, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, will they consider that? No, Mr. Speaker, they won't consider doing things in a co-operative manner because they think they've got a divine right just like the last government did in 1982 that was led by a guy named Devine. But, Mr. Speaker, they don't understand that they don't have a guy named Devine running the government right now. Mr. Speaker, their idea of a divine right was his individual rights, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government now should exercise its opportunity to try to work with the opposition. Mr. Speaker, it should understand that under the principles of unanimous consent should only rules be changed. Mr. Speaker, the House should only uphold its rules under the principles of unanimous consent. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if any of the members opposite took those rules, Mr. Speaker, and looked at it and they read it. But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that they have the opportunity to read that, Mr. Speaker. And they have the opportunity to consider what it means.

Mr. Speaker, it means that we need to work together. It means that the government should work with the opposition to find a solution to this problem. They should attempt to find a resolution that meets both sides' needs, Mr. Speaker, rather than unilaterally trying to change the rules.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say, I'm going to say right now that we are prepared to entertain and enter into those discussions, Mr. Speaker. Our House Leader would be more than willing and more than happy to meet with the members of the government. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if the Government House Leader wanted to meet now, I'm sure that our House Leader would be prepared to meet now, Mr. Speaker.

As we're debating this issue, they could be working on a solution, Mr. Speaker. They could be working on a solution to try to resolve this, Mr. Speaker. But it can't be my way or the highway, Mr. Speaker. It means you have to enter this discussion open minded. You have to be prepared to compromise. You have to be prepared to find a resolution that meets the needs of both the government and the opposition, Mr. Speaker. It can't be one way. The world doesn't work that way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, nowhere, nowhere does a relationship flourish and move forward when you have a unilateral, one-sided approach, Mr. Speaker. We need to work together, and the government needs to learn that they need to work together. When they were in opposition, they understood the need to work together because they didn't have the power.

So, Mr. Speaker, they keep telling us we lost the election. They tell us we lost the election; we need to know our place, Mr. Speaker. Well we understand we lost the election, but the rules didn't change because we lost the election, Mr. Speaker. The

rules only changed because we have a heavy-handed government who thinks they can unilaterally bring forward a proposal to change the rules, Mr. Speaker — no consultation, no desire to work with the opposition.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, maybe it's not just a desire not to work with the opposition. Maybe they don't have the competency to work co-operatively with the opposition, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, maybe they don't have the abilities. Maybe it goes to their fundamental incompetence, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it's not that they don't want to work with us; maybe they don't know how.

Mr. Speaker, we know how to work with the opposition. We worked with them when they were in opposition, and we found resolution to problems. We found creative ways to continue to move the agenda forward, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've seen no desire of that from this government. Mr. Speaker, all we hear from this government is, you lost the election on November 7, and we can do whatever we want whenever we want, Mr. Speaker. That's their attitude. Mr. Speaker, this is an embarrassment for the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's an embarrassment for the country of Canada, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, most importantly it's an embarrassment for the government opposite.

Mr. Speaker, no government — no government — is so big that they don't have to listen to others. No government is so big that they don't have to work with others. Nobody is so important that they don't have to listen to others. And nobody is so important that they don't have to work with others, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see an approach today that members opposite aren't prepared to work with the opposition. The members opposite aren't prepared to work with the citizens of Saskatoon on Station 20, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite want to govern in a manner which is high-handed, Mr. Speaker, that clearly shows the only tool that they have in their tool box at the moment is a sledgehammer, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that isn't good for the province of Saskatchewan. It's not good for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's certainly not good for this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, they continue to laugh, Mr. Speaker, and yell across that you lost the election, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this isn't a laughing matter.

And, Mr. Speaker, I hope, I hope the members opposite in fact have taken the time to read the principles of unanimous consent. And I hope the Government House Leader has taken the time to read the section on unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker. I hope he's taken the time to not only read it but consider it. Consider what it means, Mr. Speaker, and consider what it means because, Mr. Speaker, if he considers what it means, if he truly cares what it means, Mr. Speaker, then he will reconsider, Mr. Speaker. Then he'll reconsider his position, Mr. Speaker, and be willing to meet with the Opposition House Leader in an attempt to find some resolution to this impasse. And they will not decide to proceed unilaterally, Mr. Speaker. They'll decide to work co-operatively, Mr. Speaker.

Because you know what, Mr. Speaker? They may pass this motion, Mr. Speaker, and they may ram through their agenda, Mr. Speaker, but people won't forget that. People will not forget that. People will not forget that, Mr. Speaker. People will not forget that. It may not have an impact this year. It may not have an impact next year, Mr. Speaker, but it will have an impact, Mr. Speaker, because we'll continually remind the people of Saskatchewan the attitude this government brought forward — the attitude that this government displayed, Mr. Speaker, and their willingness to subject both the opposition and the people of Saskatchewan to their belief that they're above the law, Mr. Speaker, that they're above, Mr. Speaker, they're above the rules of the House.

And, Mr. Speaker, they can do whatever they want to do. And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen this already, and the people of Saskatchewan have seen numerous examples of this attitude, Mr. Speaker. This is just one more rock in the backpack, Mr. Speaker, one more rock when they're putting on their backpack. And eventually that backpack will get awful heavy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't funny but the members opposite think it's funny. And because they think it's funny, Mr. Speaker, there's all the more reason, Mr. Speaker, that we need to continue, we need to continue to reinforce the fact, Mr. Speaker, that this type of unilateral action offends the very principles of our parliamentary democracy. It offends the very principle of, Mr. Speaker, of our institution, the very principle which we all should be defending, and above all else, Mr. Speaker, that officers of our parliament should stand up and defend, Mr. Speaker.

What's their agenda, Mr. Speaker, when they're willing to circumvent, Mr. Speaker, the rules of this Assembly? What are they trying to do that they're afraid to face head-on, Mr. Speaker? Why do they insist that they have to pass legislation that has no impact for years in the future? Why are they afraid to work with the opposition to try to come to some compromise to move forward the agenda in a co-operative manner, Mr. Speaker? Why are they afraid of all these things?

Mr. Speaker, why won't they work with the opposition? We're not unkind, unsympathetic human beings, Mr. Speaker. We're willing to work with you, and I'd like to reiterate, Mr. Speaker, we're willing to work with the government to try to find a resolution to their situation.

But, Mr. Speaker, they have to be willing to work with us. They have to be willing to work with us before you're going to find a solution to the problem. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what this institution stands for and the principles of our parliamentary democracy are more important than any of us. And, Mr. Speaker, they should be willing, they should be willing to re-examine their position, to re-evaluate why they took this position, Mr. Speaker, and come forward with a resolution. Come forward with a willingness to work with the opposition to find resolution. Mr. Speaker, anything short of that, anything short of that shows a total disrespect for our traditions, our institution, and for the rules which we are responsible to adhering to.

[21:15]

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are starting to say that my old ticker isn't going to take this for another hour. Mr. Speaker, I'll do another hour and 15 minutes today and seven hours tomorrow and five hours on Wednesday, Mr. Speaker, because I believe.

I believe fundamentally in the institution which we all serve. I believe in the principles of this very institution, Mr. Speaker. But what I cannot accept, Mr. Speaker, is that the members opposite, the members opposite do not care, that the members opposite do not care about the fundamental principles of this institution and the fundamental principles of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a minute or two now to talk about where I think we need to go. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the government, have got themselves in a real pickle here. You know, they've now moved forward with a unilateral motion to try to change the rules. We've now tabled for them the principle of unanimous consent and what it means. Some of the members opposite have had the opportunity to read it. One of the members opposite held it out and just threw it in the garbage. Mr. Speaker, that shows what he knows and understands about the principle of unanimous consent.

But there's a reason why it exists. There is a reason why it exists. There's a reason why it's in print. And there is a reason why, there is a reason why, Mr. Speaker, that rules have not been changed or amended without unanimous consent by the House. There's a reason for that, Mr. Speaker. That's because the rules are there to ensure balance, Mr. Speaker, to ensure fairness. It's a fundamental principle of our democracy. And, Mr. Speaker, for it to be changed unilaterally is a breach of that fundamental principle of our democracy. Mr. Speaker, we want the members opposite to consider that and to take this opportunity to re-evaluate what they're doing because, Mr. Speaker, they have other options available to them.

This is the type of decision that shows that the government is very limited in their skills, extremely limited in their skills and abilities, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they have a need, a fundamental need, Mr. Speaker, they have a fundamental need to accomplish something here. But they have other means to do it, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, all we're asking the members opposite is to re-evaluate their position, to have the Government and the Opposition House Leader meet and respect this institution and try to find some resolution to the problem, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have had citizens of our province, citizens and founders of our country, our citizens die, die to protect our democracy. They've died in the First and Second World War, Mr. Speaker. They've died in the Korean War to try to ensure the democratic rights of other people around the world. Mr. Speaker, we have today Canadian soldiers fighting for the democratic freedoms of citizens around the world. Mr. Speaker, we can't forget that people have given their lives so that we in Canada live in one of the greatest countries in the world, Mr. Speaker. We live in a country that has achieved its greatness because we have a parliamentary democracy which we believe in. We have principles which we have adhered to for not 10 years, not 20 years, but hundreds of years, Mr. Speaker, in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, today we have a government in Saskatchewan who wants to throw a lot of that tradition away, Mr. Speaker, who, when you provide them with rules, when you provide them with the traditions of our parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker, they just laugh at them. They have no respect, they have absolutely no respect for the rules of our Assembly, Mr. Speaker. They have no respect for the parliamentary tradition of this country, Mr. Speaker, and very little or no respect for their own, their own traditions when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker.

We are asking no more than they asked when they were in opposition. We're asking not one thing more than they asked of the government when they were in opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, I will tell you they received consideration, Mr. Speaker, and they got the very things that we are asking for when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have a government today that will continue to yell across, Mr. Speaker, continue to say things like, you know, you lost the election, Mr. Speaker. We understand that. But all those things show a lack of respect for our parliamentary system. They show a lack of respect, Mr. Speaker, for the traditions of our Assembly.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why we have the motion we have before us today, Mr. Speaker, because the members opposite don't have respect. They don't have any respect for our parliamentary traditions. They don't have any respect for the rules which they negotiated and which they agreed to, Mr. Speaker. They don't have a fundamental respect for what they said they believed in, Mr. Speaker, and they spoke highly of just a year or two years ago, Mr. Speaker.

It's amazing. It worked when they weren't the government, but as soon as they're the government, the rules don't work, Mr. Speaker. So it's not the rules that are the problem then, Mr. Speaker, it's the government. If the government can't make the rules work, then it's the government, Mr. Speaker, not the rules. And, Mr. Speaker, it's shameful.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite continue to show their respect — or disrespect, pardon me — for the process, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, did we have any attempt by the government to work with the opposition on a resolution of this issue? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. We're now about seven or six hours into debate, Mr. Speaker, which in my earliest . . . the first hour of my comments, Mr. Speaker, I offered the opportunity for the Government House Leader to meet with the Opposition House Leader and try to find some resolution. Over the last five hours they couldn't have been looking for a solution to the problem, Mr. Speaker. There's been no attempt to find a resolution to the problem. They see only one resolution to the problem, Mr. Speaker, to use their majority to abuse the minority. Mr. Speaker, they want to use their majority to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker, and that is fundamentally wrong. Mr. Speaker, that is fundamentally, fundamentally against, Mr. Speaker, fundamentally against the number one principle, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like once again — I won't be quoting, but once again I'd like to refer back to the principle of parliamentary law,

Mr. Speaker. And section 1 of parliamentary procedures that talks about parliamentary law says very clearly, the fundamental problem, the fundamental principle of law of our democracy is that the majority should not use its power, Mr. Speaker, the majority should not use its power to abuse the minority. And that's exactly what this motion does, Mr. Speaker. That's why it goes on in section 18 to say that rules are routinely changed but through unanimous consent and why unanimous consent is used, Mr. Speaker.

Because section 1 says that the majority should not use its power to abuse the minority. That's tyranny. It uses the word tyranny, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're seeing today. Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a majority use its power to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker, with disrespect for the rights of minority, jamming it through this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government has an option. And once again I urge them to use that option, to negotiate some other form of resolution to this issue rather than jamming through a rule change that should only be done through unanimous consent.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite they do not have unanimous consent for this rule change. If your House Leader or your leadership has told you that the opposition agrees with this unanimous change, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite, we do not. We do not and we will not ever agree with a government who wants to unilaterally change the rules to ram through an agenda without consideration of the needs of the opposition or the minority.

There are minority and majority laws in this country, and principles that have been long established both in parliamentary law and in common law, Mr. Speaker, and they've been established for a reason. They've been established to ensure that the majority gets to move their agenda forward, Mr. Speaker, because the majority should always in the end be able to move their agenda forward, Mr. Speaker; but, Mr. Speaker, it should not be at the expense of the minority and without balance and fairness attached to it, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this rule change has neither of those. It has not balance and it has not fairness.

Were we consulted, Mr. Speaker? The answer is no. Are we prepared to work through the issue? The answer is yes, Mr. Speaker, but they are not prepared to work with us.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are getting tired obviously. They're saying I should sit down. Mr. Speaker, I've got days left in me, Mr. Speaker, absolute days left in me, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, by this time tomorrow night, by this time tomorrow night I should be about halfway through my remarks, Mr. Speaker. Not quite halfway, as my learned colleague says, about this time tomorrow night.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's not get anxious. I've got lots more to say, and I know the members opposite would just love — love — to see me go at this for another day. They're waiting with bated breath, Mr. Speaker, to hear what I have to say next, Mr. Speaker, but I'm just going to quickly take a drink of water, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I continue my remarks, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to once again talk about where the resolution might be on this issue. I want to help the members opposite because, you know, Mr. Speaker, they didn't come forward with any real resolution to this problem other than the heavy-handed approach with the one tool they have in their tool bag, the sledgehammer, saying my way or the highway, Mr. Speaker. The big hammer.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if any of them took the time to go talk to their parents, their mother and father, or perhaps their grandparents about, you know, the importance of working co-operatively with others — this province was founded on co-operation, Mr. Speaker — they would know that this type of approach doesn't sit well with the pioneers of our province. Well, Mr. Speaker, that has been the approach of this government. Mr. Speaker, the government's been in power for now four months, Mr. Speaker, and they continue to show that they have very little imagination, very little creativity, and very little ability to work with others, Mr. Speaker.

We see this in working with the founders and the community coordinators on the Station 20 West project in Saskatoon. Are they willing to meet with them, work with them? The answer is no. They just unilaterally decide they're going to take away \$8 million and when more than 2,000 — when more than 2,000 — residents of Saskatoon meet and rally on getting that funding, Mr. Speaker, what do they say? They don't care.

Mr. Speaker, I heard them say again they won the election. Well, Mr. Speaker, it might surprise them but we're a little more intelligent than that. We know they won the election, Mr. Speaker. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? They didn't win the right, Mr. Speaker, to abuse others. Mr. Speaker, they didn't win the right to be abusive, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are principles. There are principles and values which a government must adhere to, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, when they're always yelling they won the election, Mr. Speaker, that goes a lot to attitude. That goes to attitude, Mr. Speaker. It goes to the way they fundamentally think, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, winning the election doesn't give them the power to do anything, any time, anywhere, exactly how they want to do it, Mr. Speaker. There are still the people of this province that have a right to be consulted. They have a right to be consulted and they have a right to ask questions through their opposition, Mr. Speaker. Our parliamentary democracy has a very well-reasoned and -founded role for the opposition, Mr. Speaker. And it's built on the principle of the government bringing forward legislation and the opposition questioning that legislation, amending that legislation, pushing for changes to make it the best it can be, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, if they don't allow that process to occur, Mr. Speaker, then they're subverting the process, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, that process is important to the people of Saskatchewan. It's important to the opposition. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when they were in opposition they saw that process very, very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, members who weren't here when they were in opposition continue to make comments and laugh about the importance of the process, Mr. Speaker. Those members who served in opposition understand the importance of process and

the right of the opposition and the role of the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, I wish, I wish that today those members would spend the time and talk to some of the members who weren't elected before about the importance of that role, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it would be helpful if those members would take into consideration how they felt when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, and they would have the same consideration, Mr. Speaker, for the members on this side as we gave them when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker.

[21:30]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Iwanchuk: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Leave is granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, to you and through you, I would like to introduce to all the members in the House a guest sitting in your gallery, Dwayne Yasinowski. Dwayne was born in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. He spent his first eight years in Fort Qu'Appelle.

If we could just get Dwayne to give us a hand there. Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1975 he moved to Lemberg where his parents operated a small business and a farm. Dwayne graduated from high school and remained in Lemberg for a number of years helping operate the family business and farm. Mr. Deputy Speaker, after graduation Dwayne spent a year back in Lemberg working in the family business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — This is the second time I have addressed this. The member has asked respectfully for leave to introduce a guest. It is expected that he will introduce his guest. I recognize the member.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — In the fall of 2001 he enrolled in the graduate studies program at the University of Regina where he specialized in Western Canadian history. It was at this time that Dwayne began to take a more active interest in the provincial politics.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Order. This will be the last time I stand without . . . I will ask you to introduce your guest.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — In the fall of 2006 Dwayne was hired by the NDP [New Democratic Party] and went to work in the minister of Health's office. He worked with the former minister of Health until November 2007. Dwayne is currently employed in the NDP caucus . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — The member for Saskatoon Fairview will introduce his guest shortly.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Okay. I'd ask all members to welcome Dwayne Yasinowski to his legislature. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member from Dewdney.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I now want to go to what I think is some of the fundamental problems that the government has with, Mr. Speaker, their need to change the rules unilaterally.

Mr. Speaker, in the fall when this government was elected on November 7, we had a short fall session and they introduced six priority Bills. Mr. Speaker, those six priority Bills at that time, they knew at least two of those Bills, three of those Bills, perhaps four of those Bills would be controversial. Mr. Speaker, they knew at that time that they would have a very difficult time getting their legislative agenda through without adequate time, Mr. Speaker. They should have known and fully expected that this opposition would ask and vigorously debate some of that legislation, Mr. Speaker.

We told them very clearly of our intent to vigorously debate some of these Bills, Mr. Speaker. They knew in the fall of 2007, Mr. Speaker, they knew the rules. They knew that 20 hours of debate was required on each of those six priority Bills, Mr. Speaker, and they continued to introduce further legislation, Mr. Speaker, and they offered no time in the fall of 2007 to debate these Bills, Mr. Speaker.

We told clearly the Government House Leader, we told the minister responsible for Bills 5 and 6, the minister responsible for Bill No. 2, that we would have issues with those Bills, Mr. Speaker. They should have known that the opposition wanted considerable time to vigorously debate those Bills. To say that they didn't know that and didn't understand that in any way, Mr. Speaker, would be a clear misrepresentation of the facts, Mr. Speaker. We clearly outlined Bills 2, 5, and 6 were Bills that would require debate. We know and we all know, as members of this Assembly, that those Bills would require 20 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government should have organized its legislative agenda and its priorities to provide those 20 hours of debate within the rules. To not do so, Mr. Speaker, is a fundamental, fundamental, Mr. Speaker, a fundamental showing of their incompetence, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they knew, they knew prior to making the decision. Mr. Speaker, I think I have the floor. I can't even hear myself with members shouting across the floor, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the government knew that Bills 2, 5 and 6 were going to require 20 hours of debate. Mr. Speaker, they knew that estimates requires 75 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker. They know and should have been able to figure out the amount of time that would be required in order to pass their agenda, Mr. Speaker. It's a

simple calculation.

Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what did we see? Mr. Speaker — and the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know this — what did we see, Mr. Speaker? We saw a legislative calendar that was to see us to return to this Assembly on March 3. Mr. Speaker, we saw a legislative calendar that saw this House open on March 3. In fact members of this Assembly were notified that we would be returning on March 3. And how were we notified, Mr. Speaker? We were notified because we were each sent a calendar, Mr. Speaker. We were each sent a calendar with a shaded area, saying that this Assembly would reconvene on March 3. Members of this side of the House understood what that meant. That meant we would return on March 3. Is that what happened? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. The answer is no. We returned on March 10, Mr. Speaker. We returned on March 10, Mr. Speaker, because the government wasn't ready to return on March 3.

And my question is this, my question is this: why wasn't the government ready? Why I do this, I do this, Mr. Speaker — and I'm going to tell the people of the province of Saskatchewan this, Mr. Speaker — we didn't start March 3 because the Premier was in New York. He was opening the stock exchange. And he was in meetings in New York, Mr. Speaker. He wasn't doing his business here at home, Mr. Speaker. And we didn't open this House for a week because the Premier was running around New York with the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mr. Speaker. Well that, Mr. Speaker, if that's the reason, it's shameful. Mr. Speaker, if that is the reason, it is shameful. Because if the Premier doesn't want to be here, and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs don't want to be here, Mr. Speaker, to do the business of this House and to adhere to the rules which they agreed to, Mr. Speaker, that should be their number one priority. That should be their number one priority.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to acknowledge the work, Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite wouldn't be trying to shout me down I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that the trip to New York accomplished some positive things. But this isn't about the trip to New York, Mr. Speaker. It's about both should be able to be done, Mr. Speaker. Both should have been able to be done. It takes planning, it takes understanding the rules, and it takes forethought. It takes consideration, Mr. Speaker, and that didn't occur.

The needs of the opposition weren't considered. The dates were unilaterally changed from the 3rd to the 10th, Mr. Speaker. Unilaterally. There was no consultation, Mr. Speaker. And that is what has caused this problem, Mr. Speaker. And then you have a Government House Leader who didn't structure it to sit the Monday and Tuesday nights of the first two weeks, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to the budget being tabled, Mr. Speaker, we didn't sit Monday and Tuesday nights and we lost hours of debate. We lost hours of debate. Mr. Speaker, we lost enough hours of debate to pass one piece of legislation. And then we have a government decide they got to change the rules. And they think we should just sit back and take it, Mr. Speaker. That we should just sit back and take it, Mr. Speaker. Well I don't know who they think they're kidding, Mr. Speaker. I don't know who they

think they're kidding, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it took 14 hours out of the debate, Mr. Speaker — a minimum of 14 hours out of the debate, if not longer. And, Mr. Speaker, that is shameful. That is shameful that they can't use their agenda and the time appropriately to get their legislation through, Mr. Speaker. And then when they find out, when they decide they have a problem, when they decide they have a problem that they should have known all along, do they question their own House Leader and their own internal operations? No. They decide that they're going to use a heavy-handed, unilateral approach and change the rules, Mr. Speaker. And that's shameful. That is absolutely shameful that they would do that, Mr. Speaker.

Do they want to work co-operatively? The answer is no. Today I've put out the olive branch at least a dozen times. At least a dozen times today I've said and offered that we, our House Leader would be willing to meet with their House Leader to look for some form of resolution. And have we had any uptake, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely not.

Now who's running the agenda over there? Yes, well when I say who's running the agenda they say, we are. Well, Mr. Speaker, that goes to their attitude. Mr. Speaker, was this a decision made collectively by all members of the government or was this a decision made by the Premier? And if it was a decision made by the Premier, then maybe the Premier should answer to it, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not fundamentally right to unilaterally change the rules of this Assembly and the principles of parliamentary democracy because they can't manage their own affairs and then blame it on somebody else — and then blame it on somebody else. This time they don't have any officials to blame, thank goodness. Thank goodness they don't have any officials to blame like the Minister of Social Services did, Mr. Speaker. They can only blame themselves. And, Mr. Speaker, blame themselves they should. Blame themselves they should, Mr. Speaker.

This shows fundamental incompetence, Mr. Speaker. This is the root of the problem, Mr. Speaker. This is the root of the problem, Mr. Speaker, that they can't manage their own affairs, Mr. Speaker. So what do they got to do? They got to blame somebody else. In this case they're trying to blame the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, have they tried to work with the opposition and resolve the problem? The answer is no. They have not tried to work with us to resolve the problem. And, Mr. Speaker, I challenge them and I challenge the Premier. I challenge the Premier. If our two House leaders can't work together, I challenge the Premier to work with the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. And they say no, they're not going to.

Mr. Speaker, that's an attitude problem. That has nothing to do . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And he says, yes. Well they're admitting they got an attitude problem. It has nothing to do at all with the real problem, and that's that they can't manage this House, Mr. Speaker. And they can't manage this House so it's somebody else's problem.

Mr. Speaker, it goes to where this government comes from. Mr. Speaker, it goes to where this government comes from. Mr. Speaker, they don't care about parliamentary tradition. They don't care about parliamentary rules. They don't care about their own deals on the rules in this province. They don't care about anybody but themselves. And, Mr. Speaker, if that's what they care about, Mr. Speaker, then they should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr. Speaker, there's members opposite laughing over there. There's members opposite saying, they're the government; we forget we lost the election. Well, Mr. Speaker, we understand that. But I want to point out to the members opposite, in eight years that I've been elected not once did we, when we were government, have to change the rules to get our agenda through. Not once in the eight years I've been elected did we have to change the rules to get our agenda through.

Mr. Speaker, we didn't show the level of incompetence we've seen in the first four months of this government, and they should be ashamed of that. Mr. Speaker, they thought they were ready to govern. Mr. Speaker, they're showing it daily that they're not. Mr. Speaker, they're not ready for prime time. Mr. Speaker, they're only ready to play second fiddle in opposition. They did that pretty well, Mr. Speaker. But when it comes to running the show, Mr. Speaker, they can't do it. They thought they could do it, Mr. Speaker. They could be in opposition, but they're not ready for the prime time. They're not ready to be government, obviously, Mr. Speaker, because they're showing their incompetence.

[21:45]

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite knew that Bills 2, 5, and 6 would be controversial and would need to be debated for 20 hours. What'd they do about it, Mr. Speaker? They shortened the session by four days. They don't meet evenings for the first two weeks. Mr. Speaker, whose fault is that? Who made those decisions? I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker — the opposition didn't. So why should the opposition be deprived of its rights under the rules, Mr. Speaker, deprived of its rights under the rules because this government doesn't have the competence to bring their agenda forward?

And, Mr. Speaker, this government has decided that they'll unilaterally try to rush something through, with or without any co-operation from the opposition, with or without any care for what the outcomes are, Mr. Speaker. And what does that say, Mr. Speaker? We haven't seen a government like that since 1982 — since 1982, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's a member or two over there that can remember the 1980s well. There's a member or two over there that fundamentally probably agree with what happened in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker — although the people of Saskatchewan don't remember the 1980s very fondly. And I hope, for the sake of the province, Mr. Speaker, that this government learns from this mistake and never again has to change the rules because they're not able to get their own agenda through.

Mr. Speaker, we have a government that has indicated that they're prepared to go to war on labour issues with the labour unions of this province. The Sask Party needs to assure that

Bills 5 and 6 are passed this session, they think. Why do they need to assure that? Mr. Speaker, we've operated this province for more than 100 years without Bills 5 or 6, without essential services legislation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out what the members opposite should see as obvious. If they did have a labour dispute that was problematic, Mr. Speaker, they can do what the previous government had to do, what the NDP government of Saskatchewan did more than once because they had to do it. We used back-to-work legislation, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we used back-to-work legislation if we had to.

We didn't presuppose outcomes of labour disputes, Mr. Speaker. When we needed to, we used the hand of government. But we didn't use it in a manner that was presupposing what collective bargaining should be about.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate again that we made it very clear in December, we made it very clear in December our opposition to some of these Bills and that we were going to debate these Bills vigorously and that we wanted to debate these Bills vigorously, Mr. Speaker, and that we had serious concerns. And we asked the opposition then to send Bills 5 and 6 — in December — we asked them to send Bills 5 and 6 out for consultations. Mr. Speaker, those consultations could have been done before the spring, Mr. Speaker. Did they do that? No. They rejected that because they don't believe, Mr. Speaker, in consulting anybody. They don't believe in consulting the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They don't believe in consulting anybody, Mr. Speaker.

And that's never been more evident than now, when they're going to unilaterally change the rules, when the rules are changed in this House only through unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't speak to consultation, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't speak to the fundamental principles that this Assembly has worked under for many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I once again urge the Government House Leader to meet with the Opposition House Leader and try to find some resolution to this issue, Mr. Speaker, to take a step backwards, Mr. Speaker, and try, and try to find some resolution, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes taking a step backward allows you to move four steps forward, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite say for 16 years we went backwards and so on and so forth, Mr. Speaker. They want to blame everybody else, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to take into consideration that they're the root of their own problem. Mr. Speaker, they don't want to consider that they're the root of their own problem, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, nothing — nothing — should be so fundamentally important to them that they cannot take the time to consider what's best for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we adhere to our parliamentary practices, our traditions, and our rules, Mr. Speaker, because they're there to protect all members of this Assembly. They're there to protect the principles of our democracy, Mr. Speaker, and when you want to unilaterally change those, you're subverting that principle. You're

subverting that democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite need to take time to consider what they're actually doing here. And, Mr. Speaker, I have tried today to — through various quotations, some of which we've sent over to members opposite — to let them understand that what they're doing is an abuse of their power. And when a government is prepared to abuse its power, Mr. Speaker, that is the most fundamental abuse there is.

Mr. Speaker, parliamentarians should oppose abuse of power by the majority on its principle. All members . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — All members of this Assembly should oppose the abuse of majority power on its principle, Mr. Speaker. The number one principle of parliamentary law in this country is that the majority should not abuse their powers. They should not abuse their power over the minority, Mr. Speaker.

It's a fundamental, fundamental principle, Mr. Speaker; a fundamental principle that they are prepared to laugh at, Mr. Speaker; a fundamental principle that they are prepared to ignore. And, Mr. Speaker, they should oppose it on principle. They should oppose this motion on principle. Members of the government should oppose such a motion ever coming forward on principle, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and if you don't oppose, if you don't oppose the motion I guess on principle, Mr. Speaker, then you're showing you don't have fundamental principles, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about working long hours, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're prepared to do whatever work's necessary, Mr. Speaker. It's not about working long hours at all. They missed the whole point. They missed the whole point, Mr. Speaker. Do you think I'd be standing on my feet for seven hours today, if it wasn't more important than simply, simply, Mr. Speaker, if it wasn't more important than working long hours, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, this is far more important than simply working long hours, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is about the principle of democracy. It's about the fact that the majority should never abuse their power, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, the members opposite have an opportunity to re-evaluate this, Mr. Speaker. They have an opportunity tomorrow to come forward with a proposal to the opposition, that the opposition can agree with and, Mr. Speaker, we can immediately start working on the important business of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, we can start working on the estimates, Mr. Speaker. We can start preparing, Mr. Speaker, officials to answer questions, and members on this side can prepare their questions and we can start estimates tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. We can come to some resolution, Mr. Speaker. If not, this debate could go on for days.

Or do we have a government that will use closure? Do we have a government that will even once again use its abusive power to move closure on the debate talking about the fundamental principles of democracy? Mr. Speaker, do we have a government that will do that, Mr. Speaker? Do we have a government that will abuse the principle of democracy once again by moving closure, Mr. Speaker? And if the government,

if the government will do that, Mr. Speaker, then they have no respect at all for our parliamentary process, Mr. Speaker. But I don't put it beyond them, Mr. Speaker. I don't put it beyond them to use closure, Mr. Speaker. It's within their nature, Mr. Speaker. It's in their nature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if this government cannot get their legislative agenda through without using the sledgehammer that they have in their tool box, if it's the only tool they have, Mr. Speaker, then, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about the well-being of this province over the next four years. Because they're the government for the next four years, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to once, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to review for the members opposite and I'd like them — somebody from the government — to come and tell me later personally why these Bills have to pass immediately and why, why, Mr. Speaker, it's so important.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start with Bill 1 again. Because I think it's very important to talk about these pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker. Because that is what this Bill, what this motion is about. It's a motion to extend the hours so they can pass these Bills. Well let's, Mr. Speaker, I would like the government to explain to me why these Bills have to pass. All of them. And as I have pointed out earlier and I'll point out again, Mr. Speaker, that four of these Bills could pass easily within the parameters and the hours that we have without a change to the rules, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 1, Mr. Speaker, is An Act respecting Saskatchewan's Growth and Financial Security. Mr. Speaker, today this Act does the exact same thing as the fiscal stabilization Act does with one exception, Mr. Speaker. And that one exception allows them to use the assets from Crown sales in the General Revenue Fund and spend as part of those budgetary expenditures. Previously that was not allowed, Mr. Speaker.

I will acknowledge that in order to make their budget balance this year, it's required, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and you know they have members chirping over there that we ran deficits, Mr. Speaker. Well you know what, Mr. Speaker, they stood in the House and said we had the 15th balanced budget this year, Mr. Speaker, admitting the last 14 were balanced. So the member opposite doesn't even know what he's talking about. Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't be bragging about the 15th balanced budget if the other 14 weren't balanced before it, Mr. Speaker. So they again they're showing that they have no fundamental competence, no fundamental ability to talk, to know what they're talking about, Mr. Speaker.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, this Bill they can pass, Mr. Speaker. They have the time to pass this Bill, Mr. Speaker, because without it their budget isn't legal. And I think that's pretty important to any government to have a legal budget, Mr. Speaker. I'd agree with the members opposite. That's pretty important.

So, Mr. Speaker, they can pass this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and they might not even need 20 hours. Have they tried? The answer is no. They haven't tried. They haven't discussed any hours that may be needed on each Bill. Had they approached the government . . . or approached the opposition on that, asking?

The answer is no. Yes, well . . . No, we didn't have any discussions on hours, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they didn't come and ask us.

Bill No. 2, Mr. Speaker, An Act respecting Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Now this Bill puts in place a new entity, Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. But if this Bill didn't pass immediately, what would the impact be, Mr. Speaker? Because this Bill could be passed retroactively and have application from any day that the government picks — any day the government picks — and make it legal. But, Mr. Speaker, they have time remaining within the existing rules to pass four Bills. So, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 2 can pass. Bill No. 2 can pass and Enterprise Saskatchewan can become legal this session, Mr. Speaker. That's fine.

Let's deal with Bill No. 3. Bill No. 3, An Act to repeal The Potash Development Act, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the information and notification of members opposite, for members, for the notification of members opposite, this piece of legislation has been in place since the 1930s and never been acted on. Mr. Speaker, if this Bill, if this Bill is not repealed, Mr. Speaker, till the fall of this year, who would care? Who would care? Well, the minister responsible would care, and he's the only one. He's the only one, Mr. Speaker.

So how urgent is that Bill? Why the panic button on a piece of legislation that's been in place for more than 30 years? Why the panic button? Don't ask me. So, Mr. Speaker, if that piece of legislation didn't pass till this fall, it's only symbolic, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? It would only be an issue if the minister was going to act on this piece of legislation, and I think hell will freeze over first, Mr. Speaker. I truly do. So I don't think there's any worry of that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 4, Bill No. 4, An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007. Mr. Speaker, this is the Bill that puts in place fixed election dates. The first fixed election date is going to be November . . . Mr. Speaker, I want to say this very slowly and very loudly so the members opposite understand. The next election date is set as November 7, 2011. Mr. Speaker, this is March the . . .

An Hon. Member: — April.

[22:00]

Mr. Yates: — Pardon me, April 7 — I need glasses, Mr. Speaker — April 7, 2008, Mr. Speaker. That's three and a half years or more from now, Mr. Speaker. So how urgent is this Bill? If this Bill passed in the fall, Mr. Speaker, does it make any difference? None. It makes no difference if this Bill did not pass until the fall, Mr. Speaker. It makes absolutely no difference.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I want to now talk about Bill No. 5 — the Bill that the opposition Health critic said prior to the election, they didn't need, Mr. Speaker, and the Bill that the leader of the opposition, then premier said they had no intention of doing. So, Mr. Speaker, but they knew this was a controversial Bill.

We told them last year this is a controversial Bill. We asked

them to send it out for public hearings. But, Mr. Speaker, they didn't do that. But, Mr. Speaker, because they have the time to pass four Bills, they could pass this Bill too. They could leave Bills 3 and 4 until the fall because they have no impact.

And, Mr. Speaker, finally, finally, finally, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 6. Bill No. 6 is about An Act to amend The Trade Union Act, Mr. Speaker, and they . . . Hey, Mr. Speaker, in all fairness, they told us they were going to do this. They've been saying this for eight years they were going to do this so this is no surprise, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't surprise anybody in this province that they were going to amend The Trade Union Act. In fact if they didn't do this, I would have been surprised.

So, Mr. Speaker, that this is Bill No. 6 and that they want do this, is anybody in Saskatchewan surprised? No, Mr. Speaker, not one single person's surprised. But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker . . . I just want to take a quick drink, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation . . . they can pass four Bills. They can still pass four Bills and get 20 hours of debate, so do you know what, Mr. Speaker? If this is their biggest priority, they can pass it. Mr. Speaker, lo and behold, they can pass Bills 1, 2, 5, and 6. Let 3 and 4 go to the fall, pass their estimates, and get their agenda through.

Do I have to explain this to them one more time? They can pass Bills 1, 2, 5, and 6 and the estimates in the time that's remaining and get their agenda through.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's the problem? What's the problem, Mr. Speaker? The problem is they can't manage their affairs. They can't manage the House, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, so I've tried to help them. I've tried to explain how they could get their agenda through. I've tried to offer them the opportunity to try to negotiate something with us, Mr. Speaker. I've tried to help them. Mr. Speaker, they keep indicating to me they're beyond help. They don't understand. I don't know what to say. Mr. Speaker, I actually don't know what to say.

You try to help them. You try to tell them how they can do it. You try to give them some guidance. You let them know that we were able to manage it for eight years when we were in government — the House. I'm trying to give them a hint or two, trying to tell them how to do it. Mr. Speaker, they still can't catch on. They still don't catch on. I don't know what else I can do. Mr. Speaker, I guess I'm not a very good teacher. Mr. Speaker, I have to conclude that either they can't learn or I can't teach. Mr. Speaker, I have to conclude that either people can't either . . . they can't learn or I can't teach, Mr. Speaker. It's one or the other.

So, Mr. Speaker, they knew full well that Bills 2, 5, and 6 were going to be contentious last fall. They could have started the session a week earlier, Mr. Speaker. We could have debated those Bills in the evenings of week one and two, a Monday and Tuesday night. But did we do any of those things? The answer is no. So all of a sudden because they don't do their job, it's everybody else's problem.

Mr. Speaker, they are prepared to spend thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money on extending the hours and paying overtime

on a daily basis to employees of the Legislative Assembly — tens of thousands of dollars in overtime. Mr. Speaker, they're prepared to spend additional money because they couldn't organize their own thoughts, Mr. Speaker, that they couldn't get their act together, Mr. Speaker. But whose problem is that, Mr. Speaker? It's the people of the province of Saskatchewan's ultimately because they pay. The taxpayers pay.

And, Mr. Speaker, is that fair? Is that fair, that the taxpayers pay? Mr. Speaker, it is not fair, Mr. Speaker, that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan would pay. And, Mr. Speaker, rather than attempting to meet and negotiate some sort of deal that would allow them to move their agenda forward with the opposition today, during the last six and a half hours or seven hours of debate, Mr. Speaker, did they make any attempt to do so? The answer is no. They've decided that they're going to ram through a high-handed, heavy-handed approach; that they're going to use a sledge hammer approach to move forward the agenda with or without, Mr. Speaker, with or without any co-operation; and with or without, Mr. Speaker, any consultation with the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

And is that fair, Mr. Speaker? Is it the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. The answer is fundamentally no, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to revert to introduction of guests.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Leave, leave is not granted. I recognize the member for Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've now, Mr. Speaker, we have now seen another example. We have never . . . we have now seen another example of . . . we've never seen in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, we've never seen, we have never seen in this legislature leave being denied for any member. Now, Mr. Speaker, now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Order. Order. I will ask the members . . . Order. Order. This is the last time I will call order. I recognize the member for Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this debate has been about the abuse of power — the abuse of majority, the abuse of the majority over the interest of the minority, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, sadly, sadly, Mr. Speaker, sadly, Mr. Speaker, we just saw another example. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we just saw another example.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker,

the behaviour of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, the behaviour of the members opposite was not only inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, but it set a new low. It set a new low in this legislature, Mr. Speaker. It's a new low now that we all have to live with. We've seen a government that will use its power to abuse the minority at every opportunity, Mr. Speaker. And that's sad, that is very, very sad.

And, Mr. Speaker, at some point, this government's going to need co-operation. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are power hungry, and the power's gone to their head, Mr. Speaker. And they're prepared to use the majority to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker. And when you see that in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, it is fundamentally wrong. It is fundamentally wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read from, I'd like to read from a passage from the parliamentarian, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian parliamentarian. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read from the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, volume 31, number 1, spring 2008. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read from an article called "Observations on the Theory and Practice of Parliamentary Government," Mr. Speaker . . .

Mr. Taylor: — Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I realize that you, Mr. Speaker, were engaged in some conversation, but I wish you'd paid attention to the member from Kindersley just now.

The rules very clearly state, when a motion is under discussion, no member shall use provocative or threatening language. The threats from the member from Kindersley are unacceptable, unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, unacceptable. He points, he points over to this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and he says, you wait your turn. You wait your turn, he says.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Kindersley has to be called to account. He has to apologize, and he has to do it right now.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, clearly the member opposite didn't hear the exchange that was going on. And clearly it was meant as barter across the floor in a way that is quite common, given the spirit of the evening. And certainly, given the record of that opposition, it was quite appropriate. I would urge you to find the point not well taken.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — As I was in conversation, I will have to reserve my decision until I can look at *Hansard*. I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I tried to indicate previously, I'd like to read from an article contained in the *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, spring edition 2008, which all members of this Assembly would receive. I'd like to read particularly from the observations, an article on "Observations on the Theory and Practice of Parliamentary Government" in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it says:

In our first year of Political Science classes we learned that parliaments were "talking places" — the buildings in which first nobility, and then elected officials, developed solutions to public policy problems [Mr. Speaker] and debated the issues of the day — and of course the odd scandal too [Mr. Speaker]. While this may be a simplified and perhaps optimistic reading of the function of legislatures, it is also the reading which informs many proposals . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Regina Dewdney. I would ask that we keep the side conversations down.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I'd once again like to read this passage that talked about what this institution is about and what's the purpose and practice of this Assembly, and in fact every parliamentary and Legislative Assembly in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And it talked about . . . It's written by an Ashley Cochran and Heather Cochran, Mr. Speaker. They're two interns in the British Columbia legislature, Mr. Speaker. They're interns who are watching daily the proceedings of the legislature of British Columbia. So, Mr. Speaker, like our legislature, they're observing daily what's happening and they're reflecting upon their . . . what they have viewed and what their reflections upon that Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

But I think it's speaks to every Assembly in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And in the second paragraph says:

In our first year of Political Science classes we learned that parliaments were "talking places" — the buildings in which first nobility, and then elected officials, developed solutions to public policy [issues and] problems, and debated the issues of the day — and of course the odd scandal too. While this may be a simplified and perhaps optimistic reading of the function of legislatures, it is also the reading which informs many proposals to reform and renew . . . [the] fundamental [of the] democratic institution. This reading also speaks to our collective desire for parliament to be places for discursive engagement among our elected representatives, [Mr. Speaker].

So, Mr. Speaker, the fundamental . . . One of the fundamental responsibilities we have as legislators is to debate the issues of the day, Mr. Speaker, to have informed discussion about those issues that confront us as parliamentarians or as legislators in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, today we're debating an issue. We're debating an issue that is about changing the rules of this

Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's about changing the rules of our Assembly unilaterally without consultation, without consideration, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's without consultation or consideration of the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are rules that govern our parliamentary traditions in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And I've outlined those rules previously, Mr. Speaker, and it's clear that the practice has been that those rules can be changed by unanimous consent. Mr. Speaker, that is not the case today. We don't have unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker. We haven't had the opportunity to discuss that. We haven't looked at other options, and now we have a government that's going to use its majority power to unilaterally change the rules that are normally and routinely done by unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker.

[22:15]

Now what gives this government the right to step outside parliamentary tradition and practice of unanimous consent and unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker? That's the question they have not yet answered, Mr. Speaker. And why do they need to change the rules, Mr. Speaker? What is the compelling public policy issue that drives the change in rules, Mr. Speaker? What is that issue, Mr. Speaker?

Well we don't have that issue, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have not heard a compelling, driving issue from the members opposite that would say that the rules should be unilaterally changed at this time or ever, Mr. Speaker. What has been by unanimous consent in the past, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite think they have the divine right to change unilaterally. And why do they think they have that, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, why do they think they have that right to change those rules unilaterally? And why do the members opposite think that winning an election gives them the right to abuse parliamentary tradition and practice, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, did they see that occur, did they see that occur from the previous government? The answer is no. The previous government never did it, Mr. Speaker, because the previous government respected parliamentary traditions. Mr. Speaker, and they say the previous government got kicked out of power too, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, if the general public of this province knew and understood that the new government was going to abuse powers — abuse rights, Mr. Speaker — would they have been elected? Well I don't know the answer to that and nor do they, Mr. Speaker. Nor do they, Mr. Speaker.

But I'll tell you this. Even a government that's elected by a large majority that does the right things for the people but does them in a wrong way will be held accountable by the people eventually. It will be held accountable by the people eventually, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are here to represent the people. We are all elected to represent the interests of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

An Hon. Member: — We won the election.

Mr. Yates: — You won the election. We accept that. We accept that you won the election, Mr. Speaker. But Mr. Speaker, that

doesn't give you the unilateral right to change the rules. It doesn't give you the unilateral right to abuse parliamentary processes and our parliamentary practices, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, do they try to work with the opposition? No. When they were in opposition, did they work with the government? Did they negotiate with the government? Yes they did because they had a government willing to work with them, Mr. Speaker. They had a government willing to work with them, Mr. Speaker. But do we see that today, Mr. Speaker? The answer is fundamentally no.

Mr. Speaker, what we see, what we see is members still yelling from their seats, we won the election. Mr. Speaker, they say they won the election so they can do whatever they want, Mr. Speaker. That's their attitude; that's their approach. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a fundamentally wrong attitude and a fundamentally wrong approach. We don't disagree they won the election. We don't disagree they have a right to pass the legislation, Mr. Speaker. We just disagree that they have the right to high-handedly and unilaterally change the rules to do it in a time frame that isn't allowed within the rules.

Mr. Speaker, so what they say, if the rules don't meet my needs? Change the rules, Mr. Speaker. And don't do it in a way, in a time-honoured tradition of parliamentary practice and do it by unanimous consent or do it by working with the opposition. No they don't do that, Mr. Speaker. Instead they take a high-handed approach, and they unilaterally change the rules of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. They move a motion to unilaterally change the rules of the Assembly and ram through legislation they wouldn't otherwise be able to do, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, that's high-handed, Mr. Speaker, that's derogatory, and it's not in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan and it's certainly not in the best, long-term interests of this Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — And, Mr. Speaker, I hope some members of this Assembly take the time to think about that because, Mr. Speaker, maybe some of them should get off their high horse and think for a little while about the institution which we all represent. Mr. Speaker, we all represent an institution that's bigger than any of us. We represent principles and values that are more important than any one of us individually or more important than all of us collectively, Mr. Speaker. We're not here for our own self-interest; we're here for the interests of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And we're not saying, Mr. Speaker, we're not saying as an opposition that they don't have a right to pass their legislation, Mr. Speaker. We acknowledge they have the right to pass their legislation. Mr. Speaker, what we say is they have to pass it within acceptable rules. They have to pass it within the rules they agreed to, Mr. Speaker. They don't have the right to use high-handed, unilateral approaches. They don't have the ability to say, if the rules don't meet my needs right now, my immediate need — like a child they need it right now — that we can change the rules to meet that immediate need.

They don't need to have instant gratification anymore, Mr. Speaker. They're not children. They need to understand that

they can pass the rules within or pass their legislation within the rules, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, when they don't understand that, Mr. Speaker, when there's no discipline, when there's no orderly conduct, Mr. Speaker, things break down. And when they start to break down, you're on the road to the bottom. And, Mr. Speaker, all we're asking the members opposite is to consider that. Try to work through a process that isn't unilateral. Try to work with the opposition and work with the people of Saskatchewan to show that you're bigger than what you're portraying today — that you're bigger and you can operate within the rules and that you can work with others and you don't have to show that bully mentality, and that you have more tools than a sledgehammer. Mr. Speaker, that's all we're asking you.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's fundamentally important. Mr. Speaker, it's fundamentally important. The rules . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Iwanchuk: — To introduce guests.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, sitting in your gallery, I'd like to introduce Bob Bymo, president of the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union. So I ask all members to welcome Mr. Bymo to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give credit where credit is due. They have learned something. They have learned something. And, Mr. Speaker, it's important to give credit where credit is due. And I appreciate that the members opposite who may not have understood the long-standing traditions of this Assembly and assemblies now do.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, as I want to continue my debate, Mr. Speaker, as I'd like to continue my debate on this very, very important issue about the fundamental principles of our democracy, it's nice to learn that they've learned. It's nice that they've learned.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we approach the end of this evening, as we approach the end of this evening and we wrap up my debate today, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to summarize my comments today in short. I'd like to summarize it in this way, Mr. Speaker —

that we have before us a problem that's here as a result of the incompetence of the current government, Mr. Speaker. They knew very clearly from this opposition that there would be opposition to a number of the Bills that they were bringing forward as priority Bills, Mr. Speaker — primarily Bills 2, 5, and 6, Mr. Speaker; the Bills putting in place Enterprise Saskatchewan and the Bills putting in place essential services and amendments to The Trade Union Act. They knew ahead of time.

So, Mr. Speaker, we expected, we expected as members of the opposition to follow the parliamentary calendar that was sent to all of us and that we would be returning on March 3 to start deliberations in this House on that legislation. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, we get told that we're not starting till March 10. And, Mr. Speaker, we lost 25 hours of valuable debate, 25 hours of debate that would have allowed the passage of at least one of these controversial Bills, Mr. Speaker.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I just want to summarize that in the first week and second week we did sit, Mr. Speaker, we didn't sit in the evenings, taking away another 14 hours of debate for a total of 39 hours of debate, Mr. Speaker, which would have allowed the passage of two additional Bills, Mr. Speaker . . . or two Bills, two Bills, Mr. Speaker.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we also took time off between Easter. We took a week off at Easter, Mr. Speaker. We could have sat then, Mr. Speaker, if they needed more time. No, but we needed to take a . . . We worked two weeks; we had to take a week holidays, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and that is in the rules; I will acknowledge that's in the rules. But, Mr. Speaker, if they can unilaterally change the rules here, why didn't they ask us, if they were going to have difficulty, to sit that week, Mr. Speaker? Did they approach us as the opposition and ask us? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker. They made no effort. They made no effort to work with us, Mr. Speaker, co-operatively. And, Mr. Speaker, they made zero effort, Mr. Speaker, to work with us co-operatively now on this proposed rule change.

So when they discovered miraculously — although they knew going into this — that they would have trouble passing their agenda, Mr. Speaker, and that their agenda was at risk, Mr. Speaker, did they work with the opposition to try to find a solution to the problem, Mr. Speaker? Did they agree to send Bills 5 and 6 out to public consultations as an example, Mr. Speaker? No, they didn't. No, they didn't. They refused to send Bills 5 and 6 to public consultations, Mr. Speaker.

Now that, Mr. Speaker, what would that do, Mr. Speaker? It would simply mean that the legislation wouldn't pass until the fall. It means Bill 5 and 6 would not pass until the fall, Mr. Speaker. But in the meantime, we would have the opportunity to consult with labour and business about trying to improve those Bills, to get in place Bills that truly dealt with the problem, Mr. Speaker, with full consultation of those who would be affected by it. But are they prepared to do that, Mr. Speaker? The answer is no.

So Mr. Speaker, we end in this impasse. We end in an impasse now that we have a government that's going to abuse their majority power to pass a resolution to abuse the minority interest, Mr. Speaker. And as I clearly indicated, the principle

of unanimous consent for rule changes is a long-standing tradition and practice in parliaments in Canada, in both the Parliament of Canada and legislatures in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

But do they want to adhere to that rule, Mr. Speaker? No, they don't. Do they try to reach any type of arrangement with the opposition? No, they didn't, Mr. Speaker.

So what do we have? Let me finally summarize this, Mr. Speaker. We're at an impasse. And today on at least 13 occasions that I can reflect upon, Mr. Speaker, I offered, I offered that our House Leader would meet with the Government House Leader and try to find some resolution to the impasse. And I can tell you that my House Leader, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition House Leader is more than willing — more than willing — to meet with the government to try to negotiate some resolution to this impasse, Mr. Speaker, a resolution that protects both the interests of the majority and the interests of the minority, Mr. Speaker, which is what our parliamentary tradition is about, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, are the members opposite interested? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very happy to see, Mr. Speaker, that we have nearly a full house tonight, Mr. Speaker, in the last five minutes of my speech, Mr. Speaker. They are so, so enthralled by this, Mr. Speaker, that they all came to the House, Mr. Speaker, for the last five minutes.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member from Kindersley who said I couldn't do a full day, Mr. Speaker — the member from Kindersley told me I couldn't do a full day, that he's had to do it and how difficult it was, Mr. Speaker — I hope, I hope the member from Kindersley now acknowledges that I did what he couldn't do, Mr. Speaker, do a full day in the House, the whole day, Mr. Speaker. The member from Kindersley couldn't do it, but I could, Mr. Speaker.

And there is a reason for that, Mr. Speaker, because, Mr. Speaker, I believe fundamentally in what I'm speaking about, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, at this time tomorrow night, when I'm concluding my remarks tomorrow night, Mr. Speaker, I hope he acknowledges, Mr. Speaker, that on Wednesday night, I will conclude about that same time of night, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I hope this government, this government will not use or abuse their power and move closure on this motion, Mr. Speaker. I hope that they will consider the interests of minority rights, Mr. Speaker, and the fundamental principle about abuse of minority rights, Mr. Speaker, which is the number one parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker, that the majority should not abuse its rights to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker. And I hope the members opposite will not abuse their rights, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, tonight as we close, Mr. Speaker, this day, I once again want to offer to the Government House Leader that the Opposition House Leader is prepared and willing to meet to try to negotiate some resolution to this impasse in the best interests of both the government and the opposition, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and they say they have no interest, Mr. Speaker. Well

they have no interest because, Mr. Speaker, they've used the heavy-handed approach in this entire issue, Mr. Speaker. They came to the table with only one tool in their tool box, Mr. Speaker, a sledgehammer. And, Mr. Speaker, they're going to nail their agenda through regardless what.

Do they care about the interests of parliamentary tradition, Mr. Speaker? Do they care about the interests of the people of Saskatchewan or the interests of the minority? And the answer's no, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we're concluding tonight, Mr. Speaker, I think it should be clear to the people of the province of Saskatchewan that we have in place a government today that will abuse its power, that will abuse its majority, Mr. Speaker, and will do so in a heavy-handed manner without looking at the interests of stakeholders in the province of Saskatchewan, without looking at the interest of the opposition in the province of Saskatchewan, and, Mr. Speaker, will act unilaterally without thought, without consideration for the needs of others, Mr. Speaker, and in only, their own self interest, Mr. Speaker, and not in the interests . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — It now being 10:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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