



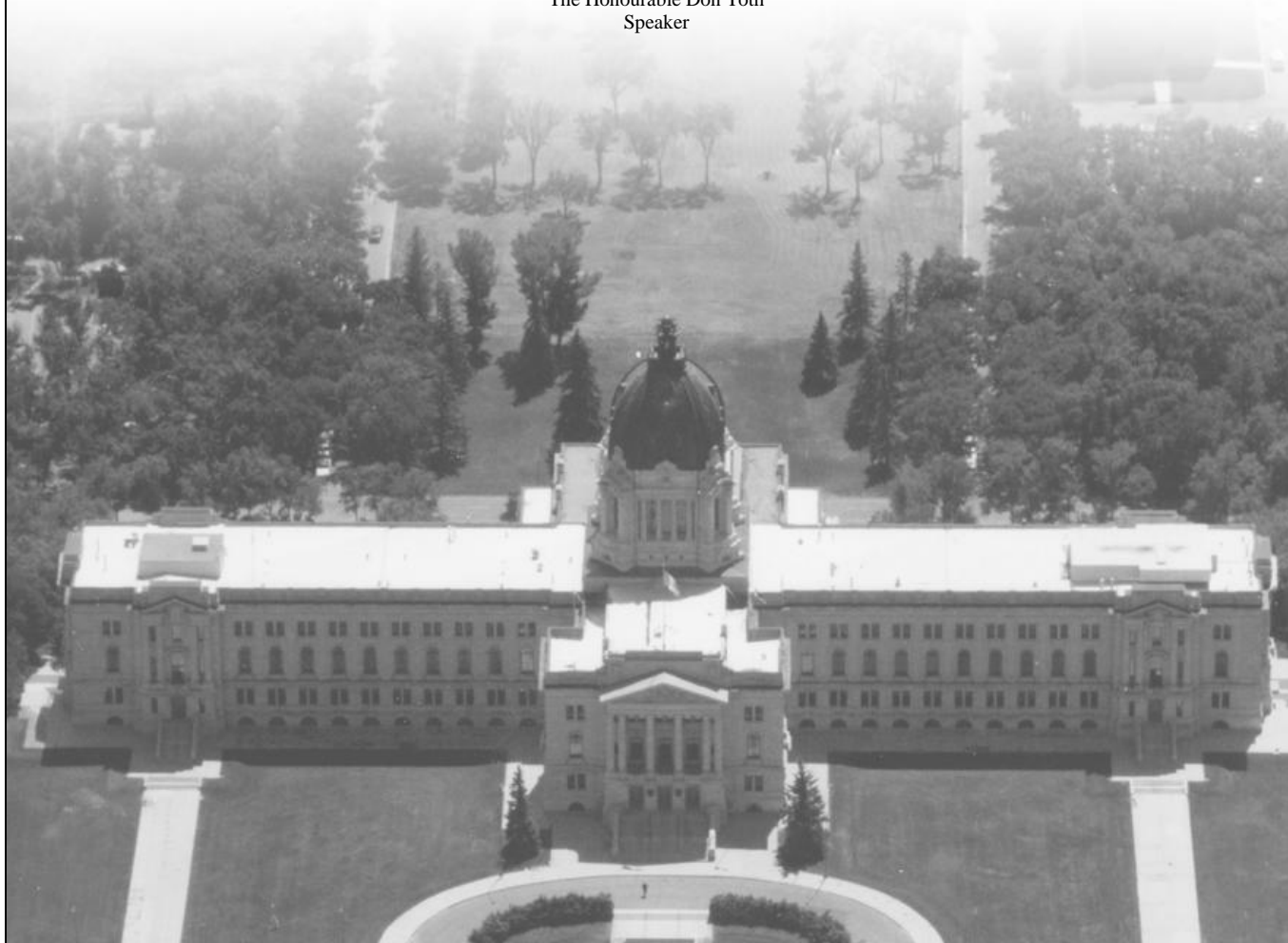
FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Members, if I could, we have a special guest in the Assembly I would ask to have the privilege of introducing. I would like to introduce to you today Mr. Gilbert Parent. He's seated in the Speaker's gallery. He's the former Speaker of the House of Commons.

Mr. Parent was first elected in 1974 and served for 27 years in parliament. In 1994 MPs [Member of Parliament] chose him as their Speaker in a vote by members that required six ballots and nearly seven hours. I'm glad I didn't have to face that. Mr. Parent was re-elected Speaker in 1997.

During his time as Speaker he founded the Teachers Institute on Canadian Parliamentary Democracy where he met with teachers in the Chamber of the House of Commons. A participant recalled that Speaker Parent sat in the historic Speaker's chair and shared his thoughts and deep affection for what he called our House. It was the most powerful unity speech the teacher had ever heard. The words came from his heart.

Tonight Mr. Parent will be the keynote speaker at our own Institute on Parliamentary Democracy, this Social Sciences Teachers' Institute.

Joining Mr. Parent is Mr. Brent Toles from the Ministry of Education. Mr. Toles attended the first Ottawa Institute and the first Saskatchewan Institute and has served on the SSTI [Saskatchewan Social Sciences Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy] steering committee for nine years. He's referred to as Mr. SSTI.

Would you please join me in welcoming — and I'd ask them to stand — Mr. Parent and Mr. Toles.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to introduce someone very, very special that's seated in your gallery. So if I may, to you and through you to all of my colleagues in the Assembly, introduce Jennifer Lozinski who is this year's Easter Seals ambassador. She's joined in the gallery by Michelle Hunter and her dad. Mr. Lozinski's joined us as well today.

And it's a great pleasure to have Jennifer here. She is 14 years of age. She attends Riffle Collegiate in Regina. In addition to her official duties as ambassador which will take her around the province representing the great cause of Easter Seals, she has a number of other passions. She, well like a lot of kids her age, she enjoys Facebook, I'm told. We chatted a little bit about that earlier. She's a fan of Avril Lavigne, Hedley, and Green Day. And unlike the member for Thunder Creek, Mr. Speaker, I've

actually heard some of those, some of that music.

I just want to say to Jennifer that I had a chance a few moments ago to meet her, and we had a wonderful visit. And I know she is going to do an outstanding job for Easter Seals.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming her to her Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's my honour as well today to introduce to this Legislative Assembly some individuals who are part of the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers, so to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Today I was able to meet with some of my former colleagues who I sat with on the Saskatchewan federation board of directors till about six months ago actually as a member of their association.

When I call your names, would you please stand, please: Stan Goertzen, Saskatoon Police Association; Nolan Berg, Saskatoon Police Association; Murray Zorkan, Saskatoon Police Association; Lorilee Davies, Regina Police Association; Donovan Steffenson, Regina Police Association; Shane St. John, Weyburn Police Association; Jay Pierson, Estevan Police Association; and Bernie Eiswirth, the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers' executive officer.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals represent over 1,100 police officers from Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Regina, Weyburn, Estevan, and Moose Jaw. And like I said, up to about six months ago it was my privilege to work and serve with them on the streets of our fine cities and to serve and protect as they do, as two of my colleagues have as well.

It's because of them and the people that they represent that we're safe at night, Mr. Speaker, and the daytime period. Thank you and welcome to your Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister and welcome our guests from the Saskatchewan association of police officers. Mr. Speaker, because of these individuals and many like them throughout the province as the minister indicated, we have safer communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, I look forward, as do other members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to working with these members to help to continue to improve the safety and well-being of our province. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition that speaks to the shabby way that employees at the South Hill liquor store in Moose Jaw were treated and the residents of my constituency. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reassess its decision to close the South Hill liquor store, allowing it to continue to serve the people of Moose Jaw and provide valuable revenue to the people of this province.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition. This one's in support of affordable housing in Saskatchewan. Many citizens are concerned about the process in terms of the openness and accountability. I'll read the prayer:

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

I do so present. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions on Station 20 and in support of the 2,500 people who showed up last weekend at a rally in support of having the funding restored. And the prayer reads:

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

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

The petitions are signed by people in Saskatoon and area. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to present some petitions, a petition against means testing the seniors' drug plan:

To the Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan legislature assembled, the petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth . . .

And it describes the problem of means testing:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to means test seniors and ensure that all seniors continue to have access to affordable prescription drugs.

I am delighted to report these signatures are all, in this instance, from Regina Coronation Park, the constituency I'm honoured to represent. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Women of Strength and Distinction Banquet

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of recently attending the Women of the Dawn's second annual Women of Strength and Distinction banquet. The Premier and I had a wonderful opportunity of networking with the guests in attendance.

Last year the member from Kelvington-Wadena, the member from Saskatoon Eastview, and myself had the distinct pleasure of being three of the women honoured. It is important, Mr. Speaker, to publicly showcase the many distinguished First Nation women in Saskatchewan so that the First Nations youth have role models to emulate.

The banquet was held to raise money for a homeless shelter. The Women of the Dawn, through the proposed Regina Centre of Hope Homeless Shelter, will support homeless women, youth, and children at a time of critical need. This government, Mr. Speaker, also recognizes the challenges posed by affordable housing, and hopes to be part of the solution through the task force on housing affordability created on March 18.

It is not too far-fetched to hope that one day we will be able to rise in this House and honour the achievement of someone who found her strength, courage, and potential with the help of the Regina Centre of Hope Homeless Shelter. Mr. Speaker, Ivy Kennedy and the Women of the Dawn need to be congratulated for the good work they do. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Northeast.

Multiple Sclerosis Fundraiser

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday night, April 5, I along with the Minister of Health, the member from Indian Head-Milestone; Ralph Goodale, Member of Parliament; Mayor Pat Fiocco, and over 400 guests enjoyed a slice of paradise at the Conexus Arts Centre. Paradise was the theme for the evening's fundraiser for multiple sclerosis research here in Saskatchewan. We were treated to an evening of fine food, great entertainment, followed by a live auction.

The magnificent, seven-course meal was prepared by 10 outstanding chefs from across Saskatchewan. And the entertainment was simply breathtaking; the live auction, with a chance to bid on luxurious holidays from around the world.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the highest number of MS [multiple sclerosis] cases per capita of anywhere in the world. MS is a disease that steals from its victims their opportunity to reach their full potential. As a result, MS robs society of their talents.

I want to congratulate the evening's co-hosts: Angel Blair of CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] and Dr. Lynda Haverstock and their committee for a very successful evening. And I wish them all the best in their continued efforts to find a cure for multiple sclerosis.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

2008 Oskana Cup Hockey Tournament

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday I had the great honour of representing the Government of Saskatchewan at the 2008 Oskana Cup hockey tournament. This is an annual event dedicated to promoting and supporting Aboriginal youth in reaching for their dreams through participating in competitive hockey.

Dozens of teams from First Nations in our province enter each year and the quality of play, the level of enthusiasm, and the sportsmanship displayed by the team members is just amazing.

I watched the incredibly exciting final game between two very evenly matched teams from Standing Buffalo and Gordon First Nations, and then assisted with the presentation of trophies afterward.

Mr. Speaker, all young people need role models to look up to for guidance and encouragement. For youth in the Oskana Cup tournament, hockey legend Reggie Leach very generously fills this essential role. A Stanley Cup and Conn Smythe Trophy winner, high-scoring star of the Philadelphia Flyers in their glory days, and recipient of the National Aboriginal Achievement Award in sports, Mr. Leach is the perfect mentor for aspiring young First Nations hockey players — someone who balances world-class abilities with modesty and a burning desire to assist youth.

Mr. Speaker, as Reggie Leach's personal endorsement shows, Oskana Cup is a shining example of leadership, co-operative

effort, and personal growth in Saskatchewan's Aboriginal community. It was both a privilege and a pleasure to be involved, and we wish everyone involved continued success in the future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Dinner

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend I, along with many of my Saskatoon colleagues, attended the 2008 Saskatoon Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame dinner.

The Junior Achievement program encourages young people to learn about business and entrepreneurial activities. They do this through actually starting a business and following it through the year, guided by mentors, volunteers, and corporate sponsors. Both the public and separate school divisions encourage their students to participate.

I want to congratulate Walter Murray in the riding of Saskatoon Eastview for winning the Educator of the Year Award for showing leadership and promoting and encouraging JA [Junior Achievement] programs within their school. SaskEnergy and Junior Achievement will present a scholarship or bursary in the school's name.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Northwest read the names of the winners in each category yesterday, and I also want to congratulate all the achievers, the volunteers, the corporate sponsors, and the winners in the various categories for their wonderful work in promoting JA's mission statement: "To inspire and educate young Canadians to experience free enterprise, understand business and economics and develop entrepreneurial and leadership skills." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Emergency Telecommunicators

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to inform the House that Saskatchewan's Telecommunicator of the Year is Janice Marcotte with MD Ambulance in Saskatoon.

Janice is credited with saving the life of an individual who nearly froze to death in January of this year after being involved with a single vehicle rollover incident in rural Saskatchewan. Janice has been recognized for outstanding perseverance, loyalty, and dedication to her work and the people who call in in an emergency. Later this year, Janice will go on to represent Saskatchewan in a national event.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to bring to the attention of the members that the week of April 6 to 12 has been proclaimed

Emergency Telecommunicators Week in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, these individuals can be counted on to be available 24-7 to respond to emergency telephone calls, dispatch personnel, and generally help people in emergencies stay calm. They not only provide direct advice, but they are the assurance that help is on the way. They are the 911 operators and other service dispatchers from police, fire, and medical services who handle emergency calls across this province.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating Janice as well as thanking all of Saskatchewan's emergency communication professionals.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Girl Guides of Moose Jaw

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this spring, members of the Girl Guides of Moose Jaw participated in an event known as the Walk Across Saskatchewan. The event was held in our beautiful urban park, the Wakamow Valley. The goal of the event was to raise awareness and to purchase metres for the Trans Canada Trail.

Now Girl Guides consist of different age groups: the Sparks are the youngest group, and they're five- and six-year-olds; Brownies are seven and eight years old, and Guides nine and eleven. The oldest group, known as the Pathfinders, includes ages 12 to 14.

Each group started in a different area around the city and walked to meet up as one large group once they hit the valley. The day was meant as a fun outing, not only supporting a good cause but to get exercise for the girls and highlight that hiking is part of Girl Guides. Family members also joined in the support group.

In all approximately 75 people were out to enjoy a grand day, get a bit of exercise, and spend some time with the children. The entire group then met up as they marched to Kiwanis River Park in the Wakamow Valley for refreshments and a snack.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in congratulating the Girl Guides, not only for their long involvement in each and every one of our communities, but for holding this event and for finding a great way to kick off spring. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Heroism Recognized

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise in this Assembly to inform the members of the legislature of a constituent who was recently recognized for an act of heroism.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year Barry Kessler of Pangman was awarded the Medal of Bravery by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kessler received this decoration of bravery for rescuing his neighbour and a fellow farmer.

On August 30, 2004, Mr. Kessler was working in his field when he noticed smoke coming from a nearby field. As he got closer to the field, he noticed a tractor was on fire and his neighbour was slumped over the wheel. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kessler tried to contact emergency services through both his cellphone and his Fleetnet Radio but was unsuccessful.

Due to the fire and smoke, Mr. Kessler was unable to get to the tractor door. Instead he moved to the back and smashed out the back window and after several attempts was able to pull his neighbour, Mr. Tom Merritt, from the burning tractor.

Mr. Speaker, while Mr. Merritt's life was saved that day, he succumbed to illness eight months later. His widow, Loretta, not only thanks Barry for saving her husband's life on that August day, but for also giving her an extra eight months with her husband.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, I want to offer my congratulations to Barry Kessler of Pangman on his feat of heroism and on being awarded the Medal of Bravery. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Infrastructure Agreement with Federal Government

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in November of last year the federal government announced a national infrastructure program worth \$33 billion over seven years. But in order for the funds to flow to municipalities, the members opposite need to do their job and negotiate a deal.

Many other provinces have already begun receiving this funding, including Newfoundland and Labrador. And if Newfoundland and Labrador can have a deal signed by now, Mr. Speaker . . . Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and British Columbia have already signed and they are starting to see the benefits of this agreement.

To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why is the Saskatchewan Party government so incompetent they can't sign a framework with the federal government? When will the minister quit bumbling this file at the expense of municipalities?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, harsh words indeed, and undeserved. If the hon. member opposite had been listening to the news, we have said repeatedly, clearly and consistently, that this is a very complicated, overarching agreement with several different programs in it. Think about it from the federal government's perspective. Mr. Speaker, they're negotiating with several provinces and territories from coast to coast to coast, all at the same time, trying to meet the needs of infrastructure for a wide variety of constituencies all the way from small communities in remote northern districts to provinces with a third of the population, like Ontario.

On the provincial side, our folks are working day and night with the federal people trying to hammer out a deal that meets our needs too, as varied as the largest municipalities from Regina and Saskatoon to small northern hamlets and rural constituencies as well. It's going on and on and we certainly hope for an early and successful conclusion to the negotiations. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well our Minister of Municipal Affairs has failed to give a timeline for signing on and has refused to tell the public what the plan will mean for their communities. In fact, the minister has refused to tell the public how much money is even on the line. Thanks to the minister's federal counterpart who wrote a letter to the editor, we now know that there's over \$755 million waiting to flow to our province — \$755 million just waiting to be accessed, Mr. Speaker, yet this government continues to sit on its hands and community projects go unfunded.

The minister owes the public more than a shrug and a smile. He owes them an explanation as to why he has failed to get an agreement. What on earth is he waiting for? When will the agreement be signed?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you again for the hon. member's question. We haven't actually refused to do anything and all we've decided to do is to fix problems left over by the previous administration. A perfect example there is we inherited the underfunding of the provincial share of the IPSCO upgrading project right here in Regina. They didn't do anything about that. In fact, they left it broken and we're fixing it as we speak.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well that's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that he

would specifically mention IPSCO because IPSCO Place . . . The mayor of Regina has said if this government doesn't sign on to this Building Canada fund, that project won't go ahead. But he uses it as an excuse and as an example of how wonderful the work is they're doing.

They've also announced the intermodal project but, Mr. Speaker, in their own press release the intermodal project is said to be contingent on this agreement being signed. So they're tearing around the province saying what a wonderful job we're doing, what a wonderful job we're doing, and they haven't actually signed the agreement or have any ability to do it. When will the minister get his job done?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well a classic example once again, Mr. Speaker, of the hon. member opposite not doing her homework and therefore coming up with questions of this kind. It is inconceivable in this day and age that projects as significant as IPSCO Place and the intermodal facility, just to use two examples, could possibly proceed without funding from the federal and provincial and municipal levels of government. That's what it's all about.

We keep working day and night to make sure that this agreement is struck in a timely fashion and to meet all the needs of the residents of Saskatchewan. We will succeed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Jobs for Northerners

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the North contributes an incredible amount to the province as a whole. We know that we make a great effort in improving and contributing to the GDP [gross domestic product] of our province. However in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, every local job counts, and every job that's out there people want to hang on to it.

And, Mr. Speaker, one area that's of great promise is, of course, the men and women who work in the fire protection branch for the Ministry of Environment. These are dedicated civil servants that work hard to protect our northern communities and the valuable northern forests. Mr. Speaker, many of these workers have been with the department for many, many years.

My question is to the Minister of Northern Affairs. How could the Minister of Northern Affairs not defend these northerners' jobs when these jobs . . . Recently six people were fired as kitchen support staff from the northern protection office in Buffalo Narrows, Mr. Speaker. Why didn't the minister defend against those cuts?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for his question. And I share his concern about the economic situations in the North and jobs for people in northern communities. And, Mr. Speaker, we are addressing that.

While there were a few seasonal staff that their positions were discontinued when we closed the ministry-operated kitchen facility, the fire base will continue to make a significant contribution to the local economy as the fire base will use local businesses, local restaurants to feed the people within the fire service. And we think that's good for their economy. It provides jobs and it adds money into their local economies. And I would expect the member opposite to be happy with that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, let me be perfectly clear. I am not happy about those job cuts. These are six women, six women that have dedicated many, many years to northern Saskatchewan and many years to the Saskatchewan Environment. And, Mr. Speaker, it is not very proper, it is not very proper for the minister to get up and say, you should be happy with these cuts. Absolutely not. We are not happy. We are angry, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, to the Minister of the Environment or Minister of Northern Affairs, whom we thought would defend our northern interests: why did you cut these jobs, which were jobs for people that have dedicated their lives to this Environment ministry and people that have protected northern forests for many, many years and are part of the support staff? Why did you cut these jobs, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, what I said is that I would expect the members opposite to be pleased with the fact that we are contributing to the local economy by allowing local businesses to contribute to this process.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, this actually brings into line the Buffalo Narrows facility as other areas such as Stony Rapids and Weyakwin fire bases are practising the same approach that we have taken in this budget and that is to help promote the local economy by letting local restaurants and businesses be involved in the provision of food services for the fire base.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Actions of Public Servant

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, that was one of the weakest excuses I've ever heard in my time here, Mr. Speaker. However, Mr. Speaker, I want to have a question towards the Minister of Northern Affairs.

In December a Northern Affairs employee and a vocal Saskatchewan supporter in La Ronge callously handed out big pink slips to fellow employees, suggesting that the Sask Party government would fire them. This individual caused people to fear for their jobs and upset several workers and their families, and many of these are loyal public servants of the North and in the North, and they are left wondering what would happen to them.

Mr. Speaker, after the incident, the Minister of Northern Affairs said she would get some answers to the question that these workers were asking. That was in December, Mr. Speaker, and we still haven't heard from that minister. My question is for the Minister of Northern Affairs: how could she allow a senior manager in her department to play this cruel joke and this cruel hoax on employees that have dedicated their lives to Northern Affairs and northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we agree that the actions by the employee of the Northern Affairs department wasn't right. It wasn't right to have somebody in fear of their job, but at the same time we took the actions that we thought were important. We discussed the issues; the member was talked to, the employee was talked to. No one lost their job, and I think at this time everybody is pleased that this government is working towards fulfilling our agreement to make sure the economy is rolling and people have a chance to get a job in the North.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Diversity in the Public Service

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, it didn't take long for the Sask Party to break their promise to deliver a non-partisan and professional public service. They started by firing civil servants who had decades of experience working for governments of all partisan stripes. They quickly graduated to firing 70 civil servants and Crown employees for failing the Sask Party ideological purity test. And their budget continues the attack by axing programs that were aimed to build a more representative and diverse civil service. To the Minister of the Public Service Commission: can he explain to this House why he decided to eliminate the \$500,000 in funding for the Aboriginal Career Connections program?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, let me just say very clearly that it's the intent of this government to ensure that the public service is representative of the public that it serves. And so we want to ensure that First Nations, people of Métis origin as well are involved in the civil service.

An indication in terms of our government's commitment to a professional civil service was also evident in the budget. I noted that, Mr. Speaker, when this party, when our party kept its promise to fund the Johnson-Shoyama institute of public policy at the University of Regina with a view very specifically to ensure that we're encouraging . . . We're always encouraging people to join the civil service, people to pursue public administration as a post-secondary career, and that goes, Mr. Speaker, for all peoples, whether they are First Nation, Métis, or non-First Nation, non-Aboriginal in the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, we heard some big words and well-meaning phrases from the Premier yesterday on the subject of tolerance and open-mindedness, but actions speak louder than words.

They've extended their mean streak by cutting funding to a program which their own website still describes as providing Aboriginal graduates with an, and I'll quote, "... an opportunity to put your expertise to work while further developing knowledge and skills on the road to building your career."

All of this while you've got \$1 billion in the bank, Mr. Premier. To the Minister of the Public Service Commission: what other successful programs can we expect to be cut while the Minister of Finance sits on more than \$1 billion?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of initiatives in the budget that the hon. member is conveniently forgetting to mention, including funding for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology; additional training funding under the Canada-Saskatchewan labour market agreement of \$1 million; \$80,000 very specifically for an Aboriginal recruiter within the public service, an Aboriginal recruiter whose job it will be to ensure that we are recruiting people of First Nations and Métis origins in the province, Mr. Speaker; \$1 million for Aboriginal Health Transition Fund; \$200,000 for the

consultation round table on the duty to consult and accommodate — maybe the most important issue facing First Nations and Métis people in the province and an issue, Mr. Speaker, that that party opposite when in power completely ignored, Mr. Speaker.

We will not ignore those issues. We will not ignore the need for strategic investments with respect to First Nations and Métis people. We will not ignore the need to ensure that our civil service is recruiting actively from First Nations and Métis communities in the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the government cut the Aboriginal Career Connections program, but they seem to have forgotten to mention it to the people who run their website. In fact their website is still loaded with glowing testimonials from people who have benefited from this program.

Since they seem to have forgotten already, I'll quote from some of them. One says, quote, "My experience in the Aboriginal Career Connections program has been incredible." A second one says, "As I begin my . . . career . . . I know that the Aboriginal Career Connections program was the best career decision I ever made."

With such damning testimony, it's no wonder they decided to axe this program, but to do it in such an incompetent manner as to leave positive testimonials on their website . . . To the minister: how come they can't even cut a program correctly?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the work done by the initiative that the hon. member refers to is going to get done. It'll get done more effectively through the investment that this government's going to make in a very specific First Nations and Métis Aboriginal recruiter in the Public Service Commission. And all those testimonials that will exist, that exist on the website today will apply to this approach, Mr. Speaker. It is an investment in exactly the same goals that the hon. member is advocating. It is an investment in a different way, mind you, one where we will have in place in the Public Service Commission an Aboriginal recruiter.

Mr. Speaker, frankly, you know, I think it's interesting to hear questions coming from members opposite on this issue because when they ask them, they ignore the very many numerous numbers of additional investments that this government is making in First Nations and Métis issues, Mr. Speaker. They ignore the fact. They speak not a word about the duty to consult and accommodate, the most important issue facing First Nations and Métis people, because they did nothing on it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit and knowledge of the members opposite, there have been Aboriginal recruitment individuals and specialists in the Public Service Commission for more than 20 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the Aboriginal Career Connections program isn't the only PSC [Public Service Commission] program aimed at building a more representative and diverse public service. The PSC also has a program aimed at the recruitment and retention of persons with disabilities, whose aim is to achieve a more representative workforce by recruiting people with disabilities.

We heard earlier this year that the Sask Party government had axed the Saskatchewan Council on Disability Issues without a plan to replace it. And now I'm hearing concerns about the future of the program aimed at helping people with disabilities enter the public service.

To the minister: what is the status of this program, and has your government taken any additional steps to help build a more representative public service?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. I find it kind of interesting when it comes from the members opposite. They had, as a government they had a number of years as a government to a policy that was inclusive of people with disabilities and they had an action plan . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They had an action plan drawn up and presented to the government and do you know what happened with that action plan, Mr. Speaker? They sat on it for five years. Five years they sat on it before they came with the disability inclusion policy framework.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a good document. It's a good piece of work. Have they implemented, did they implement everything that's recommended in this document? No, they did not, and that would have included people with disabilities in the workforce.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Literacy

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, on Monday the Premier told this House, and I quote:

Our best hope to find our better selves and to build a better province is not in this room today. It is with our kids.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more. That's why I am all the more surprised and dismayed by this government's decision to cut literacy funding by about \$500,000 — all in this budget with a \$1 billion surplus. To the minister: can he explain why he cut almost a fifth of the Saskatchewan literacy budget?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to take that question from the member opposite. Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, the Literacy Commission was created by that government as a stand-alone entity. It had office space that were not within the confines of the Ministry of Education or the former Ministry of Learning. And as a result of strategizing about how we might do the job better, how we might conduct literacy forums across the province, Mr. Speaker, we decided to bring it in-house.

And, Mr. Speaker, what's going to be happening on April 13, 14, and 15, a project that is going to be hosted in five sites across Canada, including Saskatchewan, we're going to be hosting a forum on literacy, on Aboriginal literacy, to ensure that the public in Saskatchewan, that the people in Canada know that literacy is important. And it doesn't mean that you have to have an office space of significance; it means that you have to move forward with good initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, a conference is excellent but we need dollars behind this. Saskatchewan's booming economy needs more skilled and trained workers, not less. Basic literacy programming helps to build a skilled workforce. It helps to build healthy communities and it helps to build opportunities for people young and old. Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that literacy is a good in and of itself. But instead of building for Saskatchewan's future, instead of being ready for growth, this government is once again mimicking Stephen Harper's Conservatives with their cuts to literacy organizations. To the minister: will he use his \$1 billion surplus to reserve this decision and restore funding to literacy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think I've explained that the Literacy Commission in fact is going to be working in a different way and it will be achieving the same results. But you know, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about what is going on within education, the fact that the Education budget was increased by 25 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I had the privilege of being in Moose Jaw, I had the privilege of being in Moose Jaw this morning to announce some extra funding for early childhood and pre-kindergarten programs, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 2 million additional dollars for the pre-K program. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. One member's been recognized to be able to respond and I invite the minister to finish his response.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're doing a number of things. We're spending a lot of money to ensure that we provide the necessary opportunities for young children . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Prince Albert and the member from Regina Rosemont, please allow the minister to finish his comments.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it is clear. If the member would look at the estimates, he will see that there is significant funding to achieve better results for education.

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

Cancellation of Program and Response to Newspaper Article

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Social Services has had one do-over on her budget and we're hoping she gets a couple more. We learned today that the teen and young parent program will cease to exist as of June 1, thanks to the members opposite.

A ministry spokesperson says the decision was necessary so that resources could be diverted elsewhere. The spokesperson goes on to say the ministry hopes the CBO [community-based organization] sector will pick up the slack left by the program being axed but that the ministry is still working out that part of the plan.

To the minister: with the other billion dollars in the bank, was it really necessary to cut this program? Why has this minister not figured out a plan before putting the program on the chopping block? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for that question. The priority of this government and this minister is going to be our children at risk and we made budget decisions accordingly. The teen and young parent program was initiated in 1986 — sorry, Mr. Speaker — and it was already being phased out by the previous NDP [New Democratic Party] government. It only had about 135 clients left and I am positive we can find very, very competent CBOs that will offer the services to those young teens.

Mr. Speaker, the workers, the workers will be moved into child and family services to work in the child protection file which is so critical. These are our children at risk. The caseload is increasing and we need the extra help.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier spoke of the need for greater inclusion and said he'd been instructing his ministries to find ways to increase the inclusion of all people. But today we know programs are being cut that help young parents build a better life for themselves and their families and the only reason being, by that minister, is a lack of cash.

Mr. Speaker, they say an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. To the minister: is this how her government works with young parents to ensure their inclusion, by slashing programs and not even bothering to come up with a new plan? Will she do the right thing and use some of her \$1 billion surplus to restore funding? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the government deputy leader.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it is time for the people of Saskatchewan to understand the position of that opposition that sits opposite this government.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened for days that the members opposite talk about Bill 5 and 6. We've listened to them take positions on certain programs and certain initiatives. Mr. Speaker, I want the Leader of the Opposition opposite to respond to this article that is in the *Leader-Post* that shows crosshairs of a rifle scope that is aimed at a young woman, and it suggests that someone should take aim, Mr. Speaker.

This is the message from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. It talks about taking aim at young people. It talks about taking aim at this individual. And I want to know whether the members opposite support this article and what they're going to do about it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Severance Payments and Response to Newspaper Article

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Deputy Premier. We learned before Christmas that a number of very senior public servants had been terminated by the transition team of the Saskatchewan Party. These long-term public servants had 30 years, 32 years, 33 years of public service. Can the Deputy Premier advise us this afternoon how much taxpayer money has been paid out in severance pay to these long-time public servants?

[14:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the deputy leader.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this article is from Saturday, April 5. It's just a few days ago when that opposition that sits opposite who has been, on behalf of the SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] and labour groups across the province, raising concerns, raising concerns about tolerance, raising concerns yesterday about the abuse of power, Mr. Speaker. We heard those concerns in this Legislative Assembly, and we see an article that is in support of suggesting that someone should take aim with a rifle, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is that the kind of position that that member opposite has? I would . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Final remarks from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — I want the member from Saskatoon Nutana to unequivocally say that she does not support the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's position taken that would suggest that somehow a young lady should be in the crosshairs of a rifle scope, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Regional Parks

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, April 8, 2008, the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association held its spring convention and annual general meeting. There are 100 regional parks in our province which are managed overall by independent regional park authorities whose board members are appointed by local municipal governments. Individual regional parks are self-financed through user fees, donations from member organizations, municipalities, and other fundraising efforts; and with much volunteer dedication.

I attended the regional parks' annual general meeting and

announced that, in addition to the \$75,000 the association had been receiving from the province to run its affairs, the government is fulfilling its campaign promise for increased funding to parks, and they will thus be receiving an additional \$525,000 this year, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Tell: — This money will be used to further support the functions of their association and for distribution on a cost-shared basis to their members for capital projects according to the criteria established by a peer group.

These parks make a very important contribution to the quality of life in Saskatchewan, particularly in our rural communities where they offer a wide range of services and facilities. They could not function or be the source of public enjoyment and recreational opportunity without the tireless efforts of many committed volunteers. At the spring convention banquet, awards were presented in four categories to these volunteers. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the individuals who were the award recipients for this year.

The first award, called the Park on the Move, is given to a park that has survived a low period and bounced back to become a successful park once again. This year's winner of that award was Big River and district regional park and was accepted by Barry Nontell.

The second award, Mr. Speaker, for Volunteer of the Year, given to a volunteer who has tirelessly donated his time to ensure the success of a park, went to Lyle Beaulieu from Struthers Lake Regional Park.

The George Rathwell Lifetime Achievement Award acknowledges long-time service to either a regional park association or a local regional park. This year's winner was Bruce Anderson from Big River and district park.

Finally, the Park of the Year Award — the big one which goes to the park that has offered outstanding facilities and customer service — this year's award went to Carlton Trail Regional Park and was accepted by Bernie Mikolas.

On behalf of this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, may I offer congratulations to these recipients and our thanks for maintaining these beautiful spaces so all of us can enjoy the wonderful benefits of our great Saskatchewan outdoors.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association does a tremendous job providing recreational facilities, places where people can lease lots so they can have their summer vacations. I think in many ways the regional parks, along with our provincial parks, are part of the Saskatchewan memory bank because virtually everybody that you talk to will have good memories of the times that they've spent at regional parks.

I think it's a good idea that the government has returned to the Saskatchewan centennial funding program that we had a few years. It didn't exist last year, but it existed in the previous four years. I know that the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association will be using the same committees and the same processes that had been used in the previous four years to allocate the money for important projects right across the whole system. That's important.

I know that they can use even more help, and I know that the members opposite will be looking at this as they develop the budget for this year so that there can be even more secure funding for the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege to attend a number of the annual meetings for the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association, and they are times of celebration about what the positive things that people right across Saskatchewan have done. And I know that they will continue to do a good job as they provide these places for our Saskatchewan people but also for people from other provinces and other countries. So congratulations to the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

NOTICE OF CLOSURE

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I give notice pursuant to rule 66(1) that at the next sitting of the Assembly when the order of the day is called for resuming consideration of the government motion for the sessional revision of sitting times, I will move that consideration of the said motion be not further postponed.

The Speaker: — The notice has been given.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure, on behalf of the government, to table answers to questions 451 to 548.

The Speaker: — Questions 451 to 548 tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Dewdney.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased once again to stand and participate in the debate on this

very, very important motion.

Mr. Speaker, this is a motion about the fundamental principles of our parliamentary democracy. It's about the rights of us as members of the legislature to ensure that the rights to the citizens of this province are adhered to.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by quoting an outstanding Canadian, an individual who devoted his life to ensuring that parliamentary democracy worked in Canada. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read this quote:

I am a Canadian, [a free Canadian]
free to speak without fear,
free to worship [God] in my own way,
free to stand for what I think is right,
free to oppose what I . . . [think] is wrong,
or free to choose . . .
who shall govern my country.
This heritage of freedom
I pledge to uphold
for myself and for all mankind.

Mr. Speaker, those are the words of the only Prime Minister that ever came from this province, Mr. Speaker, the Hon. John G. Diefenbaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Diefenbaker was a man who very much loved the right of Canadians to have a free society. And, Mr. Speaker, he felt every bit as strong about parliamentary traditions, parliamentary democracy, and the balance of parliamentary rights between the majority and the minority, which is fundamentally upheld to the rules of an Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the rules of the Assembly of any assembly or parliament, Mr. Speaker, are the balance between the majority and minority interests. It provides the minority the ability to exercise their responsibility in opposition, Mr. Speaker. And what we see today, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly and in this motion, Mr. Speaker, is a government who has chosen — who has chosen to unilaterally, without consultation, without working with the opposition — to change the rules. Mr. Speaker, that is fundamentally against the principles of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak largely this afternoon about . . . There have been many, many papers written on this subject and published throughout Canada, most of them nationally, but Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak at length about this very issue.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start by talking about once again the subject and the principle of parliamentary law. Mr. Speaker, the principles of Canadian parliamentary law are, and this is as published, Mr. Speaker, to protect a minority, to protect the minority and restrain the improvidence of tyranny of a majority. That is the fundamental overruling principle of parliamentary law. It's to ensure that the minority is not abused by the majority.

And, Mr. Speaker, when a government or a majority — in this case and always it's the majority; it's the government, Mr. Speaker — uses that power to take away the rights of the minority or to unilaterally change the rules which are, as I will

come to very shortly, Mr. Speaker, are done by unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, the rules which were agreed to by all members of this Assembly — that is abuse of their majority, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's an abuse of parliamentary privilege and it's an abuse of the parliamentary system.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to say that the vast legacy and tradition implanted in Canada by the preamble to our own Constitution Act says very clearly, one section above all affects procedure. Section 18 permits the adaption in Canada of all the privileges of parliament current in the British House of Commons. That's the foundation for which our parliamentary laws were made.

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. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we did. We did unanimously as a group. Both sides, both the opposition and government agreed to a set of rules in which this House would run by, which we would govern ourselves, Mr. Speaker, which we agreed we'd all adhere to, and, Mr. Speaker, that we would all be bound by, Mr. Speaker.

Then going back to the number one rule of parliamentary law that exists in Canada, Mr. Speaker, that the majority would not abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker, we now have a majority government prepared to abuse the minority by unilaterally changing those binding rules which you all agreed to, Mr. Speaker, and take away the rights, take away the rights of the minority to speak on behalf of people of this province to improve legislation, to make changes, to recommend alterations to legislation coming before the House, Mr. Speaker, because they're going to change our ability to speak on behalf of people.

Mr. Speaker, parliamentary law is based on centuries of tradition and precedents which have marked the evolution of our parliamentary systems, our freedoms from the times that the first parliamentarians were governed by the divine right of kings, where the kings had the divine right to do whatever they wanted, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, they gave that away. In stages, parliamentary sovereignty was given, was given to parliaments across the Commonwealth, Mr. Speaker. And today, today we operate our parliaments and our legislatures on a set of rules that are agreed to by all members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to talk about how rule changes should occur, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about the principle of unanimous consent, which is well enshrined, well enshrined in our parliamentary tradition, our parliamentary law, and our proceedings, Mr. Speaker. Now what does parliamentary consent mean, Mr. Speaker? Well I'm going to, Mr. Speaker, speak at length of this throughout this afternoon.

It means within the ambit of its own rules, within the rules which have agreed to by all members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, the House can change its rules. Yes, the House can change its rules because we made the rules. The rules are to be agreed to by all members so that they're fair and balanced, so they protect the rights of the minority and protect the interests of the majority to always be able to pass their legislation and their agenda in the end, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

But it is common practice for the House to ignore its own rules. But, Mr. Speaker, this is the most important point. It is common for a House to ignore its own rules by unanimous consent, by unanimous consent of all the members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, not by a motion driven by a government that's power hungry and has their own agenda and has forgotten about the first and fundamental — fundamental — principle of parliamentary law, and that is that a majority should not abuse its power, should not abuse its power over a minority, Mr. Speaker.

In fact the words used in parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker, are very clear. It says: "The principles of Canadian parliamentary law are: To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority . . ." That is the fundamental principle of parliamentary law in this country.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we see before us today, what we see before us today is a government who is prepared to ignore, prepared to ignore parliamentary law, prepared to ignore parliamentary tradition because of its own incompetence, Mr. Speaker. They're saying they can't get their own agenda through by following the rules in this Assembly which they agreed to.

Well, Mr. Speaker, first off, they don't even know that. They're making assumptions all over the place, Mr. Speaker, that they can't even properly debate their own legislation if they ever got it before the House so we'd get a chance to talk about it. The fact that some of the Bills that they're talking about have never been discussed in this House is because they haven't put them on the order paper and had them discussed in this House, Mr. Speaker. It's not because the opposition hasn't dealt with them.

Mr. Speaker, with what they're doing, they're bringing forward a motion which would allow Bills to go through without the proper consideration, the proper debate, and the proper consideration and debate in this House and perhaps in committee and in the general public, Mr. Speaker. So you shorten the time frame. You decide to sit till the wee small hours of the night, and you ram things through so the public aren't aware of it.

Mr. Speaker, is that enhancing our parliamentary democracy? Is that working for the people of this province? And, Mr. Speaker, because of their own incompetence, their own inability to get their agenda before this Assembly and give the members of the opposition the opportunity to debate them, Mr. Speaker, they want to change the rules.

And, Mr. Speaker, just a short few minutes ago, not only did they want to change the rules. With one day of debate, with one day of debate, Mr. Speaker, they're moving closure. So at this time tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, the debate on their change to the rules ends. Mr. Speaker, the debate on the change to the rules will end tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. Is that fair? Is that right? Is that democratic?

Mr. Speaker, at least that provision's in the rules. At least that provision's within the rules, and they're not changing the rules to end the debate.

But, Mr. Speaker, to unilaterally change the rules, which is done by unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, to unilaterally use their majority position to change the rules and then to stifle the debate on that very change because people might have, the people of the public of Saskatchewan, the citizens of Saskatchewan might have concerns about a government who would change the rules unilaterally, without consideration of the citizens of this province and the rights of the opposition to oppose, and the rights to bring forward amendments and potential changes to pieces of legislation, to question that legislation, Mr. Speaker . . . And the end of the day the government has the ability to pass their legislation. There's nothing in our rules . . . And they're balanced very carefully to ensure that the majority, the government, always gets to pass their agenda, Mr. Speaker.

But to take away the ability to consult others, to have public consultations, to have meaningful debate on an issue. Because they're going to change the agenda, Mr. Speaker, and lengthen the hours so that the debate's going on in the wee small hours of the evening, in the early morning. Mr. Speaker, that's irresponsible.

And then to unilaterally close debate on a change to the rules of that nature by moving closure after one day of debate, Mr. Speaker, that's unconscionable. That's absolutely unconscionable, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious, serious violation of parliamentary democracy, the principles of freedom of this nation. And, Mr. Speaker, it's without question, without question in violation of many of the long-standing procedures of both the parliaments of Canada, the legislatures of this country, and, Mr. Speaker, the long-standing practice of this legislature as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have an ability for the government today to ask their House Leader to meet with the Opposition House Leader and make an arrangement, talk about what they see as their problem. They don't know they have a problem. They've come to some assumption that they're going to have a huge problem. They push a panic button without knowing they got a problem.

Mr. Speaker, we're at this situation, we're in this situation because of government incompetence, because they can't manage the hours in which this House is supposed to operate. And then they push a panic button without knowing they have a problem, Mr. Speaker. They push a panic button without realizing or knowing that they have a problem, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd just like to take a minute or two to recap exactly what they're proposing to do, Mr. Speaker. They're proposing to extend the hours, Mr. Speaker. From Monday to Friday they would have us sit to midnight every night, Mr. Speaker, from early in the morning to midnight. And we don't have any problem sitting and working, Mr. Speaker. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, we don't need to extend the hours to do the work if they just sit down and do the work.

And, Mr. Speaker, to add to this, Mr. Speaker, when this session was supposed to start on March 3 . . . We've had a calendar that was agreed to as early as May 2007, and published, that we all knew about, Mr. Speaker. And I've got a copy of that calendar here. So if members of the House have difficulty understanding what was intended, Mr. Speaker, I

clearly have a copy of that calendar in my material.

And it said we were returning to start the spring session on March 3. And, Mr. Speaker, did we return on March 3? No we didn't. We returned on March 10, Mr. Speaker, and we returned on March 10, we returned on March 10 because the members of government unilaterally again chose not to return on March 3.

So what is the impact of that on the operation of the legislature and how the legislature would function, Mr. Speaker? What that does is deny, deny members of this Assembly 25, approximate 25 hours of debate time, Mr. Speaker.

So it takes that 25 hours and they're concerned about time to get the Bills, their legislation through, Mr. Speaker, because there are six specified Bills or six priority Bills that the government brought forward that we could if we chose to — I say we could and we haven't told the government we would do this — but we could force them to debate for a total of 20 hours for each Bill.

But, Mr. Speaker, they're assuming that they're going to be forced to debate 20 hours on each Bill. Some of these Bills, Mr. Speaker, are so non-important, Mr. Speaker, that they would have zero impact. So why would they automatically expect that they're going to have to debate 20 hours on these Bills?

But, Mr. Speaker, that's their problem. They don't understand their own agenda. They don't bother talking to the opposition about what the opposition's concerns are, and they want to unilaterally change rules.

Mr. Speaker, we have not seen this type of unilateral and heavy-handed approach since the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, and there are actually books written about heavy-handed approaches by the then Grant Devine Conservatives government from the period of 1982 through 1991.

But, Mr. Speaker, if we had had that extra week that we were supposed to actually be sitting and working, which we were actually scheduled, Mr. Speaker, to be here working — then the government decided, no we're not going to start on the 3rd; we're going to start on the 10th — but had we worked that week, we'd have an additional 25 hours, Mr. Speaker, of work done in this Assembly.

But, Mr. Speaker, that isn't even the greatest crime if in fact they're concerned about their management of the House. In the first two weeks of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, when our sitting hours say that we work on Monday and Tuesday from 1:30 till 5 and 7 to 10:30, Mr. Speaker, and the government plans the agenda and they put forward the work for the House, Mr. Speaker, we didn't sit from 7 to 10:30 because the members of the government didn't want to sit. They didn't put any work on the order paper, Mr. Speaker.

Well who's responsible for that, Mr. Speaker? Are the members in the opposition responsible for the government's failure to do their own job?

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out to members of the House and members opposite, when the members on this side were the government — and, Mr. Speaker, we were the government for

the entire eight years I have been elected to this House and, Mr. Speaker, I among several other members of this House served as the government House leader at one point, responsible for ensuring the work of this Assembly got done — did we ever have to unilaterally extend hours? The answer is no. The answer is no. With a one-vote majority, Mr. Speaker, in eight years we never once had to extend the hours — with a one-vote majority.

I'd like to point out to the members opposite in case they haven't, you know, haven't noticed, Mr. Speaker, on November 7, 2007, Mr. Speaker, they won the election. They won the election. And when you win the election, you take over responsibility, Mr. Speaker. You take over the responsibility and you take over the accountability, Mr. Speaker. So then managing the House becomes your responsibility. It becomes your responsibility to manage the House and, Mr. Speaker, it's not the problem of the members opposite in opposition to manage the House.

Quite frankly, yesterday I tried to give them advice several times on how they could deal with their problem, Mr. Speaker, but they ignored it. So, Mr. Speaker, we lost a total of 39 hours of debate because they couldn't manage their own affairs. Now if, if — and I'm saying if — the opposition forced each of those priority Bills to 20 hours of debate, that's two, two of those Bills which would've been passed had they only taken the time to do their own jobs. Taken the time to understand that they are now responsible, to take the time to understand that they won the election in November 2007 and they have a responsibility both to this Assembly and to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That they now have responsibility; they can't blame everybody else.

Mr. Speaker, they're in the driver's seat. They're driving the car now whether they want to or not, Mr. Speaker, and it's nobody's fault but their own they're not prepared to do so. Mr. Speaker, it's nobody's fault but their own that they're not prepared to drive the car. Mr. Speaker, if you want to be a passenger, you want to hang on, you want to be a cling-on all your life, Mr. Speaker, then you cannot — you cannot, Mr. Speaker — expect to be driving the car. But they fought hard and they wanted to drive the car, Mr. Speaker.

Now there's no free rides in life, Mr. Speaker. You get what you get out of life by hard work. They should've understood that prior to wanting to drive the car, prior to wanting the prize of being government. Prior, prior to, prior to, Mr. Speaker, taking the reins of power, they should've understood what the responsibilities the reins of power mean, Mr. Speaker. And with a 19-seat majority, they cannot exercise the reins of power, Mr. Speaker, because they don't understand the importance of it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we see that again today. We see that again today with this motion because, Mr. Speaker, they're prepared to usurp the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy. They're prepared to take away that fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker, to just abuse their own power, without knowing they have a problem, without having met with the opposition to see if there is a resolution to this issue.

Mr. Speaker, they're taking a heavy-handed approach and willing, willing to set a precedent of abuse, Mr. Speaker, and it

can be called nothing but abuse. And, Mr. Speaker, if you go back once again to the principles of parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker, the principles of Canadian parliamentary law, it says it is to protect the minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority. Mr. Speaker, that's clear. That's very, very clear.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is shameful, it is shameful that today we're facing a situation where the members opposite don't care. They're laughing. They're making fun of the fact that they're abusing our parliamentary institution, Mr. Speaker, that they're abusing the parliamentary institution that I care very deeply for. Mr. Speaker, I care deeply for our traditions and I care deeply for our parliamentary tradition.

There are many Canadians who lost their lives fighting so that we as Canadians today could have the benefits we have, so that we today have the opportunity to live in the very best country in the world. Mr. Speaker, those are our forefathers. They fought. They worked very hard to give us this province and this country and to give us the very laws and principles that we all have to live by. And, Mr. Speaker, when they choose not to live by them, that's sad. And, Mr. Speaker, the world will go on.

Mr. Speaker, they unilaterally change the rules, but forever we will be, we will forever be different because the government chose to abuse their power, to use the tyranny of the majority to change the rules unilaterally when there is a long-standing precedent, a long-standing tradition in the law, that says it's through unanimous consent that the House can change its rules, Mr. Speaker.

Did they even ask for unanimous consent? They didn't, Mr. Speaker. They didn't attempt to work with the opposition in any way. They didn't attempt to resolve the problem in any other way. They said, to heck with you. We won the election; we'll use our majority and if you don't like it, too bad. And, Mr. Speaker, that's where we are today and it is shameful, Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely shameful that we're in this situation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take a moment and talk about this in more detail. Mr. Speaker, there have been numerous papers written on this subject throughout the Canadian parliament and throughout the British Commonwealth, but in this particular paper, I am going to be quoting, a Mr. Stanley Howard Knowles. He's a long-time elected member of the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to quote only certain passages of his long and detailed paper, but I'm going to talk firstly about the doctrine that freedom of discussion in Canada is guaranteed by the preamble of the British North America Act which was first enunciated in the Supreme Court in 1938, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Harper: — To ask leave to introduce guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[14:45]

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to my colleagues and thank you to the member allowing me to interrupt his speech.

It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all the members in the House here, Shane Osborne, who is sitting in the west gallery there. Shane is a good constituent of mine and a newly minted friend over the last four or five years. So I want to welcome him here to his constituency . . . from our constituency to his Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — 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. I'd like to, Mr. Speaker, once again say that the doctrine of law that freedom of discussion in Canada is guaranteed by the preamble of the British North America Act was first enunciated in the Supreme Court in 1938 by Sir Lyman Duff.

Mr. Speaker, since 1938 the principles of free debate and the ability to discuss issues that occur within the legislatures has been guaranteed. Mr. Speaker:

. . . free discussion means "criticism, answer and counter-criticism", it means "attack, defence and counterattack", it means "the freest and fullest analysis and examination of political proposals" from every point of view.

Mr. Speaker, that's the interpretation of the Supreme Court of Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, that is what's guaranteed to every member of this Assembly on behalf of their constituents, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And what we see today with a unilateral motion made by the government using its majority power in tyranny against a minority, Mr. Speaker, we see a government that is prepared to deny, prepared to deny, Mr. Speaker, the members of this Assembly, deny the public, and deny the people of Saskatchewan the very things guaranteed by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

The Parliament of this country, elected by free men and women on the basis of free discussions which cannot be abrogated, is not just a club of good fellows who ought to do the nation's business in the shortest possible time . . .

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that it ". . . is not . . . a club of good fellows who ought to do the nation's business in the

shortest possible time . . ." Mr. Speaker, keeping in mind this was written in 1938, ". . . and with the least possible contention . . ." Mr. Speaker.

. . . rather it is the body which should examine every proposal that is made to make sure that it is in the country's best interest; it is a body in which attention should be drawn to proposals that ought to be made but which are often overlooked . . .

So, Mr. Speaker, it's the job of the opposition to put forward proposals to change legislation, to look at things that weren't looked at, Mr. Speaker; to ensure that there's broader consultation, Mr. Speaker, prior to putting in place a law that may not be a good law, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker:

. . . unless an election is just around the corner; it is a body which should scrutinize expenditures and inquire into the administration of public affairs and to make sure that fairness, [now, Mr. Speaker, this is important — fairness] justice and equity are maintained [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, these are the fundamental principles of what our role is, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, when members of this legislature are denied any of those, Mr. Speaker, it's a fundamental flaw in our system. It means our system has failed. It means that citizens in this province and members of this legislature don't have a right to properly represent the citizens of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is tyranny. Mr. Speaker, that is majority using its power to usurp the rights of the minority which, under parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker, is defined as tyranny. Mr. Speaker, it's a word none of us like to use and none of us like to talk about but, Mr. Speaker, it's real. And when a government is prepared to use its majority power to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker, then it simply is, it simply is tyranny, Mr. Speaker.

If then free discussion in parliament is to mean anything, [so if free discussion within this Assembly, legislature is to mean anything] if it is to be real, certain measures of strength must be accorded to the opposition.

For the opposition to be able to do its role, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada has determined that certain things must be given to the opposition, Mr. Speaker. And what is that?

It must be recognized that it is the opposition's right, indeed it is its [fundamental] duty, [not just its right but its fundamental duty] whenever it feels strongly about any matter of public policy, whether it be something the government is proposing or concern over something the government is failing [to do] to propose, to criticize and attack the government for all it is worth.

For our parliamentary system to work, Mr. Speaker, the opposition has to have the right to attack the government when they believe it's wrong, Mr. Speaker. And that, Mr. Speaker, that is what is denied. That is what is denied by an opposition when a government uses its majority to unilaterally change the rules and oppress the minority, Mr. Speaker. Those are things

that my forefathers and your forefathers and many, many Canadians fought to ensure for the citizens of this country, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, “The opposition has only [and I want the members to listen to this very carefully — the opposition has only] the rules for its protection . . .” So the rules are there to protect the opposition, to ensure that the majority government doesn’t abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker. The opposition only has the rules for its protection. “. . . hence the authorities on parliamentary procedure emphasize the greater importance to the opposition of the only protection it has, the protection of the rules [Mr. Speaker]”. Mr. Speaker, this is the Supreme Court of Canada speaking.

Mr. Speaker, the protection that members of the opposition have are the rules of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And when a government uses its majority to unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker, that protection is stripped away and, Mr. Speaker, democracy in this country, democracy in this country is no longer fair and just. It’s one-sided. Mr. Speaker, it’s like a bully in a schoolyard, Mr. Speaker, deciding his way or the highway, Mr. Speaker, using a modern day analogy, Mr. Speaker. It’s like a bully in the schoolyard. It’s either his way or the highway.

Mr. Speaker, and it goes on to say:

. . . I suggest that unless we approach equality of strength, unless there’s an ability to approach a quality of strength [Mr. Speaker] — there cannot be absolute equality for in the end the majority must prevail, hence I say unless we approach equality of strength — between those who support and those who oppose the government of the day, there will not be that cut and thrust, that “attack, defence, and counterattack” . . .

Mr. Speaker, the very fundamental rights of our parliamentary democracy, the things that we as Canadians have fought for, the things that John G. Diefenbaker’s talked about in his speech about being a great Canadian, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we don’t have that today because we have a government that’s used its unilateral power, used its unilateral power to decide they’re going to change the rules.

And then, Mr. Speaker, they did the unspeakable just a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker. They did the unspeakable. They won’t even let us debate. They won’t even allow us to debate the abuse of their powers, Mr. Speaker. They will not allow us to debate the abuse of their powers, Mr. Speaker. They did not allow us to debate the abuse of their powers.

They’re moving closure, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow, tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, when I would normally stand on my feet to continue this debate, Mr. Speaker, we can no longer do that because the government once again used its majority power to close debate, Mr. Speaker, to stop us from having the opportunity to continue to debate.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to, I want to give them credit for this. Mr. Speaker, the rules of closure are at least in the rules, Mr. Speaker. They didn’t change the rules to do so, Mr. Speaker. At

least they’re following the rules. And that’s a step up to them, Mr. Speaker. That’s a step up for the government to follow the rules. Even though it’s unconscionable to do so without the debate about their changing the rules prior to using the rules to close debate, Mr. Speaker, at least they’re following the rules.

Mr. Speaker, but this decision goes on to say:

But I suggest that you could have universal suffrage, the secret ballot, and a government which is the choice of the majority of the people, and still not have full political democracy.

And, Mr. Speaker, we see that today. We can have a majority government and still not have full political democracy in our country because that majority could use its majority in a tyrannous way, Mr. Speaker. They could abuse the fundamental and first priority of parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker. They could use their majority to create tyranny over the minority.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what’s occurring today. That is exactly what’s occurring today when the members of the government are unilaterally putting forward a motion to change the rules — the rules that are said to be, by the Supreme Court of Canada, the only protection of the opposition; the only balance between right and wrong, Mr. Speaker; the only balance between the majority and minority in a parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker. And they are continuing to abuse that fundamental principle, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, democracy includes the respect for the rights of minorities. It’s a fundamental principle understood and acknowledged by the Supreme Court.

[Mr. Speaker] Democracy includes [the] respect for the rights of minorities. Democracy is not real unless the force of public opinion is brought to bear not only on the choice of a government once every four or five years but on the legislative process . . . [month to month, day by day] and during the time between elections [Mr. Speaker].

[Mr. Speaker] I submit, therefore, that you do not have [the] full political democracy, let alone the economic as well as political democracy for which my party stands, unless you include along with the ingredients that are taken for granted, such as universal suffrage, the secret ballot and majority rule, a full and . . . [unquestionable] recognition of the rights and functions of the opposition to the government of the day.

Mr. Speaker, unless you’re willing as a government to recognize the rights and responsibilities of the opposition of the day, Mr. Speaker, and work with that opposition to deal with the issues before the legislature, Mr. Speaker, then you don’t have true equality.

And, Mr. Speaker, for eight years, for eight years when we were in government we worked every single year with the opposition, Mr. Speaker. We worked with them to ensure that our parliamentary agenda, our legislative agenda got through, Mr. Speaker. We learned to make sure that our budgets got through, Mr. Speaker. We worked with the opposition. We worked collaboratively, Mr. Speaker, to ensure, we worked

collaboratively to ensure that the agenda — which was the people's agenda, Mr. Speaker, because ultimately it was in fact passed, Mr. Speaker, and became law — that the people's agenda carried on.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to say, Mr. Speaker, I'm not prepared to say that the members opposite are willing to work with us, because they've shown no signs of a willingness to work with this opposition, Mr. Speaker. Instead they've chosen to use their power of majority and, Mr. Speaker, I dare say in tyranny — as anticipated by parliamentary law in this country — to abuse the minority, to take away the rights of the opposition to do its job by changing the rules unilaterally, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, why'd they do all this? I think it's time to go back. It's time to go back and look at something very carefully, Mr. Speaker. We're in this situation because of their own incompetence, their own inability to understand that they won the election, they're now responsible, and they have to manage their own affairs, Mr. Speaker — that they have a responsibility to manage the agenda in such a way that they can pass the laws which they want to pass, Mr. Speaker, so that they can pass the budget that they put before the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, why should the rights of the opposition be usurped because they can't do their own job, Mr. Speaker? They started the session late. They denied the opportunity for the debate in the evenings because they put nothing on the agenda, Mr. Speaker. And all of the sudden that becomes the fault of the opposition.

Well, Mr. Speaker . . . And then they push a panic button. They push a panic button, thinking they can't get their agenda through, Mr. Speaker. But did they try to work with the opposition to see if they could get their agenda through, Mr. Speaker? No. The answer's no.

Mr. Speaker, this is 1986 all over again. It's exactly how the Conservative government in the 1980s acted, Mr. Speaker. The first thing that the Devine government did in 1986 after re-election, they moved a unilateral motion to change the rules. Mr. Speaker, this is identical to the Devine government of 1986. And where was the member from Swift Current, the leader of the opposition, in 1986, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, he was working in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, he may well have drafted that very motion. And we see today the exact same behaviour. And, Mr. Speaker, we believe this decision was made in the Premier's office.

We've seen very carefully orchestrated shift in power so that the power in the current government lies in the Premier's office, Mr. Speaker. We see the Premier actually direct in this House who's answering questions, Mr. Speaker, which is normally the function of the House Leader. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier can't do his job.

If the Government House Leader can't do his job, all of the sudden it becomes the fault of the opposition or we're going to have to unilaterally change the rules because they're incompetent. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's against every principle of parliamentary democracy. It's against every principle of our

democratic system. And, Mr. Speaker, it clearly is against the intent of these decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

"Only in this way . . ." Mr. Speaker, pardon me. I want to talk about: "Only in this way can you protect the rights of minorities; only in this way can you make sure that the force of public opinion will be brought to bear on the legislative process."

Only if you respect the rights and the role of the opposition, and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, only if you respect the rules of the Assembly — only if you respect and adhere to the rules which you all agreed upon, the rules you agreed to.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a minute and go back and talk about how these rules came into place, Mr. Speaker. The current rules of the Legislative Assembly, the current rules of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, were agreed to by all members of this Assembly.

[15:00]

But how did we come to the current rules? Mr. Speaker, we put a subcommittee together consisting of members of — what? — equal number of members of government and opposition that went and looked at how the rules in other assemblies were working. How could we modernize our Assembly in such a way and ensure the continued balance between the rights of the minority and the rights of the majority such that the government could always continue its agenda and at the same time, Mr. Speaker, that we could ensure, we could ensure, we could ensure, Mr. Speaker, that that balance that was anticipated by our forefathers and by the Supreme Court of Canada and by the British North America Act and by hundreds of years of tradition, that balance would continue?

And, Mr. Speaker, we agreed to a set of rules that we all thought ensured that balance. In fact we all strongly believed it. We endorsed it. Both the current government when they were in opposition . . . and they fought for many of the rules which they're fighting today. They won it. It was an all-party committee. We all agreed. And we agreed because we, we as people of integrity, Mr. Speaker — I would like to say that — we as people of integrity on both sides agreed that these rules should and could work to continue that balance, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we believed, we believed and we accepted their word. When we accepted their solemn oath, Mr. Speaker, their solemn belief that these rules were fair and when we gave our solemn oath and our solemn pledge that these rules were fair and continued that balance, Mr. Speaker, that we would live by those rules, we would live by those rules. And we would only use the principle of unanimous consent that we were going to change the rules or the sitting times, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, sadly, sadly the day November 7, 2007, came along and the members opposite for the first time found themselves in the position where they had the majority power, where they were in a position to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker. What did they do, Mr. Speaker? They in fact abused the minority, Mr. Speaker, and we see that today very clearly in this motion that's before the House.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad day for democracy in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this is a day that some may say that true democracy in Saskatchewan dies. It's a sad day and it's unfortunate that this occurs when we're sitting in this House, Mr. Speaker. But this all occurred as a result of the incompetence of the government in power.

Mr. Speaker, they've been in power for only four months. We can understand, and we very clearly understand the complexity of government. We understand the difficulties in operating a very complex system. Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite didn't understand that, why didn't they just come to the opposition and try to work out some solution to the problem which they're facing? But did they choose to do that? No.

Last night, Mr. Speaker, last night and during the day yesterday on 13 occasions, I urged the Government House Leader and the Premier to either meet with the Leader of the Opposition or to meet with the Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker, to seek resolution to the problem so that we don't have to set this awful precedent, so that we don't have to set this awful precedent, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to use the majority to abuse the minority in this province.

Mr. Speaker, once again I'd like to urge the Premier to either meet with the Leader of the Opposition or the Government House Leader, to meet with the Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker, and let's try to seek some resolution to this, this problem they perceive, Mr. Speaker, that I still have not had to find, Mr. Speaker. And as you would know and understand, I understand the rules very well, Mr. Speaker, and I don't believe we have the particular problem that the members opposite are talking about.

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce some guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce seven guests who've dropped in to witness democracy in action. These seven guests, Mr. Speaker, include from SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] Frieda LeVasseur of Local 1101 in Regina. We also have a vice-president of the SFL, Shelley Johnson. Shelley, give us a wave. Thank you.

We have Sandi Marcotte from Local 1120 in Estevan. Welcome. Kurt Whitford from Local 1104 in Weyburn.

We have Garry Ramage with SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] academic. Welcome Garry. Tracey Kurtenbach who is the chairperson of the SIAST professional services bargaining unit, welcome Tracey. And Jim

Steele who is the chairperson of the SIAST academic — Jim, welcome. And I want to welcome these people to the Assembly and thank them for their interest in democracy. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to once again reiterate, we're in this problem, this perception of a problem which we don't even know is reality because the Government House Leader pushed the panic button, believing he can't get his agenda through.

Did he meet with the opposition, seeing if there was some arrangement that could be made, Mr. Speaker? Well when we asked him to give us a proposal, Mr. Speaker — and I know I was part of some of these discussions, Mr. Speaker — what did he give us? He gave us the motion that we have before us, saying, well we don't need your co-operation. We're the government. We have the power and we can ram it through, Mr. Speaker.

Well that's an attitude problem, Mr. Speaker. That's a significant attitude problem, a significant attitude problem that we haven't seen in Saskatchewan since we elected the last Conservative government, the Grant Devine government in the 1980s. The Grant Devine government in the 1980s was the last time we saw unilateral change of the rules in this manner, Mr. Speaker — a change that usurped the rights of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, which used its tyranny, Mr. Speaker, of the majority to abuse the minority Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to talk about this decision by the Supreme Court of Canada: "We are indeed fortunate in Canada to have inherited from the United Kingdom a parliamentary system of government," Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we're well served by the parliamentary system of government we inherited. I think it's not perfect, Mr. Speaker, but we as Canadians have the opportunity to live a quality of life that few in the world have, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker "... the genius of which is the responsibility of the government to a parliament in which the rights of those who support the government and likewise the rights of those who oppose it are clearly recognized." Mr. Speaker, it says that the rights of the opposition should be clearly recognized.

And how are those rights, Mr. Speaker, protected? Earlier it was very clear in this decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, Mr. Speaker, that those rights were protected by the rules of this Assembly — by the rules of this Assembly — and the adherence to those rules by the majority, by the government, Mr. Speaker. That is how an opposition's rights are protected, how the minority's rights are protected in law in this country, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it's a very sad day — a very sad day indeed in Saskatchewan — when we have a government that cares not about the rights of minority, Mr. Speaker; cares nothing about abuse of power, Mr. Speaker; is willing to abuse its power. Like the schoolyard bully, Mr. Speaker, over a younger, less fortunate individual in the schoolyard, Mr. Speaker, the one that doesn't have the ability to say no, Mr. Speaker, that's the type of attitude this government's displaying — that of a bully, a bully that's willing to use its majority in a tyrannous way over a minority, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful. It's absolutely shameful. And members opposite should take the opportunity to think about that.

They should think about that because they're going to go down in history as part of this. And there will be books written about them as there were books written about the Devine era that speak of just this — that speak of just about this and about the abuse of power. And, Mr. Speaker, I can't believe that I'm the only . . . I know I'm not the only person on the opposition side that feels very passionately about the rights of parliament, Mr. Speaker, our history, our laws, Mr. Speaker.

But there has to be some members on the government side that feel as passionately about parliamentary law, that feel as passionately about the parliamentary rights, Mr. Speaker. There has to be somebody. There has to be at least one member among their 38 members that really cares about abusing power, that doesn't think it's appropriate to use its majority to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker. There needs to be one caring, compassionate individual among the 38. There must be. Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that there is not at least one caring, compassionate individual among the 38. There isn't one person who cares about abusing their power.

Mr. Speaker, there has to be somebody over there. There has to be somebody over that that isn't so afraid of the Premier and the direction from the Premier's office that they can afford to care. They can afford to show that they have a little compassion, Mr. Speaker, that they don't want to be a schoolyard bully.

Mr. Speaker, there needs to be at least one member opposite . . . and I see a couple of members leaving, Mr. Speaker. Maybe those are individuals who aren't comfortable, that are uncomfortable, Mr. Speaker, in the role that they're playing. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope that there's at least more than at least one member over there, Mr. Speaker, that feels bad, that understands what they're doing is wrong. And, Mr. Speaker, they should not be doing it.

Mr. Speaker, "It might interest you to know," it goes on to say, "that the 'term 'His (or Her) Majesty's Opposition' has been in use longer than the title 'Prime Minister.'" Mr. Speaker, that now parliamentary democracy, the role of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition has been used more frequently and longer than that of the office of Prime Minister, than the title Prime Minister. Mr. Speaker, one of the quotes used in this is:

When Sir Charles Tupper wrote his farewell letter to the Conservative Party in 1901 he put it this way: "The duty of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is to exercise vast influence in restraining vicious legislation, and in giving a loyal support to proposals of the Government which

commend themselves as in the interests of the country" [Mr. Speaker].

And, Mr. Speaker, you've heard me many times in this Assembly stand and give recognition to the government for the things they do well. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what a good opposition does. Mr. Speaker, we pointed out to them many good things in this budget. But there were things that didn't meet the test of the needs of the people of this province. And we pointed those out too.

But that's our job as the opposition, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is why our parliamentary system both has a government and an opposition: to create a balance, to create the dialogue and discussion that brings forward and forth even better legislation, Mr. Speaker, better outcomes in the interests of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. That's why it's been anticipated ever since The British North America Act and ever since our parliamentary democracy was developed in Canada that there would be both a government and an opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker ". . . and in giving a loyal support to proposals of the Government which commend themselves as in the interests of the country; while initiating itself such measures for the commonwealth as are neglected by the Administration."

So it's also the role of the opposition to bring forward things that it felt are neglected by the government in power of the day, Mr. Speaker. And when we ask for certain Bills to go to public hearings so that members of the public have an opportunity to have direct input into those Bills, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't mean those Bills aren't going to pass because those Bills are still going to come back to this legislature and the government through its majority will pass them.

But what we're asking is, on Bills that are contentious in nature, Mr. Speaker — as they asked of us when we were government and as we granted them, Mr. Speaker, and as we granted them as you would know, Mr. Speaker — the right for some pieces of legislation to go to committee so that members of the public can directly have input, so members of the public can directly contribute to ensuring that we get the best possible legislation, we get the very best possible outcomes for the people of our province and, Mr. Speaker, so that a piece of legislation that may have been drafted in the middle of the night in some individual's office that has a particular dislike for a group of people or a segment of society cannot pass without having the type of scrutiny that is ensured and intended in our democratic process, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Sir Wilfrid Laurier spoke in 1913 in the House of Commons and brought forward in a resolution to amend the rules of the House of Commons as to provide for closure, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals were then scandalized by the opposition party as "This was a form of tyranny free men in a free parliament could not take," Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it didn't pass. Mr. Speaker, it didn't pass. "Heaven is my witness," it goes on to say, "that I would rather stand here today defeated and in opposition by that appeal to the people [rather] than stand over there in office by the power of the gag, [Mr. Speaker]."

An Hon. Member: — Read that again.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, it says, “Heaven is my witness that I would rather stand here today defeated and in opposition by that appeal to the people than stand over there in office by the power of the gag,” Mr. Speaker.

And this is talking about the government using its ability in power to use closure, Mr. Speaker. Something this government today is willing not only to do, Mr. Speaker, but to do it after only two days of debate, Mr. Speaker. After two days of debate, Mr. Speaker, this government is prepared to abuse its power — prepared to abuse its power and prepared, prepared to move closure, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now just briefly talk about a quote by Stanley Knowles, and it says that:

Debate is not a sin, a mistake, an error or something to be put up with in parliament. Debate is the essence of [what our] parliament [is].

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I now want to say that one more time, Mr. Speaker:

Debate is not a sin, [it's not] a mistake, [it's not] an error or something to be put up with in parliament. Debate is the essence of [what our] parliament [is, Mr. Speaker].

And, Mr. Speaker, when you're going to stifle that debate, when you're going to take away the rights of members of this legislature to debate something fundamental as changing the rules unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, that is tyranny at its best. That's abuse of power at its very best, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite are prepared to do that after only allowing, after only allowing members to debate this issue for two days, Mr. Speaker, by taking away the right of individuals to free debate on this very serious issue, Mr. Speaker. So it tells you how serious they take this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the members opposite are laughing and giggling and making faces, Mr. Speaker, but they obviously don't take this issue very seriously, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you don't, if you're passing a closure motion after two days of debate, you don't take it very seriously at all. Mr. Speaker, they do not take it very serious at all.

Mr. Speaker, Sir Wilfrid Laurier goes on to say:

There are occasions . . . when an opposition or a minority owes it to itself, on account of the strong views it holds upon some public measure, to oppose that measure with all the force at its command.

Mr. Speaker, and that's what we're doing today. Mr. Speaker, we're opposing this unilateral rule change, Mr. Speaker, and we're opposing it with every, every ounce of effort that we have, Mr. Speaker.

And the reason we're opposing this is because, Mr. Speaker, it's not necessary. It's not needed. It says the only, the only protection an opposition has is the rules, Mr. Speaker. The Supreme Court of Canada said that. And when a government is prepared to unilaterally change the rules, it takes away the protection of that opposition, Mr. Speaker, and it takes away the balance of fundamental democracy in Canada, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, today, today in Saskatchewan democracy dies if this government moves ahead with this motion.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen this once before during the Devine years right after the 1986 election, Mr. Speaker, and we see it today. Mr. Speaker, it's déjà vu. It's living the 1980s all over again, Mr. Speaker. This is Grant Devine II. This is doing exactly what the Devine government did in the 1980s.

On another occasion, Mr. Speaker, on another occasion, and this again is a Sir Wilfrid Laurier quote:

On another occasion in 1771, the majority of the house . . .”

Mr. Speaker, because their history comes from the British parliament.

. . . the majority of the house did not want to allow the publication of the debates. That strange position was opposed by a minority headed by no less . . . than Edmund Burke, and Burke by whole days of obstruction succeeded in defeating the object of the majority, and, as he himself said afterwards, “Posterity will bless the pertinacity of that day.”

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, our whole system is designed so that individuals who have very strong held beliefs have the right to debate those beliefs in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, we see this government denying the rights to debate those very strongly held views, to have these very strongly held views debated, Mr. Speaker, because they're prepared to use their majority to abuse, Mr. Speaker. They're prepared to use their majority to abuse, Mr. Speaker. And when you allow a majority to abuse, Mr. Speaker, the world is a weaker place, a lesser place as a result, Mr. Speaker. And we all have to examine the outcomes of such behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, they go on to say:

I submit that ours is a great tradition, that we play a vital role in the democratic process — a role without which our legislative process would not be democratic — and that posterity will continue to bless the pertinacity of those to Mr. Speaker's left who do their job as [the very] best they can [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, we're trying to have the members opposite understand that what they're doing is not the right thing. Mr. Speaker, rather than trying to resolve the issue through some form of negotiation, consultation, or consideration, Mr. Speaker, they're unilaterally changing the rules. They're changing the democratic process of this legislature, Mr. Speaker, and they're doing so because of their own incompetence, Mr. Speaker. They're doing it because they can't manage their own affairs, Mr. Speaker, and they cannot manage

the government, Mr. Speaker. And that is a shameful, shameful situation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the opposition we're to consult. We must check, prod, and in the third place . . .

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce some guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, members. It's my pleasure to introduce to you, and they're seated in the gallery opposite, Brent Barre. He's a member of the SGEU Local 5485 in Regina, and if Brent could give us a wave. Also, Lori Bossaer. She's from North Battleford, and she's a member of the SGEU Local 1103, and if Laurie could give us a wave. And also, Darwin Delorme. Darwin is also from North Battleford and a member of the SGEU Local 1103 and also has a distinction, Mr. Speaker, of serving as the vice-president, Aboriginal vice-president of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. And I wonder if all members would join me in extending these people a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to continue my remarks talking about the role of opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say that:

Any opposition worth its salt must check, prod, and in the third place [to] do something else to the government . . . Checking the government is the most obvious task of the opposition. This applies to legislation, spending, taxation and administration.

Mr. Speaker, clearly he felt that the role of the opposition is to question what the government is doing, to question what the majority's doing, Mr. Speaker. And when you do that, Mr. Speaker, when you do that, you have to have the freedom to do that. And you have to be able to do it in a way that is balanced and fair, Mr. Speaker, and that allows for the influence of the opposition to change the opinion of the government at times, Mr. Speaker, so that there's open and meaningful dialogue, so that there's public consultation, so there's an opportunity for the

people of this province and the people of Canada to have a say in what their legislative body is doing, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, a denial of this process, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what's occurring with this change in rules, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our second task is equally important if not more so as an opposition. It is ours to prod and push and persuade the government to take those steps for the common good, for the common good, which is sometimes seems awfully slow to be done, Mr. Speaker. That's our responsibility as an opposition. It's our responsibility to push the government to do the right thing. And what's wrong with that, Mr. Speaker? We're all elected by the people of this province. We all want to have the very best province we can have. We all want to have the very best place we can for our children and grandchildren to grow up.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, over the last day or so, I've on a couple of occasions said hello to my own grandson who likes to stay at home and watch grandpa. He's four years old. And when I'm up here talking about the principles of parliamentary democracy, he knows that I want what's very best, the very best for him.

But I also want the very best for the children of the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote. I want the very best for every member of this Assembly and their children because, Mr. Speaker, we all live in this province. We all live in this country. And of course we want the very best for our children.

But we want, Mr. Speaker, as much as we want what's best for our children, Mr. Speaker, we need to have, we need to have balanced processes that protect the rights of both the majority and the minority. We need that for our parliamentary system to work. We need it so that our children have the very best future to grow up to, Mr. Speaker, and that we don't become like other countries that no longer consider, no longer consider what's best for our children, that care only about for those who are in power themselves, who seek self-gratitude instead of what's best for the province, Mr. Speaker.

And for those very reasons we have rules in this Assembly that we all agree to adhere to, Mr. Speaker. And we don't when we don't adhere to them, Mr. Speaker. We have slipped a long way down the road towards an end, Mr. Speaker, where the might makes right, where the power of an individual or the power of a few will dominate the will of the majority, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we can never reach that point. We don't want to get to a system where people are elected in this Assembly based on how much money they have in their pocket or how much influence they have prior to getting here. We want to have an Assembly that's representative of the people, that's balanced and fair, that believes in the principles of equality and justice, Mr. Speaker, and that believes in the fundamental principles of balance between the rights of majority and the rights of minority, Mr. Speaker.

Those things are important. They're important to our future, Mr. Speaker. They're important to our ability to continue a democratic process in this country that will allow the best possible future for our children, Mr. Speaker. And we — all members of this Assembly — should consider that very, very

important. And when we don't, Mr. Speaker, we have reached a point where our future is uncertain because when we're prepared to use the rights of the majority to abuse the minority, Mr. Speaker, we cannot say, we cannot say what the future means to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for just a minute about the democracy must include the rights of the minorities, Mr. Speaker. And in this case that's well, well documented in our parliamentary law that the rights of minority in this legislature must be respected, Mr. Speaker. And how are the rights of the minority protected in this legislature, Mr. Speaker? The Supreme Court of Canada clearly said it's protected by the rules. It's protected by rules that are agreed upon unanimously by all parties in the House, Mr. Speaker. And then, Mr. Speaker, rules are only to be changed by unanimous consent, not by a majority abusing its power, Mr. Speaker.

I have had relatives who have gone to war, Mr. Speaker, gone to war to protect the rights, to protect our democracy, Mr. Speaker, to protect our democracy. They fought so that we could have the very rules that we have today, Mr. Speaker. Let's not, let's not, Mr. Speaker, just throw that out the door. And, Mr. Speaker, we've got members opposite out there say, let's not waste time, Mr. Speaker. That shows how little respect they have for the democratic and parliamentary process, Mr. Speaker. It shows how little respect they have for this institution, and it shows how much disrespect they have for other people, Mr. Speaker, and that is sad.

If the member from Moose Jaw North wants to continue to say, let's not waste time about talking about rights and minority rights, not talk about the principles of democracy, then the member from Moose Jaw North should be prepared to tell his constituents, Mr. Speaker, prepared to tell his constituents that he does not care about the democratic rights of the people of this province. And is he prepared to do that? No, he's not. The member from Moose Jaw North will chirp from his seat, but will he tell his constituents what he's willing to say in this House? I dare say he is not man enough to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a right and responsibility to protect the democratic principles of this institution. Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw North may not hold those values very importantly. He may not value, Mr. Speaker, the rights of minorities, the rights of minority and majority rights in law, Mr. Speaker. But this institution is based on those rights, Mr. Speaker, and the members of this House should respect them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to now talk about . . . There was a paper written about the role of the opposition in a parliamentary system in Canada, and it was tabled December 1988 in the Parliament of Canada. Mr. Speaker, it's a detailed research paper prepared by the political and social affairs division of the House of Commons. Mr. Speaker, in the House of Commons this paper was tabled for all members. It can be found in the Library of Parliament in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to talk a little bit about the opposition in a parliamentary system and what it means. Parliament after all is the function about debate — rhetoric in the classical Greek sense — and the transacting of the people's business in a public forum. This, Mr. Speaker, is our public forum to transact the

people's business. It's not the business of the government or the business of the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

We're all here to represent the people of the province of Saskatchewan. We're here to represent the people of the province of Saskatchewan. We're not here to represent our own self-interest. We're here to represent the interests of the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, "Genuine political opposition is a necessary attribute of democracy, tolerance, and trust in the ability of citizens to resolve differences by peaceful means."

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, that's what genuine political opposition is about.

If these systems are perceived as not [to be] working well [Mr. Speaker] . . . it may be the rights of political oppositions which are immediately and most visibly at stake, [Mr. Speaker] . . .

If the parliamentary system is not working well, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say that:

. . . it may be the rights of political oppositions which are immediately and most . . . [viably] at stake, but ultimately the threat is to democratic rights and freedoms generally [of the population].

Because when you have a government which is prepared to take away the democratic rights of the opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, it also indicates they're prepared to take away the rights, genuine rights of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. What's next on their agenda, Mr. Speaker? Because when you're prepared to abuse your power, Mr. Speaker, that abuse of power doesn't often stop on one occasion, Mr. Speaker.

"The division between government and opposition is as old as political democracy itself" is, Mr. Speaker. The role of the opposition and the role of government is well-defined, and the balance between the role of opposition and role of government is also well-defined, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely important, it's absolutely important that we all respect those roles.

And that, Mr. Speaker, as was determined in the decision by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1938, the protection of an opposition is the rules. The rules of the Legislative Assembly are there to protect the rights of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, and when those rules are abused, Mr. Speaker, when those rules are abused, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Harper: — To ask leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my colleagues for giving me this opportunity and my apologies to the Speaker for the interruption.

Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to introduce to you and to all the members of the House Mr. and Mrs. Bill Bobyk from Yorkton, who are sitting up in your gallery there, Mr. Speaker. It's been many, many years, but I did have the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Bobyk many years ago when I represented the Pelly constituency. Pelly constituency at that time surrounded the city of Yorkton, and I remember during that period of time I did have the opportunity to meet with Mr. Bobyk and to discuss some of the issues. So I want to once again welcome him and his wife to their wonderful Legislative Assembly. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to continue with my discussion about the role of opposition in government and why the balance between minority and majority rights are so important to our parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker, and why a violation of that, those very basic rights, by the majority — in this case the government, the Sask Party government — in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, by putting forward a unilateral motion to change the rules is such an abuse of those very democratic principles, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. This is a fundamental violation of the principles of parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker. And we should all take this very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the members opposite — after hearing this information and having the opportunity to think a little bit about what this means and what it means to the future of this province, to the future of parliamentary democracy and to this legislature — would reconsider, Mr. Speaker, and would withdraw this abusive motion, Mr. Speaker, and instead decide that they could talk to the Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker, and through dialogue come to some resolution to this perceived problem they have. Mr. Speaker, perception is reality if that's all you have, Mr. Speaker. But they think they have a problem without knowing they have a problem, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very, very important that the government consider what's being said, Mr. Speaker; that the Government House Leader take the opportunity to meet with the Opposition House Leader, Mr. Speaker; and that, Mr. Speaker, that we have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to look for some resolution other one that's as draconian and one sided and abusive as a motion to change the rules, Mr. Speaker, which is unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, fundamentally what's being proposed is wrong. Mr. Speaker, it's wrong. The members opposite should recognize it's wrong. And, Mr. Speaker, it's wrong for a number of reasons, which I've laid out today, and I've laid out over the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker and, Mr. Speaker, I will continue to discuss for probably some hours yet today.

Mr. Speaker, "The division between government and opposition is as old as political democracy itself." We know that.

Government could alternate among different groups of citizens, and the minority could seek to persuade a majority [That's our history, Mr. Speaker] of its point of view by peaceful (i.e., political) means, [Mr. Speaker.]

We strive to change the majority opinions through peaceful and political means through our legislative processes, Mr. Speaker, using the rules of the Assembly to put forward meaningful debate, Mr. Speaker, debate that is without threat, without any power being held over the head of the opposition. It's the rightful place of the opposition to debate, to probe, to challenge, and to try to change proposals of government to improve the well-being of that very proposal, Mr. Speaker, to improve it for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

What has not changed, [over time, Mr. Speaker] however, in our . . . [modest] liberal-democratic society is the hallowed principle that the government must rest on the consent of the governed — which means, *inter alia*, that the minority accept the right of the majority to make decisions, [and, Mr. Speaker, we do] provided that there is reciprocal respect for the minority's right to dissent from these decisions and to promote alternative policies [Mr. Speaker].

And, Mr. Speaker, what protects the right of an opposition to do that, Mr. Speaker? The rules. And, Mr. Speaker, when you unilaterally change the rules, you take away the rights and protections of the opposition to oppose a government's position and try to make effective change. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the role of an opposition.

So why would this government, why would this government? Because they perceive a problem because of their own mismanagement, their own intolerance, Mr. Speaker. Why — because of their own mismanagement, incompetence, and intolerance, Mr. Speaker — would they move a motion to change the rules and take away that very important democratic principle? Mr. Speaker:

. . . in all parts of the world, these legislatures are confronted with the problem of "executive dominance" [Today we're seeing more than ever the problem of executive dominance, Mr. Speaker] in the face of modern demands for more and more government services. The complaint is often heard that because of these pressures legislative . . . [policies] are inefficient, ineffective, and in danger of becoming obsolete [Mr. Speaker].

Because this government is in such a rush to get its legislation passed, it's not prepared to follow the rules, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's prepared to circumvent the rights of others, Mr. Speaker. It's prepared to use its power of majority to abuse the

minority, Mr. Speaker. It's prepared to be that abusive, Mr. Speaker, because it cannot do its own job within the rules and in this case, Mr. Speaker, because of their own incompetence and their failure to start this House when it should have started on March 3, Mr. Speaker, when it should have started March 3, Mr. Speaker.

So the incompetence of the government, the incompetence of the Premier, the incompetence of the Government House Leader to manage their own affairs, Mr. Speaker — because of that incompetence, Mr. Speaker, they're prepared to do what should never be done, Mr. Speaker, without unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, and that is to change the rules.

Mr. Speaker, that's shameful. That is absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, the emergence of a set pattern of government and opposition is of comparative recent origin, Mr. Speaker. The rules that exist today, and the function is of very recent origin, Mr. Speaker.

When opposition to the government's handling of affairs of state could be considered to smack of treason and hence to be dangerous in the 16th and 17th centuries, Mr. Speaker, the Member of Parliament who went beyond presenting private, local, and special grievances or Bills or to oppose the Crown or even to debate such national issues as the right of succession, foreign policy, and religion risked imprisonment or worse, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time in British parliamentary history that if you spoke out against the Crown, in fact you faced possible imprisonment, Mr. Speaker, or worse. Mr. Speaker, and I want to go on to quote, Mr. Speaker and this is a very significant quote:

. . . every man who then meddled with public affairs took his life in his [own] hand . . . It was, we seriously believe, as safe to be a highwayman as to be a distinguished leader of the opposition . . .

Mr. Speaker, there was a time in British parliamentary history that it was as safe to be a highwayman as it was to be a distinguished leader of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately we have made improvements, Mr. Speaker, and thankfully, Mr. Speaker, today we have a system that has balance between minority and majority rights, Mr. Speaker, a balance which is supervised and upheld through the rules of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have quoted from the Supreme Court paper earlier today, in 1938 said, "The protection of the opposition is through the rules," Mr. Speaker. And to take those rules away unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, is to take away that protection, is to take away that balance that's anticipated in our parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, for a government to do that, for a government to use its majority to do that, Mr. Speaker, in the words of that very paper, is tyranny. It's tyranny.

And, Mr. Speaker, I find it hard that there isn't at least one or two members over on that side of the Assembly that don't, that don't feel as passionately about the rules of parliamentary law

and about upholding parliamentary law as I do. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope there's at least one or two members that'll at least question the need of their Government House Leader to do what they're doing. Mr. Speaker, I've asked at least 15 times during this debate for the Government House Leader to approach the Opposition House Leader to find some resolution to this perceived problem that doesn't bring forward such an unquestionable, unquestionable proposal as to unilaterally change the rules.

Mr. Speaker, it's like having a tradesperson who has only one tool, a sledgehammer, Mr. Speaker, that the only thing he knows how to use is a sledgehammer. He doesn't know how to do anything constructively, only destructively, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a sledgehammer is used for destructive purposes, Mr. Speaker. So why do the members opposite want to use their sledgehammer? Why don't they want to work with the opposition which has been anticipated in our rules, Mr. Speaker? Why don't they? Why don't they want to work with us, Mr. Speaker?

When we were in government, Mr. Speaker, we worked with them. Mr. Speaker, we worked co-operatively with them. We put forward . . . We actually held Bills, Mr. Speaker, didn't pass Bills and allowed them to go out for further consultation that the members opposite wanted when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker. We sent Bills to public consultations that they wanted, Mr. Speaker.

When this opposition asked the very same things of them, what do we hear? No. And we won't discuss it; we'll use our majority to change the rules, so you don't have the opportunity to even discuss it. So they use a sledgehammer, Mr. Speaker. They're destructive, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to be co-operative. They don't want to work co-operatively together to try to resolve the issue, Mr. Speaker. And as a result we have the problem we have today, Mr. Speaker, that we're here debating a Bill about fundamental democracy. We're debating a motion, pardon me, about fundamental democracy, Mr. Speaker.

And then to add to the tyranny, to add to the abuse of the majority, we have the Government House Leader today, after one day of debate — after one day of debate, Mr. Speaker — stand on his feet and say, at this time tomorrow, at the start of government business tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, closure, Mr. Speaker. Closure of debate, Mr. Speaker. At least, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give him credit for, the rules around closure are in the rules, so he's not changing the rules to apply the rules. That I'm going to give him credit for. But to close debate on something as fundamental as this after one day of debate, to move closure after one day of debate, Mr. Speaker, is shameful. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it is shameful.

Mr. Speaker, just so I can explain it to the members, Mr. Speaker, which they're having difficulty understanding — the members of government — now I understand why they've mismanaged the House so badly. They moved it after one day of debate. That's what I said. They moved it after one day of debate. And yes, that will allow one additional day of debate prior to closure, Mr. Speaker, but it was moved after one day of debate.

Just so members understand what I said and what it means. There was one day of debate, and before the second day commenced, Mr. Speaker, they moved closure. Mr. Speaker, they served notice on closure, Mr. Speaker. After one day of debate. And that's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

It's unheard of, Mr. Speaker. It's unheard of unless you're a schoolyard bully — unless you're a bully. Unless you believe that you can do whatever you want to do whenever you want to do it, Mr. Speaker, when you believe that you're not accountable to anybody, Mr. Speaker, and you can do exactly what you want to do when you want to do it, Mr. Speaker, and that's a bully. And, Mr. Speaker, people don't respect bullies. People don't like bullies. Most people have ran into a bully or two in their life, Mr. Speaker, and they don't appreciate them very much at all.

Mr. Speaker, it was not until the 18th century, Mr. Speaker, that it became constitutionally accepted that an opposition could be loyal across the whole spectrum of public policy, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to show the members of the public this opposition does want what's in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're loyal to the principles of having the very best decisions that this legislature can bring forward for the people of Saskatchewan. We want the very best for our children and our grandchildren, your children and your grandchildren, Mr. Speaker. We want this province to be the very best that it can be, Mr. Speaker, but we want it to be inclusive of all people. We want people to have the opportunity to have a say, and we want a government that has to be held accountable. They can't do things unilaterally, Mr. Speaker.

This government wants to curtail debate, Mr. Speaker. They're curtailing debate on this fundamental motion, Mr. Speaker, about parliamentary democracy. They're curtailing the debate. And after one day they decide to curtail debate, Mr. Speaker. That's shameful. That is absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker, that they will curtail debate after one day of debate, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely shameful that they will curtail debate after one day of debate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and members opposite can chirp from their seats and smile about how this is all the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker, but they will be judged, Mr. Speaker. We are all judged at some point, Mr. Speaker, about what we do, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we will all be judged. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, fundamentally that people believe in the concepts of our parliamentary democracy and they believe in the right for debate, Mr. Speaker. That's what this legislature's about, Mr. Speaker. It's not about curtailing debate.

Mr. Speaker, the actual term His Majesty's Opposition was coined during a British debate in 1826, Mr. Speaker, and it's been in use ever since. So, Mr. Speaker, there's a long and proud tradition in history of the role of the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

The governing party is always responsible to the commons chiefly in that it can be turned out of office or replaced by another party at the next election, Mr. Speaker.

And I wanted to just bring that up, Mr. Speaker, because I want the members opposite to think about that. Mr. Speaker, yes they won the election November 7, 2007, Mr. Speaker. They won an election, but did the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, elect them to take away the democratic rights of members of the legislature? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely not.

And the last time we saw that we had the worst government we had in this province's history, Mr. Speaker, in the 1980s, from 1982 to 1991. Mr. Speaker, we saw this very action in 1986, Mr. Speaker, and that, Mr. Speaker, has gone down in history as the worst government in our history, Mr. Speaker.

The role of an opposition party Mr. Knowles noted is to check and to prod, but ultimately to replace the government party, Mr. Speaker. So there is a role for the opposition which ultimately is to replace the government when the government isn't doing its job very well, Mr. Speaker. Usually it takes more than four months. Usually it takes more than four months, Mr. Speaker, before a government is viewed . . . is doing the types of things that this particular government is doing.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out to the people of Saskatchewan that it took the Grant Devine government four years to have a demonstration of more than 2,000 people against the policies and actions of the government, Mr. Speaker. The current government took four months, Mr. Speaker. We had a demonstration of more than 2,000 people, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon at Station 20 in west Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker — Station 20 West. We had a demonstration of more than 2,000 people in less than four months about the unilateral actions of this government removing funding for a project that the community very much wants, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a project the community designed. It's a project they want, Mr. Speaker. And it's a project that the members opposite took away, Mr. Speaker, the funding from because why, Mr. Speaker? Well why? They say because the people didn't want it, Mr. Speaker. Well obviously that's wrong. The demonstration indicated they did.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's the real reason? What's the real reason? Because they wanted to punish, Mr. Speaker. They wanted to punish the people of the constituency of Riversdale for electing the member for Riversdale — the current Leader of the Opposition — Mr. Speaker, because they couldn't win that seat, Mr. Speaker. They wanted to punish the member from Riversdale.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to talk a little bit more about the role of opposition in parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker, and why we need to have that role in order to function properly as the parliament or in the legislature, Mr. Speaker.

"A vigorous opposition in parliament can be the chief bulwark against the temptation to *force majeure*," Mr. Speaker, which is a bureaucratic empire, to create a bureaucratic empire. That's what an opposition is about; to ensure, to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that the government doesn't become like a bureaucratic empire, Mr. Speaker, and serve only its own self-interest, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we are, we are as an opposition going to ensure that doesn't happen in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, members of the opposition in the lower House are often called upon to act as a brake on the government. And that's what the role of the opposition is, to be a brake on the government, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that all legislation receives due process of parliamentary deliberation. That all legislation gets due process of deliberation, Mr. Speaker, and to see that diverse and opposing points of view have a chance to be aired and defended, Mr. Speaker. So today we have a diverse point of view with the government who wants to unilaterally change the rules. And when we want to debate that issue, Mr. Speaker, what do we see? Well, Mr. Speaker, we see a refusal to allow that debate to continue. We see a unilateral closure motion.

Mr. Speaker, they want to shut down the opposition. They want to shut down any, any debate, Mr. Speaker, that they don't like. They talk about democracy, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they talk about three days to debate it, Mr. Speaker. They don't even understand, they don't even understand, Mr. Speaker, what they've done. Mr. Speaker, that tells me a great deal about the abilities and why we have the particular problems we have in the government being able to manage its own affairs.

What do the people of this province have to look forward to, Mr. Speaker, if they can't manage their own affairs? Mr. Speaker, they won't let the opposition debate something that's as fundamental as parliamentary democracy. They have to shut down, they have to shut down the opposition because, Mr. Speaker, they don't have the ability to debate this intellectually, Mr. Speaker. They don't have the ability to manage their own affairs and they don't have the ability to debate issues like this, Mr. Speaker. They don't have that ability.

Mr. Speaker, in Canada the parliamentary opposition has much more structure and has a more formal status. In Canada the opposition has a very clear role, Mr. Speaker, but it also has to contend with a disciplined government party which may control the legislature for very long periods of time. And that's true, Mr. Speaker. That's very true. We have a parliamentary system that you have an opposition that's there to perform a role but also must face often — often, Mr. Speaker — a very disciplined government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would understand that, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite would understand that because they faced a very disciplined government for 16 years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, rules and respect for minorities in the Assembly are there to ensure confidence and it is why we have the Legislative Assembly and not just the government appoint independent officers, Mr. Speaker. That's why the legislature appoints positions like the Provincial Auditor, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ombudsman, and many others, Mr. Speaker — the Children's Advocate, Mr. Speaker.

That's why the legislature appoints those individuals because, Mr. Speaker, we need to have confidence, the entire legislature needs to have confidence in those individuals, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not a purview of government to do that. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not a purview of government to unilaterally change the rules of this Assembly. And the members opposite should understand that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they should

understand that.

Mr. Speaker, the role of the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition parties is to be as vigilant and diligent as the members of the government on the other side of the House. Our responsibility is to be every bit as diligent and responsible as members on the government side. And we are.

We need to ensure that what legislation is brought forward is in the best interests of the people of the province, and not just in the best interests of those in government. And when we ask for public consultation that's what we want to achieve, Mr. Speaker. We want to have public hearings so the members of the opposition and the members of government can both hear submissions from the general public about what is in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, but no, Mr. Speaker, this government chooses to shut down the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a full and unquestioned recognition of the rights and functions of the opposition to the government of the day is . . . only in this way can you protect the rights of minorities, Mr. Speaker. Only through the full recognition of the rights and functions of the opposition, and respecting those rights and that function, Mr. Speaker, can you protect the minority rights in our society. And only in this way can you make sure that the force of public opinion will be brought to bear on the legislative process, so there is meaningful and open debate about what should occur versus the unilateral decision by one side, Mr. Speaker.

And we are indeed fortunate in Canada, Mr. Speaker. We are indeed fortunate in Canada to have such rules. But, Mr. Speaker, the rules only work if you follow the rules, Mr. Speaker. The rules can only work if you follow the rules, Mr. Speaker.

In this case, we're in a fundamental debate about following the rules, Mr. Speaker. Halfway through the game one team decides they can't win, Mr. Speaker, so we're going to change the rules.

So Mr. Speaker, let's just put this an analogy. You're in a hockey game, Mr. Speaker. You're in a hockey game. Midway through the second period the one team decides, oh we can't win. Well we have to change the rules so we can win, Mr. Speaker. And in this case, in this case, you got one team that's made up of adults, Mr. Speaker, you know, adults who had the responsibility and the power of government. And on the other side you have other individuals that don't have the power but just know how to play the game better — a little more talented, a little more ability, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, what they want to do in order to even up the rules, Mr. Speaker, they want to take the goalie away from the opposition. They want to take away the goalie from the opposition — which is the rules, Mr. Speaker — so they have a chance of winning.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't even understand their own rules because, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, at the end of the day the opposition can make the game a little more difficult, Mr. Speaker. And they can ensure that there's scrutiny of the legislation, and they can ensure that there is consultation, Mr.

Speaker, and they can ensure that there's debate, Mr. Speaker. In our game the rules allow the majority to always win. Our rules allow the majority to always win, Mr. Speaker. So they don't even understand their own rules, Mr. Speaker — because they can win, Mr. Speaker. They can fundamentally win.

Mr. Speaker, what do we see today? What do we see? We have a government that's abusing the fundamental principle of parliamentary democracy and unilaterally changing the rules of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — They talk a good game.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, they talk a very good game, but they produce very little.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back for just one second and talk again about how the rules should be changed, Mr. Speaker, and about the principles of parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by talking about, Mr. Speaker, the fundamental principle of Canadian parliamentary law. And, Mr. Speaker, I have to find the appropriate piece of paper, and I have found it, Mr. Speaker. It says, "The principles of Canadian parliamentary law are: [and I'd like to say] To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority . . ." Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — That's the fundamental principle of parliamentary law in Canada, Mr. Speaker — the majority should not abuse their power over the minority. And, Mr. Speaker, in this case, how do you protect, Mr. Speaker? We just went through a long case and decision by the Supreme Court of Canada that said, how is the balance between the rights of a minority and the majority protected in our parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker? It's protected by the very rules of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And that's why rules are put in place by unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker, by agreement of both political parties, by agreement of all the political parties, Mr. Speaker. And in this case the rules which this House are governed by, Mr. Speaker, are in fact agreed by all the political parties.

And then, Mr. Speaker, there is a provision, there is a provision in our parliamentary system to change the rules, Mr. Speaker, to not follow the rules, Mr. Speaker. There is a provision, Mr. Speaker, and it's called unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker. Section 18, Mr. Speaker. And I want to quote from it, Mr. Speaker. It says:

Within the ambit 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.

[16:00]

So, Mr. Speaker, we can set aside the rules. We can change the rules. But we do it through unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker — not by one side abusing its power, not by the majority abusing the minority, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, by our own parliamentary law in Canada, that's

tyranny, Mr. Speaker, and it's shameful. And why are we in this situation, Mr. Speaker? We're in this situation because halfway through the game, the government power rings a panic alarm that they can't get their own agenda through. Without knowing whether they can or they can't, without consulting or working with the opposition, Mr. Speaker, they decided that they had this massive problem. Without knowing if they do or don't, Mr. Speaker, they decide to unilaterally change the rules and abuse minority rights. A knee-jerk reaction, Mr. Speaker. And these are rules they agreed to, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, why are we in this situation? Well it's nothing less than incompetence, Mr. Speaker. This Assembly started one week later than it should have because the government unilaterally decided to. And, Mr. Speaker, for the two weeks we didn't meet, work at night because this government didn't want to work. And then they decide, Mr. Speaker, then they decide unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, they decide that they're going to unilaterally change the rules like a schoolyard bully, Mr. Speaker. They decided they were just going to unilaterally change the rules like a schoolyard bully.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada in 1938 very clearly said that the rules of the Parliament of Canada are there to protect, Mr. Speaker, there to protect the rights of the minority. That is how opposition members are protected in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite may laugh. The members opposite may not take this issue very seriously, Mr. Speaker. But I cannot believe there's not a single member on the government side that does not feel it passionately, as passionately as I do and members on this side of the Assembly do, Mr. Speaker, on the rights and the rule of our parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, it is shameful. Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shameful if members on the government side do not feel as passionately about the rules and laws of our parliamentary democracy as members do on the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, if they're being muzzled by their leadership, Mr. Speaker, then that is even more shameful, Mr. Speaker, because they are elected leaders and have a right, Mr. Speaker, to speak their mind. And, Mr. Speaker, they have a responsibility to speak their mind.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the members of the government take an opportunity to reconsider their position, Mr. Speaker, and bring forward a proposal that this opposition can work with to ensure that the government is able to get through its agenda, that we're able to work together to accomplish what should be done, Mr. Speaker. Let the people have a chance to have input, Mr. Speaker, to take some of these Bills to public consultation, Mr. Speaker, to public hearings through our democratic process, through our committee hearing process, Mr. Speaker, that's anticipated as part of our rules, Mr. Speaker, as part of how we operate this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. This is about having good public parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say as we talk about the roles of the opposition in government, Mr. Speaker, “it is a responsibility of the Legislative Assembly to uphold and maintain the rights of minorities against majorities,” Mr. Speaker. It’s not only the right of the opposition to ensure minority rights, Mr. Speaker; it is in fact a fundamental responsibility of the government. It’s a fundamental responsibility of the government. And that’s why we have the rules we have, Mr. Speaker — to ensure the rights of minority. And every bit as important, Mr. Speaker, every bit as important, Mr. Speaker, as the rights of the minority, Mr. Speaker, is the responsibility of the majority to ensure those.

And what are we dealing with today, Mr. Speaker? We’re dealing with a motion that the government’s put forward that abuses those minority rights — a sledgehammer, Mr. Speaker, that takes away the rights of the minority.

And, Mr. Speaker, what is most appalling of all, what’s most appalling of all today? Today the Government House Leader stood on his feet after one day of debate, the Government House Leader stood on his feet, rather than coming over and trying to make a deal with the Opposition House Leader to move forward in some form of co-operative manner, Mr. Speaker, he decided to use the only tool in his tool box. Just like the motion would indicate, Mr. Speaker, he is going to close debate tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, after one day of debate, he decides he’s going to use closure to close debate tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, that is shameful. Mr. Speaker, that is shameful. Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely shameful.

[Mr. Speaker] The opposition has only the rules for its protection, Mr. Speaker. It only has the rules for its protection, hence the authorities on parliamentary procedure emphasize the greater importance to the opposition of the only protection it has, [Mr. Speaker] the protection of the rules [of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker].

And those protections have been stripped away unilaterally by a government that was willing to abuse its power like a schoolyard bully rather than work with the opposition to get its agenda through, Mr. Speaker. And that’s shameful. It’s absolutely shameful.

And I hope there are at least a few members opposite that don’t feel good about what they’re doing, Mr. Speaker, that understand what they’re doing is wrong, Mr. Speaker, and understand that doing wrong things, Mr. Speaker, lead to greater problems, Mr. Speaker. They result in even greater mistakes, Mr. Speaker, and greater problems, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that’s only been in power for four months, that already can’t manage its own agenda, already is having great difficulty, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it’s the responsibility of an opposition to “. . . scrutinize every action by the government [Mr. Speaker] and in doing so prevents the short-cuts through democratic procedure that governments like to make.” Shortcuts that governments like to take to get their own way. What are we seeing right now, Mr. Speaker? We’re seeing exactly that. We’re seeing this government trying to take a shortcut to get their own way, Mr. Speaker. And that’s shameful. That is absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have a very difficult time as I know very many, many members on this side of the House do with what this government’s proposing. What this government is proposing is fundamentally wrong, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of the day what happens to the schoolyard bully, Mr. Speaker? At some point, Mr. Speaker, the schoolyard bully gets his own, gets his own, Mr. Speaker. The schoolyard bully — somebody comes along that’s a little better, a little bigger perhaps, maybe a little more intelligent. And then what happens, Mr. Speaker? That schoolyard bully, Mr. Speaker, like everyone else who tries to abuse power, eventually gets that stripped away in some way or in some form, Mr. Speaker. When you’re going to use those types of tactics, Mr. Speaker, eventually they catch up with you. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan need to know this government is prepared to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go on to talk a little bit about the right of members of the legislature to use this forum to debate those things on which they disagree. Mr. Speaker, it’s one of the fundamental rights that’s afforded to those elected members of this legislature. It’s a responsibility, Mr. Speaker. It’s more than a right; it’s a responsibility. It’s something each and every one of us should value.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we’re dealing with something as important as a change to the rules done through a unilateral motion, Mr. Speaker, we should be afforded the right to debate that issue, Mr. Speaker, and we should be afforded the right to debate that issue as long as we want to debate it, Mr. Speaker. We shouldn’t be facing a closure motion after just one day of debate. Mr. Speaker, we shouldn’t have a government that stands up after a single day of debate and says, at this time tomorrow debate ceases.

Mr. Speaker, they’re scared of the facts, Mr. Speaker — absolutely. Mr. Speaker, they’re absolutely scared of the facts, Mr. Speaker. And they’re scared of those facts because they’re incompetent, Mr. Speaker. And they’re showing that, not just in moving this motion, Mr. Speaker, but in how they’ve operated this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, second, it’s the responsibility of the opposition to prod the government to act on behalf of certain interests, Mr. Speaker — opinions and needs in society. Whether or not there’s a majority need or interest in society, Mr. Speaker, it’s imperative and the responsibility of an opposition to ensure that the needs of certain groups in our society that may not be the majority, Mr. Speaker — that may not be the interest groups that the majority would like to adhere to, Mr. Speaker — that their interests get heard, their interests get expressed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we’re all elected to govern on behalf of all the people of the province of Saskatchewan, not just those we like, Mr. Speaker, or just not those who voted for us, Mr. Speaker, but all the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is something that these members who are now in government need to learn and need to understand.

Because, Mr. Speaker, clearly any government that would

curtail debate after one day on something as fundamental as a rule change, Mr. Speaker, doesn't understand what abuse of power is, Mr. Speaker, or about hearing the interests of those they don't want to hear, Mr. Speaker, because they're curtailing that debate, Mr. Speaker. And they're not allowing people that they don't want to hear from to be heard.

[Mr. Speaker] In particular, [Mr. Speaker] when major decisions take place without passing through parliamentary channels, the opposition is placed at a distinct disadvantage in terms of its ability to scrutinize and influence government actions [Mr. Speaker].

So when we're asking for Bills to go out for public debate, Mr. Speaker, to go out to public hearings through one of our legislative committees, that's because we want to see a greater level of scrutinization by the public. We want the public to have say on the actions of government, Mr. Speaker. That's one of our fundamental roles as an opposition. But, Mr. Speaker, more importantly it's one of the fundamental responsibilities of all members of this Assembly to want to have the best possible decision and to allow our decisions to be publicly scrutinized by the people we represent, Mr. Speaker — the people of Saskatchewan.

And when we don't want to have our legislation, Mr. Speaker, or our policies scrutinized by the public, Mr. Speaker, well why is that? What are we afraid of, Mr. Speaker? What are we trying to hide when we're afraid of the people who elected us, Mr. Speaker? What are we afraid of, Mr. Speaker, when we don't want to take out our policies or our legislation, out for public scrutiny, Mr. Speaker? Out before the public, Mr. Speaker, to be criticized perhaps, Mr. Speaker, but the endgame is to end up with a better piece of legislation and a better public policy, Mr. Speaker. So what are we afraid of, Mr. Speaker, when we won't do that, Mr. Speaker? What are we afraid of?

I don't know, Mr. Speaker. We're afraid to be criticized, perhaps. We're afraid that maybe somebody doesn't like us. We want to be liked by everybody, Mr. Speaker. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I think it just shows pure and simple incompetence when you don't want to do something, Mr. Speaker, when you're not willing, when you're not willing to face the very people who elected you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to be fully credible, Mr. Speaker, an institution of parliament, this institution of parliament, Mr. Speaker, or this institution of the legislature of Saskatchewan must be able to demonstrate an active presence across the full range of public policy concerns of the people of this province. And if we're not willing to do that and if we're not willing to put ourselves forward to be discussed, scrutinized, and criticized, Mr. Speaker, by the very people elected us, then why are we here. If we're so insecure that we're not willing and, Mr. Speaker, be criticized for the very decisions we've made, then why are we here? Why are we here, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the members opposite are paying some attention, Mr. Speaker, but I want to emphasize again a couple of very important things that I think they need to understand. Even if a piece of legislation or major public policy issue was to go out for public scrutiny through our committee hearing process, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't mean that we as the opposition

or the public can unilaterally change their position, Mr. Speaker. We can't outvote them. There's six members on the committees, Mr. Speaker, four from government, two from the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

So the only way the rules actually change or the legislation would actually change, Mr. Speaker, or the public policy would actually change would in fact be if they heard something out there that was strong enough to compel the members of the government to actually change their position, Mr. Speaker. Are they afraid? Are they afraid to hear from the public of Saskatchewan on any issue? Are they afraid to change their position if in fact they believe it should change, Mr. Speaker? Are they that insecure, Mr. Speaker? Are they that insecure that they're afraid to change their own position, Mr. Speaker, if it was the right thing to do?

Mr. Speaker, since they are never going to be able to be outvoted, the government, Mr. Speaker, will always get its way on any policy or piece of legislation, but, Mr. Speaker, opposition parties must — must — exercise their right to try to influence the best possible outcomes, Mr. Speaker, and bring forward alternatives, Mr. Speaker, and bring forward changes that are in the interests of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Speaker] The balance between compromise and obstruction, co-option [Mr. Speaker] and reflex opposition, is often in the eye of the beholder.

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, today we have this problem because we cannot get the government to work with the opposition to find resolution to the problem, Mr. Speaker. We cannot get them to be willing to work to find a resolution, Mr. Speaker. And I want to state again, Mr. Speaker, I want to state again and I would like the members of the government to hear very clearly; we are prepared. We are prepared to listen to proposals from you that will get through this perceived crisis you have, Mr. Speaker. We don't even know that we have a crisis. We only have a perception of a crisis, Mr. Speaker. We're prepared to listen to proposals to get through this perceived crisis, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, you, you — the majority — must propose. You must propose a route, a road map through this perceived crisis because it's your crisis, Mr. Speaker. It's your problem. You must take responsibility for that problem and propose a solution, put forward a proposal to the opposition in a manner in which we can negotiate, we can compromise, and we can come to resolution, Mr. Speaker, in the interests of all the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, a government that is not willing to do that, Mr. Speaker, has only one set of tools, has only the sledgehammer, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we see the government today using, Mr. Speaker. We see the government using its sledgehammer to unilaterally change the rules in contravention of good parliamentary democracy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, they're afraid to go out to their own constituents with legislation for public consultation, Mr. Speaker. They're prepared to go to the people of the province

and have their legislation challenged by both business and labour groups, Mr. Speaker. They're afraid. But Mr. Speaker, they don't have to be afraid, Mr. Speaker. They have the majority, and in the end they can pass the legislation, Mr. Speaker. And that's the right of the majority. But it's only the right of the majority after, after, Mr. Speaker, the rights of the minority have been protected, and there's been appropriate deliberation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today we saw a government move closure on a very important motion, Mr. Speaker, after only one day of debate, Mr. Speaker. At the very least, Mr. Speaker, it's shameful.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 100 years we've seen steady improvements in the parliamentary democracy in our legislatures and in the Parliament of Canada, Mr. Speaker. We've seen steady improvements. We've seen greater consultation of the public. But in the last few years, Mr. Speaker, we have in some cases seen a drawback of that public consultation, about that public participation, Mr. Speaker, as governments have drawn power in more centrally.

We see that today in the Parliament of Canada with the current federal government, Mr. Speaker. And we're seeing it today in this legislature, Mr. Speaker. And it's not good. It's not good for parliamentary democracy. It's not good for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we need to think very carefully before we do that, Mr. Speaker. We have to look at these issues very carefully. We have to examine these issues in great detail, Mr. Speaker, before we choose to go down that road.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a directed attention over the last number of years to the factors impinging on the effective operation of the checks and balances in our democratic political systems and in turn to numerous proposals for legislative reform. In parliamentary systems there is a fundamental constitutional principle of responsible government, Mr. Speaker, of responsible government at stake. Mr. Speaker, we have to uphold that fundamental, fundamental parliamentary responsibility of responsible government.

And in the Canadian case, the tradition of a one-party government combined with the frequent weakness of legislative oppositions poses added dangers, Mr. Speaker. And when a government uses its power to weaken an opposition, to change that balance between majority and minority rights, Mr. Speaker, it's not only an abuse of power; Mr. Speaker, it weakens the fundamentals of our parliamentary democracy.

And, Mr. Speaker, members of the government should understand that. They should think very hard and very carefully before they use the big stick, before they use the sledgehammer — the only tool that they've been able to show this opposition they have, Mr. Speaker. Have they been able to convince anybody to change their position? Have they tried to negotiate? Have they tried reasoning? Have they tried any form of conciliation, Mr. Speaker, or any form of a negotiation? No, they haven't. Any form of compromise? Have they shown any compromise at all, Mr. Speaker? No, they haven't. They've shown nothing but a sledgehammer. And if we can't get our way, Mr. Speaker, we'll get our way one way or the other, Mr.

Speaker — just like the schoolyard bully.

Mr. Speaker, governments may think that slipping things through the House may seem smart in the short run or that doing things outside the rules may seem smart in the short run, Mr. Speaker. But in the long run it works to discredit both the government and the parliamentary institution which we all are part of, Mr. Speaker. It discredits the government, and it discredits the parliamentary institution that we are all a part of.

And, Mr. Speaker, so government that wants to try to slip something through or do something through manners that are untoward, Mr. Speaker, shows a discredit both to the government in the long run, Mr. Speaker, and to the very institution which we are part of.

Mr. Speaker, I think that it's very, very important that we can take the opportunity to consider what is our role. Our role isn't simply to pass the legislation that we want to pass. It isn't simply to pass the budget, Mr. Speaker. It's our role to be fair, to be impartial in our deliberations, to be willing to listen to the opinions of others, to be bigger than any one of us should be within ourselves, Mr. Speaker, and to work for the benefit of all the people of Saskatchewan, whether we like those people or not, whether those people elected us or not.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a much larger responsibility than to a political party or to our own constituents, Mr. Speaker. We have a responsibility to all the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's bigger than any one of us. This institution is bigger than any one of us. And our fundamental responsibility here: it's the principles of this institution.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak at some length again from a slightly different perspective about the issue of majority rule and minority rights, Mr. Speaker, because that's what this whole issue is about, Mr. Speaker. It's about the issue of majority rule and minority rights.

Mr. Speaker, on the surface the principles of majority rule and the protection of individual and/or minority rights would seem contradictory. It would seem that they're out of sync, Mr. Speaker, that they're contradictory with one another. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, however these principles are, they're twin pillars holding up the very foundation of what we mean by democratic government. They're the very pillars that hold up the foundation of what we stand for.

And if we're not going to stand up, Mr. Speaker, for those pillars, if we're not going to defend those pillars, and if we're not going to — with every ounce of strength we have — defend the very principles of our democracy, Mr. Speaker, then why are we here? Why are we here? Mr. Speaker, we're either here as principled individuals that are here for a greater good of all this province, Mr. Speaker, or we're here in our own self-interest.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to believe that the members of this Assembly are here, not in their own self-interest, but in the interest of the greater good of all the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, because that is what parliamentary democracy is all about.

And I think the members actually are, but I think that this decision they've made, it was not well thought through. I think this decision was not well thought through, Mr. Speaker. I don't think a great deal of time was taken to consider what the implications of making this decision were. I don't think a great deal of time was taken to consider the impact of unilaterally changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, about abusing minority rights, Mr. Speaker. I don't think they considered it in detail, Mr. Speaker. In fact I don't think they took a great deal of time at all to consider what that would mean in this situation, Mr. Speaker, and how that eroded the fundamental pillars of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, majority rule is a means for organizing government and deciding public issues. It is not another road to oppression. Majority rule is about organizing and deciding what the public issues are, but it's not a road to oppression, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when a majority abuses their power, that's oppression, Mr. Speaker. But that is not what this is about. That's not what our majority rule in a parliamentary democracy is about, Mr. Speaker. Majority rule in a parliamentary democracy is about deciding public issues, deciding what public issues be taken forward for debate, Mr. Speaker.

Just as no self-appointed group has the right to oppress others, so no majority even in a democracy should take away the basic rights and freedoms of a minority group or an individual, Mr. Speaker. Those rights are guaranteed under law. And how are they guaranteed in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker? They're guaranteed by the rules. So taking away the rules from the minority, from the opposition, by changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, you're oppressing the opposition, Mr. Speaker. You're abusing your majority, Mr. Speaker, and you're doing the very fundamental thing that parliamentary law, Mr. Speaker, that parliamentary law says you should not do.

Mr. Speaker, minorities — whether as a result of an ethnic background, religious belief, geographic location, income level, or simply as the losers in an election or political debate — enjoy guaranteed basic human rights that no government and no majority, elected or not, should remove.

Mr. Speaker, that's a very profound statement, Mr. Speaker. Minorities — regardless if they're from a geographic area, an ethnic background, or because they lost an election, Mr. Speaker — are guaranteed basic rights. They're guaranteed the rights of protection that the rules of this House afford, and no government has the right or no majority has the right to take them away. Mr. Speaker, those are long-standing, long-held principles and values of our parliamentary democracy and the values of our society, Mr. Speaker — the very things we strive to accomplish, Mr. Speaker, in a caring, compassionate society that cares more about all its citizens and not just a few, Mr. Speaker.

Minorities need to be able to trust that the government will protect their rights, Mr. Speaker, and their self-identity. Mr. Speaker, minorities need to know and understand that the government will protect their rights, Mr. Speaker. The prosecution of minorities in our society or in any society, Mr. Speaker, is wrong. It's fundamentally wrong, Mr. Speaker. And minorities need to know that their government will protect their rights, Mr. Speaker, and that they believe in the need, Mr.

Speaker, and more importantly, that they believe in the need, to protect those rights, Mr. Speaker. That's very, that is very, very important, Mr. Speaker.

Once this very basic goal is accomplished, such groups can participate and contribute to the country's democratic institutions, Mr. Speaker, and can do so in such a way as to meaningfully, meaningfully protect the rights of those minorities, Mr. Speaker. And that's a responsibility, it's a fundamental responsibility of all members of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Among the basic human rights that any democratic government must protect are freedom of speech and expression; freedom of religion and belief; due process and equal protection under the law, Mr. Speaker; and freedom to organize, speak out, dissent, and participate fully in a public life for their society, Mr. Speaker. Well no more, in no place is this more important than in this very Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. That when you take away the right to debate something of fundamental importance, Mr. Speaker, you're taking away a fundamental right. And, Mr. Speaker, that's shameful. That is absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, democracies understand that protecting the rights of minorities to uphold their cultural identity, their social practices, their individual consciences, and religious activities is one of their primary tasks. Mr. Speaker, responsible governments understand that protection of minority rights is one of their fundamental responsibilities, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

Do we have a government today that appreciates their responsibility, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility as a majority to protect those minority rights, Mr. Speaker? Obviously we don't, Mr. Speaker. Obviously we don't because they're prepared to unilaterally change the rules in this Assembly taking away the minority rights of the opposition, which, Mr. Speaker, in decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada are clearly protected. By what, Mr. Speaker? Clearly protected by the rules. And when that protection is taken away, Mr. Speaker, so is the fundamental protection of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, the acceptance of ethnic and cultural groups that seem strange if not alien to the majority can represent one of the greatest challenges that any democratic government can face. Mr. Speaker, accepting those things that we do not understand and we do not know is the greatest challenge any government can face, Mr. Speaker. But democracies recognized that diversity can be an enormous asset. They treat these differences and identity, culture and values as a challenge that can strengthen and enrich them. Can strengthen and enrich, Mr. Speaker, our society and not threaten it, Mr. Speaker. It can strengthen and enrich a government. It should not be a threat, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is no single answer. There is no single answer, Mr. Speaker, to how minority group differences or how minorities in views or values or results or differences of opinions and views and values are resolved, Mr. Speaker. Only the sure knowledge that only through the democratic process of tolerance, debate, and willingness to compromise — very

important, Mr. Speaker, a willingness to compromise — can free societies, reach agreements that embrace the twin pillars of majority rule and minority rights, Mr. Speaker. Only through a desire to compromise and to work together, can you protect the twin pillars of majority rule and minority rights, Mr. Speaker.

And as I have offered many times over the last day and a half, Mr. Speaker, offered that we as the opposition are prepared to meet with the government and the Government House Leader or whoever they wish, to discuss — could be the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier — to talk about a compromise to their perceived problem, Mr. Speaker. Because, Mr. Speaker, we don't have . . . We have a problem that an opposition believes exists, Mr. Speaker. We're not even sure that a problem exists. How do they know that they can't get through their agenda and their legislation in the time allotted, Mr. Speaker? They don't, Mr. Speaker. It's only their own perception that can't get through these issues, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they lack confidence in their own ability. They lack competence as well, Mr. Speaker. But they do. They lack confidence in their own abilities to get their own mandate through, and they lack competence, Mr. Speaker, because they can't balance the need to accomplish their goals, Mr. Speaker, with the priorities, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use a quote from Confucius here to talk about the situation we're dealing with. It says, "Men of principle are sure to be bold," Mr. Speaker. "Men of principle are sure to be bold, but those who are bold may not always be men of principle," Mr. Speaker. So we see a bold move by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, but we don't see the principle that should be accompanying such a bold move, Mr. Speaker. Confucius says "Men of principle are sure to be bold, but those who are bold may not always be men of principle." And, Mr. Speaker, that's what we're seeing today. Mr. Speaker, that is what we are seeing today. We're seeing the schoolyard bully mentality, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing absolutely no, no understanding of the rights of minority.

And, Mr. Speaker, what work we have now is a number of members yelling from their seats, Mr. Speaker, trying to interrupt the debate, Mr. Speaker, showing clearly no respect for the importance of the very issue we are debating today, Mr. Speaker. They're showing no respect for the issue before us, Mr. Speaker, and they're showing no respect for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important issue we're dealing with and when members of the government are not prepared to work with members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, they're showing that they don't have the respect that they need to have as the majority, to work with the minority, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite can say from their chairs many things but, Mr. Speaker, they're not saying things that are intelligent or contributing to the debate. And that's why they don't want to debate this issue, Mr. Speaker, because they cannot contribute to this debate in an intelligent way. All they can do is chirp from their seats in ways they certainly wouldn't want their constituents to hear, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Wood River says this is a waste of time. Mr.

Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the member from Wood River says this is a waste of time and that I'm wasting my time, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order.

An Hon. Member: — It takes two to make a mess.

The Speaker: — That's the trouble. The member from Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this debate is about the role of majority and minority rights in our democratic system and the role of the opposition and government in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from a book written by . . . it was edited by Thomas Courchene and Donald Savoie. It's about governance and political powers in contemporary western governments, Mr. Speaker. And I want to just read from this book. It says:

The problem with contemporary democracies, again especially in the majoritarian democracies, may be that the parties have been perhaps too successful in creating majorities and in putting their stamp on government once elected. The success of majority parties poses several problems for the conduct of democracy. The first difficulty is that there is little check on the capacity of the majority to rule, [Mr. Speaker] and hence little constraint on their capacity to adopt the decisions they want. This lack of formal limitations means that the only real constraints on a government's decision-making is its own political judgement, and its common sense [Mr. Speaker]. In addition, some of the norms that guided the conduct of parliamentary responsibility for parties have been weakened, so that governments, which at one time might have been expected to resign, continue in office without sanctions [Mr. Speaker].

The governments that are incompetent and should resign in fact continue in office, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today, Mr. Speaker, today, today, Mr. Speaker, we have a government that doesn't want to debate issues. They do not want to debate a rules change in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. They want to use their majority power to stifle debate, Mr. Speaker. They want to ram it through. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly, exactly what is wrong with this government today and wrong with parliamentary democracies that want to abuse their power, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the basic arrogance that we see when a government wants to ram things through without debate, Mr. Speaker, is one of the fundamental weaknesses of power today in parties that don't take the time, Mr. Speaker, to think about their responsibility to both minority interests in their provinces, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about when parliament is independent. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking from the volume 30 of the spring 2007 *Canadian Parliamentary Review*. And it says, "When a parliament is independent . . . beyond the control

of government . . .” Mr. Speaker, when the parliament is independent and beyond the control of the government, and that means when the parliament, or in this case this legislature, is beyond the control of the government, when free and open debate is allowed, Mr. Speaker, “it acts for the benefit of the electorate to ensure that government delivers focused programs, lower taxation and a growing healthy economy,” Mr. Speaker.

When the parliament acts, Mr. Speaker, beyond the control of the government, it acts in the interest of all of the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. But when it doesn’t, Mr. Speaker, it acts only in its own self-interest, Mr. Speaker.

“While all Parliaments are influenced by government, the question is to what degree?” To what degree is the legislature influenced by the government, Mr. Speaker? “How independent is Parliament? How well is the electorate informed by a free and open media . . .” How independent is the message that’s going to the public, Mr. Speaker, to the citizens of the province “. . . and are elections fair and honest to keep parliamentarians accountable [Mr. Speaker]?”

Are those very fundamental rights of electoral independence, are they upheld, Mr. Speaker? Are our elections fair, the information people are placing their vote, making their decision upon, Mr. Speaker, honest and fair? “In the developed world, [parliamentarians] . . . are a reasonable, independent, open, and transparent check on government, hence our prosperity [Mr. Speaker].” Hence why we have prosperity. When the larger group, the parliament or the legislature is the check on government, Mr. Speaker, you have prosperity, Mr. Speaker.

So why do we have a government today trying to take away that check? Why do we have a government today trying to take away that check and balance, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, we have a government saying they want prosperity, they want growth. But they’re wanting to take away the check and balance that this legislature should be able to provide. Mr. Speaker, they want to stifle debate. They’re wanting to use their majority to overrule the minority, Mr. Speaker, without having the opportunity for debate, without giving us the opportunity to try to change their minds through meaningful, intelligent debate, Mr. Speaker.

What are they afraid of? Are they afraid of the facts? Are they afraid that the public may actually stand out and say what they want doing is wrong, Mr. Speaker? Why are they trying to stifle the debate?

Mr. Speaker, for the rest of the world, parliaments are dominated by their governments, Mr. Speaker. So in some parts of the world, Mr. Speaker, parliaments actually are able to control their governments. In other parts, parliaments are dominated by their governments, Mr. Speaker.

Well what are we seeing here today, Mr. Speaker? We’re seeing a government dominate the parliament, the legislature. That’s exactly what we’re seeing here today, Mr. Speaker. It’s what you see in third world countries, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we’ve got a government that’s dominating the parliament, that’s stopping free debate on the issue, on this very issue of the change of the rules, Mr. Speaker.

They’re using their majority to close debate, Mr. Speaker. They’re using their majority to close debate after one day, Mr. Speaker. Is that free and democratic? It’s the death of democracy, Mr. Speaker. It is doing what we fundamentally oppose, Mr. Speaker. It’s taking the fundamental rights away from members of this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker:

Parliaments [that] are dominated by their governments — one-party states being a common example of a compliant Parliament. Bribery and coercion of parliamentarians often ensure that Parliament is not a force beyond the control of the government. Intimidation of parliamentarians, including jail or assassination guarantees the lack of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, that’s coming from our own *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, volume no. 30 in spring of 2007, Mr. Speaker: “A compliant Parliament may be a wonderful thing for those in power . . .” Mr. Speaker.

A compliant Parliament may be a wonderful thing for those in power [Mr. Speaker] but it produces an impoverished society. When people in government steal their nation’s taxes . . . [without] impunity, there is no accountability . . .

Mr. Speaker, when governments don’t respect the parliaments or respect their legislatures of which they are part of, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where you have government control that you ram through changes without debate, Mr. Speaker, where you take away the fundamental rights of debate from members of the Legislative Assembly. You change the rules unilaterally, Mr. Speaker, and you shut the public out. Mr. Speaker, you shut the public out from the very, very important issues of which we want to speak about.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes now to talk about why the opposition thinks they have a problem. Mr. Speaker, I went through Bills 1 through 6 last night in detail. I’m not going to do that again for the members opposite. They know Bills 1 and 2 could pass. Bills 3 and 4 have no immediate impact. And Bills 5 and 6, they could in fact pass.

[16:45]

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few minutes to just review and talk about the other pieces of legislation that the government put forward during this session, Mr. Speaker, much of which I’m going to start by saying was developed and put forward by the previous government that are now in opposition, Mr. Speaker. The majority of these Bills are our work, Mr. Speaker, and so why, just out of common sense, Mr. Speaker, why would we oppose them? Why would we oppose these Bills, Mr. Speaker?

Now there is one exception. There was one Bill that was put forward by the bureaucracy here which we refused to put forward which the government is putting forward, and I call that the double-dipping Bill, Mr. Speaker — Bill No. 9. And, Mr. Speaker, that particular Bill which members opposite want to put forward, we wouldn’t put forward, Mr. Speaker. We

wouldn't put forward because we don't believe that people should be paid twice for doing the same job, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite may, but I don't think their constituents from rural Saskatchewan would believe that, Mr. Speaker, and by the way neither did some of the reporters today that I tried to explain this provision to. They were quite interested in why the government would want to support this. But, Mr. Speaker, if they ask the question, you shall get an answer, Mr. Speaker. If you ask the question, you shall get an answer.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take an opportunity to review these Bills that the members opposite are concerned whether or not they'll get passed. The Bill No. 8 is An Act to amend The Natural Resources Act, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure you that this Bill in fact was brought forward by the previous government. In fact the current opposition when they were in government, Mr. Speaker . . . And this is a very good piece of legislation that would in fact, Mr. Speaker, pass. Surprise, surprise, surprise, Mr. Speaker. This piece of legislation would pass. We did the work on this Bill. We proposed this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and of course we'll pass this Bill, Mr. Speaker. Surprise, surprise. They're worried about getting their agenda through, Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately the majority of their agenda is in fact our agenda, Mr. Speaker. So we developed these Bills. We're supporting these Bills. Why would we talk for 20 hours on these Bills, Mr. Speaker, or for any prolonged period of time? But they may want to speak for 20 hours on these Bills because, Mr. Speaker, they didn't develop them. They didn't think about them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 9. Bill No. 9 is the double-dipping provision Bill, Mr. Speaker. It's An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act, Mr. Speaker, and this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker . . . I have to say this particular Bill, the opposition when they were in government wouldn't put forward, Mr. Speaker. We would not put this Bill forward, Mr. Speaker. We didn't agree with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Speaker, when this Bill comes forward, Mr. Speaker, we may not want to be quite so co-operative with Bill No. 9, Mr. Speaker. But I don't think the people of Saskatchewan really would like to see this Bill go through, Mr. Speaker, and I think the members opposite did not spend a great deal of time examining this Bill in detail in fact with me.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 10, An Act to amend certain Pensions Statutes with respect to certain requirements of the Income Tax Act. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you once again, this is our Bill. We did the work, Mr. Speaker, and will we support this Bill, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, I don't have to . . . I have absolutely total confidence in where my colleagues are on this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. We'll support this Bill. We'll support this Bill. We don't need 20 hours of debate on this Bill, Mr. Speaker. We did the work on it. We know it's a good piece of legislation, so why are the members opposite so concerned, Mr. Speaker? Why are they so concerned? Did they bother talking to us about any of this legislation, Mr. Speaker? The answer is no. Their answer is no. Did they try working with us to find out what would go through and what wouldn't go through easily, Mr. Speaker? The answer is no. No. All they did was bring out the sledgehammer and say, if we can't do it our way and how we want to do, Mr. Speaker, we'll do it anyway.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 11 is an Act to amend the enforcement . . . And I hope the Government House Leader is listening over there because I'm going through, piece by piece, legislation and telling him which Bills will pass easily. I hope he has a clue as how he could negotiate a settlement to this rather than force this through, Mr. Speaker, unilaterally, a rule change, Mr. Speaker. I am once again trying to help him out. I'm once again trying to help him out, Mr. Speaker. I hope, I hope, Mr. Speaker, he's paying attention. I hope that he is paying attention, Mr. Speaker, or that he'll at least read *Hansard* after.

Mr. Speaker, we're now dealing with Bill No. 11. Bill No. 11 is an Act, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 11 is An Act to amend The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act, 2002. Mr. Speaker, this is another piece of legislation that we did the work on, Mr. Speaker. We did the work. We were going to pass this legislation, Mr. Speaker, so, Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members opposite this Bill, Bill No. 11, will pass. It will pass, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we may want to talk for a few minutes about some of these Bills because some of our members did a tremendous amount of work on these Bills, Mr. Speaker, and they have a tremendous buy-in to making these Bills law, Mr. Speaker. We care about these Bills, Mr. Speaker. Some of them have a song in their heart and would want to speak for a short period of time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the next, the next piece of legislation is a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that and again, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 12 again, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'm not exactly sure if the member's able to hear himself as he's speaking, so I would like to call the members to order. I recognize the member from Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I hope that we have some peace for a few minutes in the House so that members opposite can hear exactly what we're prepared to do with each of these pieces of legislation. And I see the Government House Leader, Mr. Speaker, he's taking some notes right now and I'm pleased to see this.

Bill No. 12, Bill No. 12, Mr. Speaker, another piece of legislation that we did a great deal of work on, Mr. Speaker, and a Bill that we feel very, very, very, very seriously about passing as quickly as we can, Mr. Speaker, because it's good legislation for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — And it is legislation that my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Meewasin, put a tremendous amount of work on and he feels very strongly about, Mr. Speaker, so he may want to speak for a few minutes about this Bill to tell you how good it is, and how important it is to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we could do that, Mr. Speaker. Check.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 13, An Act to amend The Teachers' Life Insurance (Government Contributory) Act, Mr. Speaker, so this

Bill, this Bill was what was agreed to in collective bargaining when we were the government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, they may want to talk 20 hours on this but, Mr. Speaker, we agreed to this already, Mr. Speaker, at the bargaining table with the teachers. So are we going to pass this legislation? Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the Government House Leader that we're going to pass this legislation very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to, Mr. Speaker, deal with Bill No. 14. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very complex Bill, Bill No. 14. It is so complex that I think that somebody might be able to debate 20 minutes on if they . . . at the very most, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we brought this Bill forward as well, Mr. Speaker, and I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that if 20 minutes is spent on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, somebody is talking about nothing, Mr. Speaker. Check, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'd like to deal with Bill No. 15, Mr. Speaker, An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, once again a piece of legislation that my colleagues worked quite extensively on, Mr. Speaker, a piece of legislation, a piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that we had a great deal of buy in, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, once again I want to assure the Government House Leader that Bill No. 14 or Bill No. 15, pardon me, will pass very expeditiously, Mr. Speaker. Check.

An Hon. Member: — You know you should have just asked. You didn't have to put forward a closure motion. You should have just asked.

Mr. Yates: — Well you could have asked that, and we would have told you this. I could have done this in the corner, you know, more easily than doing it this way.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to deal with Bill No. 16, Mr. Speaker, and I'll tell you why. We already passed it. Okay? I don't want to waste anybody's time talking about what's already in place, Mr. Speaker. Okay? Been there, done that. We're not going to talk about 16. It's already, it's already done. Okay? No sense wasting time on what we've already done.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 17, An Act to amend The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that piece of legislation, well it does a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. And I have to say the most important thing this Bill does is allow the minister to direct the speed on provincial highways, Mr. Speaker — to actually have a say.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it used to be that the minister worked through the officials and told the officials what was sort of the wish of the government, after hearing the information from the officials as to the safety issues and that, Mr. Speaker. Well this doesn't really contemplate any change, Mr. Speaker, in the process. It just simply says that where it might have been questioned in the past, that the minister actually had the authority. Will it make the public announcement? Mr. Speaker, it's just straightening out that the minister can actually go and make the public announcement in a nice way.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, although they did the work on this piece of legislation — we're going to acknowledge that they did the work on this piece of legislation after, after they were government, or the officials did — Mr. Speaker, this is a very good piece of legislation. And check.

Mr. Speaker, the next piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is An Act to amend The Public Service Act, 1998, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this is a thoughtful, a very appropriate piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. And as some of the members opposite would know, I've spent a lot of time dealing with the issues of labour relations and government over the years prior to my being elected and that. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a change to improve the rights of the commissioners, the public service commissioners to do the right thing, to actually, if a mistake is made, to correct the mistake, Mr. Speaker — for the commissioners to exercise their authority and correct a mistake, Mr. Speaker, once again a very good piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this was drafted again after, after the new government took power, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I happen to be the critic for this particular piece of legislation, and I think you can put a check mark down beside this piece of legislation as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, next we have An Act to amend the Social Workers Act, Mr. Speaker. Well this is a piece of legislation that has been worked on for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, in consultation with the Association of Social Workers in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It is a very important piece of legislation.

We probably only have one question about this legislation, Mr. Speaker — one question. We'd have to ask if the minister's read it and if the minister understands it. That probably would be our only question, Mr. Speaker. And when she sent this forward, did she know what she was doing? That would be our simple questions, Mr. Speaker. Check.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 20. Mr. Speaker, it's a Bill to amend The Administration of Estates Act and to make consequential amendments to certain other Acts and repeal certain other Acts, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that we did work on when we were in government, Mr. Speaker. The work was in fact done when we were in the government, Mr. Speaker. We understand this piece of legislation well, Mr. Speaker.

And a couple of my colleagues, in particular the member from Regina Lakeview, spent a great deal of time on this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. And my colleague, also the member from Regina . . . or pardon me, Saskatoon Meewasin, Mr. Speaker — I wish he was from Regina Meewasin, Mr. Speaker — spent a lot of time on this legislation, Mr. Speaker. And do you know what? I hope they're listening, Mr. Speaker. This piece of legislation, check.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, now at the final Bill that's been tabled in the Assembly, Bill No. 21, Mr. Speaker, and that's An Act to amend The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Act, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, look this is absolutely radical. Once again this was negotiated during the last round of

collective bargaining.

And who was the government in power during the last round of teachers' collective bargaining? Well, Mr. Speaker, that would be the current opposition, Mr. Speaker. So we've already agreed to this, Mr. Speaker. We've already agreed to this. So, Mr. Speaker, the final Bill, the final Bill that these members brought forward, what do we have? We have another check mark, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what does this mean? It means that the panic, Mr. Speaker, it means that the panic alarm, the absolute false alarm, the false alarm that the members opposite pushed and the absolute panic that they think they have, the panic button that they pushed, Mr. Speaker, and the hysteria in which they thought they needed to bring forward such a knee-jerk reaction with a unilateral motion to change the rules . . . What's it mean, Mr. Speaker? It means incompetence. Mr. Speaker, it means once again, Mr. Speaker, incompetence, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It being the time of the afternoon recess, the Assembly is recessed until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

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Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

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Minister of Crown Corporations

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Information
Technology Office

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Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

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Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Provincial Secretary

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Minister of Social Services

Hon. Nancy Heppner
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Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

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Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
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Minister of Education

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

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Minister of Justice
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Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Workers'
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Hon. Christine Tell
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Minister Responsible for the Capital City Commission