



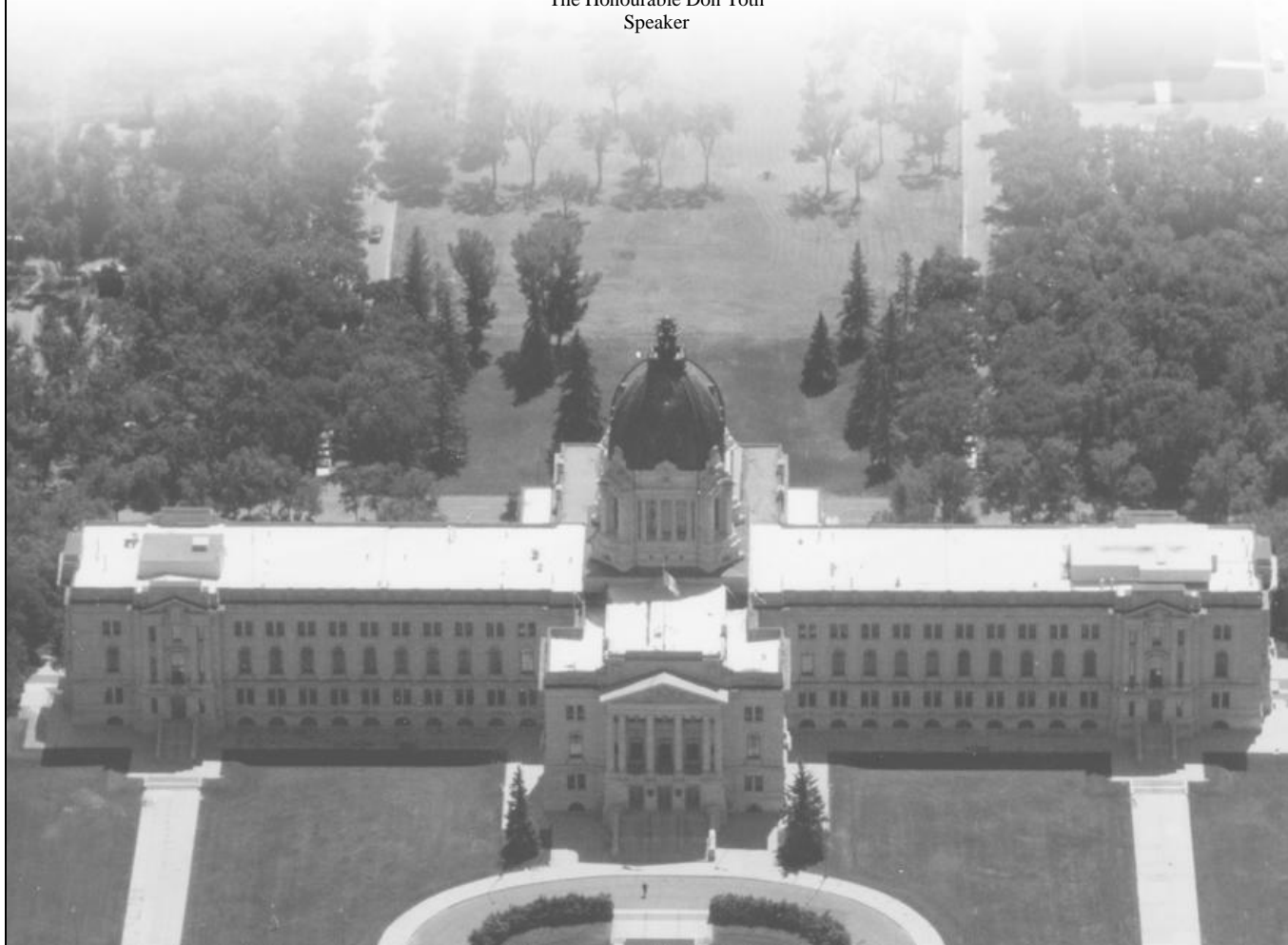
FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

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

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitions are signed by people from Sedley, Gerald, Grayson, Springside, Tisdale, Nipawin, Meadow Lake, Rouleau, Elston, Aberdeen, North Portal, Invermay, Odessa, Midale, Qu'Appelle, Coronach, Grenfell, Elstow, Tuffnell, Riverhurst, Shell Lake, Cut Knife, Maymont, Oungre, Earl Grey, Mossbank, Southey, Archerwill, Lumsden, Balcarres, Lebret, Kronau, Craven, Dilke, Pense, Coppersands, Edenwold, Balgonie, Silton, Buena Vista, Togo, Davidson, Melville, Langenburg, Saskatoon, Spiritwood, Estevan, Lucky Lake, Herschel, Oxbow, Martensville, Regina, Weyburn, La Ronge, Spruce Home, Prince Albert, Langham, Biggar, Perdue . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The member has the right to present his petition. Other members will have an opportunity in a moment. The member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Abbey, Yorkton, Esterhazy, Young, Duval, Imperial, Assiniboia, Moose Jaw, Kamsack, Wroxton, Canora, Hendon, Stenen, Rhein, Veregin, Air Ronge, Hagen, Lloydminster, Kindersley, North Battleford, Holbein, Pilger, Humboldt, Lanigan, Buffalo Narrows, Bienfait, Estevan.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present pages from petitions from concerned citizens in Saskatoon about the cancellation of the province's support for Station 20 and the taking back of the \$8 million that was set aside for that project. I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station 20 project.

I so do present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition that addresses the shabby way that the employees and the constituents of Moose Jaw were treated with this government's political decision to close the liquor store. And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

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.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Vimy Ridge Day

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, today is Vimy Ridge Day. On July 1 we celebrate the achievement of a group of politicians, the pilots of Confederation, who in 1867 constructed the framework of a federal state — the Dominion of Canada.

Today is the day we honour the thousands of Canadian farmers and workers turned soldier who, through their sacrifice in 1917, gave birth to the nation, Canada. With innovative tactics, determination, and courage, Canadians succeeded where others had failed in the taking of Vimy Ridge. And Canada took its proud place among the nations of the world — a leader in the causes of human freedom, justice, and peace.

Purporting to represent no one but myself and appreciating the arguments to the contrary, I believe that, on this day, our national flag should be lowered to half-mast on federal buildings.

Also speaking as an individual member of this Assembly, I believe that the practice of lowering the flag to half-mast when a Canadian soldier dies in a theatre of conflict should be reinstated. Mr. Speaker, a sacrifice not acknowledged is a sacrifice not honoured.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, April 9, is the 91st anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, where the combined Canadian corps captured the German-held high ground that had frustrated allied commanders.

The battle has become a national symbol of sacrifice and bravery, and it truly stands as a timeless memorial to the strength of the Canadian nation. Over 97,000 Canadian soldiers formed the core of a fighting force that launched the assault 91 years ago today. Four battalions engaged in this battle hailed from Saskatchewan.

The actions of these soldiers defined the character of Canada and brought this nation out from under the shadow of the British Empire, allowing its citizens to forge their own image.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of being stationed in Europe as a member of the Canadian Forces and actually visiting Vimy Ridge. I can also say it brings me great pride to remember the extraordinary achievement and sacrifice of our forefathers in this fight for freedom.

As our sons and daughters are currently serving in many capacities around the world in both peacekeeping operations and in NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization]-led missions such as in Afghanistan, it is crucial that we note that they are just the latest to wear the uniform of the Canadian Forces. They are writing the newest chapter in the history of Armed Forces, and what a glorious history it is.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, as several of my colleagues have said, today is Vimy Ridge Day, a time to remember all those who fought to preserve our way of life. This is a debt we as Canadians can never repay, so we remember instead. I feel honoured to speak today on this special day.

My constituency office is across the street from the Royal Canadian Legion, Nutana Branch No. 362. As a member of the legion, I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to meet many of the men and women who have served this country in our Armed Forces. I want to publicly thank them and their families for the sacrifices they have made on our behalf.

The Nutana Legion currently has 1,250 members. Their facility is air conditioned, wheelchair accessible, and has a huge free parking lot. The legion, in partnership with the ladies' auxiliary, offers many activities in the community. They also issue newsletters, maintain a museum and a website. As you can see, their service to us continues at home.

It is fitting that we take time to remember those men and women who have fought for the privileges and freedoms we enjoy. The son of a close friend of mine is currently serving abroad. My heart and my prayers go out to her and all the other families who have sons and daughters serving our country. These young men and women are laying their lives on the line every day. Those of us at home do not make this daily sacrifice,

but we can honour those who do by living our lives in a way that makes us worth fighting for. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Leader's Dinner

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, enthusiasm and excitement are just two of the words being used to describe an event I had the pleasure of attending last night in Saskatoon. More than 1,200 people gathered at TCU Place for the annual leader's dinner. The atmosphere was electric, Mr. Speaker, as the enthusiastic audience cheered along with the greatest hits video from the election campaign. When it was time to introduce . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Please allow the member from Saskatoon Northwest to place his statement.

Mr. LeClerc: — See, Mr. Speaker, even they're excited. When it was time to introduce the leader, former Saskatoon Northwest MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Ted Merriman, now Co-Chair of the affordable housing task force, did so with heartfelt warmth. Premier Brad Wall spoke with humility, confidence, and enthusiasm. In his energized and hopeful speech he spoke of Saskatchewan with its eyes firmly set on the future of a great province.

Mr. Speaker, attending events such as these are always such a great experience. It is truly then that you realize that this Saskatchewan Party government is taking the right steps. The growth agenda we have set for this province is supported, Mr. Speaker, and supported by the broadest cross-section of people this province has ever seen. The crowd at TCU Place, Mr. Speaker, told us they were ready for growth and we will do everything in our power to accommodate them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would just like to caution members about the fact that we refer to individuals by their constituency or their position, not by their individual name, under the rules. Thank you. The member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Congratulations to Oskayak High School

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, Oskayak High School, located on Broadway Avenue in Saskatoon Nutana, is a unique school serving First Nations and Métis students in Saskatoon and surrounding communities. The school offers credits in both traditional courses and in four academies designed to appeal to the preferences of students who have interest in hockey, drama, cultural arts, and Cree language. First Nations and Métis students can find support and cultural reinforcement in these programs.

Oskayak, which means young people, provides a network of trained support staff, counsellors, social workers, psychologists, daycare providers, and physicians to help young students face challenges both in and outside of the school environment.

Oskayak's philosophy is bound to the Aboriginal medicine wheel, and works toward achieving balance in students' mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical lives. Throughout the year, school elders Simon Kytwayhat and Mary Lee lead both students and staff in many cultural and spiritual activities such as sweats, smudges, and powwows.

Oskayak is working to build relationships between the school, students, and the surrounding business community. The school principal hopes to develop a job shadowing program to pair students with successful businesses in the Broadway area near the school so students can learn about the world of work and entrepreneurship.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Oskayak school for their dynamic programs, and I would ask my colleagues to join me in wishing the staff and students well as they strive for a creative and productive future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Return of Spring

Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, I love this time of year. Spring is in the air. The sights and sounds of renewal are everywhere. As I drive between home and the legislature, you can see the evidence. Snow is disappearing from the ditches. The farmers are almost in the fields. Kids have traded their winter boots for the ones of the rubber variety. It is, Mr. Speaker, a time of renewal but there are forces at work, Mr. Speaker, who would deny Saskatchewan that renewal. They sit across this House from us, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past 48 hours, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have held the people of Saskatchewan hostage, paralyzing the ability of this House to do the work that we've been hired to get done. With both eyes firmly on the rear-view mirror, Mr. Speaker, they have quoted James Madison, Plato, Winston Churchill — names stretching back 2,500 years — in a show of partisanship utterly disrespectful of the choice the Saskatchewan voters made on November 7, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

Well, Mr. Speaker, not to worry. The members on this side of the House remain committed to our growth agenda, Mr. Speaker. We will ensure that the people of this province get the spring that they have so long been denied by people on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Quick Moves

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, who says government can't move fast? Yesterday I stood in my place and pointed out that though the government had cut the Aboriginal Career Connections program, they had forgot to mention it to the people who run

their website.

In fact as of yesterday the website was still loaded with glowing testimonials from people who have benefited from the program. And I took the opportunity to quote a couple of them, things like "My experience in the ACC program has been incredible" and "As I begin my new career . . . I know that the ACC program was the best career decision I ever made" — which I guess, Mr. Speaker, is when the government leapt into action. I think those testimonials were gone from the website before I sat down.

Well that's just the latest example of the lightning quickness in which the Saskatchewan Party can move. Witness how quickly they cut the ties with their old friend Kate McMillan when her nasty open letter to the residents of the inner city of Saskatoon embarrassed them.

If the Saskatchewan Party moved half as quickly on reinstating the funding for Station 20, on getting the P.A. [Prince Albert] mill opened, or on addressing the issues of affordable housing -- if the Saskatchewan Party moved half as quickly to benefit the people of Saskatchewan as they move to protect themselves — then they might actually accomplish something.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Station 20 West

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand from press reports that the Premier this morning met with the community and the organizers of Station 20 in Saskatoon. And if the press reports are correct, he has made a decision to stick with this ill-advised, short-sighted, and mean-spirited cut to the inner city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, over 2,000 people rallied last weekend demanding this government listen to their voices. On the Facebook site — the Friends of Station 20 — over 4,500 people have joined that site. The unprecedented thing has happened with the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix* where they cannot print all of the letters that have come to the newspaper, and we have no idea how many letters and emails has been delivered to the Premier and this government.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is this, my question is this: why will this Premier, why will this government not listen to the voice of Saskatchewan people?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to answer that question on behalf of this government. Mr. Speaker, the leader is right. The Premier and the Minister of Health met this morning with a group of

individuals representing Station 20. There was a good discussion. We as a government . . . And the Premier has expressed this that these people are there with tremendous passion. They believe in the same types of issues that this government believes in and that we need to address within inner cities, within those particular regions.

We understand that the model that has been proposed by that previous government addressed some of the concerns. And we have committed to ensuring that we will move forward and that we will move forward with a different model. But the goals that we wish to attain will still be the same for those people in inner city Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I want to again remind members of this government, that the concept of Station 20, the genesis of this concept and project came not from government; it came from the community. It came from people who live in the community, who work in the community. They've been joined by the academic expertise of the colleges of medicine and dentistry at the University of Saskatchewan. This was a project born in the community. They don't need the paternalistic plans delivered upon them by the Sask Party government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — They need, Mr. Speaker, they need, Mr. Speaker, to be able to retain the money that had been placed in their hands to build their dream. Again I say to this government: why would they not listen to the voice of people, the voice of the community? Why will they not reverse — as the Minister of Social Services was quick to reverse her decision — why will they now not reverse this ill-advised, mean-spirited decision to rob from the community of the inner city of Saskatoon these \$8 million?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do want to make investments in inner city Saskatoon and in other cities, and we want to achieve the goals and aspirations of many. We have stated very, very publicly that we will work with initiatives like the Saskatoon Food Bank. We'll work with community schools like St. Mary's School which is going to deliver a nutrition program. An additional \$500,000 has been provided for dealing with that, nutrition within the system.

Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that the investments that are provided to the area are in people and services unlike when that opposition was in government. We want to ensure that people and services are the number one priority of this government. We will work with our partners to establish a model that will deliver on those services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, again to this government, how do they justify the hypocrisy? They say that they're delivering a budget that will provide infrastructure for the people of Saskatchewan. That's their theme of the budget that's now under debate in this House, but that does not apply apparently to the poor in the inner city. They don't deserve infrastructure. They don't deserve infrastructure.

I've got a question, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know who wants to answer it. I don't know who's capable of answering it, but is this going to be a government that's going to govern for all the people? Are they going to govern just for some? Are they only going to govern for their friends, or are they going to govern for all of the people of Saskatchewan? Are they going to govern for the people who have dreams and visions, who live in poor neighbourhoods of this province, or are they going to inflict their own philosophies and their own plans regardless of what, Mr. Speaker, the people of the province are telling them? Have they grown in five months, Mr. Speaker, in five months have they grown so deaf that they will not listen to the people of the province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's very obvious what this government intends to do. We have provided for the first time, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. And I don't need help from the benches on the floor. Order. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question about what we're providing to the entire province. We're providing \$1 billion worth of infrastructure construction, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — One billion dollars. Mr. Speaker, that leader allowed this province to crumble, Mr. Speaker. We see examples of health care facilities. We see examples of school facilities. We see examples of highways that are crumbling in this province, and that government led by that premier were in office for 16 years. Mr. Speaker, they did not deliver. We will deliver based on the fact that we're providing dollars, we're providing initiatives, and we will achieve what the people of inner-city Saskatoon also want to achieve.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Prince Albert Pulp Mill

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start with a very simple question for the government. We heard from the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation last week, and I quote “. . . negotiations are going on to reopen that plant and . . . we're not far away from some sort of an announcement . . .” The very next day the Minister of Energy and Resources threw cold water onto his colleague's statements, calling them, quote, “not helpful.” Well I think that makes two of them, Mr. Speaker.

To the government: are they close to an agreement or aren't they? Who's right, the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation, the Minister of Energy and Resources, or neither of them?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are ongoing discussions. We've described them as productive and constructive. We have said that there are shareholder rights that have to be respected here, and as a result of that, the discussions are confidential in nature. And that would only be natural given the fact that we're talking about a publicly traded company, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, it's been almost a month now since the government's been sitting on Domtar's counter-offer. In that month not only has another plant been indefinitely closed, but the government's story continues to change. Let's not forget, when he was in opposition, the leader of that party said, and I quote — and he couldn't have been any clearer, Mr. Speaker — “Anything less than a timetable for reopening the Prince Albert mill will amount to a failure . . .”

To the minister: what is his timetable? What is his plan? And if he doesn't give us one, will he admit, by his own leader's definition, that he is an utter and complete failure?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the negotiations are ongoing. There will be continued negotiations for some period of time. The timeline is unknown at this particular time. We have to make sure that there is a deal that is proper for the company involved as well as the forest management agreement

as well as all other players associated with the mills associated in the area. So, Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By the previous administration's own admission, it took them some 18 months to put together a deal that resulted in putting the taxpayers of this province on the hook for some \$100 million.

We've made it clear that that is not something that we're prepared to do with taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker, and as a result of that the people of Saskatchewan gave us overwhelming support in the last election.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from P.A. Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Well, Mr. Speaker, either it took 18 months, or it was a last minute deal like they purport. They can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They finally admit that they're a failure — welcome news for the people of Prince Albert, I'm sure.

Let's review for the people of Prince Albert and area the absolute mismanagement on this file. The member from Batoche chaired a task force with no findings. The Premier three times was in Prince Albert to announce that they had a plan to reopen the mill. There was no plan. The member from Prince Albert Carlton took out an ad in the newspaper that said a vote for him was a vote for the mill open and people working — truly not the case. The Minister of Energy and Resources claimed to have had discussions with Domtar when clearly no discussions have taken place. And now the Minister of Energy and Resources, the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation can't get their stories straight.

To the minister: why on earth would families in forestry communities have any faith in his failed leadership on this file?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, the reason why the people of Saskatchewan have faith is because there was an election in November of last year. The people of Saskatchewan spoke. The people of Saskatchewan spoke and at that time they said that this was a flawed deal for the people of this province. This was a deal that resulted in \$100 million of taxpayers' money being put at risk, and it simply was a deal that the people of Saskatchewan were not prepared to agree with. And as a result of that, that administration was summarily bounced out of office.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Fairview.

Essential Services Legislation

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour is pretty good at sticking on message and repeating catch phrases ad nauseam. When he's not talking about how capable, confident, and qualified Ken Love is, chances are he's talking about how balanced his new labour Bills are. Mr. Speaker, the minister's entire justification for Bill 5 is to bring Saskatchewan to the, quote, "national norm."

To the Minister of Labour: is it still his contention that this government's labour legislation, particularly his essential services legislation, is moderate in comparison to other jurisdictions in Canada?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and I think the people of Saskatchewan do. I think the key question here, Mr. Speaker, is as we look across the country we see that every province either has or has tabled essential service legislation. Saskatchewan is simply moving in that direction, Mr. Speaker.

The key here is to ensure that there's a balance between the right to strike, Mr. Speaker, and public safety, Mr. Speaker. And in fact I think it's been well regarded that this is middle-of-the-road legislation. It's meant to ensure public safety is balanced with the right to strike.

Mr. Speaker, I think the question remains — and we've yet to hear from the members opposite — will they be supporting essential service legislation, Mr. Speaker? That's the question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now table some very interesting Advanced Education, Employment and Labour documents provided to me by a private citizen who submitted an FOI [freedom of information] request on the government's essential services legislation. The first is a hand-written ministry document saying, and I quote, "This is likely the broadest application in Canada." The second calls the legislation, quote, "quite broad," and raises the possibility of just about anybody being included under the regulations, including CBOs [community-based organization].

Mr. Speaker, the minister can't have it both ways. Either the Bills are moderate, as he claims, or it is the broadest in Canada, as his ministry claims. To the Minister of Labour: who's right? Who should the people trust — him or his officials?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, once again I appreciate the question. Mr. Speaker, obviously I'll wait for the document to be tabled and then that way I can have a look at it.

But, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province, really they're interested in one key element. Why is it that Saskatchewan doesn't have essential service legislation? Why is it that during the recent CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] strike at the University of Saskatchewan, 400 people per day were being turned away from receiving medical treatment and care that they needed? Why? Why is that the case, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, it's the reason and the case that we don't have essential services in place. That's why we're moving forward this piece of legislation. It's a moderate piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, this is amazing. Mr. Speaker, while the part-time Minister of Labour was reassuring members of the public that his legislation is moderate and balanced, his very own department was warning that his legislation was, and again and I'll quote, "likely the broadest application in Canada."

Among what's already been tabled today are some other interesting documents which speak to the minister's inability or unwillingness to communicate. The first cites a need to give the minister an opportunity to explain his legislation in, quote, "a controlled environment such as streaming videos." The second estimates the cost of shooting such videos as up to \$12,000.

To the Minister of Labour: can he please explain to the taxpayers of this province why they're on the hook for his own inability to answer questions?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, the question about cost is actually about the cost of not having essential service legislation in place, Mr. Speaker. That's the cost.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what we've seen is members opposite who were more than happy to legislate nurses back to work in 1999, Mr. Speaker. What they're not willing to do is

move forward with essential service legislation that will help to protect the safety and security of the people of Saskatchewan while balancing the right to strike, Mr. Speaker. That's what we see. And all I can say is the member opposite seems to be lost in missing the big question. The big question is, will you be supporting essential service legislation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, it seems quite clear perhaps the minister needs his teleprompter in here, if possible. But let's review, Mr. Speaker. There were miscommunications as to whether essential services would be legislated by this government. There were miscommunications as to who was consulted prior to this legislation being introduced in the House. And there were miscommunications as to whether this legislation was moderate or not. The Premier of the province, the director of communications, and the minister all agree he is not a very good communicator.

To the Minister of Labour: why didn't he just answer the questions in the first place, cut out the middle man, and save the taxpayers time and money?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to once again to return to the question of essential services in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, every province either has in place or has tabled essential service legislation. We're moving forward in this fashion to ensure that the people of this province are protected, the public safety of this province is protected. That way when we see labour . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'm having difficulty. There's a couple members on my left that . . . second and last warning. Member for Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, the main point here is, I can't believe that the questions relate to the process. The questions really relate to, how is it that we cannot have, to date, essential services in Saskatchewan? That's the question. And the question remains, will the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Moose Jaw will allow the member, the minister to respond. Minister of Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The question remains, will the members opposite be supporting essential service legislation in Saskatchewan or not? That's the question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Nutana.

Legal Fees and Services

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've learned that the Minister of Labour certainly is a high maintenance minister. It's obvious that he has to have a \$10,000 teleprompter paid for by the taxpayers. Well that's not all we learned, Mr. Speaker. We learned yesterday that by the end of January the minister's private lawyer had earned over \$50,000, and there's nowhere to go but up in terms of that bill. Now that taxpayers have actually had to pay Kevin Wilson, can the minister finally tell us what we've been paying for?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, again I appreciate and I know the people of Saskatchewan appreciate this question. That is it's common practice, Mr. Speaker, that governments of all stripes hire people from outside to help, offer advice and research. Mr. Speaker, in fact, in fact what we see, Mr. Speaker, from 2003 to 2007, we see from the same said law firm, a bill for almost \$5 million, Mr. Speaker, from that government. So, Mr. Speaker, it is common practice. In fact what we've also seen is a rationale offered on May 1, 2007, by a former member of this House who would have been sitting on that side and that is, we paid Mr. Waller based on fees of a senior lawyer in the province would receive for a similar kind of work, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's called the Milgaard inquiry and that's why MacPherson Leslie & Tyerman was paid that amount of money. Now, Mr. Speaker, what is so unusual about Mr. Wilson's services is that normally cabinet ministers rely upon the Ministry of Justice and their lawyers to provide them legal advice.

My question to the member is this: why didn't you rely upon the Ministry of Justice legal officials to provide you advice? What did Mr. Wilson do? Did he draft the legislation which was then given to the Ministry of Justice officials? Why over \$50,000? And, Mr. Speaker, that just gets us to the end of January.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I want to offer this House and the people of the province every reassurance that it was the Ministry of Justice that drafted the legislation, Mr. Speaker.

And we've gone through what Mr. Wilson has been doing. He's been offering us, especially advice, and offering some research during the early days of this government.

Mr. Speaker, what's curious, Mr. Speaker, is that perhaps the former minister of Finance can answer that she also sought some outside advice to the tune of \$291,000, Mr. Speaker, in her 2006-2007 Public Accounts volume 2. So, Mr. Speaker, as she knows well, it's not infrequent that outside advisers are offered for their advice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what's infrequent is that this member fails to answer questions in this House. Can he please advise the House what precisely did Mr. Wilson offer? Was it legal advice? Can he provide any written documents? Have we got anything to show, that the minister can provide this House in writing, that is worth over \$50,000?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what we can say is the people of Saskatchewan are being very well served by Premier Brad Wall, by the Premier.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Just to remind members to refer to members by their responsibility or their constituency.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The people of this province are being very well served. While the members opposite are driving in reverse through the rear-view mirror, we're moving forward — 14,000 new full-time jobs, Mr. Speaker. Year over year what we see, Mr. Speaker, is people pouring back into the province, Mr. Speaker.

Regarding the specific question, the answer is that obviously during times of transition we draw on expert legal advice and outside advice. I did that through the ministry and, Mr. Speaker, what we can say is we're moving forward on our agenda and meeting our promises, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday sure was a good day for Saskatchewan Party lawyers, but it wasn't such a good day for Saskatchewan taxpayers — \$125,000 to be precise, Mr. Speaker. That's how much this Sask Party government is giving its good old political friends for helping them gut the public service and draft its legislation.

We learned about this payment just hours after hearing about a mean-spirited cut to the Public Service Commission program to assist Aboriginal people and disabled people join the public service. But we also learned it just days after thousands of people on the streets of Saskatoon demanded that the Government of Saskatchewan restore its funding to Station 20.

So I guess to the Premier or to the Deputy Premier: how on the one hand can they plead poverty when it comes to valuable programs and services and, on the other hand, give all of this money to their political friends, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The question really relates to the fine document that the Minister of Finance has tabled recently. That's the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, within the ministry I have the honour of serving, \$761 million, Mr. Speaker . . . We see over 5,500 new training opportunities. We see \$5 million going to community-based organizations, Mr. Speaker.

So what we see, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity to actually achieve the promises and fulfill the agenda that we spoke of during the election and move forward with the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 22 — The Irrigation Amendment Act, 2008

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 22, The Irrigation Amendment Act be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Agriculture has moved first reading of Bill No. 22, The Irrigation Amendment Act, 2008 be now read a first time.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

**Bill No. 23 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing
Amendment Act, 2008**

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

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Municipal Government has moved first reading of Bill No. 23, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2008. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

**Bill No. 24 — The Trade Union
Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)**

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 24, The Trade Union Act, 2008 (No. 2) now be introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour that Bill 24, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2008 be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

[14:15]

**Bill No. 25 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection
Amendment Act, 2008**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the

Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 25, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that first reading of Bill No. 25, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act be now read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Private Bills to present its first report. Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Pursuant to rule 98, private Bill 901 is deemed to have been read a first time and is ordered for second reading on the next private members' day.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Prior to orders of the day, a couple of questions were brought to the Speaker's attention. A couple of

evenings ago, in the evening sitting, a point of order was raised to which I will respond. During the evening sitting of April 7, 2008, the Opposition House Leader raised a point of order regarding certain remarks made by the member from Kindersley from his seat.

I've now had a chance to carefully review the *Hansard* for the evening of April 7. I find there is nothing on the record regarding any remarks by the member from Kindersley. However I would like to take this opportunity to caution all members that inflammatory language incites disorder and interferes with the proper functioning of the Assembly. I would like to remind members of a ruling of a former Speaker made during a similar circumstance. On April 15, 1999, Speaker Hagel reminded members that shouting across the floor does not contribute to the proper conduct of debate and does nothing to preserve the dignity of this Assembly.

Ruling Regarding Question of Privilege and Application of Closure

The Speaker: — Also it was brought to my attention yesterday by the Opposition House Leader, who gave notice of a question of privilege concerning the government's decision to invoke closure on the motion to extend the sessional sitting hours. I thank the member for raising this matter by the proper means and providing me with the advantage of a day's notice in which to consider it.

Under the rules of this Assembly, my role as Speaker, when presented with a question of privilege, is restricted to determining whether a prima facie case of privilege has been established. If I am satisfied that that threshold has been met, the question is put before the Assembly for it to decide whether or not a breach of privilege has been committed. In order for a prima facie case of privilege to be found, the actions complained of must amount to an impediment to a member's ability to carry out his or her functions as a member. It must be clearly demonstrated that a member has been obstructed and interfered with in his or her parliamentary work.

It is the submission of the Opposition House Leader that changes to the rules or standing orders of parliaments are traditionally only implemented after opposition parties have been consulted and their consent obtained, and after a lengthy parliamentary debate. In his opinion the government's decision to unilaterally move to extend the sitting hours and to curtail debate on the motion after two days debate unduly limits the ability and opportunity of opposition members to consult with their constituencies and to develop and offer alternatives

A further consideration raised by the Opposition House Leader is whether the application of closure is within the spirit of this Assembly's rules and practices. It was his assertion that the impact of proposed sessional sitting hours would permit the government majority to in effect impose closure on specified bills in contravention of rule 66(2).

Let me begin with the closure rule itself. The purpose of the closure rule is to give the government a procedural device to bring debate on a question to a close. The rule is only available to ministers but has been rarely used despite having been part of the rules of this Assembly since 1917. It has been invoked only

seven times.

The rule was first used in 1999 and hasn't been applied since 1993. An observation by the Speaker of the Canadian House of Commons on June 29, 1987, captures the nuances of its use. Closure is not a standing order, even if only frequently used. This present situation is not without precedent. Closure has been used by all parties while in government. It has been used after much and after very little debate. It remains to this day a procedural avenue available to the government. By and large the timing of its use becomes a political issue, but some debate clearly must have taken place. Thus the timing of closure in debate is clearly not a procedural matter.

My decision on this question of probate must rest on whether the government's actions are an impediment to members' ability to perform their parliamentary duties. To this question I must consider the matter in the context of the rules and the procedures that members themselves have put in place and have a continuing ability to modify as they see fit.

When the new rules for a parliamentary calendar were put into place, the closure rule was retained, except that it could not be applied to specified Bills. The application in this instance is not on a specified Bill, nor does the motion under notice of closure attempt to curtail debate on the proposed Bills.

I should also point out that the rules contain many other examples where this Assembly has imposed limitations on debate through its standing orders. In these instances where members themselves have established limitations on debate or means to curtail debate, the Speaker has no discretionary authority to intervene as a matter of privilege.

The issues the Opposition House Leader has raised are properly questions of order and not privilege. In this instance, the closure rule has been applied properly. I do not agree that its impact would amount to an infringement on any member's freedom of speech beyond what is already made acceptable by the rules.

Accordingly I find that the application of the closure rule on the motion to extend the sessional sitting hours does not meet the threshold required to establish a prima facie breach of privilege.

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, to move a motion before orders of the day.

MOTIONS

Closure of Debate

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has the floor to move a motion.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day is called for resuming debate on item 10, the proposed sessional order for the revision of sitting times, pursuant to rule 66(1) I move:

That debate on the motion regarding the revision of

sessional sitting times and on any amendments or subamendments proposed thereto be not further adjourned.

Forbes
Brotten

Taylor
McCall

Quennell
Wotherspoon

I so move.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That debate on the motion regarding the revision of sessional sitting times and on any amendments or subamendments proposed thereto be not further adjourned.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 14:25 until 14:35.]

The Speaker: — Order. The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Government House Leader:

That debate on the motion regarding the revision of sessional sitting times and on any amendments or subamendments proposed theretofore be not further adjourned.

Those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 33]

Stewart	Elhard	Bjornerud
Draude	Krawetz	Boyd
Eagles	D'Autremont	Hickie
Cheveldayoff	Heppner	Tell
Gantfoer	Harpauer	Morgan
Hutchinson	Huyghebaert	Brkich
Kirsch	Schriemer	Allchurch
Weekes	Chisholm	Wilson
Duncan	Michelson	LeClerc
Ottenbreit	Ross	Reiter
Bradshaw	Harrison	McMillan

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion, please rise.

[Nays — 18]

Calvert	Harper	Junor
Trew	Van Mulligen	Atkinson
Nilson	Yates	Higgins
Belanger	Furber	Iwachuk

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 33; those opposed, 18.

The Speaker: — The motion carries.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize . . . Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Ross: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed. The member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I would like to introduce Dr. Lorna Butler. She's the dean of nursing at the University of Saskatchewan. And along with her is Dr. Marlene Smadu, associate dean of nursing at the University of Saskatchewan.

I had the pleasure of . . . Dr. Butler accompanied us to the Philippines when as the education portion of the nursing recruitment drive. And we appreciated and really enjoyed the educational aspect that she was able to bring to that trip.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. The member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome our guests in the gallery, Dr. Smadu and Dr. Butler. I have had a long association with Dr. Smadu. Many iterations of our lives have crossed paths, and I certainly respect her.

And I would welcome her here to the legislature and . . . [inaudible] . . . Dr. Butler.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night I made some brief remarks on the motion now before us, Mr. Speaker. And I need to return to those to conclude my thoughts in respect to this matter. And on occasion, I think more than once, pretty sure more than once, Mr. Speaker, I quoted the Government House Leader on their alternative to trampling on the privileges of this House, trampling on the privileges of its members, and trampling on the rights of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. And the Government House Leader's alternative, as we understand, the alternative as we understand as is quoted in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker, I think from April 7, 2007, when he made the motion.

His alternative was for the opposition to surrender, Mr. Speaker. His alternative was for the opposition to debate Bills that they are entitled to debate for 20 hours — or members of this House, to put it more accurately, Mr. Speaker, members of this House both government and opposition are entitled to debate for 20 hours — the opposition to debate any one of those Bills for an hour at the most, Mr. Speaker, an hour at the most, perhaps 20 minutes, or maybe some shorter period of time, Mr. Speaker. That was his suggestion. That's in the record.

But what did the Government House Leader think about these rules that he now has no respect for; that he would disregard so lightly, that he finds an impediment to a majority government's legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker? What did the Government House Leader think when he was in opposition and negotiating these rules, Mr. Speaker? What did he think of these rules then, Mr. Speaker, when he cared, when he cared about the rights of opposition, Mr. Speaker? What did he think back then? Well on May 17, 2007, he said in this Legislative Assembly, he said within this Chamber, the following, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

... I believe this is the first full session where we've operated under the new rules of the Assembly that have been established and developed. And I think that in balance we have been very successful in bringing our Saskatchewan legislature to the forefront of parliamentary process, not in this province, but also in this entire country. And I think that we can all be rightly proud of all of the work that we've done to accomplish these changes.

These changes, Mr. Speaker, are for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan firstly. And I think that the fact that there is more predictability also, in particular, benefits our constituents and the people, in addition to the people of the province generally.

Mr. Speaker, this is what the Government House Leader believed about these rules. I think this is what the Government House Leader still believes about these rules but now, Mr. Speaker, these rules are inconvenient. These rules are inconvenient to the agenda of the government, not because they allow the opposition to unfairly impede the work of government — they do not. The former government accepted these rules and

they did not impede the work of the former government.

The hon. Government House Leader at the time, when he was in opposition, speaking after a full session where the rules had been in place, where the government and the opposition found that the rules worked for both parties. No, the House Leader has changed his view on these rules because of the Government House Leader's mismanagement and the mismanagement by his government of their legislative agenda, their ability to get their legislative agenda through this House despite rules to which they agreed, which they certainly understood, which they praised — which they praised — when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker, despite having a two-thirds majority in the House.

Because of their own laziness, complacency, and arrogance, Mr. Speaker, they cannot get their legislative agenda through under rules which they supported — not only supported, Mr. Speaker, but as you have heard from May 17, 2007 supported wholeheartedly and enthusiastically. Nobody from the government side of the House in that day when we were in government, Mr. Speaker, was holding a gun to the head of who is now the Government House Leader, the member for Melfort, requiring him to say these things. He volunteered to say them, Mr. Speaker. He volunteered to say them and he was right when he said them. But they are just as right today as they were when he said them, Mr. Speaker, and that makes what is being done here, Mr. Speaker, just as wrong today as if it had been done then, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan Party's attempts to unilaterally change the rules of the Legislative Assembly is nothing more than an attempt to cover up for their own inability to manage the House and to manage the House, Mr. Speaker, in a case where we have a majority government, a government at least for the time being which has the confidence of a majority of members of this House.

A basic function of any government is to have legislation written, presented to the Assembly, and then passed. The Sask Party is incompetent to the point that they have failed to be able to carry out this basic function, this basic function even though again, Mr. Speaker, a majority government working with rules that they negotiated, that they researched, that they helped develop, Mr. Speaker, that they understood, that they have worked under and having worked under them when they were in opposition, found them worthy and praised them.

[14:45]

And the member who is now the Government House Leader went out of his way to speak highly of the rules which he now attacks. Five weeks, five weeks sitting as government, Mr. Speaker, and the Government House Leader reverses himself on his view of the rules of this House. It did not take very long, Mr. Speaker, for them to stop concerning themselves about rules and laws and fairness and equity and minority rights, and start concerning themselves with the exercise of power and the tyranny of the majority's ability to oppress the minority in this legislature.

Because of their own incompetence and mismanagement of the House, the Sask Party now needs to unilaterally change the rules of the Assembly or jeopardize their legislative agenda.

This 11th-hour rule change is nothing more than an attempt to cover up their own mismanagement and incompetence, and ensure that individual pieces of legislation require the required amount of debate in order to be passed in this House.

The Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, negotiated these rules in 2006 when they were in opposition. Are they admitting, are they admitting, Mr. Speaker, that they are so incompetent they did not understand implications of the very rules they negotiated? Are they admitting that they are so incompetent they didn't understand the implication of the rules that now Government House Leader praised when he was in opposition on May 17, 2007?

The Sask Party government is attempting to pass 20 pieces of legislation. The rules of the Legislative Assembly — rules that the Saskatchewan Party negotiated — clearly state, and I quote, “. . . no less than 20 hours of debate” on Bills that have been introduced in the fall period, end quote. Is the government so incompetent that they cannot do simple mathematics?

Mr. Speaker, we are not accusing the government members of not being able to add to 20. We are not making such an accusation. The accusation we are making, Mr. Speaker, is that they cannot multiply 20 by 6. That is the problem they clearly had. They could not understand, well we have six, we have six Bills, almost all of which are symbolic, certainly symbolic to get them passed in the spring; almost all of which, if not all of which could have waited; some of which should wait and receive public hearings, public consultation, Mr. Speaker.

But if they wanted to have these Bills — as they clearly do — if they wanted to have these Bills passed May 15 in order to say to some part of their party, to some interest groups, see what we have accomplished, then they knew how to do that, Mr. Speaker. They knew how to do that because they asked officials how to do that.

The Minister of Labour admitted that he might have a math problem, Mr. Speaker, and went to his officials and said, what do we need to do? What do we need to do to pass six Bills, and particularly two Bills for which I am responsible as Minister of Labour? What do I need to do to pass these Bills? And the Minister of Labour, we have learned, received a calendar, Mr. Speaker. It's got big numbers on it — real big numbers on it — and the calendar and the notes to the calendar make it very clear that all the government wants to do is quite achievable under the rules, quite achievable with the government majority that they have. All they had to do, having decided they didn't want to sit nights in December, all they had to do was start on March 3, Mr. Speaker. And that was the plan. I think we've seen sessional calendars with those dates shaded in, Mr. Speaker. And then we heard a rumour that no, no, we weren't coming back on March 3; we're coming back on March 4, Mr. Speaker.

These are changes in when we begin that were made by a government that wanted to blame this motion, Mr. Speaker, on the laziness of the opposition. That's the absurdity of it, Mr. Speaker, or part of the absurdity of it in any case. The government decided that they didn't want to sit March 3, March 4, March 5, March 6, even though they had been advised — even though they had been advised — that to guarantee that their legislative agenda would pass while they complied with

the rules, they would need to sit on those four days.

The planning calendar actually has second reading debates and second reading speeches on March 3, March 4, March 5. Sitting those dates and sitting in the evenings on those weeks and the week following when they're able to do that, Mr. Speaker, doing that would have allowed them time to pass their entire legislative agenda, all their priority Bills, Mr. Speaker. And they knew that, and they chose to ignore that, Mr. Speaker.

And they chose to ignore that and then say, well it's the opposition that doesn't want to work. Mr. Speaker, I think the amendment makes it clear that the opposition is quite willing to put in the hours necessary to do what has to be done, Mr. Speaker. That's not the issue at all.

What's clear is that the government didn't want to work. A new government, a fresh government, a government that wanted to change the face of Saskatchewan didn't really want to work in December, Mr. Speaker. It certainly didn't want to go to the public and discuss its priorities in January and February, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact it didn't really want to go back after spring break, Mr. Speaker, and played hooky for another week. The government played hooky. March 3 is the week that never was, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're in the situation that we're in.

It was the Premier and his government who chose to delay the opening of the spring session fearing that it would be difficult. Having done that, Mr. Speaker, to pass all the proposed pieces of legislation, the part-time Minister of Labour sought the advice of his department, received the advice of his department. It's not clear he read the advice of his department, Mr. Speaker, it's not clear that he does do that. But in any case it was ignored whether it was read or not.

And it was the Sask Party who chose not to have evening sittings in December or evening sittings in March.

And then it was not till we were into the budget debate, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the government suddenly realized that they once again dropped the ball and now they're in a panic. Their own incompetence and mismanagement of the House has caused them to attempt to unilaterally impose an eleventh hour rule change. This rule change is nothing more than a feeble attempt to cover up their stunning incompetence.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that I bored some members opposite, some of the government members, last night with some of the historical discussion. The members opposite look forward to being doomed to repeat history, Mr. Speaker, because they're not interested in learning it, I would say, with the exception — I have to be fair; I have to be fair, Mr. Speaker — with the exception of the member of Weyburn-Big Muddy. With the exception of the member, the government member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, Mr. Speaker, who says he wasn't all that bored . . . As a matter of fact, no. I have to be fair. The member from Weyburn-Big Muddy told me that he enjoyed the speech, and that he thought it was a good speech and was interested in some of the historical discussion in my speech. I have to be fair to the member and I thank the member for his comments. It was very kind.

Over the last two decades, numerous parliaments have been modernized, Mr. Speaker. The goal was to make parliament work more efficiently and effectively. A common feature of modernization is the parliamentary calendar. The House of Commons in Ottawa adopted a parliamentary calendar in 1982, and I quote, “in order to make the sitting and non-sitting times predictable.”

The United Kingdom instituted a parliamentary calendar in 1992 as part of, and I quote, “a more sweeping modernization agenda.” Parliamentary calendars have been instituted in Alberta in 1993; Manitoba, 1996, and British Columbia in 2002. On May 15, 2006 the Standing Committee on House Services appointed a subcommittee study delegation whose purpose it was to, and I quote, “study and make recommendations on the adoption of a legislative calendar and revisions to sitting times.”

The subcommittee was made up of the Speaker of the House and opposition House leader and government House leader. It was a joint co-operative and collaborative effort between the government and the opposition. On October 16, the Standing Committee on House Services which was made up of members from the government and opposition unanimously adopted the recommendations of the subcommittee. The recommendations of the subcommittee were based on, quote, “the experience of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan with an informal parliamentary calendar.”

The informal calendar was based on an agreement made in May 2004 between the government and the opposition. That agreement expired in the spring of 2006. The recommendations to the subcommittee were also based on the reviews and observations of parliamentary calendars being used in other provinces. The subcommittee found the use of parliamentary calendars resulted in greater co-operation amongst members, and it was found that when parliamentary calendars are properly instituted, with fixed beginning and end dates, there are less days devoted to partisan manoeuvring.

The subcommittee also found that a fixed calendar . . . a more efficient use of staff resources. There were numerous advantages to the fixed calendar, Mr. Speaker, and the underlying message the subcommittee reported was that, and I quote, “parliamentary sessions should not be treated as if they take place in a vacuum.”

This was a co-operative, collaborative effort of creating a set of rules for the Legislative Assembly that would allow the Assembly to function in a more productive, efficient, and effective manner.

The Sask Party was not only a part of the creation of the new rules; they were in favour of the new rules. And as we have heard the member from Melfort — who is now the Government House Leader — when he was in opposition, after a sitting in which the rules had been in place, praised the rules, the same rules that after five weeks in government, the Government House Leader now sees a necessity to change.

On May 17, 2007, the member stood in the House and said, as I have quoted previously, “. . . in balance we have been very successful in bringing our Saskatchewan legislature to the

forefront of parliamentary process, not [only] in this province but also in this entire country.” Improving the way the Legislative Assembly works, he said, “bringing our Saskatchewan legislature to the forefront of the parliamentary process . . .”

Changes that are for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan and pride in the work that went into accomplishing the Legislative Assembly rule changes are all being thrown in a ditch along the road by the Sask Party because they want to save face, because they made a mistake — all the work of the subcommittee, all the negotiation between government and opposition that resulted in rules to end abuses that the member from Kindersley complained about last night from his seat, all that being thrown in the ditch five weeks into the first spring sitting of this government because they were unable to manage their own legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker.

It can't be, if you look at the larger issues, it can't be worth it, Mr. Speaker. It can't be worth it. I will not again review, as I have done and the member from Regina Dewdney has done, this less-than-imposing legislative agenda of the priority Bills of this government. I will not review again, as the member from Regina Dewdney and I have both done, the absolute lack of urgency to this legislative agenda.

It is not worth, it is not worth the integrity and the character and the reputation of the Government House Leader to march away from what he said in May 17, 2007. That is not worth the attack on the institution. It's not worth the attack on the opposition. It's not worth the member from Melfort, the Government House Leader, having to eat those words, Mr. Speaker. It's simply not worth it, and I can't believe that he wants to do it, Mr. Speaker.

I don't want to help him do it, Mr. Speaker. I oppose the motion, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Assembly for their patience and consideration and courtesy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well the government finds itself in a mess. The question is, how have we arrived? How has this government arrived in but a few short weeks of this session, in only months after achieving a majority status in this legislature — a significant majority — how have we come in five weeks, in five months to a situation where a government is now using the most heavy-handed tool that is available to any government in the British parliamentary system?

So how have we come to a situation within five months of being elected with a big majority, five weeks of this session, that now they are unilaterally changing the rules and, to boot, imposing closure. How in the world have we come to this situation, Mr. Speaker? Because my understanding of the British parliamentary system, closure motions when they are used or unilateral rule changes when they are imposed will usually occur only after what has been a very long and protracted debate or when there is a very, very significant public issue at stake.

[15:00]

What do we see here in the case of this government, five months after winning a big majority, not just five weeks into the session? And, Mr. Speaker, introducing the closure motion after only one day of debate, there is something, Mr. Speaker, that is relatively unprecedented about this.

The only memory that I have that comes close is some activity of the Devine government, the Devine Conservative government in the 1980s, when they acted in a similar fashion soon after the 1986 election. But to be fair, Mr. Speaker, at least they'd already been in government four years. These folks have been in government five months. We've been in this session five weeks, and here we are with the heaviest hand that government can use, in our system, being applied — unilateral rule changes and closure.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question is, how have we got in this mess? How has the government got us in this mess? I mean, it has to be an embarrassment. It has to be an embarrassment to this government. They've got a big majority. They've just won a substantial election majority. And here we are five months in, and they can't manage their legislative agenda without using these hammers of unilateral rule changes and closure.

Well let's try and think about this, Mr. Speaker. Now some might say, well you know, it's a relatively new government, and they are having to, they are having to learn. Well I tell you what, Mr. Speaker, this is not a relatively new group of men and women to the legislative procedures. Some members have been here since the 1980s. We have the member from Kindersley. He served as the leader of the Conservative Party. He sat in this House many years. The member from Cannington has sat in this House many years. He has served as House leader. There is a wealth of experience on the government benches. This cannot be described as the problem of inexperience. Inexperience cannot be the excuse for the mess they're in.

Some might say that you would use closure or you would use unilateral rule changes because you have such a heavy legislative agenda, that the agenda's so heavy that you can't get it done, simply because of the weight of the agenda.

Well what do we have, Mr. Speaker, what do we have in the legislative agenda of this government? Well I think by latest count today we're up to 25 Bills — 25 Bills. Now typically, Mr. Speaker, in this legislature during the course of a session we'll deal with 60 to 70 Bills. That's been typical over many years. The last session of our government, I'm sure there were about 70 Bills. Well they've got a legislative load of — what? — a legislative load of now 25 Bills. And for those of us who have had the opportunity to listen particularly to the member from Dewdney who has described this legislative agenda very carefully, it's clear, Mr. Speaker, that the use of closure and unilateral rule changes cannot be excused because of the legislative load.

What have we got here? Well as the member from Dewdney pointed out and the member from Meewasin last evening, number one, we've got two Bills here that in effect break commitments that they made before the election. We've got a Bill that says we're going to establish a growth stabilization

fund. Even before the election, they were saying there's no need for such a thing, and they were going to get rid of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And we've got a Bill that imposes essential services legislation, which again before the election they said they wouldn't do. So we've got two Bills, two Bills, doing what they said they wouldn't do.

Then we have, Mr. Speaker, a host of pieces of legislation on this legislative calendar that were in fact legislation drafted and worked on by the former government, by our party when we were in government. About 10, 12 of the Bills were handed to them from the former government. We see those in the legislative agenda. To be fair, Mr. Speaker, there are one or two pieces on this agenda that are new and do reflect things they said in the campaign: a fixed election date situation, Enterprise Saskatchewan. There are one or two pieces that no one has ever heard of — this Bill that will create the circumstance of double-dipping, where people can be paid full salary while they're receiving full pension from government. It'll be interesting to see how the people of Saskatchewan, when they learn of this Bill, how they react to a government paying someone twice for doing the same job. We've got that piece of legislation.

None of the legislation, as has been described by the member from Dewdney and by the member from Meewasin, has any particular requirements in terms of timelines to have it passed in this session. No family is going to wake up in Saskatchewan at the close of this session and feel a significant difference in their lives if this legislation passes or doesn't.

So it cannot be that we're in this mess or the government's in this mess because of the heavy legislative load that they've put on, that they've put on themselves or this legislature.

And for sure, Mr. Speaker, for sure, in this case they cannot put the blame for the mess they're in on the public service. They've tried this on other files when they've found themselves in a spot of trouble. When the Minister of Social Services found herself in trouble, her first reaction was of course to blame the public service, that they either don't understand or didn't get it straight. Well they cannot blame the public service for the mess they're in today because it was made very clear to the Minister of Labour, very clear to the Minister of Labour, the legislative calendar that must be adhered to, to achieve passage of the labour Bills which he is so keen to pass, so keen to pass.

He was provided by the officials a very clear timetable. And what did that timetable say, Mr. Speaker? Well he was told — and I would have expected him to share that with his cabinet colleagues like the member from Thunder Creek — that this session needed to begin on March 3. The public service, the officials, when asked to provide a legislative calendar to ensure the passage of these Bills, told the minister, part-time Minister of Labour, that this session needed to start on March 3. That was the advice from the public service. We have copies of that advice. We have seen it and we've shared it with the press.

What did this government do? Well no, they decided we'd come back on March 10. For over a year, Mr. Speaker, or thereabouts, we've had March 3 as the opening date of this spring session, spring sitting. For some reason the government opposite decides we're going to come back on March 10. They

waste an entire week, an entire week, and they cannot blame this, Mr. Speaker, they cannot blame this on the public service. The public service told them what they needed to do. If only they would have listened, we might not be in, they might not be in the mess we're in today. They might not have to be using the most heavy-handed tool that belongs to any majority government in the British parliamentary system. But here they are using it.

Or is the excuse, they don't have the political staff in the ministers' offices to steer them clear on these issues? Well that obviously or apparently, according to the government, cannot be the reason because we're told they've provided all these significant salary increases to political staff; because they're hiring all this expertise in the ministers' offices. They're paying all this money to their political staff so they can have the expertise in the political offices. Well I don't know what their political staff was telling them — all this new expertise they've surrounded themselves with — but either they weren't getting good advice or they weren't listening, Mr. Speaker.

So they're into the mess they're in, five months after achieving a majority government. Five weeks into the session, they all of a sudden have to say to each other: Houston, we've got a problem. We've got a problem, and the problem is we cannot get our legislation passed because we didn't observe the rules established by this legislature not much more than a year ago — rules by the way, Mr. Speaker, rules by the way that were developed together by members on both sides, rules that were agreed by all members, and in fact have received the praise of members including — as we heard today — praise from the Government House Leader. So the rules were well known. Their legislative intentions I expect were well known, but they've got themselves into a big mess.

So what's the solution? What's the solution? The sledgehammer, the tyranny of the majority. What's the solution? Not negotiation, not discussion, not a response to opportunities to sit down House Leader to House Leader, or Deputy House Leader to Deputy House Leader, or Whip to Whip, or Leader to Leader — not that solution, but the knee-jerk reaction after only five weeks in this session; the knee-jerk reaction, well we'll impose our will through that tool, those tools, which are available to a majority government, the tools of unilateral rule change and closure because we're not going to stand debate on the rule changes.

The question remains, Mr. Speaker, how did this government get itself in this mess? Well I think there are two, there are two reasons, two explanations, and the first is simple incompetence. It is simply incompetence — incompetence at the highest level; incompetence from members who have sat in this legislature for years, who know the rules, who were part of the rules. And, Mr. Speaker, these members have known these rules, I would suggest, better even than members on this side of the House because in opposition they were fully apprised of the rules and used them to their best advantage. It is simply incompetence that they've got themselves in this mess, incompetence that's got us in a situation where now they have to, they have to use the heavy-handed tools of unilateral rule changes and closure.

It is incompetence, Mr. Speaker. And this only follows in the pattern that we have seen, particularly since the beginning of

this sitting and in fact from the day they were sworn in. I mean it was hardly competent on the day they were sworn in that the Premier of the province stood up and said to the people of Saskatchewan, the financial situation in this province is stark. That was hardly a competent assessment of where we're at in terms of the finances of the province. It was hardly competent the way they attacked the Labour Relations Board. I mean firing the whole board in the midst of a hearing, leaving 30 cases outstanding; hardly competent that they've done away with an existing Labour Relations Board, firing them without cause, and of course foisting on the taxpayers of Saskatchewan severance costs that are going to result in — when you look at all the severance they're going to have to pay — millions of dollars.

This is hardly competent, Mr. Speaker. It's hardly competent when you hire . . . you don't hire; you appoint a new Chair of the Labour Relations Board without a competitive process that was in place.

We look at the demonstration of incompetency that surrounded the Minister of Social Services in the handling of her department. She sits on the caucus benches. She sits on the Treasury Board. She sits on the cabinet. She approves a plan for her department. She has it placed in the budget. We all read it right in the budget. And the day after, she said well that wasn't what I wanted done, and she unilaterally changes the budget. Doesn't speak to the Minister of Finance, she just goes out and says, well I was wrong, and we're just going to change that. That's hardly competent, Mr. Speaker.

It was hardly competent when the Premier came out, the Deputy Premier, and said we're going to rid the province of the wheat sheaf symbol, and then under some public pressure, they reverse . . . [inaudible] . . . on that. That was hardly a competent process.

And maybe the height of incompetence, Mr. Speaker, we've seen in the whole debate around Station 20 in Saskatoon where they axed this funding that was in the hands of the community. Every minister that's asked to respond gives a different reason. The Premier's got a different reason. They're misinformed. But now they simply have dug in their heels and apparently won't listen to reason or won't listen to the community. Mr. Speaker, this is, this is a demonstration of incompetence.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is not the conclusion of the Leader of the Opposition alone or the opposition members, not just the conclusion of their political opponents. Mr. Speaker, this is a conclusion of the editorial board of *The StarPhoenix*. I don't recall an editorial like this for years and years appearing in any paper, where a government, again, Mr. Speaker, a government that's only five months into its mandate, a government that's only five months into its mandate, only five weeks into its first session, and here's what the editorial boards are saying. Quote:

Rather than appear to be competent managers of the public purse, Premier Brad Wall's team has been extravagant in its spending, ham-handed in its communication strategy and incompetent [incompetent] in its delivery.

Mr. Speaker, we are in this mess, this government is in this mess and pushing the panic buttons all over the place because of incompetency. No reason, no reason that this government, no

good reason that this government should be using closure, using unilateral rule changes to have to achieve its legislative agenda. I mean it almost boggles the mind that they could have got into this mess this quickly in their mandate.

Again I remind you, Mr. Speaker, it's most often that closure is used only as a last resort, only as a last resort, when considerable debate has occurred, where in fact there is a weighty public policy issue at stake. But no, the response here, after getting themselves in the mess because of their own incompetence, is to use the heavy hand of closure and unilateral rule change.

[15:15]

Or, Mr. Speaker, or is it because, or is it because this government has so mismanaged the nurses' file that they fear the consequence of their mismanagement on that front? Have they so mismanaged the nurses' file, Mr. Speaker, that now they fear work stoppages, that now they are desperate to have this essential services legislation in place so they have that sledgehammer to deal with nurses and other health care workers and other workers in the province? Is that what this is all about? Is this now panic because of the mismanagement of the nurses' file?

Because, Mr. Speaker, there's been some significant mismanagement in that file as well, some significant mismanagement. I mean they sign an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with the nurses in all good intent, I expect, but they cannot define how much this MOU is going to cost. They refuse to define it in terms of cost, Mr. Speaker. They have no costing on the MOU.

Mr. Speaker, I had a father come into our constituency office, a father of a nurse who's now practicing in Alberta, who desired to return to Saskatchewan. What did she find out? She finds out she can't get a full-time job in this province. Now how can that be, Mr. Speaker? How can that be when this government said they were going to manage this file? That was supposed to be fixed.

What have they done in terms of bargaining with nurses? Well they put on the bargaining table a bunch of take backs, Mr. Speaker. They want to take back from the nurses in this province things that they have negotiated and fought for over the years. Now that's sure some way, Mr. Speaker, to encourage retention and recruitment of nurses — to go to the bargaining table and provide a bunch of take backs.

So they can't define the MOU. They don't know how that's going to work, and they don't know where the money is. And by the way, Mr. Speaker, April 1 passed and money was supposed to flow in the MOU, and they won't tell us if money has changed hands.

So is this, Mr. Speaker, a desperate attempt to get their essential services legislation complete? Well perhaps that's the reason. Again an example of incompetence. Now let me just say, Mr. Speaker, when a government is incompetent and has to find its way out of this incompetence by using the heavy-handed tools of unilateral rule change and closure, then we are in trouble as a province. If five months in, they have to use these tools, what's

it going to be like three and four years from now? What's it going to be like?

Mr. Speaker, there is a tyranny of the majority. We've heard members speak about it, Mr. Speaker. In my view if the power, if the exercise of power is made easy, that's when the rights of individuals, families, and communities are in jeopardy. And it's not the intention of this opposition to make the exercise of power easy for this group of men and women.

We believe in the importance of opposition, and that's why we're going to fight this motion with every tool available to us. That's why, Mr. Speaker, you will see every member on this side of the House in his or her place standing against this government. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, they'll get their way. Make no mistake about it. They have the majority and they can impose the majority. At the end of the day, they'll get their way.

But I want that government and the people of Saskatchewan to know this: people will not forget. People will not forget how this government, this newly elected government in only five weeks has been so incompetent to put itself in the position of panic that it's in, and they won't forget that the first response was to use the sledgehammer on democracy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we are debating today is a drastic revision of the rules governing the sitting of the Legislative Assembly to extend hours greatly from the hours that had been agreed to over time. And that in and of itself should not, I think, be a cause of concern for members of the public because certainly in our history there are many occasions where members of the Legislative Assembly have worked even longer hours, but have done so by agreement.

What we are also doing now is that we are limiting our remarks to 20 minutes as opposed to rules that allow members essentially to speak for an unlimited period of time. So people that are watching the proceedings may have some concern about the fact that their member of the Legislative Assembly's remarks are being circumscribed, limited by a motion of closure by the government.

Speaking of unlimited contribution to debate, I want to recognize the contribution made by the member for Regina Dewdney. I want to recognize the contribution to debate by the member for Saskatoon Meewasin, both of whom have spoken now for the last two days on this particular motion. I think they made many excellent points. They did it very well. I think one columnist referred to the member of Regina Dewdney as being loquacious. Certainly both members, between them, covered the waterfront. I think they pretty much covered any and every issue that is germane to this debate, Mr. Speaker.

I feel a little bit like . . . Was it Elizabeth Taylor's seventh husband on his wedding night when he said, you know, I know what to do; I just don't know if I can make it interesting. And so

I have somewhat the same challenge here, Mr. Speaker, after the member for Regina Dewdney, after the member for Saskatoon Meewasin, not to mention my own leader, Mr. Speaker. Well I know what to say. I just don't know if it hasn't already been said and if I can make it interesting, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, today in the brief time that I have available to me I want to quickly cover three topics, three topics. One is Yogi Berra. The second topic, Mr. Speaker, is the question of irony, and thirdly the question of competence.

Now as to Yogi Berra, Mr. Speaker, you will know him as an American baseball player and manager coach who is also famous for his tendency to fracture the English language in provocative and interesting ways. Some of us would say that he is in fact a foremost American philosopher because of the issues that he raises in his use of the language. For example, "I want to thank you for making this day necessary." Well I don't know if that's appropriate to this debate or not. It might have been appropriate when he said . . . he might have had the member for Regina Dewdney in mind when he said, "It ain't over till it's over." And certainly that might have been going through the minds of some members, but today I want to talk about another observation of Mr. Berra's and that is "It's like déjà vu all over again," Mr. Speaker.

Now what do I mean and what am I talking about? Well in 1986, having just been elected the first time to this Legislative Assembly, and I think in my second day I was sitting in this Chamber — in opposition then too — was startled to find that the first item of business after the Throne Speech the day before was a motion by the government House leader to change the rules of the Legislative Assembly. No prior warning, no discussion. The then House leader, Eric Berntson — and I think members of the public will be aware of that name — unilaterally which means undertaken or done by one side or party as opposed to bilateral where it's done by two parties or multilateral where it's done by many parties or all parties, move unilaterally to change the rules of the Legislative Assembly. No warning, no discussion, change the rules.

The specifics in that case were about quorum, and the intent was to make it easier for government members to be away from the Chamber. All in all, Mr. Speaker, it was considered by all to be an arrogant display of power that characterized the Devine regime in those years, Mr. Speaker.

And here we are again 21 and a half years later, déjà vu all over again, Mr. Speaker, a government again seeking to change the rules unilaterally without prior discussion, without consent from both sides, without agreement from both sides, seeking to change the rules of the Legislative Assembly. Now is it like 1986 again, an arrogant display of power? Well I'll leave that for history to write the book on that, Mr. Speaker. I'll leave it for historians to decide and to write about whether this is an arrogant display of power.

But I tell you the common element in both cases. Whether it's 1986 or now in 2008, the common element is right-of-centre parties that become frustrated with process quickly, quickly move to change the process that they're involved in. We heard that from the Minister of Labour today in question period that the opposition would be concerned about process at all as

opposed to simply being concerned about the substance of something that he is proposing to do. But I think again the common element here is that a right-of-centre party that is concerned or frustrated with process and moves quickly to change that process.

Or is it the end — that is, the passage of legislation — the end justify the means, a unilateral change of the rules? Well for those that have watched this proceeding, they will know that's an essential question for debate in any philosophy 100 class that one might take at university or elsewhere. Does the end justify the means? I think, you know, there are occasions where we all agree on the role or we agree on the end to be achieved. We all agree on the means that need to be employed.

And there are other overriding ethical concerns. For example a police officer might be supported in using power or using force to restrain an individual or harm an individual if it's done to protect the public. So there are occasions when we'd say, well that means can be supported because the ultimate end is a valuable end and is good for all of us.

But the question is, is it justified here? Now the member for Regina Dewdney, the member for Regina Meewasin, and my leader before me dealt in detail with that question — especially the member for Regina Dewdney. And I would say, is it justified here? No. It's not justified here when you look at the details of what the government is seeking to accomplish.

What is their goal? What is it that they want to do at the end of the day? For example, one of things they say is important for the government to do is to repeal The Potash Development Act. I think that's the name of the Bill, Mr. Speaker. Now this is a Bill that's been on the books for 30-plus years. Since the mid 1970s, they've been on the books, has never been proclaimed as I understand it.

But now the government wants to repeal this Act. So is it urgent after 30-plus years? Now the members of the public might well be asked, is it urgent that you repeal something that's been on the books, has never been proclaimed, has been there for 30 years, is it urgent, urgent to repeal it? Does that justify this drastic change in the rules of the Legislative Assembly? Well I leave it for the public to judge. I know what the members are saying, but I leave it for the public to . . .

Was it a campaign commitment, because sometimes government might be given some leeway if it's a campaign commitment. Is it something they campaigned on? No, it wasn't. So you know, the people that are watching the proceeding might well ask, well what then is the reason or the need for this drastic change in the rules to accommodate this particular piece of legislation?

What about, for example, another Bill that's before the Legislative Assembly: fixed election dates? Now that's something that everyone knows the government campaigned on. They said we're going to have fixed election dates. But is it urgent? Is it urgent given that the election they're talking about is in 2011, some three and a half years from now? Is it particularly urgent to have this piece of legislation dealt with here and now and therefore would justify this kind of assault on the Legislative Assembly's rules? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

Another one is essential services. Now was that a campaign commitment? No, it wasn't. The government did not campaign to change essential services. They said in fact the contrary, that it wasn't needed. Is it urgent? Well you know, we've had the present situation with us now, I think, for 103 years, Mr. Speaker, longer than that if you want to go back to the days of the North-West Territories.

So you know, again the public might be asking themselves, is this a particularly urgent piece of legislation, given that the existing way we have of dealing with these items has existed for 103 years? Are there egregious examples of late that would say we have to move on this as a matter of urgency? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker.

[15:30]

So the government has options, Mr. Speaker. I agree that on Bill No. 1 — it's called The Growth and Financial Security Act which essentially sets out a new framework for the government's budgets for this year and future years — is something that will need to be passed in this Legislative Assembly because, as it stands at this point, the government is breaking the law. And the government will continue to break the law until it passes this new piece of legislation called The Growth and Financial Security Act. So out of all these Bills that the government said are so urgent, so necessary, there is one that definitely does need to be changed. And, Mr. Speaker, we are sensitive to that.

So again, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think the government has options, and there's nothing on the legislative agenda to justify the motion that's before us.

My second topic, Mr. Speaker: irony. Or is it perhaps more appropriate to speak of incongruity, lack of harmony . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What do I mean? There have been many rule changes over the years in the Legislative Assembly. The common element of almost all of these rule changes is that they have come as a report with recommendations from committees of the Legislative Assembly.

You see, the Legislative Assembly says look, we on both sides identify a need to change the rules. Set up a committee. And the common element here is that this committee is then comprised of members from both sides of the Legislative Assembly. They go out, they review the rules, then they come back with a report with recommendations which, you know, in the main get adopted by the Legislative Assembly. But again the common element is that they are mutually acceptable to both sides of the Legislative Assembly.

And each change in the rules that we have seen over the years, Mr. Speaker, rests on a foundation of rule changes that have been agreed upon by previous legislatures. And these changes go right back to 1877 under the former North-West Territories council that preceded the Legislative Assembly, and then followed by rule changes in — oh there's a long list of these, Mr. Speaker — in 1906 when a motion was made by the then-premier, Walter Scott, for rule changes; 1917 a complete revision. 1918 there was amendment, 1928, 1931, '34, '56, '57, '63, 1970, '76, 1980, 1981. And there have been rule changes since that time, the most recent being of a year or so ago, and

again the conclusion that we can draw from all of these rule changes is mutual consent, Mr. Speaker, agreement from both sides of the Legislative Assembly. Why? Because we recognize that to maintain parliamentary democracy it's best to have agreement on the process. Because if we don't have agreement on the process — and parties and governments come and go — if we don't have agreement on the process, then this Legislative Assembly essentially has the law of the jungle and might is right, Mr. Speaker.

And that's not the way it should be, and that is the thing that should very much concern the members of the public who are watching because at some level people understand that parliament, as was noted here by a former Law Clerk from the parliament in London, that parliament or the legislature is a sublimation of civil war, that if you don't have a Legislative Assembly, if you don't have a parliament, then how do people reconcile strongly held views about how society should be governed?

And I agree that the members on the other side will have strongly held views that differ from our side, but the question is, how do you resolve that? How do you resolve that in a peaceful, democratic way unless it's through a Legislative Assembly? And then how do you do that effectively if there can't be agreement on the rules that govern this place, Mr. Speaker? And that's why it should matter to the public. It's their Legislative Assembly. It's their province. I think the public, you know, likes to see progress. The public likes to see results, but even more the people of Saskatchewan, I dare say, like fair play, Mr. Speaker.

So the irony, the incongruity of a majority forcing changes of rules, to rules that have been developed by mutual consent. There is an incongruity there that you would now have the majority seeking to change something that we've all agreed to in the past. And so have members of this very opposition or government that now sit in this Legislative Assembly, sat there then, that agreed to these rule changes.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a word about incompetence, the leader touched on this. You know the public might be saying that, well it's a new government, and we should cut them a little slack. You know, there's a new government, and they're susceptible because they're learning their way to making a few mistakes. And, you know, to be sure that members in the opposition who seem to have clear views based on limited information get into office and therefore say, well you know, we can't quite do it the way that we thought we could do it.

For example, there are aspects of the budget which now have a Fiscal Stabilization Fund that in opposition the members argued against. But now there's again a Fiscal Stabilization Fund because they found out, upon reflection and discussion with the experts in the civil service, that certain changes perhaps shouldn't be made.

And I think the public kind of understands that, kind of understands that. But, you know, you can't understand this particular instance of where both sides of the House and especially the opposition who is now the government — now the government — is probably more intimately aware of how the rules work or, you know, how the rules work, how it is that

you need to get legislation through this House. There's no cutting them any slack on this particular change, Mr. Speaker. There's none at all. We all understand the need to provide a new government some slack but not when it comes to following the rules of the Legislative Assembly.

Again when it comes to the rules the now government . . . And they like to call themselves the new government, but maybe they call themselves the new government because they're trying to appeal to the public about when they stumble and make mistakes, and we've certainly seen evidence of lots of this over time. They prefer to call themselves the new government, and they're hoping the government might cut them some slack but not in this particular case.

I think the issue here is one of competence or lack thereof. They had an opportunity to plan the session, to take advantage of the available hours, and they didn't do it. Through December and early March they refused to call evening sittings when they could have been debating these Bills. I don't know why. Maybe they had social engagements or obligations on their calendar. I don't know. But that was an opportunity they had.

They could have taken advantage of the calendar. We still don't understand to this day when you publish your calendar and say we're going to come back on March 3 to give us the additional time to deal with the legislative load that we have, and then to change that to set that back to March 10, Mr. Speaker. So why delay calling the legislature in March when that is the very thing that, you know, you should not have done if you wanted to pass the legislation in a timely fashion?

So I want to be charitable and call it incompetence, Mr. Speaker. I think the alternative — ham-handed, arrogant display of power — is . . . I want to be charitable. I wouldn't say it was that. I would say that this is, simply put, Mr. Speaker, incompetence.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the government and again to quote Yogi Berra, "I want to thank you for making this day necessary," to which I would add, it wasn't necessary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I want to join in the debate to support the efforts of my colleagues in trying to point out to the people of Saskatchewan what exactly is going on here. And for the sake of my listeners that may be back home, because some communities have the legislative channel and others don't, but I want to quickly explain, to kind of encapsulate if you will, what's happening here.

What's happening here, usually a government has the opportunity through the Legislative Assembly to push forward their Bills and their budget and so on and so forth. And what clearly happened was the folks across the way, because of their inexperience and primarily because of their incompetence, they didn't figure out and didn't add properly the amount of hours that they needed to sit in the Assembly to go through all the

Bills and to make sure that all the legislative agenda that they have in mind or they have in place, that they get it through.

But these were the rules, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the two parties negotiated several years ago. And the House Leader on that side — who's still the current House Leader, was the House Leader at the time when he was in opposition — and of course, the House Leader on our side at the time, Mr. Hagel, they negotiated the deal. And they said okay, we will set the agenda for the Legislative Assembly, and we'll identify certain times that you're allowed to debate Bills. We'll set up a certain amount of hours that you're allowed to look at the budget. We'll also look at this whole notion of community input, public consultation. And so we started moving the stuff forward. And boy, it really sounded like it's going to be a good democratic process for both the opposition and for the government.

Now we fast-forward to 2008. They're finally, after years and years of trying, they finally get to be government. And hold it — they didn't put enough hours on the schedule to follow through with what they agreed with a couple of years ago.

So we as a party and certainly as an opposition want to make this very simple point to the people of Saskatchewan and to those that are listening. They bungled this process, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They did not figure out the amount of hours that they needed, that they agreed to, that they simply did not have the hours allotted in this session to make not only their legislative agenda pass, but the budget pass as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it's just really important to point out to the people of northern Saskatchewan, the point we're trying to raise, the point we're trying to raise is, quite clearly, as an opposition party and as members of the opposition we want to point out to the people of Saskatchewan and the people of northern Saskatchewan, a very simple function of the government is to get your legislative agenda through and your budget through if you have the majority. And these guys somehow bungled it up.

Now they come to the opposition saying, well we made a big mistake here. Can we fix this? And we're saying oh no, we're going to tell the people of Saskatchewan, because of your inexperience, what exactly is transpiring here. So they come along and they say, well we have more voters than you, and we have more MLAs than you. And we said, yes you do. And they said okay.

So they're kind of figuring this out here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're doing a number count. It took them a couple days. And they said, yes we do have more members than them. Why don't we just simply ram through legislation saying we're going to stop all consultation. We're just going to do what we have to do as government because we added our numbers and we have more MLAs than you. And we said on this side, yes you do.

And that's what this closure motion is all about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is quite clearly that they're simply using their majority to squelch independence. Mr. Speaker, they're simply using their majority to stifle advice and quite frankly to circumvent due process, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So what I've done is, I've taken the luxury . . . I always look at the quote in *The StarPhoenix*. And they have it after every one

of their columns. Every year or every weekday, they give us an opinion, and it's called the SP opinion — and of course SP being *The StarPhoenix*, not Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. And *The StarPhoenix* opinion simply says on the bottom, it says, and I quote, “*Democracy cannot be maintained without its foundation: free public opinion and free discussion throughout the nation of all matters affecting the state within the limits set by the criminal code and the . . . law.*” And this was a quote presented by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1938, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So what I've done is . . . I think that really sets the tone of what is happening here. They messed up the legislative agenda. They didn't properly figure out their time frames. And then all of a sudden . . . It took a couple of days for them in the session to realize they had more MLAs than us. So all of a sudden they said, okay we're going to have this closure motion. We're going to shut down all debate. We're going to continue moving this thing forward.

And it's not about any principle. That's the most amazing thing. It's not about one specific agenda or it's not about any, really, crisis that's out there, as the member from Dewdney explained. He indicated that all the Bills that they're talking about on their legislative agenda could be easily passed. This is not a matter of life and death. And they simply made the mistake because they're inept and they're inexperienced. And I point out as well is that they simply don't have the ability to govern. And this is why I want to make that point to the people of Saskatchewan.

[15:45]

But in the future, Mr. Speaker, when I explain the quotes here, especially the Supreme Court of Canada quote of 1938, that always follows *The StarPhoenix* opinion, every day, it uses a number of words. And I wanted to explain to the members opposite, I had the advantage of looking through the Oxford dictionary. The full title of it — of course you have to do this for, you know, for copyright sake — is the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. And if you go to page 516 of the first volume, and I looked underneath . . . And this is for the guys across the way here. And it says, it talks about democrat. What is a democrat? And it says, “an adherent or advocate of democracy.” So democratic and democrat, it's pretty much the same principle, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So I'm trying to explain to them, in the English dictionary, what democrat is or democratic is — again I'll be very, very repetitious here — “an adherent or advocate of democracy.” And they can find that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on page 516. And the dictionary of course is the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*.

The second word I think they have trouble with — and that's the first word I think they have a lot of trouble with — is of course process, process. You know, and I wanted to look up in the dictionary again, the same dictionary, the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*. This is volume 2 by the way.

And we look at this whole notion of the word principle. And what does the word principle say? And I'm just going to read it for them so they know, and this is on page 1671. And principle,

it says, “especially great; of high degree of importance.” So they know what principle is now. And they know what democrat is.

And the third word I think they have difficulty with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the whole notion of process. So we got democratic figured out, and you got principle figured out. And this is not from me; it's not from the member from Athabasca. This is from a dictionary. You know, this dictionary is used by hundreds of thousands of students and professional people. And on process, if you turn to page 1677 of the second edition . . . I know I'm confusing those guys across the way with the first edition and second edition, but there's so many words in here that they need to understand and study. But on process, on process, it says, “a continuous and regular action or succession of actions taking place or carried on in a definitive, definite manner.”

So now we've explained democratic. Now we've explained process. And now we've explained principle. Those three words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are all in the dictionary. And I think sometimes the reason I do this is I don't think they understand those three words very clearly. And it's an amazing, it's an amazing feat to be able to sit here and say, well we made a mistake, but we're going to blame it on the opposition. We're going to blame it on the opposition. We're going to say they're holding up business, and they're being unreasonable, and we're just a new government; give us a break here.

And the point is the people of Saskatchewan ought to know is that this is not a new mistake, or it's not a new government that come along and didn't understand the rules. They designed the rules in co-operation with us two years ago. We, as government of that time and they as an opposition, negotiated these rules.

And in these rules we clearly explain that you're allowed a certain amount of hours to debate Bills, a certain amount of hours to go through all their discussion on the budget, and then after that, we'll end. And then everybody has their due time and due process. And the opposition has their opportunity to ask questions, and the government of course has the opportunity to defend. Now that was done two years ago, if not three years ago. And a lot of people put a lot of effort into that. And we had a lot of great help in understanding how this new agenda was going to work for both the government and the opposition in Saskatchewan.

So when they come along and say, give us a little bit of slack, we didn't understand the rules, I tell the people of Saskatchewan, they did understand because they were part of the architects of those rules.

So now suddenly we fast-forward again to 2008. And once again democracy and principle and process are words they simply do not understand nor do they care to respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that's one of the most important and fundamental point, I think, is made at the bottom of every *StarPhoenix* — point that they make. Every *StarPhoenix* opinion that they write, they always follow up with that, with that statement.

And I want to read it out again. And this is really important, people know. And the statement is, “*Democracy cannot be*

maintained without its foundation: free public opinion and free discussion throughout the nation of all matters affecting the state within the limits set by the criminal code and the common law." And that I think, it really resonates with a lot of people because it's allowing the people of Saskatchewan and the world to say, democracy has a solid foundation if we're allowed to seek public opinion, if we're allowed to have free speech within a very responsible fashion. And, Mr. Deputy Chair, I don't think on any front the responsible action that we talk about and *The StarPhoenix* makes reference to is not being undertaken by that party through this closure motion.

Now what is simply happening here is that if you design the rules and somebody explains the process, the letters, and the words that you have to understand, you have a bigger majority, well shouldn't you at least leave the opportunity for people to have opinions and to participate in this great opportunity called democracy?

And the obvious answer today to the closure motion — saying no we're not going to listen to nobody no more; we're shutting down all debate here — that is simply, as I mentioned at the start, it is squelching anybody's opportunity to come forward to talk about some of their issues and their opinions to the opposition or to various venues that may be available to them.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I think if I go back to my earlier start in politics, my father was — rest his soul — he was a very good source of advice for me. When I first started in politics, he'd give me some advice. And every time he gave me advice, I'd say to him, yes I know, dad; I know. So he'd give me some more advice. I'd say I know. And I'd say yes okay, dad, yes I know. So every second, third, fourth word out of my lips every time he gave me advice, I'd tell him, I know. So after about a year of that, he told me, come here, Buckley; come here, son. So I leaned over to him and I said, what? You don't know a darn thing, he said to me.

And several years later and after he passed away, he was right. There was a lot of things I didn't know. So when you see people making the same mistake as this government is making . . . You know, my point is, if you're going to get advice from people, it is foolish and unwise to disregard that advice. It is foolish and unwise to not give them the opportunity to give you advice.

You don't have to listen to all the advice you get, but it is very foolish of any government to arrogantly say we're not going to listen to any more of this stuff; we're putting this closure motion in. And you're quite frankly stifling democracy and rejecting people's advice to you. And that is not fair at all in any way, shape, or form, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I think it's important, again as I pointed out, in seeking advice . . . Some of the Bills are talking about essential services Bills. Well shouldn't you talk to the public about this? Shouldn't you talk to the labour movement? Shouldn't you talk to the business community? Shouldn't you talk to the cities, to the people that are being impacted? Should you not give them the opportunity? And the obvious answer is no, we made a mistake here; we can't give people the opportunities so we're going to ram through the closure motion.

And I'll point out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's also quite frankly appalling is that they think they know everything, and that's a mistake I made early on, and I make that as a reference to them as a new government. The fact is if people are giving advice, don't say, yes we know, we know. At the end of the day you go back to your mistakes, and this one is a big mistake. This is a big mistake . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You will find out. You will find out that you didn't know. And that you made a lot of mistakes that eventually is going to catch up to you. And that kind of process, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a process that is not good for any government. And sooner and later — and it's going to much sooner than anybody expects — you're going to find out that that has a price to pay.

So again what I'm going to do, if the government really wants a copy of the definitions of the three words, I can forward that to them. But they're going to have to ask me to do that; that's extra work for me. So if they want a copy of those — what the word democrat means, what the word principle means, what the word process means — I can forward, not my interpretation of those words, but really from a dictionary, and that'll help them figure what they've done wrong here.

So you go on a number of fronts and on every front that you look at — whether it's democracy or whether it's principle or whether it's process — these are words that are really important and essential to any government, those three words: process, democracy, and principle. And we don't see any evidence, Mr. Speaker, any evidence that any of those three words or the principles behind those words are being exercised and certainly put in place by this government.

So what's happened to the people of Saskatchewan? For their very brief explanation, I'll explain to them, that as a result of them having more MLAs, they're putting in this closure motion to stop the debate that we're talking about in terms of making sure that people understand that this official opposition is not trying to stop the business of that government. They simply made a mistake. They simply did not figure out that the rules that they put in place two years ago are in effect when they became government. Those rules were designed for the opposition and for the parties. They helped design those rules. Now all of sudden they're government. They said oh we didn't know those rules. Yes, okay didn't know those rules. We want you to fess up and tell the people of Saskatchewan that you made a mess of this. And they wouldn't do that, so what we do as an official opposition? Our job and our role and our responsibility is to point out to the people of Saskatchewan what they done wrong.

And, Mr. Speaker, I look back at the whole notion of anybody's political career and life in general . . . is that being able to speak freely in this world, in this country, in this province, is pretty darn important. It's pretty darn important. There are many countries throughout the world that don't enjoy the same democracy that we have. Many times we fight with words in this Assembly whereas other countries fight with guns and bullets, and that's not something that I think we ought to take lightly because there are many, many people throughout our history of this province and from many families and from many regions of this country and this province have fought for to sustain democracy and have fought to become a free world.

And when you see government come along and saying, well basically we don't understand the rules we made, and as a result of that we're going to put this closure motion in . . . We're going to limit the debate. We're going to ram through our legislative agenda. And that legislative agenda, there's some part of the agenda that really quite frankly isn't important in life or death, but there is some that do have ramifications. And all we're asking is that we have public consultation and public input into the Bills.

But once again, as I mentioned, there's no process allowed. There are no principles involved, and as a result of that, democracy is failing from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. So I would close on these points. Number one is that when you have a new government, yes you want to try and give them some slack. But they understood the rules two or three years ago, and for them to claim ignorance and say well we didn't know these rules existed, that was just plain shoddy governance, Mr. Speaker. And I'll point out that, as a result of the shoddy governance, we were and still are prepared to work with the government to show them how this is done because obviously working together is important to build Saskatchewan.

So once again we said, okay fine, you know, we can work with this, but we wanted to debate some of these Bills. We wanted to make sure we took them to the public to have the public's input on some of these Bills, and they said, no we can't do that. Well we said, we want to see that democracy maintained. We want to see that process unfold. And they said, no. So as a result of that we put in a motion to hold them here and to keep asking these questions. Now they put in this closure motion saying we're going to stop you guys from freely speaking about some of the issues that affect Saskatchewan, not just for this year, for years and years to come.

So again I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, that they have their positions and opinions on various matters as we do, and the people of Saskatchewan will shop around to see which opinion that they share and which opinion that they're comfortable with. But the principle of having free speech, the principle of defending democracy, and the principle of making sure as part of the good governance process that people talk about, that you have the due process of anything they do as a government . . . and, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing no evidence of that. And that adds up to the list of incompetence that we can easily rattle off here that this new government, so-called new government is really suffering through, Mr. Speaker.

So again I'll point out to the people of the North, we want to have debates. We want to have discussion. We want the public's input in some of these Bills. These guys don't want that, Mr. Speaker, and that's unfortunate. And that really in my opinion stifled democracy.

[16:00]

Finally I'd point out in the last 20 seconds I have as a result of being stifled, that yes okay, it's only 20 minutes today. But we will take 20 minutes every single day to bring up issues that makes that government uncomfortable. And this side of the House will defend democracy. This side of the House understands process, and we understand principle, Mr. Speaker — something that those individuals across the way have a great

amount of difficulty understanding. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand today and join in on the discussion. I do feel it's been an important discussion that we've had, and I look forward to the comments that we will continue to hear this afternoon and into the evening. I believe this discussion is important, Mr. Speaker, because the issues that it touches, the issues that it addresses truly cut to the heart of our democracy and truly cut to our system of parliamentary democracy.

They address the concerns of people who trust in our political system to take into consideration the interests of the majority as well as the interests of the minority. And it's through this system, it's through the tension back and forth between the majority and the minority that at the end of the day the citizens of this province are well served. So I believe this discussion is important to the citizens of Saskatchewan. And it's especially important to the people of my constituency, the people of Saskatoon Massey Place.

I would like to start off my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by turning to a news release that was issued on October 16, 2006. And this news release was issued by the Legislative Assembly: "House Services Committee Agrees to Permanent Legislative Calendar." That's the title of this news release, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to share the first two paragraphs of this news release because I feel it gives us an idea of some of the reasons why there are rules in place in our legislature to ensure that debate occurs in a fair and in an honest and in an effective manner. The first paragraph reads:

Today, the Standing Committee on House Services unanimously adopted recommendations that will see significant changes to the operation of the Legislature.

A sub-committee . . .

This is the second paragraph:

A sub-committee composed of the Speaker and both House Leaders have recommended changes that will result in the establishment of a permanent legislative calendar of 65 sitting days per session — 25 days in the fall and 40 in the spring. Speaker P. Myron Kowalsky said "the changes are another step toward the process of modernization". The goal is to make the Assembly work more effectively and efficiently. The new calendar will also change the number of weekly sitting days from four to five, similar to other western provinces.

So, Mr. Speaker, as a new MLA, I've remarked about how I've gone through past news releases to get an idea of what some of the previous decisions of governments have been and going through copies of *Hansard* to get a sense for the type of debate that occurs and some of the comments that are made.

So as I was going through this news release, Mr. Speaker, there

were really three things that jumped out at me, three aspects to this news release. The first was the date of the news release. And this might seem like a simple point, but it actually is an important point for this discussion. The date is October 16, 2006. So this change, Mr. Speaker — we're currently in the year 2008 — so this change occurred some time ago.

Members on both sides of the House were aware of this change that took place some time ago. And I think for the most part members on both sides of the House had adapted their actions, their plans, their roles within government and opposition to fit within the schedule. So my first point is that this is something that's been around for a little while.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, in this news release . . . and this is in the first paragraph. Unanimously — that word jumped out at me. So when this change occurred back in 2006, there was understanding from all parties involved, from both sides. It was a co-operative effort that occurred through negotiation. And I think that's an important point to remember because when using the power of closure, that's not something that involves negotiation.

And the third point, Mr. Speaker, about this news release that I would like to draw to the Assembly's attention, it's actually two words, two words that start with e. And they're in the sentence where . . . at the time the sentence read: "The goal is to make the Assembly work more effectively and efficiently." So I think those are two important things to remember why this change occurred back in 2006, why everyone agreed to it. Both sides agreed to it, Mr. Speaker, because they realized that these changes would indeed be effective and these changes would indeed lead to greater efficiency for the operation of the Assembly.

As you would be aware of, Mr. Speaker, these changes are part of a general process of modernization of parliamentary democracies in Canada and the Western provinces, and actually around the Commonwealth as well. And other legislatures, other parliaments have caught on to this idea as well that predictability with the calendar allows government business to operate in a more efficient and effective manner.

The House of Commons in Ottawa adopted a parliamentary calendar in 1982 — some time ago — in order to make times more predictable. We've also seen a sweeping modernization agenda in the United Kingdom, again for the reasons of efficiency and effectiveness. And as I mentioned we've seen it in other parts of Western Canada — in Alberta in '93; Manitoba in '96 which was made permanent in 2003, and in British Columbia in 2002. So it's a change that people across the board realize is an important change to make. And as in the case with this jurisdiction in the province of Saskatchewan, the changes usually occur in a spirit of being co-operative and working collaboratively. I think that's an important point to remember.

In this legislature October 16 was the date in 2006 when the Standing Committee on House Services unanimously adopted the recommendations of the subcommittee. And this was not entered into lightly. It was not entered into without forethought or consideration. It was after the committee looked at what was occurring across the board and realized that this is a good decision; this is something that we need to implement here in

Saskatchewan and need to move on with.

One reason that was identified as to why this is a good decision is because changes like this can reduce the partisan manoeuvring that can take place. It brings more predictability for both sides of the House to operate efficiently.

I think also that this was recognized on both sides of the House. The New Democratic Party, we realized this was something good. But it's also something that was supported by the then opposition House leader where he did indeed view this as improving the way the Legislative Assembly works. On May 17, 2007 the member from Melfort provided this statement in the Legislative Assembly, and I quote:

. . . I believe this is the first full session where we've operated under the new rules of the Assembly that have been established and developed . . . in balance we have been very successful in bringing our Saskatchewan legislature to the forefront of parliamentary process, not only in this province but also in the entire country . . . we can all be rightly proud of the work that we've done to accomplish these changes.

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

So clearly at that time, when this occurred, all the players involved recognized that this was a good decision and one that should be embraced. And clearly both parties realized that this change was good and adjusted accordingly, and also the departments or the ministries also saw that this was a good change. And this is, Mr. Speaker, indicated.

I have a calendar here from the Ministry of Labour that was prepared in preparation for this spring sitting. And it's a calendar where I assume ministry officials within the Department of Advanced Education, Employment and Learning are giving advice to the minister to pass on to the Government House Leader, advice about how much time is needed to pass the legislation that they want to have passed, the legislation that they view as important, and the legislation that they want to have taken care of and marked off on the agenda, brought into Saskatchewan.

On this calendar, Mr. Speaker, March 3 is identified as the day session resumes, and throughout that week there are days that are identified, days that would be appropriate times to engage in the reading of a Bill and having debate. So that was March 3.

And I know in my office in my constituency in Saskatoon Massey Place, I had the calendar up on my wall, and I had checked on-line on the web page, oh when are we starting up, because I was making appointments for the month of March, and I was lining up meetings with constituents and meeting with different groups in my area. And I had actually booked off that March 3 week because I was expecting to go to work, Mr. Speaker.

So it was a bit of a shocker when I learned that we weren't going to work in the legislature until the following week. So

while ministry officials had a sense as to when we should start sitting, somehow that information did not get transferred from the Ministry of Learning to the Government House Leader.

Now I don't know if that's because . . . the Minister of Labour, rather. I don't know if that's because the Minister of Labour chose not to pass on that information. I don't know if that's because the House Leader didn't hear the information. Perhaps someone forgot about the information. There are many, many areas where the information could have fallen through the cracks. But the problem is that the information did fall through the cracks. People did know when we needed to start up, and that didn't occur. So that is too bad, Mr. Speaker.

So now the government finds itself in a position where, oh boy, we had a calendar. We have a list of legislation that we would like to pass, but sadly we don't have enough time. When we look at these rules that have been agreed to, there's a certain amount of debate, a certain amount of discussion that needs to occur for each of these Bills to go through the legislative process. That's the beauty of our system, Mr. Speaker, that there's predictability to this system.

So now we find ourselves . . . and eventually the government realized this, I believe, that well I'm adding up how many Bills there are, and I'm adding up how much time is needed on these Bills, and actually we don't have enough time. We're in a bit of a bind here. So instead of planning ahead, what they've opted to do is to use their majority to impose their will.

It actually reminds me of a story, Mr. Speaker, about a young man I heard of named Joe. And Joe was a fine young man. He came from a town in Saskatchewan. He had a rough start in life actually. The relationship with his parents was a rocky one. In many ways it was sort of a marriage of convenience, and they didn't have a lot of things in common, and there were a lot of divisions in that marriage.

But Joe had a dream. Joe wanted to, someday, he wanted to go to the University of Saskatchewan. When he finished high school, he wanted to hop on that STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Corporation] bus and head to Saskatoon to attend the University of Saskatchewan. The first time he tried to get into university he actually, he wasn't . . . He was a mediocre student; we'll be perfectly honest here. And he was a fine guy but not a great student. The first time he applied to university, he actually didn't get in.

But the next time around, he did manage to meet the minimum threshold, and he was admitted to the university. So he was thrilled. He opened the letter. He rushed to his post office box, opened it up, and he read he was accepted to the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], and he was thrilled. So he called up his friends. He said guys, we're going to have a party tonight. This is going to be a good time. I got into university. I'm very, very happy.

But already Joe's mom, who had really sort of guided him along through high school, she was a wise woman, and she began to give Joe some advice. And the next morning after this big party they were sitting at the breakfast table, just having some toast, and his mom thought it would be a good opportunity to maybe share some wisdom.

She said, Joe, when you're going to university, there's a few things you need to remember. The first one, you've got to make a packing list. You can't just one day go off to university. You have to have a list of the things you want to take to the University of Saskatchewan.

The second thing is you need a plan for the semester, Joe. You can't just sign up for classes, show up, and think everything's going to go well. You need to take, sort of, the bird's-eye view of the situation and see what you have to do and develop a plan.

And the third bit of advice that Joe's wise mother gave to him was that you need to be disciplined. It's not enough simply to have a duffle bag full of stuff. It's not enough to have a plan, but you actually have to follow it. I think that was good advice.

But sadly Joe, he was strong-willed and hard-headed, and Joe simply just carried on with the rest of the summer. Yes, he worked away at a few part-time jobs, saved a little bit of money, enough to pay tuition, but barely, with the rising cost of tuition. And the time came for him to head to the U of S.

[16:15]

He knew the bus was leaving at noon. 10:30, Mr. Speaker, he rushed into his room, rushed into his room, just grabbed a little bit of everything. He took a couple pairs of socks. He took a toothbrush, but forgot his toothpaste. He took his ball cap. He took a few notepads, a few pens. And he thought, oh I'm set for university. This is going to be great. I'm going to do so well.

Well Joe arrived at the university and boy, did he have a good time. The first little while on campus, Joe was down in Louie's every day in the afternoon. He became an exceptional pool player. He also spent a lot of time hanging out in the tunnel, Mr. Speaker, just watching people go by, drinking coffee.

But he wasn't taking his studies seriously, Mr. Speaker, and mom would get on the phone and say, Joe, are you doing your studies? You know we don't want you to be a Christmas graduate. We want you to do us proud. We want you to spend four years at the university. And Joe said, don't you worry, mom. In my dorm room, the student that was there last year left his textbooks. And believe it or not, they're the same classes I'm taking, and they've even highlighted the important parts. So it's not going to be a problem. I can just turn to the pages where they're folded over, where there's a bit of pink and orange, and I'll read those. Things will be just fine.

Well the semester went on, Mr. Speaker, and Joe carried on with this approach. He carried on with this approach, rather lackadaisical, just taking life as it comes. And I mean it's an okay way to live for a while, but after mid-terms arrived, Mr. Speaker, Joe realized, I actually need to get some things done here, and I'm in a bit of a bind. I mean, at the beginning of the year I had all these things that I wanted to do and now the time has just slipped by because I didn't heed my mother's advice. I've made a horrible mistake here. I was not . . . I didn't have a list. You know, I left a lot of the things back home, some things that I actually didn't want to leave there — my mom found them — and that was a problem. But I also didn't have a plan. And not only did I not have a plan . . . well I sort of had a plan, but it was just on a napkin, and then I didn't really follow it,

and that was a major problem.

So right towards the end of the semester, Joe realizes he's in a situation here that's a problem. He rushes off to his professor, Mr. Speaker, and he says to his prof, you know, like I'm in a real problem here. I'm in a bad situation. I know I'm supposed to have this done, and I'm involved in this group project. It's a huge assignment. People are counting on me, so many people are counting on me, and I've dropped the ball, professor.

And the professor said, but Joe, I gave you the syllabus on day one. You knew the rules. You knew that the paper was worth this much. The assignment was worth this much. Group participation was worth this much. And what did you do, Joe? You just hung out at Louie's. And, I mean, that's an okay way to live in the short term, but it's not a long-term plan, Joe.

And Joe said, I know I've really erred, professor, but if you could just cut me some more slack. You see, I'm involved in this group project, and the group . . . I know they all agreed to these rules. I know the group was counting on me, so if you could just provide me with a bit more time to do this, my group would really appreciate it. I think they'd be well served. And, you know, I wouldn't disappoint my mom, and at the end of the day, pleasing my mom, pleasing my parents is what's really important to me.

So the professor said, you know, Joe, while a man reaps what he sows, while it's important for you to learn from your mistakes; I'm going to have mercy on you Joe, and I'm going to provide an extension of time, Joe, for you to complete this project.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we learn a few lessons from this parable of Joe, and that's that one needs to be prepared. They need to be prepared. They need to pack up their bags well. You need to clean out things out properly. They need to have a game plan, Mr. Speaker, and they need to follow that game plan. And when that doesn't occur, Mr. Speaker, when that doesn't occur, there are problems. Mom is not made proud. The students in the group with the assignment are not made proud, or not pleased with that person. They're let down. It's devastating to them, affecting their marks on the course, and they're in a real bind.

So, Mr. Speaker, well I've outlined this parable and identified the three important lessons that I think we can take from this process and relate it to this legislature. The same rules need to apply. You need to be prepared. You need to have a plan. And you need to be disciplined to follow through on it. The difference here is that in the story Joe is dependent upon the professor in showing mercy. In our situation the Joe has the right to force his will on the professor, and that's a real problem. That's why democracy is not served well when the majority bullies their way over the minority.

As I said, the Sask Party knew the rules. They knew the rules because they helped make them. The Sask Party is ignoring the rules because they failed to have a plan and failed to follow a plan that they didn't have, so that's quite obvious what the problem was. This is not the right thing to do for the people of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan citizens are well served when there is strong debate on both sides. So, Mr. Speaker, with this I will conclude my remarks. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Harper): — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today on this very odd day. It's a day that we're defending the rights of democracy, the majority here who's overruling and tearing apart some of the basic principles of democracy. And I find it very alarming. I've been here for over six years and this is a concern that I have.

And I want to start out by saying that I want to thank the speakers who have gone before me to highlight this issue. And they've repeated themselves maybe a couple of times, but I think we've learned an awful lot over the last couple of days. And I want to start by mentioning the member from Regina Dewdney and the member from Saskatoon Meewasin and the good work that they've done in highlighting the issues.

I want to repeat one of the quotes that the member from Dewdney started his speech with, and I think this is very, very important. Mr. Speaker, he was quoting from a book called "The Role of the Legislature," written by Merrilee Rasmussen. And he goes right to the conclusion. And he talks about the erosion of the legislature, the role of the legislature in the period from 1982 to 1991. And this is what it says. This is the quote:

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

And are we seeing history repeat itself today, this week. This is very, very sad when we see the tyranny of the majority and they are acting very much the same way.

Of course it's an interesting process that we're in. We're seeing a government that's caught by its incompetence going to attack some basic principles of democracy.

And so what are some of these incompetent, some of the things that they've done wrong? Well they want to change the rules of the Assembly. And it's nothing more than a cover-up. So a basic function of any government is to prepare legislation, write it, plan for it. But clearly they have not done their job here. It's only a basic function, and they really missed the opportunity to show what they're really made of.

Or maybe they really are showing what they're made of. This 11th-hour change is nothing more than an attempt to really cover up their mismanagement and a stunning incompetence. And they really want to get some of these pieces of legislation through. Now we have spoken up against some of them. But some of them we've said, they're really some of the things that we were going to do because some of the things we've agreed to.

Now the Sask Party over there, they negotiated these changes when they were in opposition, but all of a sudden they're a problem. Didn't they understand the implications of what they were negotiating at that time? Well, Mr. Speaker, you'll hear it

over and over again, and we've heard over the past couple days about why are they so incompetent about some simple mathematics. These rules didn't sneak up on this government. They were in place when they were elected and they knew it. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they clearly knew the game when they got into it.

And they've said over and over again, they keep going back to their platform and saying, we're doing what we said we'd do. We got the book. We're going by the book. Well they also know what the rules were of this House. Why are they changing it now? Well as I said, Mr. Speaker, it's because of their own mismanagement and incompetence, you know.

And of course what we see is particularly a couple ministries that are having some difficulty. And one that I was involved with in the past government, the Department of Labour, we see some major changes. And just today in question period, we understand now that these are some of the most broad, far-reaching legislation changes in Canada.

And they didn't quite plan it out the way they should have. And they had opportunities to have public meetings, refer it to committee, but they've not taken that opportunity. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we know that we had the opportunity to meet in December and March, have evening sittings, but they didn't do that. Well, Mr. Speaker, they've really dropped the ball.

One area that I do want to talk about is, for example, where we see incompetence is particularly in the area of Social Services and the ministry there. Really, essentially, I think I'm on my fifth strike now. I've got to tell you about some of the things we've seen.

Of course we were clearly disappointed to read and to hear the media reports of a meeting this morning that the Premier and the Minister of Health had with the folks from Station 20. They went apparently to listen. It wasn't quite really listening. They apparently went to deliver a message, is more what it was, that it wasn't going to happen . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It was on the website. You go to the *The StarPhoenix* website. It was on at 1 o'clock. Yes. Not a problem. So yes, you got to get with the program.

But anyway, so you had this Station 20 fiasco — 2,500 people on Saturday morning show up to say this is the right thing, this is community driven, this is a solution for issues that inner city people face in Saskatoon and in Regina. And we put this money forward over a year ago to revitalize communities . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Harper): — Order. Order. If members wish to carry on a conversation, they may do so behind the bar. I recognize the member.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. So here they have a decision made on misinformation. And, Mr. Speaker, the housing issue, the housing issue — what a fiasco that's turning into, appointing a task force the day before the budget. They must have just opened up the budget book and realized, we're not doing anything. What can we do? Appoint a task force.

We see it in so many areas around the housing. We heard questions about SOS [Saskatoon Overnight Shelter]. They were

promised money. Then it was taken away and there was confusion. What were the commitments made? I don't know. It's really alarming.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to read into the record question no. 476. I just got this answer back just a couple of days ago:

To the Minister of Social Services: What housing community groups has the Minister met with between November 7, 2007 and March 19, 2008?

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how many people, how many groups do you think . . .

An Hon. Member: — 50.

Mr. Forbes: — 50 groups? No, a little lower than 50.

An Hon. Member: — 25.

Mr. Forbes: — 25? 25. No, you're not even warm. People are not warm in this House.

An Hon. Member: — Got to be at least 10.

Mr. Forbes: — Got to be 10? Got to be 10? You know what it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker? One. She met with one group, and this is the writing right here which they approved. She met with Passion for Action Against Homelessness.

Now we know the major cities. Saskatoon has a homelessness committee. Regina has one. I believe Moose Jaw, P.A. has one of which Sask Housing puts money forward to. There's at least four, all right? There are housing authorities right across this province. She chooses to meet with one group, one group. Now if that's not the height of incompetence, that is really bizarre, Mr. Speaker, really bizarre.

So and then we go on to the modernization strategy. Holy smoke, what a fiasco that was, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Here we have a situation on budget day, Social Services employees were brought together and told about this new strategy. I don't believe that was part of their plan, their platform. But the following week, we hear a back and forth, the minister knew, didn't know. She blamed the officials all over the map, but finally she reversed that decision. But we're not clear, because of the press release, what it really means. What does it really mean? People are really, really worried about that.

And of course I could talk about the disability, Council on Disability Issues — a huge, huge misstep early in January. So here you have a government that's going from, careening from one fiasco to another to another. And here we are where we find ourselves today.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we need to do is really back up and take a look at the big picture because the ground level here looks like a bit like a disaster, and we may be missing the big picture. You know it's sort of like, you can't see the forest for the trees because you go, well it's just a discussion here, maybe we can just move on and just forget about this, it's early on in the mandate. But I tell you it's really setting the tone of their mandate, this heavy-handedness.

[16:30]

So I want to talk about some of these rule changes that they're putting forward and what that really means for democracy. It really is about parliamentary democracy and the rights of the members of this Assembly. This rule change is an abuse of power that reflects on the democratic principles of this institution and how it reflects upon the rights of Saskatchewan citizens to be heard in this Assembly, and that is so important.

Day after day we bring forward petitions about Station 20. For example, 2,500 people gather, the largest demonstration in recent history in Saskatoon. You would probably have to go back to the '60s and '70s and then back to the '30s and '40s probably for the next largest group, next largest demonstration. This is not a small thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker; this is a very important thing. People are not being heard, and our job as opposition is to bring that forward, to bring those concerns forward.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not only contrary to the principle of democracy, but it's also contrary to the way this Assembly has worked for many years. It's contrary to the principle of good leadership. Now over the past number of years, we've been able to negotiate things. And of course one of the things we're very proud is the negotiation of the rules changes which brought the committee structure into place.

I remember the days when we had estimates in this room, and we were all here captive to this process. We saw that this wasn't working, and we needed to be more relevant to the people of Saskatchewan. It would be in their best interests if we would work together, all members of this Assembly.

Well the true test of democracy is based on how this Legislative Assembly works, based on the rules of this Assembly. And the unilateral action of taking away the rules as they were put into place is shameful.

Now I want to quote Stanley Knowles, this is from "The Role of Opposition in Parliament," and I think this is very, very important:

Democracy includes 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 in and month out, day in and day out, during the time between elections.

And that's true. People are not just watching us on election day and whether it was November 7, 2007. It's every day. It's every day.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, another part of democracy, the principles of democracy talk to the majority rule and minority rights. And I think last night we heard this most eloquently from the member from Meewasin and also the member of Dewdney. But I want to also reflect on this because I think this is very, very important — critical to the work we do. The integrity we have when we come into this House, it's just integrity and how we act here is so, so important.

Well majority rule is a means for organizing government and deciding public issues. It's not another road to oppression. Just as no self-appointed group has the right to oppress others, so no majority — not even in a democracy — should take away the basic rights and freedom of a minority group or individual. Now it goes on:

Minorities need to trust that government will protect their rights and self identity. Once this is accomplished such groups can participate and contribute to the country's democratic institutions.

This is so true in this province of Saskatchewan where we have communities and people . . .

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

Mr. Ottenbreit: — To request leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your gallery, good friends of mine, constituents of Yorkton.

On the far right is Randy King, a well-known country gospel recording artist and president of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship from Yorkton. Beside him is a really great young fellow — and I always talk nice to him because he's about twice my size — Jeff Langan. He does amazing things in Yorkton with Aboriginal youth and at-risk youth in Yorkton. Next to him is a good friend of mine as well, Michael Sarafincian. Michael and I have gone on Mexico mission trips together, and he's a corrections worker and a youth worker in Yorkton. And beside him is his girlfriend, Kristina Ahoasari.

And they're all here today for the full gospel supper in the cafeteria today, Mr. Speaker, and just visiting to see what's happening in their Assembly here. So I'd ask all members to greet them as they are visiting today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know one of the things I've been doing and actually I have been doing this, reading a lot about this issue over the last couple of months because we see this as politicians how our constituents, not only

in Saskatchewan but in Canada and around the world, are becoming disconnected to the kind of work we do. They feel that they have no power. They have no influence. They elect people, but they come here and somehow they're changed people. When they're out on the hustings they say all sorts of things, but they get here and all of a sudden they want to push things through.

Well there was a report published in the United Kingdom. It's called the power report and it was reported the political system of what's happening in the United Kingdom. And I think if we look over there — which in many ways we owe an awful lot to our parliamentary system — if we look at the tradition we come out of, of course clearly it's out of the system in the United Kingdom. I just want to quote some of the things. One of the chapters talk about the reality of the electoral system and politics and how people feel disengaged, and I think this speaks clearly to our issue that we're debating tonight. The one factor, and I'll quote now:

The one factor felt to cause disengagement that runs through all strands of our investigation is a very widespread sense that citizens feel their view and interests are not taken sufficiently into account by the processes of political decision-making. It cannot be stressed enough the depth and extent of this perception amongst the British public. Many, if not all, of the other accepted explanations presented here could also be understood as variations on this theme of weak citizen influence.

So here we are representing citizens in . . . and clearly we're being stymied by this rule change tonight. It goes on to say:

“We are powerless against unaccountable individuals, why should anyone be interested in politics?”

“To vote, people need to feel that it achieves something more than just exercising a right. People want to feel that their vote makes a difference to their lives; for many this is not felt.”

And I can tell you tonight, in downtown Saskatoon, in Riversdale and Pleasant Hill, they're going, what just happened to us? And it goes on to say, “It is just the fact people don't really think they make a difference.” Some other quotes, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

“I think the politicians pay lip service to the public, they don't put our suggestions into practice.”

“They pretend that we're involved and that, but you're not really.”

“The first thing is, you've got to get somebody who'll listen and this is 90 per cent of the problem. You've got nobody to talk to.”

“I feel as though they (politicians) don't want you involved.”

“[And] (politics) is a closed shop. You don't feel you're being told the truth.”

And that is so true, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this rule change is just an example of this government, the Sask Party government, abusing their power, showing the opposition that they are boss. It's a schoolyard bully mentality. Now to use majority power over minority in this legislature is not in the interests of the people of Saskatchewan, of the people in our society, and it's not at all in the interests of fairness. And I want to quote here from Stanley Knowles. And this is so, so important:

. . . a full and unquestioned recognition of the rights and functions of the opposition to the government . . . [is required to] protect the rights of minorities; only in this way can you make sure that the force of public opinion . . . [is] brought to bear on the legislative process . . .

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question remains, why the panic? This is not about the legislation; it's about abuse of power. This is what this is all about because they know the legislation will in some form move forward. We're at the beginning of this term, this session. They know they have time. What's this all about? And I really do have some serious, serious questions about this.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in review I want to talk about how this really is incompetence in so many forms. And I just want to highlight again how I am concerned. As I go about talking to different groups and hear concerns, especially in the area of social services, people are very very concerned about what that means. There is a big chill out there.

And if there was ever a message to be sent to people in Saskatchewan, it's what's happening today and this week by these men and women over here who are saying, listen, we're the boss. We're simply the boss. And if you want to get in line and get your stuff, then get in line. Otherwise we don't want to hear from you. And so they're setting the tone. And this is really, really a concern. It's abuse, and it's about being a bully.

So they've been caught in so many incompetent circumstances, so what do they do? They rush in to change some rules. But they have forgotten about why they're here. It's all about democracy. It's about something we cherish so deeply here in Saskatchewan. And this is a shame, Mr. Speaker.

There's many people here are new. This is the first time they've gone through a budgetary process. What a lesson to learn in your first term. What a lesson to learn. I've been here six years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have not seen this kind of bullying in this House. I've seen negotiating. I've seen people getting together. But I've never seen anything, anything at all like this.

I want to end on a quote by Stanley Knowles again. It's so important. He goes and he says:

If then free discussion in parliament is to mean anything, if it is to be real, certain measures of strength must be accorded to the opposition. It must be recognized that the opposition's right, indeed it is its 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 propose . . . [we

should] criticize and attack government for all it is worth.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am in favour of the amendments. I think the amendments are very, very good and well thought out. And I will definitely be speaking and voting tonight with honour and a sense of commitment to the democratic process against this ill-founded motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for P.A. Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to get on my feet and enter into this debate. I think essentially what this speaks to is competency. And I will outline a few . . . well several points in terms of why it sort of fits with a pattern that they've developed over the last little while. It's my pleasure to get on my feet and do that. I can tell that the members opposite are completely interested in what I have to say by the numbers of them that are ignoring me. So it will be an interesting process here.

They weren't in power very long, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, when the member from Melfort was put into the position of being the Finance minister. And the finances of the province were called stark. We left \$1 billion for them, over \$1 billion, and they called it stark. Now does that speak to competency? I think it does. I think when you have a group of officials that will tell you what money is in the bank and what's been left over, and you come out and tell people that the finances are stark anyway, I think that speaks to your competency.

An Hon. Member: — Or lack thereof.

Mr. Furber: — Or lack thereof. Absolutely.

The next item, the handling of the P.A. pulp mill file — there have been a litany of mistakes, incompetencies that have followed this file since they took it over. They have a member from Batoche who chaired a committee to look into the situation. They travelled throughout the province. That committee has no findings. You can't find anywhere a conversation that they had with one person, although they made a press release and made it look like they were going to do something. There are no findings brought forward from that committee.

The member from Saskatoon Greystone has said that they've been looking into legislation for essential services for over a year. They have another member that comes forward and says that that is not true. Now whose competency does that speak to? I think the member from Saskatoon Greystone speaks volumes of his work on that file.

[16:45]

The member from Humboldt, she has, in reference to the restructuring of her department where they're going to centralize services, take away fieldworkers. And they have a four-year plan to do that. Now she says that she hasn't seen the four-year plan. She comes out in the media. It's out in the media that there're going to be a bunch of cuts in rural

Saskatchewan to employees. What's her first reaction? That her officials are to blame.

Now it's difficult to understand that after it's proven that you've signed off on a four-year plan, that your knee-jerk reaction would be to blame your officials — shocking incompetence. She said that she hadn't seen it or didn't understand it. Then it was found out that she indeed had signed off on it, and oh I can't take that back. So what am I going to do? I'm going to tell people that I signed off on it, but I'm not sure what exactly it says. So we'll accept that the first-year plan will go through because it's already in the budget, so she didn't have a choice. But for the final three years, we're going to review it. So that again speaks to competency.

Within a few weeks of taking office, they decided that they didn't like the wheat sheaf emblem. The member from Canora-Pelly said that he wanted to get rid of the wheat sheaf. They were going to write it out of all the government documents, websites, releases before consulting anybody. Then there's an outcry from the public. The public didn't like it at all. So what happens? They reverse the decision — competency. They want to go and do things unilaterally, just like they're doing with this Bill, this motion. And they don't have the competency to carry it through.

They have a history, a recent history at least, of being schoolyard bullies. And it's proven with this motion that they want to stifle debate, and they're going to use bully tactics to do it.

We have witnessed recently the attitudes of three of their members in this House and in committee. The member from Indian Head-Milestone was not appreciative of the comments being made by one of our members. I remember it very vividly. He runs into the Chamber, screams till he gets sat down and then is forced to leave the Chamber — strictly to bully. He had no other purpose to be here.

The member from Kindersley just today, the Speaker ruled on a point of order for using the same tactics. So the member from Saskatoon Northwest in committee just a few weeks ago got into difficulty in that committee for his attempt to bully one of our members. So they have a mentality of bullying and a history of it in this House. Ruling is against them for doing it, and so they think that they should use it to suppress debate. It speaks to their attitude toward the opposition, toward democracy in general, and it's unfortunate.

Now I'd like to get into a bit of a discussion if I might. Again this speaks to competency. But I've got in my hands a calendar that was put out in 2007. And it says here that on March 3 session resumes. Now in order to have enough time to get these Bills passed, they're going to have to sit for a certain amount of time, and it's outlined by the officials in the assumptions page. It says that this calendar assumes that the opposition will require the full 20 hours of debate on proposed legislation. It says it right here. I mean anybody who could get through this calendar and read the first . . . It's the first bullet, assumes that the opposition will require a full 20 hours of debate on the proposed legislation. And in order to do that you have to sit these days. They chose not to.

It also outlines very specifically when second reading speeches will occur and that the debate on the legislation will occur on each day for one hour except on private members' day and during the budget debate. So it's very specific in its detail on the calendar and in terms of the hours that you require and what's needed to get your legislation through. So I guess the question is (1) did they read it, (2) did they understand it, (3) can they add? It's not that difficult to multiply by 20.

They made a choice. They made a choice not to start on March 3, which is outlined in the calendar. They made a choice to take a week off at Easter, when indeed we could have sat for several days there. They're short on evening sittings because they didn't want to for the first part of this session. They sure didn't want to in the fall. So we lost time there.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, the fall session is outlined to be up to 25 days, and we sat for a total of 8. Now I will admit that they should get a bit of a pass for that being that the election was so close to the fall session. But what they could have done was made sure that those Bills at that time were referred to committee so that we could have worked between the time the legislature ended in the fall till the time it started again in the spring. But they chose not to do that and thus wasted valuable time.

Instead of preparing properly and instead of utilizing the rules that exist, that they agreed to . . . We had an all-party committee that went down to Australia to study their parliamentary system. They were a part of it. Everybody agreed to the rules, and they chose not to follow them.

Now I'd like also to at this time speak to some of the promises that they've made as a group, and this speaks again to their promise and their reflection on how they view legislation and motions. So they made some promises.

They talked about when we used the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the NDP [New Democratic Party] slush fund, and they stated that they would never use one of those and that it was an affront to financial practice. And even though every financial institution in North America thought it was the proper way to manage our funds, and we got credit rating upgrades based on the way we managed the province's finances — 16 in a row, mind you.

The very first Bill that they introduced in the House is the financial stability Act. The Act simply renames what they referred to before as a slush fund. Now does that speak to their campaign or their promises and their character? Absolutely.

Prior to the election, they were asked by various groups if essential service legislation was required. Certainly not was the answer. It's not required. We think that the present system works fine. And the member from Indian Head-Milestone had made those comments.

Bills 5 and 6 speak directly . . . well Bill 5 essentially speaks directly to essential services and that we are going to follow through with them. And not just moderate a Bill, but what we found recently through an FOI request, is that the minister's own department views these as the most sweeping in Canada, so again speaks to promises that they made before and a level of

competency that they don't have.

Now another campaign promise — and this is very interesting, Mr. Speaker — another campaign promise that they have, that they've kept . . . and I think it would be considered no. 56 by the member from Swift Current. They admit now that there's a housing crisis in Saskatchewan and that they need a task force to look into it. Perversely they kept a campaign promise by not putting anything in their budget for housing because it wasn't in their campaign platform. Housing not in their platform — unbelievable. So in the 11th hour before the budget, they strike a task force — even though this has been studied to death and it's well understood what's required — they strike a task force to look after housing. So perversely they kept a campaign promise by doing nothing on housing.

Now I have done some reading on parliamentary democracy and actually read a synopsis of the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi, India, held just last year. They made essentially five points: (1) was the fundamental purpose of a democratic process; (2) minority views and how they're upheld; (3) the rights of opposition in the parliamentary democracy; (4) government opposition and co-operation and how that might affect democracy; and (5) campaign promises and opposition's care when using them.

It says here that the fundamental purpose of a democracy, and I'll quote:

Parliament is fundamentally about debate and the transacting of the people's business in public. Thus a genuine political opposition is a necessary attribute of democracy . . .

It goes on to say that there, quote, "There was a general consensus that there can be no strong democracy without a strong opposition." The stifling of debate brought forward by this motion is an affront to this principle, the principles brought forward by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. And it's a sad reflection on the government and what they feel is appropriate in a democracy.

Now there are several places in this document that talk about minority views and how they should be represented. It says here that democracy ensures that the views of the minority are given full exposure. So it protects people who essentially can't protect themselves, and what this motion does is exactly the opposite to that. It flies in the face of that principle.

The report goes on to say that by doing so, the opposition becomes "the voice of the voiceless." It ". . . builds the confidence of the people and reassures them that their concerns and interests are ably expressed and protected." Again the protection of the minority is essential to democracy, and what they've done here in the last couple of days is an affront to that.

Now this paper speaks on several occasions about the rights of an opposition, and it says, and I'll quote: "Delegates in the workshop agreed that it is the opposition's right, if it believes that the public interest is at stake, to oppose the government's policies and actions through legitimate means" — means set forth by the House that we have used. "The opposition also has a right to operate in a free and democratic atmosphere and be

recognized both in and out of Parliament.” So it says here there’s supposed to be a free and democratic atmosphere. Again this motion kills that atmosphere, and it doesn’t allow the freedom of the opposition to do its job.

Additionally it says that, in speaking of the Hon. Alban Bagbin, an MP [Member of Parliament] from Ghana, that he further highlighted that to effectively perform its roles, the opposition needed to be given some rights and responsibilities. The roles identified are the right to operate in a free and democratic atmosphere. It’s the same point being made once again.

It speaks to another principle, which is the co-operation of an opposition and a government, and I’ll quote, “He urged the opposition to make room for co-operation and consensus building with the government,” which is what we’ve done and what they did as an opposition to create the rules that this House works under.

So to have them work to make the rules and then, when they become government, turn into bullies to break the rules, it’s shocking incompetence and direct mean-spiritedness. It goes on to say that the opposition has a role and has to be careful of that role. Now the quote here is, “However, it needs to be [in reference to the opposition] careful in its criticism . . . [about] the government as it may be in government next and yet fail to implement what it was criticizing the government for.”

[17:00]

Well here we have a challenge in Prince Albert now, Mr. Speaker. In Prince Albert alone, prior to the election — and some time prior — the now Premier stood on the bridge with the then mayor and said that, one, Prince Albert is big enough for a second bridge; and two, that the government of the time should pay for all repairs to the bridge.

Now just a few weeks ago when asked, when the member from P.A. Carlton was asked about a second bridge in Prince Albert, his response was that, well we’ll have to fit it in with all of the needs of the people in Saskatchewan. And it’s an election promise that is broken, and it’s an affront to the principle played out by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

They also promised the people of Prince Albert an airport. No work has been done on that airport.

In a debate that I had with members of the government and the person that opposed me in the election, they promised the people of Prince Albert a tertiary health care centre. Now this is interesting for the people of Prince Albert. The mayor has been interested in having one there for years, but they have not followed up with one stitch of that promise. The obvious piece that they promised in addition to those things are the pulp mill, and I’ve spoken many times in this Chamber about that promise.

When it comes to fulfilling promises made before the election, when it comes to fulfilling their roles as members of this House, when it comes to fulfilling their roles as ministers, they’ve proven themselves not to be up to the task on each of these items.

I want to highlight for folks in my last few remarks, the new House Leader, he said, and I quote, “These changes are about improving the way the legislative assembly works, while at the same time giving MLAs more opportunity to stay in touch with our constituents.” He said that October 16, 2006, and he can’t . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it’s an honour for me to rise and take part in this debate on behalf of the fine folks of Regina Northeast. Usually, Mr. Speaker, when I have the opportunity to rise in this House, I say it’s not only an honour, but it’s a privilege, which it is. But it’s also an occasion which is usually a happy occasion, one that brings me pleasure. Unfortunately today is not one of those days that I feel pleasure. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what I feel is sadness; sadness that the debate that we’re in and the fact that what we’re debating is the loss of our democratic process.

Denying the opposition their rights to research and to contact stakeholders is a denial of the democratic system. Mr. Churchill once said that democracy is not perfect, but it’s better than anything else out there. But democracy is very fragile. It has to be looked after. It has to be nurtured and it has to be cared for.

There are instances in the world where democracy was attempted, tried, but was not nurtured, was not cared for, and was lost. And that happens when individuals and a group of individuals gain power, gain authority, and they use the heavy-handedness of that authority to crush the principles of democracy. That principles must always remain firm.

The democratic system, as we enjoy it here in Canada, built on the British parliamentary system, is very, really a very simple system. There’s a process of election that takes place every four or five years. The party who elects the majority members forms the government. The government’s role and responsibility then is to bring forward legislation to the House for the House to scrutinize.

The role of the opposition is to have the opportunity to scrutinize that legislation. In order to do a reasonable job of scrutinizing the legislation, the opposition needs the ability to receive the legislation, identify stakeholders within our society that this legislation could affect, contact those stakeholders, share with them the legislation, give them the opportunity to respond to that legislation to whether or not it has an effect on them — if that effect is positive or if that effect is negative — perhaps receive suggestions from them as to how the legislation could be twigged to make it better, to make it better work for them as individuals, better work for them within their industry.

Then the role of opposition is to bring that suggestions to the House, share it with government. Government then has the ability to do that due diligence and may perhaps even make amendments to legislation, to make that legislation better, to work better for the people of this province. That’s the role of the opposition. That’s the role of government.

Mr. Speaker, this takes time, takes time to be able to identify stakeholders. It takes time to be able to contact the stakeholders, give them time to digest the legislation, apply it to their situations, and to provide the opposition with a response.

And we have today in Saskatchewan a government that's only four or five months into their term who have brought forward a process, a process of the Assembly and legislation that they would wish to have passed. And we as opposition said that we don't have the reasonable hours to be able to fulfil our role to its fullest. So then they bring forward a motion to expand the sitting hours of the legislature. That then, Mr. Speaker, in mathematical terms will provide enough hours, the mathematical hours as agreed to in the rules. It does.

But what it also does is it jams the opposition. It jams the opposition because we are going to be here in this House from 10 o'clock till midnight, from 10 o'clock to midnight. What we need to do then as the legislation comes forward, we need to identify stakeholders. We need to be able to contact those stakeholders. Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to contact stakeholders after midnight, after midnight. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I'm sure that most stakeholders would not appreciate a phone call at 3 o'clock in the morning asking them if a particular piece of legislation has a negative or positive effect on their operations.

It's jamming us, Mr. Speaker. It's taking away the ability of the opposition to be able to contact stakeholders, to have meaningful dialogue with stakeholders, to be able to take the expressions of wishes from those stakeholders and bring them back to the legislature. It's denying the opposition the opportunity to carry out that dialogue. That is a crushing of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, the real issue here, the issue here is about parliamentary democracy. It's an issue of the rights of the members of this Assembly. The rule change is an abuse of power that reflects on the democratic principles of this institution and how it reflects on the rights of Saskatchewan citizens to be heard in this Assembly.

The very principles of democracy is under attack, Mr. Speaker, when it wasn't necessary. It wasn't necessary to be so heavy-handed. Negotiations, discussions, co-operation would have worked if the government would have ventured down that road and even given it a try. And I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the party opposite, the government of the day had one position on issues when they were in opposition and have now a new position when they are in government.

Most recently the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Transportation Company has released an annual report of which he now states, Mr. Speaker, and if I may even quote from it, and I quote, "The success of the company is measured in ways other than just financial results."

When that particular minister was in opposition, they had and he had, led by that member, one hallmark in regards to STC and that was privatization. He wanted to move it into the private sector as fast as possible. They kept referring to the fact that it was costing money.

Well STC does cost money. It does cost the Saskatchewan taxpayer money. It's subsidized because it's a good subsidy. Like any other public transportation system, whether it be in Regina or Saskatoon, it's subsidized because it's mandated to provide a service, a service to the people of Saskatchewan, to the ridership and to the transportation of freight. It does a very good job of that, and I am pleased to see that the minister has — I hope he hasn't hurt his neck in whiplash — but he's done a complete turnaround on that particular front and he is now supporting STC. And I want to compliment the minister for that. He's done a three sixty on that one.

But, Mr. Speaker, back to the issue at hand, the rule changes are contrary to the principles of democracy, but also in the way of the operation of this Assembly and the way this Assembly has been operated for many, many years. And it's also an affront to the principles of good leadership that's been lost. In less than six months — in four to five months of government — this government has not only done some complete turnabouts, but they're certainly shedding themselves of the principles of leadership, the principles of fairness, the principles of honesty.

When a government abuses its majority, uses its majority to abuse the rule changes as we have seen here, it starts to have a very worrisome effect, I think, on most people because when power sets in and you start to allow power to cloud your judgment and you allow power to start making decisions that normally probably you wouldn't have, and then you begin to wonder about what is the future of democracy and how far is the corruption of power going to carry the government. Is it going to carry the government to the point where it starts to have a negative effect on minorities and that doesn't take the time to consider the positions of minorities? Is it going to allow the government to run roughshod over other issues other than just the operational hours of the Assembly? You begin to wonder all those things.

If the Sask Party believes in the principles of democracy, they would believe in working with all the members of this Assembly in the best interests of the people of this province, and they would not use their power to abuse the minority.

The true test of democracy, the true test of the parliamentary system is based on how the Legislative Assembly works. It's based on the rules of the House. And the changes of those rules has taken away from the balance needed between the majority and the minority interests and it is eroding democracy. And that's what we're seeing happening here, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing democracy being eroded. The rules are in place here to protect the rights of both the minority and the majority interests.

The rules are here to create a balance. Mr. Speaker, balance is what this legislature is all about. Balance is what that particular party wanted when they were in opposition, when they in fact worked co-operatively with the all-party committee that was set up to modernize the rules of this Legislative Assembly. And that's something we should be always working for. We should always be working for finding ways to make the operation of this Assembly more efficient, more effective, more simplistic, but most of all more democratic.

We want to make the system more democratic. We want to open it up to the general public, the ease of the general public to

have access to this Assembly — in as far as the members is concerned, as far as the members of opposition is concerned, or as far as the members of government is concerned — so it further democratizes our system. That was the thought process behind the establishment of the field policy committees and they have, I think, worked quite well. I think they're developing and I encourage that to continue because I think that's a very good process.

[17:15]

But at the same time we have to ensure that the basic principles of democracy — fairness, balance, and equal opportunity — is made available to all the members in the House here, all the elected members, including the members of the opposition. The opposition members must have the ability to communicate with Saskatchewan people particularly when it comes to legislation, so that we can ascertain from them, ascertain from them how a particular piece of legislation may affect them as individuals, them as in businesses, or perhaps them in a group. We want to know is this good legislation or bad. We want to know if it's a positive effect on them or perhaps no effect at all. We want to know if it has a negative effective on them. If it's a negative effect, then what can be done to make it better? What can be done to improve it? What can be done to make it a positive piece of legislation for the people of Saskatchewan?

Like I said earlier, in order to do that we have to have the time to contact the stakeholders. We have to have the time to give the stakeholders the opportunity to digest the proposed legislation. We have to have the opportunity to have the stakeholders communicate with us — the opposition — their ideas, their thoughts on how it could be made better. And then we share that with the government and the process will unfold. That particular opportunity is now denied to us, the opposition.

The Sask Party used to support a broad democratic reform. Now because of their own mismanagement and incompetence, they are willing to throw democratic process aside and change the rules of the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government as a result of their own incompetence are now proposing a rule change that has a very negative effect on the democratic process in this great province of ours — very great province.

As I said this didn't have to happen. The impasse that the government finds itself at by just simply miscalculating, or perhaps not even being aware of the number of hours that is required in the Legislative Assembly here to digest the legislation, to digest the estimates — simply the amount of time that's required to do the business of the people of this province in this Legislative Assembly — they misjudged that. There's no question about that.

And it could have been resolved through negotiations and through consultations, through discussions. But consultations is not something that that particular party over there is known for since they've become government.

There's been no consultations in regards to labour legislation that has been tabled, no consultation on Station 20 funding that has been ripped away, no consultations on rule changes. Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise that that group of men and women over there, the Sask Party, have now as their hallmark no

consultations.

Does the Sask Party care about the democratic process? Well the evidence, I think, is very obvious. The answer to that question would simply be no. They run roughshod over the opposition simply because they goofed. They goofed in not being able to calculate the amount of time required to put their legislation through, to deal with the business of the people of Saskatchewan in this session. They goofed.

People make mistakes. Nobody should be held to a standard any higher than anybody else. We're all human beings. We'll all make mistakes. The way you address your mistakes is you sit down and you consult, you negotiate, you find a way out of this thing without using the heavy hammer of your majority to deny the fine people of Saskatchewan the right to a democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, the basic function of any government is to have legislation written, presented to the Assembly, then passed. The Sask Party through its incompetence to the point that they have failed to be able to carry out the basic functions of a democratic process. And who suffers in this, Mr. Speaker? It's not us, the members in here who will have to sit longer hours and who will have to debate into the wee hours of the morning. We don't lose.

The real losers in this whole process is the people of Saskatchewan. The people of Saskatchewan lose because they will be denied the opportunity to have input into the legislative calendar of the government opposite. They'll be denied that opportunity because the opposition won't have the ability to communicate with them, won't have the time and the ability to communicate with the stakeholders who are going to be affected with legislation, and to be able to discuss this legislation with them, and be able to take their discussions and bring them back to the floor of the Assembly here.

That's not going to happen in this province this session, Mr. Speaker, because that party and that government is denying the basic principles of democracy to the province of Saskatchewan. Rule changes, rule changes is something that is normal. It's a normal process to have rule changes, but it's normally done with the unanimous consent of the House. It's usually done, it's usually done when consultation and negotiation has taken place. That, Mr. Speaker, is not what we've seen here. That is not at all what we've seen here. In fact what we've seen here is just the opposite.

We've seen power, the weight of power go to the heads of the men and women over there — the government, the Sask Party Government of Saskatchewan today — to the point where they're willing to abuse that power at the detriment of the people of Saskatchewan. They're more interested in having their . . . feeding their power frenzy than they are in doing good work for the people of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day. This is a sad, sad day not only for democracy, it's a sad day for the history of this legislature. It's a sad, sad day for the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from

Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's coming up 10 years since I have been in this legislature, and over the years I have developed a very strong interest in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and have attended many meetings of that body. All members of the Assembly are members by the fact that they are elected to represent their constituencies and elected to this Assembly.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, or the CPA as we call it, represents over 50 countries, Commonwealth countries in the world. And when we go to meetings we meet with people from all around the world and they talk about democracy as the cornerstone of our commonality.

Respect for parliamentary democracy is hard won. Many countries have fought bloody wars and still are fighting bloody wars to get even close to where we are today. And people have died standing in line to vote. We take for granted so many things that we have, and they've been won at such a huge price. Respect for tradition is a long-held tenet of this legislature. We have held these traditions for the sake of the esteem that the legislature should be held in by the public and by those of us who serve in the legislature. We've had to move a motion so that male members of the Assembly could remove their jackets on a day when the air conditioning stopped in the building and it was unbearably hot. We dress for business in this Assembly. We don't dress for a barbeque or a bar night. We have respect for the legislature.

These seemingly small things say to the public that we do have respect for the legislature, that we do respect the . . . that this is a place where respect is shown not only to the Assembly but to the traditions of the Assembly and hopefully to each other. If there are traditions that no longer serve the needs of the Assembly or the role that the members play in the Assembly, then these traditions can be changed. And they can be changed by what used to be called the Rules Committee which is now the House Services Committee and basically both parties are represented on that committee.

Those things that need to be changed are passed by mutual agreement. Many of my colleagues have talked about mutual agreement which is how this House has been run over the years I've been here and I understand for many years before that. And the processes are also . . . It's understood by all the parties, that this is how we do the business of the legislature — mutual agreement, long discussions, a lot of debate, a lot of investigations of how other democracies are working, how other parliaments are working. We don't make decisions lightly or quickly. We take this seriously that this mutual agreement is for the betterment of the House and for democracy as a whole.

And when we do these things, unilateral decisions, a breakdown of that tradition, that mutual agreement and that mutual respect is a sad comment on where we're going to be going in this legislature — unilateral decisions, incompetence, and frankly some of the bullying tactics.

And the bullying comes out not only in the mocking comments that are made in this legislature but in some of the actual intimidating comments that are made in this legislature that go

basically unheard in *Hansard*, but are heard by many of us who sit in this legislature, and who I think, well not only are hurt but are dismayed by some of the things that are said. And frankly, how can you have respect for someone who speaks the way they do in this legislature and by their very speech and by the very words that they say harm — harm — the esteem that this legislature should have in all of our minds.

We will no longer have that respect if the role of the opposition is undermined as it is being done with this closure rule. Basically a healthy democracy has to have an effective opposition or the majority will overrun the minority. Many of my colleagues have talked about that.

And interestingly enough, in the CPA conference of September in '07 in India, one of the workshops was on the roles, rights and responsibilities of the opposition. And many things came out of that plenary or that workshop that are applicable here today to talk about why an opposition does what it does and why it needs to be how it is for democracy to be strong and to be relevant to the people that it serves.

There was a general consensus [in the workshop] that there can be no strong democracy without a strong opposition.

And I think that's what the people of Saskatchewan elected us to be. There's enough of us to be strong. I've heard many, many times people say to me, they're so glad to see the people that are here because they know we need a strong opposition.

Indeed, the strength of the opposition in Parliament is an essential element for measuring the quality of democracy in a nation.

And if people think that this doesn't matter, when people are making light of this debate, it does matter because democracy does matter to people. And people who are watching, people who hear about this, it can't be taken lightly when democracy is threatened and democracy is undermined. This is not something to be taken lightly or to be mocked because it is serious for our nation. And I will be coming to some of the things that it actually can do that is demonstrated for our prosperity even.

A responsible opposition performs a critical role to the effective working of Parliament and to the well being of the nation [as I've said] . . . It ensures the views of the minority are given full exposure, especially when the matter at hand is of great national importance.

The things we do are of importance to this whole province. It is important that everything has as much exposure and debate as possible.

By doing so, the opposition becomes the voice of the voiceless, builds the confidence of the people and reassures them that their concerns and interests are ably expressed and protected. The opposition also checks on the activities of the government. This is done through questions in . . . the committee system.

Basically the watchdog of the government, “. . . the opposition highlights and exposes those aspects of the government policies

and operations that are not in the national interest.”

For example today what we're talking about is not in the province's best interests. When we have undermined the respect, and the mutual respect that we have held in this Assembly, the way we have done business with the rules, this is not going to be for the betterment of the province. We will be judged by what we do today in years to come.

The opposition highlights and exposes those aspects of the government policies and operations that are not, as I said, in the national interest. And consequently the government is sometimes then induced to modify its policies to be in harmony with the public opinion. And as many of my colleagues have said, the public will judge. They will judge.

This appears to be a limited debate. It will have long-reaching and far-reaching effects on our society, and people will judge us by what we do tonight. The opposition would have to have certain things to deliver their roles effectively. You have to have certain rights. And if we believe the public interest is at stake, we do have to oppose the government's action. We do have to speak up and say so. And it's interesting that these are people who come from around the world in Commonwealth countries. This is what they have said. And we sit here today and talk about undermining all of this by weakening our democracy and our democratic process in this province.

[17:30]

It is the opposition's role to find faults and to suggest amendments to the legislation, which is what we've done — ask questions and scrutinize the actions. That's our role. “The opposition acts as a public watchdog over the activities of government.” That's the whole idea of an opposition.

“... in a parliamentary democracy those that govern must constantly compete for the favour of the people so ... [the people] always [know they will] have a choice.” And there are people in other countries who have talked about their democracies who have turned their parliaments into a rubber stamp — places where military rule; democracy no longer has any validity or any relevance. It's rubber-stamping. I mean if we can look at closure and we change rules unilaterally, we can just talk about rubber-stamping democracy.

There's “... healthy criticism is good for a healthy government and that arrogance has no place in a democracy.” Our government was accused of being arrogant after 16 years in government. This government, Mr. Speaker, has a degree of arrogance after four or five months — five months, I believe. It's really going to be disappointing to see and it's actually kind of a frightening thought to see how far this arrogance will take them in the coming years. I don't think anybody is going to be happy with where this is going to take us if what we see today is carried on and continued.

The opposition has to be, it's “... seen as an institutional promise that a change of government is possible and a reminder of the temporary nature of authority and power.” So you may be able to use your hammer, your heavy-handedness now, but it's a temporary measure. It's given to you as a trust from the public and if you abuse that trust you may be able to get away with it

once but the public is watching.

And I have often joked that there's two or three people watching these proceedings and basically they're our parents or our family. I've had so many people come up and say to me, no that's not true; we watch. So people are watching us. It may seem to be an isolated Chamber activity tonight because there's few of us in the Chamber. But people do watch and they pay attention and we will be judged.

The best interests of a democratic practice ... And “... in the best interest of democratic practice and in the interest of the nation that both the ruling party and the opposition [have to] be loyal to the nation and uphold ... [the] law ...” and what is the best interest of the public. A civil society doesn't function the way that ... When we talk about the majority overrunning the views of the minority so that they cannot be heard, a civil society doesn't function that way.

Third world countries operate that way in a dictatorship or in a totalitarian manner where the minority is not heard or their voices considered. And we see daily the struggle that these nations and these people — those oppressed — mount to change their lot. People resist that. They do not agree that the minority should not be heard or considered.

To many watching and listening, this issue does not seem to be that significant. But the essence of democracy demands the respect of the government for the legitimate role of the opposition.

In this instance, the Sask Party government did not prepare itself to carry out its legislative role. The agenda was not prepared. It's not as if it was a surprise. We had legislation in the fall. We had ample opportunity to have sittings in evenings. We had ample opportunity intersessionally to meet and discuss these things. So how come this came as such a big surprise to the House Leader and his members of the Sask Party that now we have to bring in something that we've hardly ever seen in this government? I've not seen it in 10 years. How we have to do that is beyond me.

They were for all intents and purposes asleep at the wheel in the Sask Party. And to be charitable, it is a huge learning curve to come into government. It's a huge learning curve. They had very little experience on the government side and in some cases little aptitude for leadership.

The sticking point of our argument, however, is that when government finally realized that the rules of the House would not facilitate their agenda, and because they had failed to properly prepare for the session, they got out the big stick — change the rules.

That's a pretty extreme measure. There was no discussion. There was no attempt to negotiate. There was no attempt to discuss compromise — what could be done to change the way this was, what could be done to fix it. There was no attempt to do that. What we saw was the hammer come out and this is something that ... It will damage the reputation of this Assembly and it will damage the respect for democracy.

Less than two years ago when the Sask Party was in opposition,

they negotiated the very rules of this Legislative Assembly that they are today trying to change. And negotiating is the key word.

The rule changes were implemented in 2006. We all know what they meant. We had many, many hours of discussion on what this would mean at the joint committee level. And it was a hard decision to come to, because we have traditionally not had fixed dates. We have not had fixed hours. Basically the government was at the basically the whim of the opposition when things started and stopped. So this was a huge step forward and mutually agreed in this Assembly to promote democracy and basically respect and some sort of order in the Assembly, and order in our lives actually, because it's much easier to serve your community when you have some idea of what days you'll be in the community. Now obviously we will not be in our constituencies. I will not get to Eastview for a long time with these changes of hours. It is going to hamper my ability to serve my constituents. I won't be there.

The previous rule changes, as I said, were results of studies and reviews and observations. It wasn't taken lightly to change the rules. The Sask Party government, as I've said, as a result of their own incompetence . . . This has nothing to do with anything else except not being prepared and not being competent to be government in this first session. Your learning curve is over. Your time is over. You do not have a do-over. I mean nothing is . . . You have to jump in and take over and be in charge. You're in government. That's your job. And you didn't do it.

So rather than doing the honourable thing and the democratic thing and basically the standard practice when it comes to rule changes and consulting with the opposition, as I said, out came the hammer. Mr. Speaker, when a government abuses its majority and unilaterally changes the rules, then democracy as it is envisioned in this province and within the rules of the Assembly is gone.

I think one of my colleagues said, this is the day that democracy dies. That's a stark statement, but we're chipping away at something we have held dear here and that we've taken a long time to get to this point. And we have seen basically a cavalier attitude that if it doesn't work for them, it's gone.

That's not how this Assembly has worked up to this point. And I've been here 10 years; I've not seen this. The true test of democracy, the true test of parliamentary system is based on how this legislature does work. It's based on the rules of the House. And the unilateral change of rules is taking away from the balance needed between majority and minority interests, and it is eroding democracy.

The rules are in place; they're there to protect the rights of both the minority and the majority interests. It is for a balance. And to quote Stanley Knowles, and I know my colleagues have done so over the course of this debate, in his "The Role of the Opposition in Parliament":

Democracy includes 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 in and month out, day in and day out, during the time between elections.

So as I say, we are judged always on what we do here. And again, according to some of the information that we have from the States:

There can be no single answer to how minority group differences in views and values are resolved — only the sure knowledge that only through the democratic process of tolerance, debate, and willingness to compromise can free societies reach agreements that embrace the twin pillars of majority rule and minority rights.

And to quote John Diefenbaker:

If Parliament is to be preserved as a living institution . . . [the] Loyal Opposition must fearlessly perform its functions. When it properly discharges them the preservation of our freedom is assured. The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends. It upholds and maintains the rights of minorities against majorities. It must be vigilant against oppression and unjust invasions by the Cabinet of the rights of the people.

The members of this Assembly are:

. . . elected by free men and women on the basis of free discussions which cannot be abrogated, [it] is not just a club of good fellows who ought to do the nation's business in the shortest possible time and with the least possible contention; rather it is a 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 . . .

And this again is from Stanley Knowles.

The opposition has only 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.

From Stanley Knowles again.

Mr. Speaker, we will be judged, as I said, by what we do today and what we let go today. I think it's a harsh commentary that, when I say, what does this mean to people, respect for politics and politicians has reached an all-time low. And there is a major disconnect with the public.

As politicians, if we fail to protect democracy — indeed, mock democracy and the very tenets — how then can we expect democracy to matter to the people who watch us? We are the role models for the public and by our actions contribute to their disdain.

We all will be judged by our actions in the next four years. Today is a major black mark on the Sask Party government. If this is the new way for Saskatchewan, we are not ready for growth and prosperity.

And I do want to quote one thing about how democracy leads to prosperity:

In the developed world, Parliaments are a reasonable independent, open, and transparent check on government, hence our prosperity. For the rest of the world, Parliaments are dominated by their governments . . .

and are not as prosperous as we are.

And we are willing to give this up? We will not be, we'll be not ready for growth and prosperity. We are ready for a rubber-stamping version of democracy, seen mostly in third world countries.

It is a sad day for democracy, Mr. Speaker. It's a sad day to see that an incompetent government has taken us all to this point, where we have to stand up and defend democracy in this House. It is a sad day, and it is a black mark for the Sask Party. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to make a few statements regarding what has occurred in our Assembly. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was when I was first elected and came to, came to the Assembly and people were talking about the committee that was working, that was working on rule changes, that was working co-operatively with the opposition regarding the rule changes. And how everyone talked, could this be possible? Could the government and the opposition come together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they could come together on agreed-to rules that would make this Assembly an Assembly we could be proud of in Canada? And as the committee worked and spent hours on the rule changes and we heard reports back, it became something that all of us looked at and talked about that this was going to in fact be a reality.

So when the committees finally gave its unanimous report and we were, at that point in time saw a calendar — agreed hours, joint committees, or committee work, and the committee work that the committees would do — we were all a bit, I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and perhaps you included, proud that we had achieved this. That our committees, that the people working on that and the support we had given them and the freedom we had given them, that it showed to us that democracy truly, truly was alive and well in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I think, and I think that we all here, including yourself, could agree on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was then, it was then that now we had an election and we had a new government, and that is a democratic right of every individual in this province to vote for our governments, and they chose the Saskatchewan Party to govern for the next four years.

They had hoped, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as most people do when they vote, they had hoped for something new. They had hoped for change, and they were anticipating and waiting to see what

that change would bring. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were hoping for a bright new future, and I'm not sure that that's what they got as the member across the way has just said. I don't think they got her. They didn't get her.

[17:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what they did get is I think they're witnessing in the first four months and some odd days is that they got disappointment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They got disappointment.

And I just at this time would like to read perhaps into the record some of the things that were said about this committee, about the House Services Committee, where a Speaker at that time, Myron Kowalsky, said, "the changes are another step toward the process of modernization," Mr. Deputy Speaker, he said. The goal is to make the Assembly work more effectively and efficiently.

The new calendar will also change the number of weekly sitting days from four to five, similar, similar, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to other Western provinces. We were coming on board, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were coming on board with the rest of the Western provinces, and I think most members appreciated the ability that they were going to receive Friday as a constituency day.

There was a lot made, as you know at that time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there was talk that the politicians would use that as a day off, but I think we've proven them wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Everybody in this Assembly has used that constituency day to good advantage — good advantage to meet with the constituents, good advantage to deal with their problems, good advantage to talk to our constituents, to visit with them. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is at the core of democracy. At the very core of democracy is the exchange between the people who are elected and the people who elected them.

Further on that, after a careful, and this was House leader Glenn Hagel at the time:

"After a careful review of the operations of other legislative processes, we have come to the conclusion that these changes will result in a more productive and effective Legislative Assembly . . . These changes will allow members to better balance their duties as legislators and to their constituents."

The new committee system allows for two committees to sit simultaneously, which means the Assembly now sits the same number of working hours in 65 days as it previously did in 73. A very, very productive change, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

At the same time that this was being said, we had the member, the opposition House leader at that time, stood and said the following, Mr. Deputy Speaker: I believe that it is the first full session . . . And this was on May 17, 2007:

I believe [that] this is the first full session where we've operated under the new rules of the Assembly that have been established and developed . . . in balance we have

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

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

I could not agree with him more, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was a bright day for the people of Saskatchewan and for the Saskatchewan legislature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this time also I would just like to read to the record a few points on the role of the opposition in parliament. And this from the Hon. John G. Diefenbaker:

If Parliament is to be preserved as a living institution . . . [the] Loyal Opposition must fearlessly perform its functions. When it properly discharges them the preservation of our freedom is assured [Mr. Deputy Speaker]. The reading of history proves that freedom always dies when criticism ends [Mr. Deputy Speaker]. It upholds and maintains the rights of minorities against majorities. It must be vigilant against oppression and unjust invasions by the Cabinet of the rights of the people [Mr. Deputy Speaker].

From Stanley Knowles:

. . . 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" [Mr. Deputy Speaker] . . .

Mr. Knowles goes on to say:

. . . [The members of this Assembly are] 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 time and with the least possible contention; rather it is a 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 . . . [the intention] should be drawn to proposals that ought to be made but which are often overlooked . . .

Careful scrutiny, Mr. Deputy Speaker, careful scrutiny is also at the heart of what we are speaking about. And unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has occurred is that after one day of debate on unilateral change, we have the introduction of closure.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reasons given are that the government will not be able to pass its Bills. Now to me, after feeling and watching as a new member this House work co-operatively together to come together to pass legislation that we would all be proud of, that would bring us in line with the other Western provinces, what has happened?

The government could have started the session on March 3. They could have started it on March 3, but they waited until March 10. We did not sit evenings. We lost valuable time. We have important legislation that needs debate. Instead we are stuck on debating rule changes — rule changes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now the government talks about democratic change. They talk about democratic change. In the *Saskatchewan Party Policy Book*, "Saskatchewan Party Guiding Principles," no. 6 reads: "Democratic reform to make government more responsive to the people it serves." This is one of the guiding principles of the Saskatchewan Party — "Democratic reform to make government more responsive to the people it serves."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in some of the legislation that they have passed, the arguments that we hear from the Saskatchewan Party in terms of, in terms of democracy in the workplaces — which they put forward as one of their changes that they feel are . . . or one of their Bills that are specified Bills — they argue that there should be an open forum for discussion prior to a vote, an open forum, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for discussion. And I wonder if that means, I wonder if that means one day. I wonder if that means one day of open forum discussion before there is a vote. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think it means one day of discussion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so there's a lot of talk about democracy. There's a lot of talk about democracy, and the talk about democracy is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, democracy is a very fragile structure. Democracy is very fragile, and we as agents must be ever vigilant of the faith and trust that has been placed in us by the electorate to protect that democracy because that is our greatest promise.

Democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is invested in the people when exercised directly by them — by them, Mr. Deputy Speaker — or by the elected agents under a free electoral system. And we must ever, ever be vigilant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has failed, has failed its first real test by curtailing debate, democratic debate on the issues in this House. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's indeed a sad day when debate is curtailed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they brought forward censure. I would say they brought this forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of incompetence, because of incompetence and because they are too arrogant to admit it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question would be, is, what are they afraid of? What are they afraid of? Why are they afraid? Why are they afraid of democracy and debate? Why shut it down? Why not hear the debate, hear the arguments, work towards solutions? That is what this Assembly is about. That is what I thought the Assembly was about after getting elected, after getting elected and seeing the committee come together and propose these very positive reforms for this Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what about their essential services legislation? Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does this say in terms of debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they say that this legislation is favoured by the public. Then why are they so afraid of public scrutiny? Why are they so afraid of democracy? If the public is in favour of this legislation, like the Sask Party's saying, then why are they so afraid to have it confirmed? Why not take it out, why not take it out for public hearings, put it up to public scrutiny? Let democracy, let the to and fro of debate take place. Why are they afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Are they afraid? And is this becoming the way that the Sask Party will operate in government? Will they use, as we have heard, a heavy hand? Will they use a sledgehammer to close debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only have they failed the tests on these Bills in not allowing public debate, but they have also failed the test on not allowing public debate on expanded hours. They are ramming it, I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they ramming it through because they are afraid. They are afraid of debate. They are afraid of democracy. And they are afraid of putting themselves to the test, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are hiding.

They are four-plus months into the government, and they are failing, failing on Station 20. They're failing in areas of human rights. And they are simply failing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They appear to have little respect for people — belittling — and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are failing. They are afraid of being wrong, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of having to admit that they are wrong. And they are, from what I am seeing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, forgetting why they are sitting here.

Democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is for people. And as I said earlier, we were elected and now are the agents for people in a democratic place. We have to remember why we are here because we are here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as guardians of democracy. They are not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest — in fact I would say I believe — that they are not allowing the loyal opposition to debate issues. Afraid of debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker; afraid of entering into dialogue, afraid of having something that they have done put under scrutiny, and they are afraid of being wrong so they are reacting in fear, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[18:00]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they say fear breeds ignorance, but added to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, fear also breeds intolerance and provokes suppression and that is what is happening here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're trying to suppress debate. They're trying to suppress scrutiny of ideas. And I ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why the fear? There are 38 members over there. There are 19 over here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're not allowing us to do our job. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I came here elected by the people of Saskatoon Fairview to do a job, and I have to go back and tell them that the new government is not allowing me to do my job. They're not allowing the citizens of Saskatchewan to hear debates. They're not allowing the citizens of Saskatchewan to hold public consultations. They are not allowing the citizens of Saskatchewan to hold public hearings, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Instead what is happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're ramming Bills through showing that they are the boss, Mr.

Deputy Speaker, and unfortunately that we have to use in this Assembly words like bully. And they are doing this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said because they're trying to hide the incompetence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the process . . . and I see my time is running out. Where is the process in the debate? Where is the democracy and who is it that suffers when these kind of actions . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Melfort is chirping over there, and I think I'm glad that he finally was listening. I think he was listening all along, and I would hope that the words that he used before, that he would stand by them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that he would stand by them. Thank you.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's with a great deal of pleasure that I rise . . . Well maybe not as much pleasure as I would like rising tonight to join in this debate because I truly wish that we weren't in this position and having this debate on a forced change of rules in the House to accommodate a government who is incapable of establishing an agenda or incapable of following an agenda or any type of plan. Well it's a disappointment in the House and a disappointment for democracy. And as my colleague just commented, when we are duly elected and come into this Assembly to make presentation on behalf of our constituents and engage in the democratic process, it truly is a sad evening when we're debating this motion this evening.

Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years we have seen some significant rule changes here in the Assembly. And it's not unusual because you can go back over the decades, and there has always been a continual process of modernization in assemblies and parliaments throughout the world. Whether it goes . . . Well and I think the most common and the one we are most aware of would be modernization that would include a parliamentary calendar.

And we can look at the House of Commons in Ottawa and they adopted a parliamentary calendar in 1982 in order to make the sitting and non-sitting times predictable. The United Kingdom instituted a parliamentary calendar in 1992 within a more sweeping modernization agenda for their parliament. Also we see other provinces across Canada. Alberta initiated a calendar in 1993, Manitoba in 1996. And Manitoba's calendar was made permanent in 2003. British Columbia also entered on one of these modernization projects in 2002 and made their calendar permanent in 2004.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in May 2006 the Standing Committee on House Services in our Assembly appointed a subcommittee, a study delegation whose purpose it was to study and make recommendations on the adoption of a legislative calendar and revisions to sitting times here in Saskatchewan.

And this subcommittee was composed of all members of the House, all parties present in the House, and also the Speaker of the House. And it was a joint, co-operative, and collaborative effort between the government and the opposition. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on October 16 the Standing Committee on

House Services, which was made up of members from the government and opposition, unanimously adopted the recommendations of that subcommittee.

The recommendations of that subcommittee were based on the experience of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan with an informal parliamentary calendar. The informal calendar was based on an agreement made in May 2004 between the government and the opposition, and that agreement expired in the spring of 2006. And the recommendations of the subcommittee were also based on the reviews and observations of the parliamentary calendar being used in other Canadian provinces and that was Alberta, British Columbia, and Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, we went through a number of years of discussion on this, and the subcommittee did a fair bit of investigation. Both the opposition and the government of the day came to consensus on the issues of how the rules should be changed, what was important, and what would best fit our legislature here in Saskatchewan. And it was found that fixed sessions provided ministers, members, and their staff the ability to manage their time more effectively. It was a more effective use of staff resources, and the subcommittee also found that parliamentary calendars helped members balance their duties in the Assembly with their constituency and caucus responsibilities.

And, Mr. Speaker, for me a big point of this was the point where they talk about managing your constituency responsibilities because when we don't live in the city where the legislature is located, we're travelling back and forth between our home communities and the legislature, and the last thing we want to do is not to be able to bring forward the views of our constituents and to be able to deal with issues that are there at home. So this was important for many of us.

The subcommittee at that time was firmly convinced that a permanent parliamentary calendar would make it easier for the Assembly as a whole to carry on its functions more effectively and that a permanent parliamentary calendar was the next step in further modernization. So once again there were studies done, and the subcommittee had a look at a number of recommended rule changes and the joint committee, here again chaired by the Speaker of the House, the official opposition House leader, and the government House leader. And this again was a collaborative and co-operative effort to create a new set of rules for our Legislative Assembly, that it would allow our Assembly to function in a more productive, efficient, and effective manner.

Mr. Speaker, for someone to say that they didn't have a role in this process or didn't understand the rules as they are today, both parties in the House today played a big role in establishing these new rules and the initiation and the gradual implementation so that our spring session in 2007 was the first session where the new rules were fully implemented. And it was that full cycle of the new rules being put in place and actually being able to work through them and to get a better feel for how they actually worked. And Mr. Speaker, it was a pretty successful process, and I think the work that was invested by the members in this House and by members who are no longer sitting in this House, they invested a great deal of time and did a

very good job on the new rules that we have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we can talk in detail about the rules. We can look at some of the specific changes. But what I want to say to you is today, when I was first elected a number of years ago, 1999, one of the very first committees . . . And we all know when you're first elected and you come into the Assembly, it can be a bit of a confusing process when you start to look at the caucus that you are elected into. You may have committees of your caucus. You will have standing committees of the legislature. There may be special committees. And it can take you a little while to get on to how the system works, how the processes work. It can be a little confusing, and it can cause a little bit of struggle at times.

The very first committee that I was put on to where we sat down and started doing some work, was in early 2000 and it was one of our caucus committees. And what was proposed at that time was a discussion paper that we released to look at the modernization of the Saskatchewan Assembly. And while at that time being new to the Legislative Assembly, and before the subcommittee or once the committee started working, the all-party committee starting working, but that initial paper was really my introduction into the committee system within the Legislative Assembly.

And to see how those rules and the process worked and changed and the rules were developed to suit what was needed here in Saskatchewan and what our members felt would be appropriate and a good adjustment for Saskatchewan, there's two things that really stand out for me.

First and foremost, we talked about modernization of the legislature, and it's really kind of a global term that can encompass many factors. But for me the discussion and the argument that stood out for me was that I don't think there's a politician anywhere in North America — and it could even be beyond — that shows some distress when we look at voter turnout and voter apathy when it comes to the democratic system and elections right across Canada, right across the United States. We worry that the institution has somehow drifted away from being relevant in our constituents' lives and that they feel that somehow what we do here in this Assembly may not affect them as directly as it can. So for me part of the whole discussions when we got into the discussion on changing the rules and modernizing the system and making our parliamentary system more relevant to citizens to try and engage them in not only in the issues of the day but also the processes within the legislature.

And that's where we went to the policy committees and the policy field committees that are established where Bills, where estimates will be referred to the appropriate policy committees, and they will have a set period of time depending on the interest in the Bill or the controversy in the Bill, where members can sit and all members — you don't have to be specifically a member of the committee — but any member of this Legislative Assembly and whatever area of Saskatchewan they represent is more than welcome to come to those committees and be able to question either the minister and the department on a Bill and have a good discussion.

It's not a yes/no session. We will get some lengthy answers and

explanations from officials as well as from ministers, and you can have the kind of dialogue that gives that better understanding of a more open discussion and one-on-one discussion where you can actually address issues that may be a problem for someone in your constituency. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I'm in this Assembly I'm never referred to on my first . . . by my first name unless I'm in trouble. So hopefully that doesn't happen.

But seriously, we're not referred to by our names. We are referred to by the constituencies that we are elected from and represent. And there's a good reason for that because each of us brings with us the comments of our constituents, the concerns of our constituents to speak to a Bill or to speak to an issue here in the Assembly. So this discussion in committees, this discussion on the floor of this Assembly means so much more than what it may at face value. When people see for a few minutes they may watch the Assembly on TV but it goes much deeper than that.

And it is a long and storied history we have as members in this legislature, and it brings with it a sense of responsibility of those that have come before us and have had some wonderful debates in this House — issues that have been discussed and debated, that have had a long-lasting impact on the province that we all live in and call home.

[18:15]

So, Mr. Speaker, when we are faced with changes that will unilaterally change rules within the House for a period of time and take away all that's been worked for — take away all of the expectations that we bring with us not only as MLAs but the expectations of our constituents, of opinions of theirs that we will voice, concerns that we will bring forward to hopefully have addressed — when that is taken away, it's a serious matter. And, Mr. Speaker, to have this taken away . . . We are in third week, fourth week of spring session.

Mr. Speaker, these rules were set out with the full intent and understanding that whether you were in government or whether you were in opposition, there was a balance. There was a balance in the rules so that the government could get the work done that they intended to do and have the ability to do, but also it gave a balance to the opposition, that the opposition also had the opportunity to do the job that we are here for — to question, to shed light on areas, and maybe even to have questions of our own answered, maybe just to develop that better understanding of whatever initiative the government is going through.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we were with a new government that started out with a very short, eight-day session in the fall. Now many of us were surprised that it was only eight days because you often wonder by the time you get into the Assembly and get settled in, there's not a lot of time for committees to work. So we had a Throne Speech, couple of Bills that were tabled, and that was it.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the duties of the public policy field committees is that they have the ability to meet outside of the sitting of the legislature, so it could have easily been done, that those policy field committees could have sat after Christmas until sometime into March when the House was

convened again.

And even then the set calendar that we've adopted through this rule system was set to have the House start on March 3. Well it was postponed and didn't start till March 10. And that's fine. I understand that there could be issues of a new government getting through a budget and getting that all developed, but there's absolutely no reason why the committees couldn't have sat. There's absolutely no reason why the committees couldn't have been giving input, asking questions on the legislation during that time.

The whole system is built around developing a committee system that will provide opportunity for public input and will provide opportunity for this Legislative Assembly and those committees to work between formal sessions of the Legislative Assembly. That's part of the big push behind the modernization was to provide that connect, so public could make presentations to these committees, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to prove and to have another avenue — not to prove — but to give the public an avenue where they could feel the impact and have some input into legislation that may impact their lives.

That's the whole intent behind the policy field committees. They are now a major portion of this legislature, and they've been set aside and ignored, absolutely ignored. So the whole idea behind the modernization of this Legislative Assembly has been set back years, almost eight years of work — eight years of work to put in place an appropriate system in this Legislative Assembly, for public input, for a good consultation process that could work outside of the legislature.

We aren't constrained by the hours of the legislature. We aren't constrained by the days that the legislature sits because the policy field committees have the ability to sit between sessions. They have the ability to do work. They have the ability to receive public input. They have ability to have their work done before we return to the House. This was ignored, ignored. It wasn't that it wasn't known that this could be done. It was ignored. So now here we sit where the government is going to unilaterally change the hours of the House to cram through some legislation.

And my colleague from Saskatoon made some very good points. Why are you afraid of public input? What in this legislation . . . if it meets national norms, if it's the same as every other province has, why are you afraid to have consultations and public input into this legislation?

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's the same thing we've seen from the very beginning since this government has been elected. It's either their way or no way. And during the first session — that very short eight-day session that we had in the fall — the Premier was in the House and he said, oh well we already did our consultations. They were held on November 7. Ha, ha, ha. Well isn't that funny.

Well do you know what? They were elected, but it doesn't give you carte blanche to say for the next four years, I'm going to do whatever I want. It means that the public has entrusted in you the responsibility of building the province of Saskatchewan but also in consultations with our population. It's not just by yourself. It's in consultations with the public. It's in

consultation. It's within the debate in this Legislative Assembly.

But over and over again — whether it's firing civil servants who won't toe the party line or, worse yet, firing them for no cause, without cause; whether it's political meddling in the Labour Relations Board and quasi-judicial boards that are at arm's-length from the Government of Saskatchewan no matter who's in power, and voicing expectations in the media that these boards need to take into consideration the views of the government of the day — it's either my way or no way. And that's exactly what we have seen in the legislature. That's exactly what we're seeing with this forcing through of the rules and legislation. It's either their way or no way.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's difficult for us to sit here and do this. But you know, we're elected to bring forth the views of our constituents, and we'll do that. If we have to sit here till midnight and be here again at 10 the next day, we'll do that because that's the job we're elected for and that's our responsibilities in this legislature. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what we intend to do. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to have the opportunity to participate in this debate. I'm not necessarily all that glad about this debate taking place, the cause for this debate of course being the heavy-handed, the sledgehammer tactics of the government.

It's interesting. I've been in this House since the spring of 2001, and over those years, Mr. Speaker, I've heard a lot from the opposition about the importance of democracy, about the importance of due process, about the importance of rules that serve not just the government but the opposition as well, that serve us all as we strive to do our part here in this parliamentary democracy in this Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I know for a fact that, if this was us doing this to them, there would be no end of outrage. There'd be no end of gnashing of teeth and rending of garments over on that side, Mr. Speaker. And do you know what? They'd be justified because, when it comes to the rules of play, the rules of engagement, there's a long-standing tradition in parliamentary democracy that it must be agreed upon by both sides. That's the very essence of democracy.

And it says a lot about people that when they get a little bit of power how they use that power. And if they use that power in a just way, in a fair way, in a way that respects the rules of fairness, that respects common tradition and agreed-upon principles that have evolved over centuries, Mr. Speaker, if they abuse that power what does it say about them? And I guess in this case it says plenty. It says, we've gone to the people in the fall; we got a mandate based on a certain platform that we took to the people, and we can do whatever we want because we won the election. Now of course that platform that they took to the people, there were a few things there that were — how shall we say? — less than clear at the time, Mr. Speaker.

One of those things I think of is Station 20 West, Station 20 West where we've had 2,500 people on the streets of Saskatoon saying that this is a good project. This is a community project. This is an important project to the inner city of Saskatoon. It's an important project to improve the health outcomes of people in the inner city of Saskatoon.

And I remember very well when that project was announced and the \$8 million were dedicated to that project. And I remember at that time the fact that the opposition, the then opposition, the Sask Party sent their Finance critic — no less than their Finance critic, the member from Silver Springs — to that announcement. And what the member said at that time is that this is a great announcement; call the election. Now did he say this is, this is a project that we think is ill-founded, we think this is a project that shouldn't go ahead? No what he said, you know, good project, let's get on with the election.

And I guess if he'd wanted to go to the people in a straightforward way, if that party had wanted to represent their position in a straightforward manner what they would have said is that the moment we get our hands on the public purse we're going to rip that \$8 million right out of the hands of the people in those communities and tough luck.

And I guess if they'd gotten a mandate to do that, Mr. Speaker, you know — fair ball. It's a democracy. They went to the people with a platform. That's what they said; they were straight up about it so that's the mandate they'd received from the people. But they didn't do that, Mr. Speaker. They said something else entirely before the election and then did something else entirely different after the election.

I think of the essential services legislation that's come forward. You know of course in the past year and a half in this Assembly and in the public discourse we've heard a lot from members opposite about how there would be no need for essential services legislation. And it would seem that that was so much, you know, an attempt to allay the fears on the part of working people in this province, an attempt to perhaps lull them into a sense of complacency, that essential services wasn't coming forward.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker, they didn't have it their platform. They didn't, they weren't upfront about it with the people of the province. But of course after the election, one of the first Bills that they bring forward is essential services legislation.

And when we suggest that it be taken out to the public for genuine public consultations, what is the response from this government? It's to bring down the sledgehammer of closure, to try and shut down debate; to ram home their agenda.

And I find it passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that that is the practice on this side. They've got power. They've got a mandate. They've got a mandate based on false pretenses. But they get into power, and of course, what are they doing? They're trying to ram home things that they said oh no we don't need to do this, in their very own platform.

So I guess, Mr. Speaker, on a couple of points where the opposition, the then opposition said one thing, the now Sask

Party government is doing another. You know, there's been a lot of talk in the past few days about, you know, rules; we can change the rules at whim. We can change the rules just as we see fit. Because why? We won an election in November.

But how did they win that election, Mr. Speaker? They won it on false pretenses. They won it by not being straight with the people of the province. They won it by not having the guts, the backbone to say what they were really about in places like inner-city Saskatoon, by not being straight and not having the guts to say what they really wanted to do to the working people of this province.

So again they say they've got a mandate. And I say a mandate to do what? One of the things that they ran on in this campaign, which was right interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that they brought forward fixed election dates. And it's interesting because of course, in the history of the CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party], we've always called elections more or less on four years — you know, maybe a little bit less, maybe a little bit more.

But the then opposition made a big hue and cry about how they were going to bring forward fixed election dates, you know, because they're the great champions of democracy. And it's interesting that, you know, why would they bring this forward? Because I think, Mr. Speaker, they were trying to inoculate themselves against their own record because the last government that went five years plus a day and the last government that abused democracy in this way that would need fixed election dates to guard against them are their predecessors, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess it's interesting because of course, you know, there are various members on that side that had a rich and long association with those people. So they're scared of that record. They want to hold up something to say, oh no that isn't us. We're different. So they've got a four-year fixed election date, so it's interesting in that sense, Mr. Speaker.

[18:30]

It's also interesting from the perspective that, you know, they champion democracy on the one hand. But the fundamental principles of parliamentary democracy in this legislature in terms of fair play, in terms of consensus between the parties when it comes to the basic rules of engagement in this Chamber, you know, they can't do that. So they use closure to ram home a democratic Bill, and I guess I'm glad of that because, you know, at least we'll get that Bill into law, and then we can guard against them having further abuses, future abuses of the democratic process.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to think back over the few years that I've had the privilege of sitting in this place and the many times that the members opposite have demanded fair play, have demanded, you know a fair shake under the rules, the great interest that they've had in terms of the reform process.

I know that the member from Cannington did a lot of work with the then member from Regina South in terms of a inter-party committee and work that was done to go around the world in fact, Mr. Speaker, in terms of investigating the model in

Australia. And they came home with recommendations around our committee system that improved the system, Mr. Speaker. And that was done in co-operation between the two parties.

And again, I guess we did that because democratic is our middle name in fact, Mr. Speaker, so we did that. The opposition did that because — I don't know — they had an interest in the exercise. And we came to an agreed upon set of rules around how the committees would operate, and we were able to introduce these committees that could go out across the province and take testimony or bring people in to talk about how laws would affect them.

And again the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow and other, other of my colleagues on this side of the House would talk very eloquently about the importance of how we act here influences the way people approach their institution, their democratic institutions, and how that is sometimes, how that translates into declining voter turn out because people get fed up with the democratic process, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess the reforms that we've set about over the past eight years to try and make the system more responsive to the people, make the system more accountable to the people, you know, I guess what all that relied on was an NDP government in power because we have these committees that we could use to full effect. And what do we have from the government opposite? An attempt to deny the very possibility and the great possibility of having people involved through those committees.

The way that they're bringing in closure, Mr. Speaker, it denies the very fact that it was, it was a committee of both sides of this House that involved the wise officials of this House that did a great amount of study and work to go across Canada to look at the different rules in place in different assemblies and chambers and to come back with recommendations that would make this Chamber work better — work better for the people, more efficiently for the people.

And of course one of the things they came back with was the fixed calendar. And, you know, this was something that . . . It's not like it just sort of snuck up on people, Mr. Speaker. It's not like it was a rabbit pulled out of a hat or something. This was something that was road-tested in this very Chamber. This was something that there was a lot of thought put into by both sides of the House, by both House Leaders. And of course at the time when that legislative calendar was adopted as one of the centrepieces of the legislation or the changes around the rules of the House, of course it was greeted by then the Speaker that "the changes are another step [forward] toward the process of modernization." The goal was to make the Assembly work more effectively and efficiently.

The then government House leader said:

After a careful review of the operations of other legislative processes, we have come to the conclusion that these changes will result in a more productive and effective Legislative Assembly . . . These changes will allow members to better balance their duties as legislators and to their constituents.

And the then opposition House leader, the current Government

House Leader, had this to say: "These changes are about improving the way the Legislative Assembly works, while at the same time giving MLAs more opportunity to stay in touch with our constituents."

Well, Mr. Speaker, how the times have changed. We've gone from this great state of agreements and putting out the joint press release, but of course when it comes time for joint action and real deeds to follow up those good words, you know, can you count on the Government House Leader now to live up to what he had to say then? You can't, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess I find that to be a disappointment. And I find it, you know . . . I guess my more cynical side would not be surprised. But you know, when you get together and you work to create new rules and you put all this effort in and it's ballyhooed in the House and, you know, even our, you know, political columnist, the dean of the political columnists, Murray Mandryk, says that both government and opposition give a lot, and what they did may even be a little historic, you know.

This was greeted with great fanfare at the time it was passed, and now of course we find out that because the governments can't seem to count their way through the eight days in December and what they're going to need in March, and come back late in March, and because they can't count their way through a legislative agenda, can't count their way to manage the process, it's like . . . You know right now many university students are going through finals and it's . . . You know, the member from Saskatoon Massey Place brought a fine parable about a fellow named Joe who couldn't manage his way through a semester at university and then of course paid the price for that at the end.

But I guess this is sort of like the people that don't understand the process even though they've signed off on it, even though they've helped to design it, Mr. Speaker. They say that at the end, well you know what we need to do is to jam through these changes to the rules. We need to bull our way through, and the opposition should just suck it up. And I guess I find that contemptible, Mr. Speaker.

It's like the university student that doesn't pay attention, doesn't do the work all through the semester, and then tries to get through by cramming at the end. And you know if they want to pull an all-nighter or all-weekers . . . You know people in this province look at this legislature, and they've got some problems with it already. They look at that kind of behaviour, Mr. Speaker, and it just makes them more disenchanted, more disgusted with what goes on in this place.

And I guess you know if they can't manage their own process, if they haven't got the competence, the basic know-how to get the job done and then they want to make it up in terms of cramming at the end, I guess this is where we get to with this closure motion, with this ramming home the agenda. And you know, does that improve the process here? Does that improve the job that we do on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the individual constituents who have sent each of us here to represent them? I think not, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's funny that this cramming approach, this sort of jam it at the end . . .

You know you can tell a lot about people when they've got some power and how they use that power. And if they use that power in a way where you don't co-operate and you don't consult and you just sort of play the boss and, you know, my way or the highway, it says a lot about leadership and the people that are providing that leadership or the lack of leadership as we've come to understand it in society, Mr. Speaker. So I guess I find that surprising.

I find it interesting that here we are debating these laws that the people have sent us to consider, debating these issues that the people have sent us here to give voice to. And the government's first sort of opportunity to demonstrate whether or not they know how to run a three-car parade, their first chance to show what they've learned over these years in opposition because there are certainly members in that opposition that have been here a lot longer than I have, Mr. Speaker, and in terms of the many years they sat in opposition.

And I hear a voice coming from the distant past, Mr. Speaker, almost from the Stone Age it would seem, coming from the southeast. I make no reflection on the people of that constituency. But the member from Cannington, of all people, of all people, Mr. Speaker, a former House leader, an individual who went all the way around the world, who went to Oz, Mr. Speaker, to help design the new process around this place. He should be hanging his head in shame today, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the work that had been done co-operatively in a by-partisan sense, the rules that we'd agreed upon, yes across the floor.

And now we've got the government trying to bull their way through because they apparently didn't understand the rules, because apparently they needed to take their socks off so they could count their way through the session, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that the member from Cannington likes to bellow from his chair, likes to yell from his chair. But we're not going to be yelled down, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to be yelled down. We're not going to be shouted down in this place. We're going to do the job as best we can, no matter the bullying, no matter the ramming home of agendas on that side. We're going to do the work that the people sent us here to do.

And I guess, you know, the member from Cannington likes to talk about what's happened over history. Well I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker. The member from Cannington, if he'd really meant the work that he'd done as the then opposition representative on the committee that helped to redesign the committee structure of this House, if they'd really meant what they'd done when they tried to bring in the changes to the rules to make this calendar more predictable, more efficient, more effective, you know, I guess they should have saved their breath. They should have, they should have saved the press release. Maybe we should have just stayed the way we were because the first sort of big push these guys get into, the first big jam they get into, they want us to pull not just an all-nighter, they want us to go, you know, to a way of doing business that most people find laughable.

So again, Mr. Speaker, we've been sent here to do a job. We've been sent here to do that job seriously and thoughtfully. But you know again, the member from Cannington likes to holler from his chair, bellow from his chair. I guess he should have shared

those sentiments when he was on the committee helping to redesign the rules of procedure in this place. He should have helped to do a better job when he was on the committee that went all the way to Australia, Mr. Speaker. I don't know. Perhaps he was too busy paying attention to kangaroos, or maybe he was trying his hand at surfing or something.

But apparently they didn't understand the work that they did and the decisions they made because, when it comes to the first big test of those rules and what that side does with some power, Mr. Speaker, we find out what they're made of. We find out that, you know, they can say these rules mean something, but their actions of course say something else entirely.

And of course . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Cannington, if he's so interested in this debate, he should get up and say his piece. But he's not going to do that, Mr. Speaker. He's just going to holler from his chair a little more because of course maybe, maybe he's upset that his work that he had done with the member from Regina South is being abused in such a way. I don't know. Maybe it's some kind of psychological purging that he's engaging in in terms of what guilt he feels for having played then, at that time, a positive role and seeing it treated so poorly now, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm going to be standing with the opposition on this, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to be standing up for the people that sent us here. We're going to be standing up for democracy. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This debate that we have today is about a sad time in the history of Saskatchewan. And unfortunately this is also a sad time in Canada as it relates to the role of the legislatures and of parliament in this country. What we are talking about today is democracy and the form of democracy in Canada.

And as many people know, I've always looked towards some kind of a Saskatchewan poem that catches the flavour of what's going on. And so tonight I'd like to read a poem by Gary Hyland, in his book, *Hands Reaching in Water*. And the title of this poem is "The Fragile Things":

Our dreams subside to compromise.
Damn the faltering fallibility
that condemns the fragile things we prize.

Justice comes plunging from flak-pocked skies
and freedom is conscripted for democracy.
Our dreams subside to compromise.

Who's left to challenge the disarming lies
spun by the contrary faculty
that condemns the fragile things we prize?

While wars swat innocents like flies
on our slopes of self-made misery
our dreams subside to compromise.

The illusion we are masters defies
our chronic attempts at mastery.
That condemns the fragile things we prize.

We flower lush intentions to disguise
the transgressions we are loathe to see.
Our dreams subside to compromise
that condemns the fragile things we prize.

Mr. Speaker, this is a poem that talks about some of those elusive qualities that we as Saskatchewan people, as Canadian people value — the fragile things we prize. And one of the fragile things that we prize in this country relates to the rights of people and the rights of parliaments or legislatures. Part of how we have structured our government in Canada relates to the role of this particular legislature as we move forward with the plans that we have to share the assets that are gathered together and then dispersed to the community. Part of that discussion involves how you make decisions.

[18:45]

Mr. Speaker, there's a long tradition of many centuries that relates to the rules that are agreed upon in parliament, and as my learned colleague talked about earlier, parliament is a substitute for armed combat. And, Mr. Speaker, we all prefer to work within the rules that we have developed and continue to develop to make sure that how we resolve our conflicts is done with words and not with swords.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me explain why in 2008 I think we have some things to be concerned about in Canada and in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, over the last 30 to 40 years there has been a concentration of the power of government more and more into the prime minister's office and into the premier's office.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we see is the Premier, who is a member of the legislature and in our legislature the member from Swift Current, more and more of the control of what happens is in that particular office. And this isn't something that's only happening in Saskatchewan but unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we know that our Premier is a great friend or emulator of our Prime Minister.

And, Mr. Speaker, two years ago and a few months we had a new minority government in Ottawa with a Prime Minister who believes in absolute control of what happens within his caucus and within parliament. And, Mr. Speaker, the types of central control that is happening in Ottawa I think is what's happened here in Saskatchewan over the last three or four or five months, and why we're in the mess that we're in today.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite certain but I listen carefully, I watch, I hear what different members of the government have said, especially some of the ministers but also some of the other members of the legislature, and I think that what I perceive to have happened over the last five months is that a new Premier has come in and said, well we want to do it like Prime Minister Harper. And what they've done is tried to control all of the aspects of government through one particular office and, Mr. Speaker, what has then happened is that you have all the Premier's responsibilities and the things that are related there. You have all of the caucus responsibilities and the items that are

related there. You have all of the issues that relate to the House and how that moves, plus all of the ministers' offices all being controlled through a group of people who have relatively central control.

And the reason that I talk about this tonight is that in Canada quite a number of scholars of government have identified this trend. I think probably the one that's most prominent and that people know the best is Donald Savoie, who was a former federal civil servant and in 1999, which is almost 10 years ago, he wrote a book or published a book called *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics*.

And what he effectively said is that in the federal government there was a control into the Prime Minister's office. And a number of central agencies controlled by the federal government that actually put their tentacles out and their job, as in the words of a number of the people who were talked to in this book, was to make sure that the ministers were on line, make sure that the caucus was on line, make sure that the House Leader was all, they were all pulling together on the same agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan over the last number of months we have heard some statements that mirror or mimic the kind of thing that Donald Savoie was saying almost 10 years ago. And if you recall, the Deputy Premier made comments about why certain people were working for the government or not working for the government, and it had to do whether or not they believed in the philosophy of the Premier.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's a very strange statement and I know many people in the province are still trying to sort out exactly what that means. I know that a lot of the controversy around the Labour Relations Board and the appointment of a new Chair there relates to also this question of, well we need somebody who thinks like we do.

Now who is that we? Mr. Speaker, it's my proposition here in this debate, but I think based on hearing a number of voices right across the province, that the Premier and the smaller group of people that work together with him are part of this overall control or management, I guess is another way to put it, of the whole of government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think what happened here in this particular situation is that this was not a high item on the agenda of the transition team or the Premier's office which was, how do we get our legislation completed, and that this got away on them because practically there was a concern about getting the budget together.

And we acknowledge and I think the numbers of the speakers on our side have acknowledged that it's a difficult task to put a whole budget together in time for a middle of March announcement when you've just been brought into government in late November. Well I think what happened, Mr. Speaker, is that because of the centralized control emulating the federal government, the Premier and the people around him all of a sudden started realizing that there were some problems here.

And it's only about just over a week ago that all of a sudden there was a panic that there was a mess and rather than work

together to sort out how this might be sorted out within the rules that had been drafted carefully over many years by members of both sides of the House, the decision was made, go full steam ahead. Now based on my perception of what's happened within the government over the last four or five months, I think there must have been some direction or some push from the centre — and whether that's the Premier or the people around him — that we've got to get this done.

Now we've heard quite a number of times that the concern is — and I think I even saw it in the media the last couple of days based on comments made by the House Leader — is that we have these things that we promised to do in the election and we're going to do this no matter what the rules of the House are, what the rules of democracy are.

Mr. Speaker, this is the fragile thing that we have that we're concerned about, is this ability to allow for discussion, which is the role of parliament, this ability to allow for going out to the people and saying, you know, do you as the public really think this makes a lot of sense to do this? All of that is being pushed to the side because of a centrally controlled agenda.

And, Mr. Speaker, based on the experience that I've had in a number of the committees that I've been part of over the last while — and I'm talking about our legislative committees here in this legislature — I can see the surprise on some of the backbencher members who are members of these committees when information comes out that, oh that's slightly different than the line that we heard in the House or that we heard in the media.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that there are a number of the members of this legislature who are getting a bit uneasy with the amount of centralized control. And I think that practically what we can do is recognize that today may be the low point in democracy in Saskatchewan. But I set out a challenge to this government and I set out a challenge to us as the opposition, that as we move forward we need to think through about what it means for what we can do for the Saskatchewan people as a legislature — not 10 years from now, not 20 years from now, but 50 years from now.

What we want is a place where decisions can be made for the benefit of all of the people and that are actually broad-based consensus decisions, rather than this kind of centralized control that we're all feeling today as being inappropriate.

Now we know that some of the great uneasiness on the national level related to our current Prime Minister does relate to his concern about being in control of the agenda. Mr. Speaker, we're only four or five months into this government, but I think the same kinds of concerns are starting to register with the people about this Premier and about the people around him.

Now one of the challenges that has come up in various ways over the last four or five months, and frankly before that as well but maybe not as well understood, is well who are these people that are providing the advice to the Premier? And Mr. Speaker, it appears that many of them are not the elected colleagues here in this legislature, but they're actually people who were part of an earlier government that caused a lot of difficulty for our province.

And that particular concern is registered in a number of different ways. Mr. Speaker, once again I set out a challenge to the government, I set out a challenge to this legislature — and that includes all of us — that we need to start rethinking what the role of each individual member is, what the role of the government members are, and what the role of executive government is.

It may be that the emulation of some of the US [United States] model of governance is causing some rather great stress on institutions like our legislature. And what I mean by that is any of us who have been involved in Canada-US comparisons of how our legislatures work know how difficult it is to explain that the Attorney General is a member of the legislature, part of the Premier's cabinet and accountable in that structure as opposed to being accountable directly to the people and elected separately. That's an American model that is there.

We talk and we know that our present Speaker I'm sure has given some of these kinds of speeches. We know that our previous Speakers have spent a lot of time talking to the public about the role of the legislature, the role of executive government, and the role of the judiciary. Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that because of the blended roles that we have between the legislature and executive government that there's a fragile thing there that is important to protect.

Now, Mr. Speaker, where the trouble arises is . . . comes when the trust of the political parties that are involved is eroded. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from a book that's been edited by Thomas Courchene and Donald Savoie. It's just a very recent book. I think it just came out in the last year or two, and this particular book actually was published in 2003. It's called *The Art of The State: Governance in a World Without Frontiers*.

And one of the articles in this book is written by Guy Peters. And in light of the comments I've just made, this comment by Guy Peters about reforming representative democracy — which is found on page 91 — I think puts a finger on the kind of concern that the public has with what's going on in the legislature here in Saskatchewan today. And I quote:

For much of the population now, however, political parties have become part of the problem with democratic governance, rather than part of the solution. Rather than contributing to effective governance, political parties are now often considered to be obfuscating issues, protecting incompetence, and failing to think beyond partisan advantage while in office. To some extent the parties have only themselves to blame, given the numerous instances in which political parties have rallied around party leaders who have obviously erred politically or personally, and the numerous times that parties have been seen to abuse the office in just the way they criticized the previous incumbents.

Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of the confidence in the political parties and then the further point that seemingly within our controls of our governance in Canada . . . when there's a majority government, you end up having to rely on the individual members or the premiers or the leaders who are a small group of people and their own . . . and the political consciences they have rather than having checks and balances

as they do in some of the other governance systems in Canada.

[19:00]

Mr. Speaker, what we see today is a government which has through various ways mismanaged what's happening in this particular House, and as I said before, I think it has something to do with the centralized control that's taken place here. I know that if there'd been a broader base of information in making these decisions, we wouldn't be in this jam because there are some very capable procedural people that have spent many years in this legislature.

Well because of that mess, because of that jam, we are now at a point where we may damage this fragile thing that we call democracy in Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is very sad, and it also reflects that many of the members of the public will start to further question what happens in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Tony Blair a year and a half ago or so gave a speech in Los Angeles which is reported in the American Bar Association *International Law News*. And what he was talking about in that particular speech was the role of the rule of law and traditional justice. The key point made in his speech is that we have to show that our values and our democracies are stronger, better, and more just and more fair than the alternative. And he's talking about this particular issue in light of the events of 9/11 and other extremist actions across the world.

Mr. Speaker, we think that we're somehow removed from some of those challenges to democracy that take place across the world. Well it's not so. We have a responsibility to make sure that the rule of law applies here in Saskatchewan and the rules and the traditional ways, century-old ways, that we've had to change rules and deal with conflict within the confines of this legislature are upheld.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's a sad day because that fragile thing which we call democracy is threatened by the actions of this government who have talked themselves into a very difficult spot. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for listening to me.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today with some things a little different than some of my colleagues have said. The theme of course is very similar. Here we are, day 23 of the legislature, day 23 of the legislature and we're being forced, through the use of closure, to end debate on the unilateral changing of the rules.

But what I wanted to say that's I think a little bit different is I want to draw some connectivity, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that there are hon. members on both sides of this legislature. The member for Carrot River Valley does work with relatives of mine, does some custom spraying with relatives of mine. We have a connectivity. The hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland is related to me by marriage. And we can moan and groan all

we want, but thankfully I don't see the member for Saskatoon Sutherland moaning or groaning, and I'm certainly not either, Mr. Speaker. There is connectivity.

At least three opposition MLAs represent my wife's and my children and our grandchildren. Others represent other family of mine and of my colleagues. There is an interconnectivity in this province that brings us together much more than tears us apart, and yet here we are with a motion that is going to tend to tear us apart and it says us — them. And that's a shame. It doesn't have to be that way.

I want to point out that I've attended, unfortunately and sadly, I've attended the funerals of three Sask Party MLAs, former MLAs, who passed on while they were sitting representing their constituents and representing the province of Saskatchewan. I and many of my colleagues have attended funerals, just like that. There is a connectivity. There are some things that transcend all of the disagreement or even, dare I say, even some of the ugliness that rears its head in here from time to time. We have connections, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could go on and on drawing on the ties that simply cannot be dismissed. I could go on and on drawing on that. But I wanted to say that ties help relationships, and relationships need nurturing to keep working. They need to be nurtured.

And as I was preparing this speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was reminded of the relationship that's probably the most important to myself, and that is the relationship I have with my wife. And I'm committing here to do some more to nurture that. I think many of us can say we maybe are lacking. I know I certainly am acknowledging right now that's there's more I could do to make that relationship . . . I could pay more attention to it and commit to do so.

So here we are. We've got closure of a debate that's passed earlier today because the majority used their muscle. The majority used a sledgehammer and said, at the end of this time, I have a time-limited speech. I have a time-limited speech. At the end of my time, I'm done; the new rules come. It's their way, full stop, period. No negotiation, no nothing, and I'm simply trying to urge members to consider and reconsider and ask, ask if you've tried. If you can answer the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you've tried, you've even asked, is there an alternative to this heavy-handedness?

Well I guess we all have to answer that question, but I'm asking MLAs to consider because I want to make this observation. Organizations that lack effective leadership lurch from crisis to crisis, and most of us, most of us have witnessed this in organizations that we've been either associated with or have witnessed in the past. Sometimes it's organizations that we have belonged to. And we have seen incompetent leadership cover their incompetence by simply doing something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, simply doing something.

One example that sprang to my mind — and I think I'll get some general agreement with this — the former federal Liberal government was told they had a problem with bank robberies in Toronto and they must . . . robberies and service stations being held up with guns. And so they said, ah we've got a gun problem; we must do something. And they did. They introduced the gun registry which unfortunately does very little, very little

to address, that does very little to address the problem . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm astounded. We've got a new private member over there saying, you guys supported it. And we never supported that. And we got on the record very, very early. We had then our minister, our attorney general, Bob Mitchell, stood up and made a passionate speech, and we've stuck with that ground all along.

Robbers, robbers do not register their guns. Crooks don't register their guns. We've always mounted the argument that on that front we could do much more with gun safety legislation, with education, that sort of thing.

But I digress. That's simply one example of a leadership crisis where something should have been done. And they leapt to the wrong conclusion and they did something. And so what we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all too often we've got organizations that have weak or bad leadership that do something. And in this case we have an organization that needed a channel changer, that needed a channel changer. And why did they need a channel changer? What were the debates about, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Well the debates are about things like two pieces of labour legislation, essential services which the new government said they didn't need before the election. What a difference a day makes, November 7, because ever since then they've said we'd need it. And the second piece of labour legislation — no surprise — it's changes to The Trade Union Act. But all of a sudden there's some crisis, some crisis in day 23 of a legislative session. I don't quite see it.

And the other reason they needed a channel changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the debate was broadening on the budget as people became evermore aware. Before the November 7, 2007, general election, Sask Party members had all of the answers. They said, deal with the education property tax in its totality right now. They said you've got a richness of money. Deal with it right now. Elect us; we'll fix it right now. That's what you were saying then. Well now we get a budget. We get a budget. What did they do? What did they do for your constituents or your constituents or my constituents? An average of \$27 a year on my education property tax for homeowners, and property taxes are going up I'm reminded.

And what did they do for farmers? Well let me just . . . Before I get there, let me remind members that the hon. member for Saltcoats, the now Minister of Agriculture said . . . I remember him standing in the legislature, pooh-poohing on the 1,500-and-some dollars that we were putting forward to the average typical farmer in education property tax relief. And he was pooh-poohing and saying 1,500-and-some dollars was nothing — didn't matter at all. It was nothing.

And now this year, there's an additional \$500 top-up to that, and it somehow solved all the problems of the world for farmers. Well how ridiculous is that? And farmers are getting wise to it.

The other thing that people are recognizing from the budget was this little fact. Education under us — our last budget — we budgeted \$300 million. Wound up spending I think it was \$314 million when the smoke had cleared but budgeted \$300 million.

What's this year's budget? Three hundred and two million dollars in agriculture — 302. So they went from \$300 million to \$302 million, and that for a group that is viewed as the core supporters of the Sask Party, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well let me just say if that's how you treat your friends, boy just don't count me as one. Don't do me any favours. Don't do me any favours. Don't help me. I don't want it if that's how you treat your friends — a less than two-thirds of a per cent increase in a budget while you're sitting on a mountain of \$1.3 billion.

It is small wonder, it is small wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have this motion. It's small wonder that we have this motion of closure, this motion that is demanding that the hours change. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what a shame. What a shame that we need that kind of a channel changer in your first year of government, day 23 and I know, Mr. Speaker, I've talked about it being day 23 a number of times. Let me just say why I keep referring to this being day 23, other than the obvious. It is day 23. But historically sessions have lasted minimum of 60 in my experience and the maximum is quite a bit more than that, but average somewhere around 68, 75 days, 70, 71, 72 days per year. That's the Saskatchewan average.

[19:15]

Well here we are, here we are day 23. I mean it is 30 — do the math — 37 days from day 70. Their lack of organization, their lack of ability to think things through or to talk to our Opposition House Leader and come to a deal, doesn't somehow — their lack of ability to negotiate — doesn't somehow, shouldn't somehow translate into a crisis for the rest of the world.

In a parliamentary democracy the majority shall have its way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The majority shall have its way and in this case the majority won the election. The Sask Party has the majority. You will have your way. Rest assured, you will have your way. But always, always the history in a parliamentary democracy is after the minority has its say.

And I want to simply say for the record, Mr. Speaker, that I've served 16 years in government. I have sat through endless hours of committee and hearings in this wonderful Chamber, in other rooms around this building, listening to questions that clearly had one purpose. One. Not all questions, but all too often the one purpose of the questions was simply to log time and somehow keep us government, then, in the Chamber. Let me remind you, we had a one-seat majority. It was to be cruel and unusual punishment for us and that was the ultimate goal of many of the questions and no one can deny that. No one can deny that with any credibility.

Mr. Speaker, it was to take up time and it was to tie up the legislature. Occasionally we heckled about it. Occasionally we heckled but we always knew that the opposition had its right to have its say. The opposition had the right to exhaust all of their questions and then we'd move on — always. And we sat some awfully long hours at times, but they had their say and because we believed in that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other thing I want to point out and other colleagues have pointed this out — pardon me, Mr. Speaker —

other colleagues of mine have appropriately pointed out that we have a schedule. The schedule that came to me, that I made my plans on, said we would start sitting March 3. Well, seven days later is when we came sitting, seven complete days. There's an entire week, an entire week . . .

An Hon. Member: — Get over it.

Mr. Trew: — I'm told to get over it, Mr. Speaker. But let me say, the government's inability to prepare and come to meet the schedule should not my crisis make. It should not make it where I have less access to my constituents and my constituents less access to me.

With these new rules, it is going to be very, very difficult. Yes, I have a constituency assistant. Yes, the constituency assistant will communicate to the best of that person's ability and will handle things to the best of their ability. But, Mr. Speaker, I have constituents that — there's no explaining it — but some of them actually wanted to eyeball and talk to me person to person. There's no explaining some things in life.

So we lost the week March 3 to March 10 at the government's request. Okay? And we had a schedule — this has been pointed out. But we took an Easter break, a whole week in Easter, which was, what's that? Was that last week or the week before?

An Hon. Member: — Two weeks ago.

Mr. Trew: — Two weeks ago. Thank you. Two weeks ago. Well without any mention that maybe we could come back, you know, two or three days earlier and pick up three days there. Not even a by-your-leave. And I want to point out, I think that's the very first time we've had a full week in Easter in the 21 years that I've been an MLA, the very first time. So it's hardly, you know, that we got used to it or, you know, it's somehow part of our lifestyle. Again, that's not a tradition.

The government's failure to see ahead, the government's failure to plan, the government's failure to try and negotiate with the opposition should not result in a penalty to my constituents.

I have here an invitation, Mr. Speaker, to attend a function that is taking place on Thursday the 17th in the evening and I'm going to have to regretfully send regrets to this. It would be a very fun event to be at, and it's just one of many. Why I raise it is, is not because, it's not about the member for Regina Coronation Park. It's about all of us and the invitations that we receive and the things that we try to do in our capacity as sitting MLAs. And these changed hours are going to really make it very, very difficult.

I want, members, to ask this is to Sask Party members. I really do want you to ask your House Leader, I want you to ask your House Leader if you've tried everything. Because you'll get your way, but there's a price for everything. And I'm not trying to say that in a threatening sense, but when you foster goodwill, you get more goodwill. When you use a sledgehammer and beat upon the opposition, I can tell you that oppositions push back.

In 1987 in the spring, the Devine government started sitting late. They didn't come until May and they wanted us to be out by June. And we said, no way. We wound up sitting all summer

and all fall into, it was Halloween day when we adjourned. It was the longest summer session we'd ever had. Estimates for the Department of Environment took something like 13, 17 days. Bob Lyons just did a heck of a job. Mr. Speaker, don't do it.

The Speaker: — Order. Before we introduce the next guest, I would like to ask leave of the Assembly to introduce some guests.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I would like to introduce a couple of couples that are sitting in your gallery who were involved in hosting the banquet for MLAs tonight. Willis and Wanda Thorpe, they're from Spy Hill and have taken a minute to just drop in and see how the legislative process works. And Nelson and Nicole Pohl, they're from Yorkton. And would you join me in welcoming these couples to your Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, if I could have leave to introduce some guests sitting in your gallery.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Mr. LeClerc: — I'd like to introduce Richie Hall, the defensive coach for the Saskatchewan Roughriders — Grey Cup winning — and his girlfriend, Helen Saltibus, who were down at the MLA Full Gospel Businessmen's meeting put on for the MLAs at the legislature by Saskatchewan's Full Gospel Businessmen. Richie was to share about his life and about his faith and how his faith has sustained him through the years of his high school football, university football, and then in to Calgary, and in to the province over the last 19 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, through you and to you, I'd like to introduce them, and I ask the members to give a rousing applause for one of the key factors of our, our Grey Cup win.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — To engage in debate and to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Introducing guests first, I would also really like to acknowledge Richie Hall in our Assembly here tonight. As an avid Rider fan, as a MLA from Regina, Rider

fever is, you know, awfully strong to this province. Richie Hall's meant an awful lot for a lot of years in this province when he was on the field patrolling the secondary and keeping control of the offensives that came into town. And it's a pleasure to have Mr. Hall in our Assembly tonight and his friend or girlfriend, Ms. Saltibus, as well. Thank you very much. Or wife, I apologize.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Debate will continue on the motion. I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Sitting Times for the Assembly and Standing Committees (continued)

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in discussion to the Sask Party's desire to override our rules here. And I guess what it would be worthwhile, just as this gentleman, Richie Hall, stood inside our Assembly here, I guess there could definitely be a parable or an example to football here tonight. And I think that Mr. Hall sitting up there in that Assembly symbolizes an awful lot to our province. And he symbolizes an awful lot, and I think that the members opposite could learn probably an awful lot from Mr. Hall.

If we look at the Saskatchewan Party government, this new Sask Party government, as a football team — which we certainly could — they have a challenge ahead of them. And they were tasked with that challenge at election time. They won the job if they were the coach or the general manager or whatever position they took there with the team. And I wouldn't want to compare this team to the Saskatchewan Roughriders, because unfortunately this team wouldn't be as successful as the Saskatchewan Roughriders have been. And there's many reasons for that.

And then I guess it's many things that would be contrary to the way that Richie Hall would do things there. And a big part of that is that it's sort of a football team with a great marketing scheme, a great marketing. You know they sold lots of tickets, but then when they went to go to training camp, Mr. Speaker, they forgot. They decided they were going to push time back a little bit. And in some of the off-season training some of the guys forgot to do a little bit of the work because they took it a little bit easy.

So they got to training camp, Mr. Speaker, which was pushed back a little late, and they got there a little bit out of shape. They weren't overly prepared to start their season. They got going. They engaged in the team, and of course the result of not working very hard, Mr. Speaker, the result of putting things off is that you don't have success, Mr. Speaker. And so they started losing games, losing games, losing games.

Now the difference in what the members opposite are trying to do here tonight is something that could never be done in sport, is that they're trying to override the rules of this Assembly. You certainly couldn't do that in football. You certainly couldn't appeal to the commissioner and say, Mr. Commissioner, we

need to push this schedule back. We need to play some games later in the season. So there are many comparisons that I would offer to football and it was a pleasure to see Richie Hall, a consummate professional, in this place tonight. And I hope all members within this Assembly could take note from that.

Mr. Speaker, you know it is really unfortunate in this place that, that's here to allow for a place of discourse, a place of debate, a place of different minds, a place for minority views to be present, to see a unilateral overrule of the very principles of this place. An abuse of power exercised by the members opposite is really unfortunate. Their force of their own power, of their majority is a shame.

You know, by employing basically the most heavy-handed tool available to one within the British parliamentary system is just not right. The circumstances don't warrant it, Mr. Speaker. There would be circumstances within a British parliamentary system where these actions might be warranted, something of a national crisis or a challenge. But in fact when we look at the local crises within our province, these guys don't respond to those either.

It becomes an issue, I guess, of the . . . it takes into account the democratic reform that was put in motion here by many members of this Assembly, on both sides, done co-operatively — co-operatively might I remember you, Mr. Speaker. The changes were made to enhance House proceedings. And in many ways we serve as a progressive model across our world and then definitely within our British parliamentary system. I think in many ways the role of our system here and our Legislative Assembly can transcend boundaries in so many ways.

And when we look for, I guess, struggles abroad with democracy and oppression and the challenges that exist, well, Mr. Speaker, sometimes there's not a whole bunch we can do by inserting ourselves into those circumstances. That's a hard battle, and it's certainly not one that we can keep up with. But we can certainly be models, Mr. Speaker. Our Legislative Assembly certainly can be models. And, unfortunately, a very progressive system that's been a model for some time is taking a regressive step here this week, Mr. Speaker.

Going back to the progressive move of establishing a calendar, Mr. Speaker. I'll go to a press release here on October 16, 2006, when the House Services Committee, it says:

House Services Committee Agrees to Permanent Legislative Calendar.

Today, the Standing Committee on House Services unanimously adopted recommendations that will see significant changes to the operation of the Legislature.

A sub-committee composed of the Speaker and both House Leaders have recommended changes that will result in the establishment of a permanent legislative calendar of 65 days per session — 25 days in the fall and 40 in the spring.

It goes on, Mr. Speaker:

Speaker P. Myron Kowalsky said "the changes are another step toward the process of modernization". The goal [in this Assembly] is to make the Assembly work more effectively and efficiently.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're not going in that direction here this week and, unfortunately, we're seeing, I guess, a regressive state. House Leader Glenn Hagel at the time stated:

"After a careful review of the operations of other legislative processes, we have come to the conclusion that these changes will result in a more productive and effective Legislative Assembly."

Now I guess again striking the fact that this was done in co-operation with the opposition, quoting the opposition or the Government House leader, current Government House Leader:

These changes are about improving the way the legislative assembly works, while at the same time giving MLAs more opportunity to stay in touch with our constituents.

Well that's our Government House Leader. And I heard the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy ask, well when did he say that? And it was October 16, 2006. So I mean . . .

An Hon. Member: — 2006. That wasn't that long ago.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — No, and it wasn't that long ago, was it? So it seems that we're going the opposite way there with that, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to make a comment that Murray Mandryk points out, a reporter with the *Leader-Post* here in Regina, in 2006, that's praising the legislation:

But by forcing governments to introduce legislation in the fall that can't be passed until the following spring, oppositions do have a reasonable tool at their disposal to rally public support against any piece of legislation. And, frankly, there's never been a more powerful tool for a politician than the power of public opinion.

When you get right down to it, what will be officially adopted by Saskatchewan MLAs when the fall sitting reconvenes next week will make the legislative assembly more democratic than it's ever been.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just go back to that comment, just the tail end of that again, and Murray Mandryk states here ". . . more democratic than it's ever been." Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going the wrong way on that.

I would like to again quote our current Government House Leader on May 17, 2007. The current Government House Leader, who now is taking a regressive step with his government, highlights the benefits of this legislation. "Mr. Speaker, I believe . . ." and I'll quote the current Government House Leader from May 17:

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is the first full session where we've operated under the new rules of the Assembly that have been established and developed. And I think that in

balance we have been very successful in bringing our Saskatchewan legislature to the forefront of parliamentary process, not in this . . . [process] but also in the entire country. And I think that we can all be rightly proud of all the work that we've done to accomplish these changes.

Mr. Speaker, the current Government House Leader continues on May 17, 2007:

These changes, Mr. Speaker, are for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan firstly. And I think that the fact that there is more predictability also, in particular, benefits our constituents and the people, in addition to the people of the province generally. But most . . . [importantly] I think it benefits in some significant manner our families who have some predictability when their fathers and mothers, grandmas and grandpas are going to be home with their families . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's, I guess, in short order that that same Government House Leader has taken a complete different position contrary to the progressive steps that he was seeing within the legislature, the ones he was noting at that point.

We could look at, I guess, a bit about the history of rule changes within parliamentary systems. Over the last two decades numerous parliaments have been modernized. The goal is definitely to make them work more efficiently, more effectively. And I don't think these two words are things that the members opposite are against. In fact I hear those two words quite often from the members opposite.

A common feature of modernization is a parliamentary calendar. And that's what our Assembly here has worked hard to establish, Mr. Speaker. We can look back, I guess, to the House of Commons in Ottawa when they adopted a parliamentary calendar in 1982, and I quote, ". . . in order to make the sitting and non-sitting times predictable." The United Kingdom instituted their calendar in 1992, and I quote, ". . . a more sweeping modernization agenda." So we have made strides, Mr. Speaker, in making sure that Saskatchewan residents are served efficiently and effectively with a modern Legislative Assembly, modern process. And it's unfortunate again for us to be just to be taking, to be taking strides back, backwards.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm going to share is comments from our current House Leader because I think he sums it up very well when he's talking with a group of reporters as far as what impact this has on our system here, on our process. So our current House Leader, the member from Battlefords, and I quote:

"What I see is a government who knew what the rules were, who mismanaged their role in applying those rules to their own legislative agenda and [who] are now bullying their way . . . to square one, trying to start the clock over again."

This is an unfortunate turn of events in an environment whereby order is necessary to ensure an efficient managing of the process. And he continues:

Well let's just look at the motion. First of all the government is saying that they're bringing in this motion to ensure that the legislation will be passed, but by introducing the motion, actually they are distracting from the legislative agenda. This is a debatable motion. It's also an amendable motion. So while on one hand they're saying that we've mismanaged our agenda and we need to get back to the debate on the agenda, they've introduced a motion that will ensure the debate does not go back to their agenda. We will debate this motion.

The quote goes on. There's other good pieces there, but I have stuff I want to move along to here. But I guess that was, that was at the start of this week, and I mean, it was rather telling. We've been good to our word, and we followed through with those actions here this week.

But this strikes many issues, Mr. Speaker, and it strikes issues of parliamentary democracy. Mr. Speaker, it strikes issues of the rights of members of this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, it really is an issue of access and voice for residents, our constituents. It's an issue of a government that refuses to consult, hold public debate or public consultation. We see this far beyond this individual example, Mr. Speaker, and I'll speak to that afterwards. But this government's failure or failed interest to consult broadly is evident across its work. It's an issue of work ethic. The individuals opposite were not prepared to come into the legislature and start when we should have started. We didn't need the spring fling or spring break time that was offered. The Assembly should have been in operation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's an issue of lack of co-operation. And I think that's a big part of what needs to exist within an Assembly. We're here as opposition, but we're here also to co-operate. And there certainly hasn't been that from the government's end because we could certainly have resolved some of these challenges that have arisen by the government's challenge. And it's an issue of incompetence, most definitely an issue of incompetence, and maybe many of those points I've already spoken to highlight what kind of an issue it is.

If we talk about rule changes . . . You know, we talk about the rights of the members of this Assembly. We talk about a government that's abusing its majority unilaterally to override the rules within our democracy and the overriding rules that were envisioned and were effective in delivering efficient and effective democracy.

An Hon. Member: — Built up by consensus over years.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Built up by consensus, the member from Douglas Park points out. A really, really good point that exists here, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — But not this time.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Not this time is right. The role of the opposition and the role of the critic are highlighted in all sorts of academia or all sorts of research. I'll point to a little bit here, Mr. Speaker, a couple of quotes. And this is from — and I'll quote from *The Role, rights, and responsibilities of the opposition* — this is from the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi, India. So this was put

on by our CPA. I'll quote a bit here:

There was a general agreement among the workshop participants that the opposition plays a key role in any parliamentary democracy. The division between government and opposition is as old as political democracy itself. The term "opposition" has been mainly applied to the party or parties whose elected Members do not support the government of the day and who offer themselves to the voting public, not just as individual candidates but as an organized and disciplined alternative government. Parliament is fundamentally about debate and the transacting of the people's business in public. Thus a genuine political opposition is a necessary attribute of democracy if citizens are to resolve differences peacefully.

I'll repeat that last part of that statement there: "Thus a genuine political opposition is a necessary attribute of democracy if citizens are to resolve differences peacefully," Mr. Speaker.

I'll end my quotes from there because I do want to touch on some other, other pieces here. And I do see my time is dwindling.

I mentioned the piece about co-operation there. There's numerous times here that our leaders could have got together and could have resolved this situation, could have assisted the government, could have worked together on some of this here — too bullheaded, too willing to flex their own muscles to force this one through. And that's a bit of a shame, Mr. Speaker.

It's an opportunity for our House Leader and their House Leader to sit down and to chat, to chat honestly, to chat frankly, and to resolve this circumstance. Our two whips could have done, done the same. So it's unfortunate we don't see co-operation. And I think the people of our province would be hopeful of seeing more co-operation in the future because it only benefits the voting public, Mr. Speaker.

The complete disregard for public debate and consultation is evident here again, Mr. Speaker, with these very actions of this government here this week. Now we've got all sorts of examples of how far-reaching this government is in not being willing to consult. We can certainly look at Bills 5 and 6. We can certainly look, you know, at our labour legislation there, that that hasn't been the case. We can look at Station 20. We can look at school closures. We can look at a whole bunch of pieces, Mr. Speaker. I guess I ask the government opposite or the government to, as they move forward, please do a better job of consulting across, across the board.

It comes down to a question of rules and order, Mr. Speaker. We talked about at the start that in football you can't simply change the rules on a whim to make up for your shortcomings, whether that's you came into training camp out of shape and then pushed things off late and as a result, we're loosing games — very comparable to this Sask Party government.

But I guess we could also compare this to, Mr. Speaker, to business. And I know that we have a lot of proud business people in this, in this province. I know of a lot of constituents that are really proud business people. And I think sometimes the members opposite favour themselves as a bit of a business

party.

But I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the business people I know — and I know many and I'm friends with many — is that there's an acumen that exists that I certainly don't see with the members opposite. Businesses that are thriving across our province take those risks, take those challenges. And, Mr. Speaker, they work around the regulations, the policies. They work around the requirements that exist, and they plan for these, Mr. Speaker. A business plans. I guess that's why they call a business plan.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, businesses that don't plan very well, many of them don't succeed, Mr. Speaker, and I guess very comparable to the members opposite. I don't think they've had a very good start to their government, and I would compare them definitely to a failing business.

[19:45]

And a business that I guess . . . the biggest difference in what these actions are showing right now is that a business has no ability to . . . all of a sudden have failed to have planned or to recognize a regulation or a structure or a policy. They don't have the unilateral authority to then go simply override that and to make the playing field unlevel, Mr. Speaker, with their competitors. They certainly don't have that opportunity. It's unfair that our government opposite would expect that of them.

Last piece here, Mr. Speaker, hard work. Hard-working people of our province, pioneers in this province, farms, hard-working mothers, hard-working families, many people holding down many jobs — they expect the same of us, Mr. Speaker. They're not getting it from these guys. We didn't sit long enough before the holidays there at Christmas. We came in late. We took a break off at Easter.

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For those people who've just joined in, I want to sort of go back over why we're having this debate tonight. As all members of the legislature will know, the Saskatchewan Party government has decided to unilaterally change the rules of the legislature, the sitting hours of the legislature, in order to get a couple of pieces of legislation through this session of the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that last December several people . . . and in fact many, many people in this province were absolutely surprised when they learned that Government of Saskatchewan was going to introduce two particular pieces of legislation: one, the essential services legislation and, the other, amendments to The Trade Union Act. And, Mr. Speaker, they indicated at the time that these would be specified Bills. These are Bills that they wanted to get through this session of the legislature which will end on May 15.

When the government introduced those two Bills in December,

they also introduced some other Bills as well, and at that time there were a number of people that were calling for hearings of the policy field committee to go around the province, to hear from the public on what they thought of these two Bills in particular. It was something that the government didn't want to do. They chose to have their own consultation process. And people were invited, some people were invited, to respond to the Bills, particularly the essential services Bill.

In about February discussions were going on between our House Leader and the Government House Leader about when the legislature would be reconvened, and I have a calendar here indicating that there was going to be a . . . the legislature was going to reconvene on March 3. And if you do the math, Mr. Speaker, March 3, had we reconvened on that day, would have given the government ample opportunity to get their designated or specified Bills through this Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that didn't happen. The legislature was delayed about one week, and we didn't meet as an Assembly until about March 12, Mr. Speaker, and . . . or March 10. And when you do the mathematics of the legislation that had been introduced, the legislation that before, the legislations that the government obviously knew on March 10 that they were going to be introducing, as well as the estimates — 75 hours of debate when it comes to each departmental spending estimates — when you do the math, the math simply didn't add up, Mr. Speaker.

And you would think that the House Leader, who is the Minister of Finance, that he would have had someone, if not himself, but someone figuring out how many hours would be required in order to complete the government's legislative agenda. And it's clear now that they made a mistake, that they could not add and multiply the number of Bills and the number of hours that would be required in order to get their legislative agenda through this Legislative Assembly. And so what we now have, Mr. Speaker, is a decision by the government to amend the rules in order to get their agenda done, Mr. Speaker. And what this really speaks to, Mr. Speaker, is what I would consider to be incompetence or ineptitude. I mean someone was clearly asleep at the switch.

Now the members opposite will say, well you know, we should just go along with this. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not how the place works. How we try and get along in this Assembly is we have a set of rules. We all know the rules. The government knew the rules. We knew the rules when we were in government. And you have to figure out when do we come into this place, when do we start the legislature, and when do we adjourn, and how many hours do we need in order to get government business done. And they simply didn't do that, and so tonight is about a unilateral decision by the government to change the rules, but it's also about the government's inability to follow the rules to get their agenda done, Mr. Speaker, and the government has decided since they can't get their legislative agenda through that they're going to change the rules, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they could have decided, well there's some Bills that we're simply not going to be able to get through this session of the legislature, that we will, you know, that we will be thoughtful. We will care about democracy. We will care

about how this place is going to function into the future, and we will delay these Bills into the fall because, Mr. Speaker, they have four years to do their governing, but that's what they chose not to do, Mr. Speaker. They decided that we can't get our legislative agenda through. We're the government. We're the boss. We're in charge, and even though we messed up, that doesn't matter. We're going to simply go in with the hammer and change the rules, unilaterally change the rules, Mr. Speaker.

Well a basic function of government is to have legislation written. Usually legislation is written by the officials in the Department of Justice, but sometimes it's . . . I guess in the Sask Party's case, it's written by private bar lawyers. Then that legislation is presented to the Assembly, and then it's passed. And it's quite clear that the Sask Party has a bit of a problem in terms of counting and multiplying, and therefore one has to question their competence. And the point is that they failed to be able to carry out this very, very basic function because we're now sitting here tonight as a result of their inability to carry out a pretty basic function.

Because of their mismanagement of the House, we have the Sask Party now unilaterally changing the rules of the Assembly, and if they didn't do that, Mr. Speaker, they would jeopardize their legislative agenda. So what we believe is that this 11th-hour rule change is nothing more than an attempt to cover up what really is stunning incompetence. It really is stunning incompetence, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it really does define who we have come to see as the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party negotiated these rules in 2006 when they were in opposition, and I guess one has to ask, were they so incompetent at the time that they didn't understand the very implications of the rules that they negotiated? I guess that we can't conclude anything other than that.

Now I've been in this Assembly when governments have passed 75, 80, 90 pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker. And thus far this session I believe we have 24 Bills. It's not a huge legislative agenda, Mr. Speaker. And the rules are quite clear. The rules are quite clear. And the Sask Party negotiated these rules that we need to have no more than 20 hours of debate on Bills that were introduced in the fall. And so once again I go back to my original premise that we appear to have a group of men and women that are so, they are so, I guess, incompetent that they really couldn't understand simple mathematics.

So, Mr. Speaker, these rules didn't sneak up on this government. Their House Leader was involved in negotiating the rules. The rules were in place when the Premier and his government took over. They were in place when the Sask Party took over the reins of government, and they certainly were in place when the session of the legislature opened on March 10.

So my premise is, Mr. Speaker, that their incompetence and mismanagement really has led to the position that the government now finds itself in. And, Mr. Speaker, we made it quite clear in December when they introduced these Bills, particularly the essential services legislation, that they certainly didn't have this on their party election platform and in fact something quite to the contrary. The Minister of Health and the Premier before the election said we didn't require essential services in this province. But nevertheless they introduced this legislation, and we made it clear that we believe that the Bills

needed to go out to the public through the policy field committees for consultation.

Now since that time, the government's had ample opportunity within the current rules to ensure that they would have sufficient amounts of debate on each piece of these legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, had they chosen to come into this Assembly on March 3, as they originally intended, as the Minister of Labour was advised by his government officials — we already know that from an access to information piece — we would not be in this mess.

Now the Sask Party ignored these opportunities and instead, Mr. Speaker, they chose to have the House sit only two weeks last fall. It was the government that chose not to hold consultations on these Bills. It was the government that chose not to use the policy field committees between the fall and the spring sitting of the legislature. It was the Premier and his government that chose to delay the opening of the spring sitting from March 3 to March 10.

Now it's quite clear that they fear, given that they have mishandled this entire legislative session, that they would have difficulty passing all of the proposed pieces of legislation. And certainly the Minister of Labour sought out advice from his own government department in an attempt to assure himself that his two labour Bills would pass. Now, Mr. Speaker, it was the Sask Party that chose in the early part of this sitting not to have evening sittings on Monday nights and Tuesdays. They decided they didn't want to sit. And now they suddenly realize, because they clearly dropped the ball and they're in a panic, and so not only are they changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, but they're invoking closure.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's been some time since I have seen the invoking of closure on a set of rules, Mr. Speaker. The rule change that we're sitting here debating tonight is nothing more than a feeble attempt to cover up their stunning — and I have to say, Mr. Speaker, stunning — incompetence.

Now over the last several weeks, it is clear that incompetence not only reigns supreme when it comes to how the government manages this House, but incompetence is clear throughout a number of public policy areas. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that's only been in power for four and a half months, and they're already invoking closure and changing the rules.

I think it took Grant Devine more than four and a half months to invoke closure, Mr. Speaker, and in the early 1990s I believe it took the Romanow government about two and a half years before closure was invoked. And it was invoked, Mr. Speaker, over a piece of legislation that had some significant financial implications for the province when we were trying to get the debt and deficit racked up by the former Conservatives cleared away in the 1990s.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that they've axed funding when it comes to Station 20. They have some sort of impression that this was an NDP project. I want to assure the public that members of the community worked hard for a number of years to bring together all of the people and the organizations and the university around Station 20. It was a vision of the community.

As someone who walked with the people on Saturday, I can assure the members opposite that there are people, many, many people from the community — and people stopped us along the way who were members of the community — thanking us for our support of Station 20. This was a popular program. And I know that there are some sensitive members from Saskatoon, members of the legislature, in terms of this program, but they are clearly misinformed as to this program. So they got rid of it.

They got rid of it even though the money was set aside in the '06-07 budget; even though thousands of people have responded to Station 20, including people at the University of Saskatchewan, many people at the University of Saskatchewan. And we know on the east side of Saskatoon that many of our constituents work at the university, teach at the university, and they are supportive of this particular project, particularly academics, who were looking forward to working with their students in the College of Medicine and the College of Nursing, physiotherapy, dentistry out of that important space, Mr. Speaker.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, I've also had the opportunity to speak to a number of people in the community-based organization sector. I know these people. And, Mr. Speaker, once again many of them feel as though they've been misled by the government. They thought they were going to get a significant increase in funding and they did not, Mr. Speaker. And in fact many of the groups thought that they would get more than last year, where there was a 3 per cent increase, and they learned recently that they were getting a 2.3 per cent increase. And in fact many of them still haven't heard as to what their final numbers will be.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister responsible for housing and the housing crisis in our province has indicated to one group she was going to make sure that they were supported and then they found out that they weren't to get any support. And we also know, Mr. Speaker, that the Sask Party has indicated to other groups in the province that they were going to be supported and there's a lot of disappointment when the budget came out, Mr. Speaker.

And in fact I have friends that worked very, very hard in order to get some of the members of this legislature elected, and they really are feeling disappointed that a Sask Party thus far has not lived up to what they thought the Sask Party was going to live up to, particularly when it comes to the social groups in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are saying, oh well, they maybe need to go back to their constituencies. Maybe if we didn't have these extended hours they too would be hearing from their constituents and some of their supporters that they are disappointed, disappointed in certainly what these members have done for community-based organizations who really believed, Mr. Speaker — particularly those groups that provide services to women and children — they particularly believed the Sask Party was going to come forward and come through with some significant funding increases, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we also know that the Sask Party has mishandled a number of other situations, particularly when it

comes to the public service in our province. And in fact as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, several public servants initially were released of their duties even though they were long-time public servants in this province. And now we have civil servants that are being released in dribs and drabs and not quite the profile that we had in the fall with the transition team, Mr. Speaker.

And one of the things I know, Mr. Speaker, is that when you do not treat the public service well, because they really are the people that have to help you get through your government agenda, and when the public service believes that you are not respectful to them, you do not treat them properly, you have them living in fear, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be very, very difficult for this government to get its legislative agenda, public policy agenda through, Mr. Speaker.

And when you fire long-time public servants that have no political persuasion other than to serve the public, that really does speak to your incompetence, Mr. Speaker — your incompetence, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that some of these public servants that have been fired, certainly in December and in January, are still waiting for a negotiation of their package. Nothing has been done for these public servants yet even though they've worked for the government for 31, 35, and in one case, 38 years, Mr. Speaker. And these people are still waiting.

Now I know that some people aren't waiting. Ken Love certainly isn't waiting. He's got his pay and pay increase. He is well looked after by the Sask Party. We know Doug Emsley, he's not waiting. He's been well looked after by the Sask Party. And we know that there are others that have certainly been well looked after by the Sask Party. But long-time public servants who have served the public for 31 years, 28 years, 35 years, 25 years, they are still waiting, Mr. Speaker, and so are the community-based organizations. They're waiting to hear from this government because they believed that they would be properly treated, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a historic rule change here. There's no question about that. And the reason why is because the Government of Saskatchewan so far is so incompetent that they can't even manage their own legislative agenda.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter the debate here tonight on this historic motion in the Legislative Assembly. A motion, Mr. Speaker, that I think establishes the simple fact that after only a few days — a couple of weeks, a few days — into this session, Mr. Speaker, we are indeed seeing a very sad day for the Legislative Assembly, for the people of Saskatchewan, and more importantly for the status of democracy in our nation.

After years, Mr. Speaker, of parliamentarians in provincial, territorial, and federal legislatures working on procedures and rules that have evolved to the point of civilized debate, rules that understand . . . And I'll elaborate this in a moment, Mr.

Speaker. Rules that help the public to understand that the majority can have their way but the minority must have their say, Mr. Speaker, those rules have evolved, Mr. Speaker. And what has happened is that on this very sad day we are seeing the government opposite, elected just four months ago, throwing all of that progress out the window in the interests of their own agenda.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Saskatoon Nutana said earlier a number of very important things, Mr. Speaker, but she used the word stunning, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to use that word a couple of times myself, Mr. Speaker. It's a very sad day.

It's a sad day because there's now an acute understanding, not only in this place but across this province, Mr. Speaker, an understanding that this government is acutely, stunningly incompetent, Mr. Speaker. And I will establish that in my remarks tonight as my colleagues have established that in their speeches earlier this week.

It's a sad day, Mr. Speaker, because the principle of democracy has been attacked by a democratically elected government. Mr. Speaker, this process has evolved to a civilized state and, Mr. Speaker, this democratically elected government has challenged the principle, the very principle of democracy, and I will establish some of that in my remarks tonight as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day because the government has begun a process that reduces and minimizes and in fact eliminates the public right to be involved in the legislative process, Mr. Speaker, and I will elaborate on that as well. But the principle there is, Mr. Speaker, this government thinks that debate should occur in the middle of the night, Mr. Speaker. They think that the public process of involving themselves in discussions with members of the legislature, members of the Legislative Assembly, should not occur until after a session is over, Mr. Speaker, instead of during a session.

Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day. It's a sad day, Mr. Speaker, because years of co-operation and development have been thrown out the window simply to meet the short-term goals of the needs of a few members opposite. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad day because we have seen this government for what it really is. And my colleagues over the last couple of days have used the word bully, Mr. Speaker.

This is a group of bullies who have so mismanaged their responsibilities that the only way they have left to save face is to push their weight around, to exert control — the control that the public has entrusted to them — without concern, Mr. Speaker; without concern for the consequences or the message that this might send to future generations of political leaders.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day because we have learned tonight, Mr. Speaker, we have learned this week and we have learned tonight that having a majority is not good enough for the members opposite, having a majority is not good enough. They want more, Mr. Speaker, and they want it right away. They want more. They want it now, Mr. Speaker.

And of course we in the New Democratic Party, who have been on the other side of the House, who have participated in debates from both government and opposition, who have lived by the

rules, Mr. Speaker, understand that having a majority also means having responsibilities. And having responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, means playing by the rules, allowing the public to understand what it is that the government is trying to achieve. Having a majority is not good enough for the members opposite.

My colleague who started this debate earlier this week, the member from Regina Dewdney, had the following to say in his remarks. . . And I commend those remarks, Mr. Speaker, to every member opposite. If they didn't hear every word the member from Regina Dewdney spoke, Mr. Speaker, I urge them to pick up *Hansard*, read it, spend the day, Mr. Speaker, or the next two days reading the remarks of my friend from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote a few lines from his speech, but every word spoken, Mr. Speaker, was pertinent to this debate, was pertinent to the future of democracy in this country. And I'm proud to sit on the same side of this Legislative Assembly Chamber, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Taylor: — Proud to sit on the same side of an individual who will stand up for the rights of the minority in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So what did the member from Regina Dewdney says . . . member say, Mr. Speaker? He says:

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 . . . But, Mr. Speaker, they gave that away. In stages, parliamentary sovereignty was given, was given to parliaments across the Commonwealth. 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.

That's the essence of what we're talking about. That's the essence of why we're here today.

Mr. Speaker, let's just jump back a minute and summarize why it is that we are here today. And let me put this in a simple as form as I possibly can, Mr. Speaker, not for the public who I understand can put all these pieces together, but for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, because obviously they don't get it.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter that is of urgent and pressing necessity by the members opposite. They have yet to communicate, Mr. Speaker, to the public what it is that they're trying to do. There isn't a member of the public watching this Assembly today, yesterday, or the day before that has any idea of what was said over there.

Mr. Speaker, every member of the New Democratic Party that was able to be in this Chamber today, has been here and speaking on this Bill on behalf of Saskatchewan people and on

behalf of their constituents. Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, not one word from the government, not one word except the motion to invoke closure and the introduction of this Bill by the Government House Leader. Not one member elected to the Legislative Assembly for the Saskatchewan Party by Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, not one member has said one word about why this is important to them, Mr. Speaker.

Why? They don't understand it, for one thing. But two, this is the way they are, Mr. Speaker. They are not satisfied with a majority. They want more, and this is the way they get it. They push their weight around. They push their weight around in here, and by doing that, Mr. Speaker, they penalize the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have had parliamentarians in the federal House, in provincial chambers, territorial chambers right across Canada, Mr. Speaker, who have stood up for the rights of the minorities in their provinces, territories, and federal system, Mr. Speaker. We are proud of those members.

What can we say about the members opposite who won't even speak, won't even speak to this pressing necessity Bill that they've brought forward to us? So what's the big deal? The people of Saskatchewan wonder . . . rules? You know, what's rules? The members of this Legislative Assembly, they just talk. Government passes Bills. They do what they want anyway, Mr. Speaker, so what's the big deal?

[20:15]

Okay let's simplify this, Mr. Speaker. The rules right now are very, very simple, Mr. Speaker. The rules as they were negotiated, as they've evolved . . . and I'm going to explain this just a little bit. This is what the rules say today, Mr. Speaker, prior to the introduction of the motion in front of us:

The ordinary times for the daily meeting and adjournment of the sittings of the Assembly shall be as follows:

Monday 1:30 p.m. — 10:30 p.m. with a recess from 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday 1:30 p.m. — 10:30 p.m. with a recess from 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday [from] 1:30 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

Thursday [from] 10:00 — 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, those times were reached by agreement in the past, Mr. Speaker, agreements between the government and the opposition to ensure that several things could happen: (1) that the business of the Assembly could take place; (2) that the work that needs to be done to prepare for the work that's inside the Assembly can be done. In other words, that cabinet has time to meet, that the caucuses have time to meet, that the members of the Legislative Assembly have time to meet with representative groups from across the province who want to be here to share time with us, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that when we set up parliamentary committees that they have time to meet with members of the public, to examine legislative matters that are in

front of us.

Mr. Speaker, these hours were specifically designed by members of the Assembly in discussion with each other and with members from the outside community to ensure for the orderly disposition of the legislative agenda. Mr. Speaker, so what's the motion today? Well in fact, Mr. Speaker, the motion in front of us today is extending hours, Mr. Speaker, so that it now reads: the ordinary times for daily meetings will be Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 12 a.m. with a recess from 5 to 6. And then they add standing committees will meet Thursdays from 2 to 12, 5 to 6, and on Fridays from 10 to 5.

Mr. Speaker, what this means, what this means is that they have ensured that the meetings that cabinet must have to do the work that they need to do, the meetings that caucuses must have to prepare for and work with the public in responding to government legislation, the ability of members of the legislature collectively or individually to meet with members of the public have been severely restricted, Mr. Speaker — all, all for the simple reason that the government wants to package a number of Bills that they can claim, at the end of the session, that they passed.

That's it, Mr. Speaker, so that they can claim that they were able to achieve their goals that they set for themselves, Mr. Speaker — not that the public set for them, not that the public has anything to say at this point other than through indirect means, Mr. Speaker. The public has yet to respond to the legislative agenda of the members opposite, and yet we're seeing this draconian legislation brought forward, Mr. Speaker, that takes away the ability of members of this Assembly to communicate with, work with members of the public to preserve the democratic right of the public to be able to participate in this legislative process, Mr. Speaker.

The whole thing comes down to, how did we get into this situation? One of the other rules, Mr. Speaker, was again subject to the give and take. A majority government, Mr. Speaker, can be assumed, a majority government, it can be assumed, Mr. Speaker, because they have the numbers, when a matter comes to a vote, will win it. Unless they have dissent amongst their members, Mr. Speaker, the government in a majority situation will have their way. Therefore if there's a legislative agenda that's being moved forward, the government will have their way.

Well, Mr. Speaker, over the years, recognizing that majority governments will have their way, legislative assemblies, parliaments all across the Commonwealth, across the world, Mr. Speaker, realized that if the might of the majority were always the case, how do the public scrutinize, hold accountable, ensure the transparency, understand, and participate in this process, Mr. Speaker? The role of the opposition. The role of the opposition.

So in the rules negotiated, there's an understanding the government gets their way, but the opposition has a process that it will follow to ensure that the right of the public has been able to be heard in a Chamber such as this. So what have they done, Mr. Speaker? They have taken that right of the public in order to ensure that their right gets dealt with and they've compressed

that.

Twenty hours of debate over a 45-day session, Mr. Speaker, essentially is what the rules call for, and the opposition agreed to that previously, the current government in opposition, and the government agreed. We'll have our way, but if we manage so that we get 20 hours in 45 days on any Bill that we think is important, then the Bill will pass. The opposition knows what the rule is. The opposition knows that they have 20 hours to make their point. If they can't make their point in 20 hours, the government gets their way, no matter what. So we have 20 hours to have our way.

How do we know what is important to the people of Saskatchewan? Communication — being able to take the Bills, the legislation, the ideas out to the public; work with them; consult with them; meet with them; allow them to talk to us; give us some information. We bring it back, consult in the Chamber, consult in committee, Mr. Speaker, consult back with the public. Twenty hours is over. Government has their way.

But at least they've had the opportunity to hear what the public has to say on a piece of Bill. And we protect the public's right to know what's going on and, Mr. Speaker, to be able to have input into this process.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Taylor: — And if the members of the government opposite think that the public's right to know at 11 o'clock, 11:30 at night or midnight, Mr. Speaker, is the best way to handle this, then I say take that out, take that out to the public and try and sell it, Mr. Speaker, because they can't do it.

And not one member, Mr. Speaker, has stood to defend that position. Not one, since this Bill was introduced on Monday, Mr. Speaker, not one member has defended the position that they have argued to take away the rights, to take away the rights, Mr. Speaker, of the public.

Mr. Speaker, one of the great parliamentarians in this country — and I'm proud to say that I knew him, I talked to him, I spent time with him, I had a cup of tea with him, Mr. Speaker — one of the great parliamentarians in Canada, Stanley Knowles . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Taylor: — One of Canada's greats, Mr. Speaker, Stanley Knowles was one of those ordinary people who came from the transportation and the clergy sectors of our nation, Mr. Speaker. He came from the drylands of Manitoba. And he went to Ottawa to fight for the rights of ordinary people.

And, Mr. Speaker, Stanley Knowles is well known, well regarded, well respected, Mr. Speaker. He's a parliamentarian par excellence. And what did he say? "It is the opposition's right to insist at all times on full protection of the rules of debate" — rules of debate, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because the rules are there to protect the rights of citizens.

Mr. Speaker, Stanley Knowles also said, "The opposition has only 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.”

So, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there we have the message that the opposition has the rules to ensure that the public’s right to participation is protected. What does the government have, Mr. Speaker? The government has its majority. There’s a give-and-take. That’s why rules are important, Mr. Speaker, so that you know how, at the end of the day, the will of the public has been heard and understood.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing across the way here is that the members opposite, demonstrating that majority is not good enough for them, Mr. Speaker, has created a situation whereby the message that we — Saskatchewan — who have been leaders in this nation for years, are willing to take a step backwards, Mr. Speaker, to benefit the elite, the strong, the majority.

We have worked hard, Mr. Speaker, to get rid of that sense of what is wrong in the world. Mr. Speaker, we have worked hard over the years, and this government in four months and a couple of minutes in this motion have ensured, Mr. Speaker, that this matter that’s important to the public has been taken away.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened to this debate over the course of the last three days. I have looked at the members opposite as they’ve been listening to words that have been spoken on this side. I know, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite are embarrassed by what they have done. They look embarrassed by what they have done, Mr. Speaker. And I think they should be embarrassed, Mr. Speaker, by what they have done — this attack, this attack on the public rights . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Taylor: — This attack on the public rights to participate in the democratic process, a right that is enshrined in the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

So it’s not the long hours that we are opposed to, Mr. Speaker. It’s not the long hours that we are opposed to. It’s not the work that we are opposed to. It’s the right of Saskatchewan people that we are defending, that we are protecting, that, Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for yesterday, the day before yesterday, and today, Mr. Speaker. And I guarantee you that every one of my colleagues will be standing up for the rights of Saskatchewan and Canadian citizens every time we have a chance. Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Is the . . . Order. Order. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the amendment:

That all the words in clause 1 be deleted and be replaced with the following:

Notwithstanding rule 6(1), the ordinary times for the daily meetings and adjournments of the sittings of the Assembly on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays shall be 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. with a recess from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. The question before the Assembly is the motion as amended. Is the Assembly prepared to take the motion as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed say nay

Some Hon. Members: — Nay.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Standing vote, call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 20:27 until 20:58.]

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the motion that reads:

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

And this motion is as amended, reading:

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

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

twenty-sixth legislature.

Those in favour of the amended motion, please rise.

[Yeas — 30]

Stewart

The Speaker: — Order. Do members want to stay till 1 a.m.? You can continue to participate in the debate. At the present time, we have called for a vote on the motion. I ask for your silence.

Elhard	Bjornerud	Draude
Krawetz	Boyd	Eagles
McMorris	D'Autremont	Heppner
Tell	Gantefoer	Harpauer
Norris	Morgan	Huyghebaert
Brkich	Kirsch	Schriemer
Allchurch	Weekes	Chisholm
Wilson	Duncan	LeClerc
Ottenbreit	Reiter	Bradshaw
Harrison	McMillan	

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the amended motion please rise.

[Nays — 17]

Calvert	Harper	Junor
Trew	Van Mulligen	Atkinson
Nilson	Yates	Higgins
Belanger	Furber	Iwanchuk
Taylor	Quennell	Brotten
McCall	Wotherspoon	

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amended motion, 30; those opposed, 17.

The Speaker: — The motion as amended carries. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 21:01.]

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Premier

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Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

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Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

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