



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

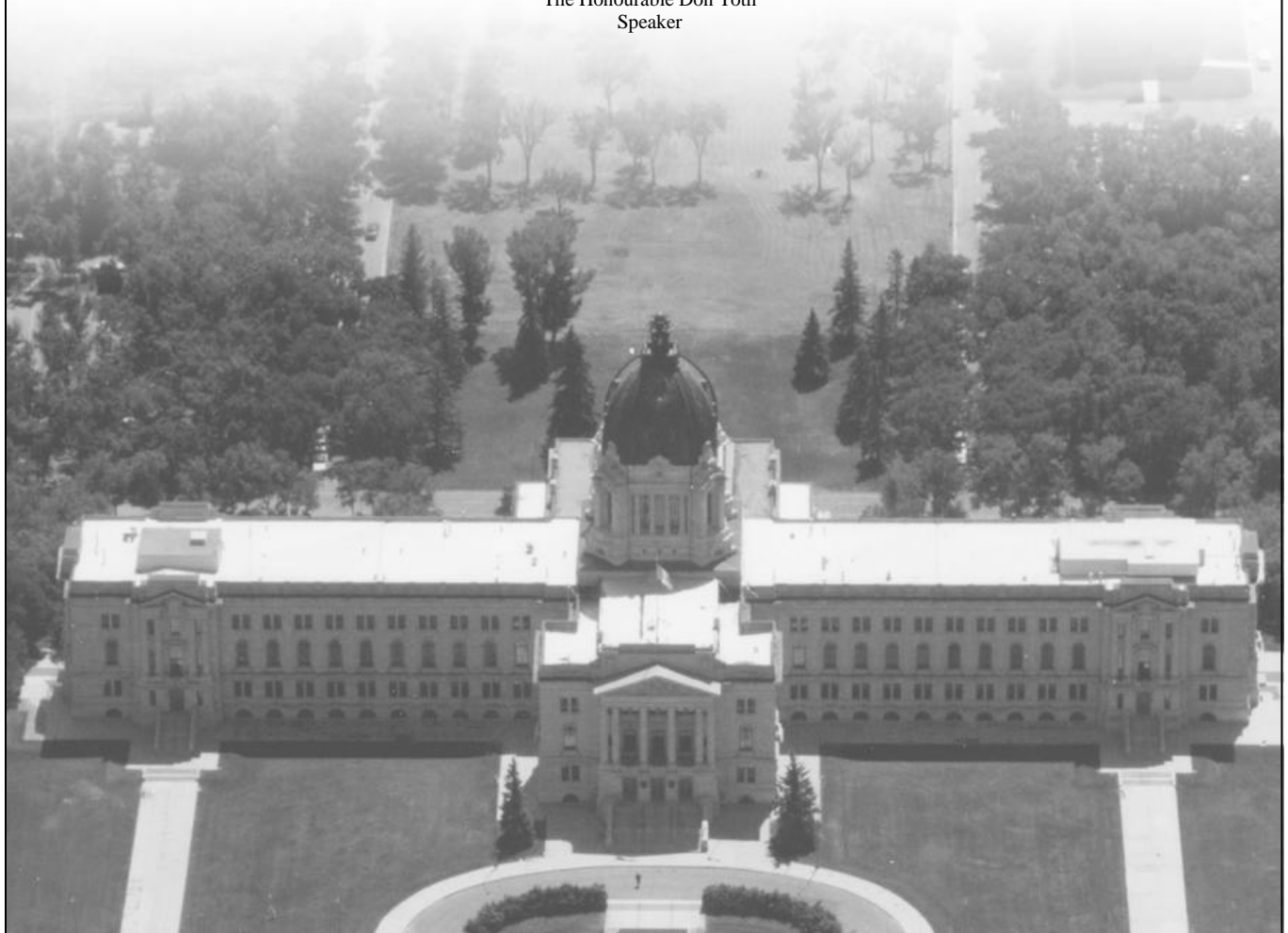
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, through you and to you I'd like to introduce the first school group that I'm hosting as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], 25 wonderful students from Lawson Heights School, their teachers Christine Rayner and Heather Luce, with chaperones Diane Thiessen and Don Erker.

I'm looking forward to meeting with them later and having a picture taken with them — although I'm not sure that they will want their picture taken with me — and having an opportunity to talk with them and share a little bit about my passions with social justice. Please welcome to our Assembly, young people, and try to excuse some of our behaviour for the next 45 minutes or so. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I see that in your gallery this morning we're joined by a few gentlemen that do a great deal of work in our province — right across the province, no restrictions. And today I would like to welcome and have the House welcome Laurent Mougeot and Allan Earle from SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], and also Jim Hallick and Ken Engel from SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's the government's privilege to introduce to you and through those members previously introduced, representing the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Vice-president Jim Hallick who also happens to be the councillor for the rural municipality of Keys No. 303 and, their executive director, Mr. Ken Engel.

SUMA, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, is represented today by its president, Allan Earle who is also the mayor of the town of Dalmeny and has been since 1991, and Mr. Laurent Mougeot, their executive director.

Mr. Speaker, I again ask that members from both sides of the House welcome these guests to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to welcome Allan Earle to the Assembly today. Mr. Earle is the mayor of Dalmeny, one of the many growing towns in the constituency of Martensville that I represent.

I've had the opportunity recently to meet with Mr. Earle and the town council and go over some of their concerns as their community is experiencing a great amount of growth. And I want to thank him for his dedication, not only to the town of Dalmeny, but to the province of Saskatchewan, and welcome here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Moose Jaw. And the petition addresses the unceremonious closure of the South Hill liquor store and the effect it's had on South Hill businesses. And the petition reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions in opposition to Bills 5 and 6, the essential services Act, and Bill 6, An Act to amend The Trade Union Act. And 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.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitions are signed by people from Kindersley, Saskatoon, Weyburn, Yorkton, Regina, Wolseley, Bruno, Humboldt, Churchbridge, Melville, Esterhazy, Waldheim, and Tisdale. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and present a petition concerning the Sask Party's decision to axe Station 20 West. The petition reads:

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.

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals that signed this petition are from the city of Saskatoon, from a variety of neighbourhoods and a variety of constituencies on both sides of the river. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

A New Era in Canadian History

Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, it's a well-known fact people across Canada are talking about Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, I had no idea that people around the world were also talking about Saskatchewan.

Earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, our Premier met in Washington and New York with major players in the international energy industry. He talked about Saskatchewan as a conflict-free source of energy. Our Premier also raised concerns that Saskatchewan had. Upon return, he reported that these meetings were both productive and positive.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we now know just how productive and positive those meetings were, based on reports coming out of Vienna this week. The United States, Mr. Speaker, has announced they are going to abandon efforts to ban the sales of uranium enrichment technology to non-nuclear states like Canada. You know what's amazing, Mr. Speaker? That was one of the topics our Premier raised.

Are we entering a new era in Canadian history, Mr. Speaker, reminiscent of the days of Lester B. Pearson and the Auto Pact, Brian Mulroney and NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement], an era where Canadian politicians are persons of influence, not irritants in international political circles? It seems so, Mr. Speaker. And it would seem Saskatchewan's new Premier is a lead-off hitter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Regina Police Service Half-Marathon

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last Sunday I had the pleasure of volunteering for the fifth annual Regina Police Service Half-Marathon. It was quite the day for a run, Mr. Speaker, with grey skies and wind gusts upwards of 60 kilometres, but the 700 race participants and the 100-plus volunteers were not deterred. The RPS [Regina Police Service] Half-Marathon always draws quite the crowd, and this was the first where a cap of 700 on registration was in effect. The race was sold out well in advance, and it's abundantly clear that this event is indeed a must-do event for the Regina running community.

This event always draws a wide-range of participants, and this year was no exception with a number of light-footed luminaries completing the course. There was Regina Mayor Pat Fiacco and city councillors, Michael Fougere and Louis Browne. There was His Hon. Lieutenant Governor Gordon Barnhart. Chief of the Lac La Ronge Cree Nation, Tammy Cook-Searson was in the running. And the media was well represented by Jason Matity, Michelle Hugli and a fellow who is no stranger to the legislature, Gareth Dash Dillistone. And of course Regina's finest was well represented by a number of their own including newly appointed Chief Troy Hagen. So congratulations to him on a number of fronts, Mr. Speaker.

I want to close by thanking all the people and organizations who make the RPS Half-Marathon such a great event and for helping us all to run harder, be stronger, and think bigger. A special word of congratulations to race director Patti Sandison-Cattell. Patti always does a top-notch job. She works very hard and even makes it all a lot of fun. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Raymore Honours Achievements in Volunteer Service

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Friday I had the pleasure of attending a special event in the community of Raymore. The event was held to honour the achievements of Ms. Joyce Lorenz. The day marked 10 years of volunteer service by Ms. Lorenz as a board member of the Raymore Housing Authority. The dedication and commitment to the community that Ms. Lorenz has displayed is to be commended. She currently right now serves as board chairperson.

I was honoured to be asked to present Ms. Lorenz with certificate of appreciation from the province of Saskatchewan, as well as a 10-year pin from the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation to commemorate her years of service as a dedicated volunteer.

Saskatchewan's strong volunteer base is one of the best in Canada. Volunteers like Joyce Lorenz and the entire Raymore Housing Authority Board of Director are typical of the committed individuals who serve their community with a great deal of time and energy. Indeed the province's network of housing authorities stands at 276; that's run by over 1,500

volunteers.

With this in mind, I would like to make a special mention of the other board members in Raymore including Elizabeth Denman, Arlene Deeg, Siegfried Lang, Brian Dionne and manager, Margaret Hodgins. The tireless efforts of these individuals make it possible for people to remain in their home communities, close to family and friends. This is one of the important ways that we can honour the efforts of our senior citizens who worked so hard to build Saskatchewan that we're so proud of. Again, Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Ms. Lorenz of 10 years of service in the Raymore area.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Informative and Unique History Lesson

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently the grade 12 drama class at Moose Jaw's Vanier Collegiate presented the play *Who is Mrs. Wilson?* The play is about the namesake of the Mae Wilson Theatre, located in Moose Jaw's historic cultural centre located in my constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow.

The drama class invited grade 3 students from St. Michael's School to attend. The young students were provided a guided tour of the facility complete with historical re-enactments that outlined the theatre's vaudeville beginnings through to the Capitol movie theatre. The tour was complete from boiler room to dressing rooms. Originally the building was known as the Monarch Theatre when it was built in 1913. It actually opened and operated as the Allen Theatre until 1922 where it showed films, hosted road shows, and vaudeville theatre.

The theatre received renovation in 1949 and was renamed at that time the Capitol Theatre. When the Mae Wilson restoration project started, it received from Mae's son, Larry Wilson who was a lifetime performer, a donation of \$350,000 towards the construction of the current building with the request that the building be named after his mother. Mae Wilson was a long-time music teacher and arts promoter in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in thanking the grade 12 drama students of Vanier Collegiate and their director, Wayne Dirkson, for their most informative and unique history lesson. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction Targets

Mr. Harrison: — After overseeing a staggering 62 per cent increase in greenhouse gas emissions, the NDP [New Democratic Party] had a deathbed conversion last year on the eve of an election. They figured they should be seen to finally be doing something to address the issue. So they set targets, the most significant being a 32 per cent reduction over 2004 levels by 2020.

So imagine our surprise, Mr. Speaker, when just hours before Earth Day, the NDP Environment critic did a stunning reversal on her party's position. During a media scrum she completely abdicated the call from Saskatchewan to reach these targets. She said, and I quote, "I would say the federal targets are something they should clearly be adopting."

The federal targets are intensity based. The NDP Environment critic has said repeatedly that intensity-based targets would do nothing to reach our goals. And, Mr. Speaker, the federal targets call for a 20 per cent reduction by 2020. We know that the NDP like the phrase stunningly incompetent. Perhaps it's because they're so intimately familiar with the concept. I ask the NDP to stand up and come clean with their real position. Is it intensity-based targets or not? Is it a 20 per cent reduction or not? Is it defaulting to federal targets or not? Or is it simply a case of stunning incompetence?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Prince Albert Mintos Win Team Award

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this year the Saskatchewan Sport Awards banquet was held at the Conexus Art Centre, and recipients in each category were announced. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the Prince Albert Mintos AAA hockey team was the recipient of the team award.

The Mintos had a strong '06-07 season finishing 35, 7, and 1. They placed first of 12 teams in the midget AAA hockey league playoffs, winning each of the four games they played. They won the provincial title for the second consecutive season.

[10:15]

Mr. Speaker, at the '07 western regionals, the Mintos once again placed first by winning each of the four games they played there. At the Telus Cup, held in Red Deer, the Mintos won each of the seven games they played there. Mr. Speaker, the Prince Albert Mintos is the only AAA team in Canadian hockey history to win national championship in two consecutive years.

Mr. Speaker, as well as being proud of my hometown team, the Mintos hold a special place in my heart as I once played for that team. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I still have my Mintos jersey and keep it as a reminder of my glory days. And if I could still get into it, I'd have worn it today. I ask that all members join with me in congratulating the Mintos on receiving the Team Award at the Saskatchewan Sports Awards banquet.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Carol Teichrob

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

last year as the NDP ship was sinking like a rock, campaign Co-Chair Dale Schmeichel abandoned ship and quit the campaign team. The NDP said, that's okay. We still have Carol Teichrob as our campaign Co-Chair. Well, Mr. Speaker, not any more.

Carol Teichrob has been a member of the CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party] since 1952. She's been an NDP MLA and cabinet minister, but she recently quit the party because she believes it is headed in the wrong direction. According to today's *StarPhoenix*, Teichrob thought the party was on the wrong track when it tried to paint the Saskatchewan Party leader as a wolf in sheep's clothing. And she completely disagreed with the NDP's unsustainable and unaffordable drug plan. She said, and I quote,

“This was the crowning glory of the platform and I thought well, God Almighty, what have I been wasting my time for, for the last 18 months going to these meetings that were supposed to be planning the election, and hear the major plank . . . I've never heard of it.”

Mr. Speaker, the wolf in sheep's clothing and the NDP drug plan were the two biggest decisions of the NDP's campaign. Their campaign Co-Chair had nothing to do with those decisions, and they both backfired horribly. And now Carol Teichrob says the NDP leader won't even look at her. She said, and I quote, “Isn't that stupid?” Exactly, Mr. Speaker, isn't that stupid?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Climate Change

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hear Australia is absolutely beautiful at this time of year. In mid-February the Minister of Environment and her chief of staff left for a 10-day trip to Australia. While she was gone, the Sask Party caucus issued a news release stating that the minister would, quote, “. . . hold a news conference upon her return from Australia to discuss the details of her trip.”

The minister must never have seen the news release because she never held any news conference, and we still don't know how much her trip cost or what it accomplished. Will the minister explain today what she learned on her trip?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for her question and I thank her for allowing me the platform to explain what happened on my trip. I was very pleased while I was in Australia to accompany a

Saskatchewan-based company who is one of the lead companies with carbon capture and storage, HTC Purenergy, on new product launches in both Sydney and in Adelaide, which was incredibly well received by industry stakeholders in Australia.

I also had meetings with the premiers from the Australian states. As the members opposite would know, the Council of the Federation is the model that the Australian premiers have adopted and we had joint meetings. The now opposition leader while he was premier received that invitation. I would imagine he would have attended had he been in a position to do so.

I also met with the Zero Waste organization which is a south Australian recycling organization to discuss some best practices on that front. And as the member opposite is concerned about the water supply in this province, I was also very impressed to see that every toilet in Australia . . .

The Speaker: — The minister's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I understand that Manitoba Premier Gary Doer attended some of the same meetings as our minister. The difference is that he seemed to have learned something while he was there. His recent provincial budget included a \$145 million investment into climate change initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, to the west, Alberta announced this week that they are dedicating \$328 million to a climate change fund. In contrast the Sask Party cut the \$320 million Green Future Fund and replaced it with an extra \$10 million this year. And now the government is looking at intensity-based targets, Mr. Speaker. They're setting the bar so low that it's actually underground.

To the minister: can she promise this House that she won't come back in two months with a climate change plan that actually lets greenhouse gas emissions grow?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for her question. I would point out that one of the major differences between Alberta and Saskatchewan is that Alberta last year introduced legislation on the climate change file, something that the NDP absolutely failed to do in this province. There was no legislation, no regulations. There were no industry specific targets for oil and gas or for SaskPower in this province.

And if the member opposite is concerned about intensity-based targets, I would point out again that on Tuesday she said, and I quote, “I would say that the federal targets are something that

they should clearly be adopting.”

I would point out to the member opposite that the federal targets are intensity-based, and if she doesn't actually agree with her own statement from Tuesday, I will quote from their climate change booklet that they released last year, which would have industry, and I quote, “. . . reach mandatory emissions reduction obligations under the federal climate change plan,” which again is intensity-based.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister is interested in legislation, I suggest you stay tuned. I guess Saskatchewan's greenhouse gases are ready for growth.

The Speaker: — Order. Member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — I guess Saskatchewan's greenhouse gases are ready for growth. The members opposite were once fond of quoting the Manitoba NDP. Well let's compare. Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is so confident in its emissions targets that Premier Doer is putting them into legislation. Unfortunately the Sask Party is ignoring Manitoba and is instead following the path of Stephen Harper. They've kept the NDP targets, but they've gutted the very funding set out to help achieve those targets.

To the minister: does she actually have any intention of reaching those targets, and if so will she set out those targets in legislation as Manitoba has done? Or will she keep blaming the NDP for her shortcomings?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, if the NDP Environment critic wants to discuss shortcomings, I would point out that they were unable to actually introduce legislation or regulations because they had no targets last year for industry or SaskPower. There was nothing to legislate. They had every opportunity. Instead of actually doing something on this issue, instead they sat back and watched for 16 years as emissions in this province grew by 62 per cent.

So I would again ask the NDP Environment critic to clarify her party's position. Is she now abdicating the NDP targets as she clearly on Tuesday has endorsed the federal climate change plan?

The Speaker: — Order. It would certainly help if members even close to the minister would give the minister an opportunity to respond. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, taking something out of context seems to be the only answer the minister has.

Mr. Speaker, Gary Doer went to Australia and came back, Gary Doer went to Australia and came back with a plan. Our Environment minister went to Australia and came back with nothing but a tan.

The NDP has put forward a motion calling on the government to set . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I know members have their own personal views and opinions, but in the Chamber members also have the right to ask a question and to respond. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has put forward a motion calling on the government to set its greenhouse gas emission targets into law, as well as creating and reporting mechanisms. The target set by this motion matched the targets from the Sask Party platform, and they match the targets from the mandate letter sent from the Premier to his minister. There's no reason why the government should have to think twice. To the minister: will she support the NDP motion, or will the government do the cowardly thing and refuse to allow any debate on this topic today?

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, apparently I had a better time on my trip than even I was aware of because I kind of missed the tanning part. But to go back to the member's statement that I was taking things out of context, I would point out again that it is the NDP's own climate change plan that I'm quoting from where they clearly indicate that they will be adopting the federal climate change plan.

And I would point out again that the federal climate change plan is intensity-based targets, and it is a 20 per cent reduction by 2020 whereas the provincial targets are a 32 per cent reduction by 2020. So she's asking us to sign on to whatever the NDP is proposing today. Perhaps she can first clarify exactly what she's proposing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Nurses' Contract Negotiations

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the Health minister has been very clear that he is responsible for the great progress being made on the nursing file. Mr. Speaker, he has been prouder than a puffed-up peacock as he has boasted about his ability to sign an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses].

He has pointed to the MOU as an asset to the bargaining process, but, Mr. Speaker, the wheels have come off the wagon. Ninety-four per cent of SUN members have rejected the government's contract offer, and the decision of a strike vote is likely to come as early as today. To the Minister of Health:

what does the minister have to say on this most recent turn of events?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, am I proud of the MOU, the partnership that our government signed with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. It is unprecedented in Canada. There are no other provinces that have achieved this accomplishment.

Work has started on that memorandum of understanding. We've had a meeting already once, and there'll be another meeting coming up next week. It's dealing with recruitment and retention issues, and, Mr. Speaker, I'm very aware at the same time there's a collective bargaining process going on. And that bargaining process, like every other bargaining process, has its ups and its downs.

There is certainly a lot more pressure being turned on right now by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. That's fully in their mandate to do that. They're looking at perhaps a strike vote. They're not happy with the proposal put forward by SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations]. I think SAHO's heard that. The public's heard that. I heard that last night at their annual meeting, Mr. Speaker, but the process will work. The end result is what is most important.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, as they say, you ain't seen nothing yet. Mr. Speaker, the minister has been trying hard to suggest that there was no trouble in paradise between him and the nurses, but now we know the real story. SUN president, Rosalee Longmoore, said in a news release issued yesterday, and I quote:

“Nurses are outraged that the government has signed a partnership agreement to work collaboratively, and then betrayed that commitment by instructing their bargaining committee to refuse to negotiate exactly the same retention and recruitment provisions that Minister McMorris has already agreed to - this is a good cop-bad cop routine that's destructive and juvenile.”

To the minister: why did he instruct his bargaining committee to refuse to negotiate the retention and recruitment provisions included in his MOU?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my first question, we're very proud of a partnership agreement that we've signed with SUN that's going to deal with a lot of the recruitment and retention issues.

Mr. Speaker, I think the members on that side should talk maybe a little bit more about retention of their own members, former members, Mr. Speaker. They'd certainly do a much better job of that, Mr. Speaker.

But certainly the process is a process that will take some time. There are emotions at the table, absolutely. I saw some of those last night at the annual meeting, as the member opposite did. He was at the same meeting, Mr. Speaker. I think that the process will work. It's a process really, quite frankly, that was put in place by that former government.

Now it's interesting if he's asking me as a minister to interfere and dictate to SAHO what that agreement should look like. Is that what happened under a former NDP government, Mr. Speaker? I'd ask him that. Is that how they conducted negotiations — with SAHO as a puppet, but they were running things behind the scenes?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, obviously that member, and perhaps that minister was at a different event than I was. But, Mr. Speaker . . . Because I heard different. Mr. Speaker, the minister says that he won't inject himself into the bargaining process.

But at the SUN convention this week, when not sharing his feelings or blaming others, the minister said very clearly that he feels mandatory overtime is necessary. So much for being a silent partner. The minister wants to tell nurses what needs to be on the table but when things get tough he throws up his hands and he says it's between SUN and SAHO.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister can't have it both ways. He made himself part of the bargaining process when he introduced the MOU [memorandum of understanding] during negotiations. Now the people of Saskatchewan expect solutions — not blame, Mr. Speaker.

To the minister: is he going to just sit there now and claim it isn't his problem? Or will he stand today, show some leadership, and promise to clean up the mess he's made? Mr. Speaker, what's it going to be?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear what I said last night because that member is absolutely wrong, absolutely wrong with what I said, Mr. Speaker.

What I said, Mr. Speaker, regarding the question on overtime

and mandatory overtime, what I said is, after 16 years of failing to recruit and retain the proper number of nurses in this province, Mr. Speaker, health regions are feeling that they have to have mandatory overtime to ensure there's care in this province. It's absolutely disgraceful the mess that that former government left this province in when it comes to human resources in health care, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot in only five months. We're increasing the number of training seats so that more of our Saskatchewan people will be trained to work in our health care facilities. But even more than that, in the short term we've been across to the Philippines, attracted 300 nurses that will help in the short term, Mr. Speaker. We've done more in five months than that government did in 16 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Release of Confidential Documents

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Regina Police Service's suspect in the case of the unauthorized disclosure of confidential police files is a retired Regina police officer. We now know that the Minister of Justice admits he wrote a letter on behalf of the suspect, quote, "two or three years ago." On Monday of this week the minister told reporters in regards to this suspect, quote:

What I've indicated is it's not someone I've met. It is not somebody that I have an ongoing relationship with. It is someone I wrote a letter on behalf of two or three years ago.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is going to want to pay very close attention to this question. Does the minister today, does the minister today stand by his claims on Monday that the retired police officer in question is someone that he never met with personally and is not someone he was in regular contact with?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that the members opposite take the opportunity to read what the members on this side of the House have said. And I'm pleased that they're following what's going on.

It's clear that the members opposite have a fixation with how the Saskatchewan Party has handled this matter instead of how the NDP covered it up. Unlike the NDP, the Saskatchewan Party has been forthright and upfront. It has corrected misstatements and has been entirely co-operative with the authorities.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP fraud scandal began in 1992. In 1994 Pat Lorjé attempted to get the NDP to come clean with the police. Not until the embarrassment of 2007 when Chief Cal Johnston made his unprecedented late-night news conference did it all come out.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party does things ethically and properly, unlike the New Democratic Party. Mr. Speaker, I can understand why they have a fixation, but let's get on with things.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Very clearly, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: does he stand behind the comments that he made on Monday? Is it still his assertion that he has not met with the Regina police officer? And is it still his assertion that it is not someone that he was in regular contact with?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, in 1992 the NDP caucus was involved in a fraud involving their caucus funds. To avoid political embarrassment, they tried to cover it up. Many of their members are still in the House today — the member from Nutana, the member from Riversdale. In 1994 they were pressed to try and come clean with everything that took place.

Again in 2007 Glenn Hagel stood in this House and tried to tell the media and the members of this House that he had provided full and complete candid information. In fact, Mr. Speaker, that was not correct.

Sixteen years, Mr. Speaker, it took for the NDP to come forward and admit that they had not been forthright with the police. Mr. Speaker, that's a problem.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Accountability

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this House we raised the issue of what is now being called the unaccountability Act, Bill 31, by which this government intends to hide expenditures up to \$350,000 from public scrutiny.

Mr. Speaker, given the reaction of the Premier in the House yesterday and his further comments in the scrum, I have a very simple and direct question: did the Premier even read this piece of legislation before it was introduced in the House? Did the Premier know the provisions that were included in this piece of legislation before it was introduced in the House?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, governments must always be working to strike a balance between efficiency and accountability. The \$50,000 threshold for cabinet approval of expenditures has been in place for many years. As a result our cabinet decided that it was not appropriate to have to have cabinet approve basic things like replacement of routine facilities, etc., in parks. We feel that ministry officials are perfectly capable and qualified to make those kinds of spending decisions. That's why we want to raise the \$50,000 threshold.

That said, the official opposition raised some legitimate concerns about accountability. Our government is committed to accountability and that's why the Premier has asked me to take two steps to ensure that accountability is not compromised. First I will be writing to the Provincial Auditor to seek his recommendation on the appropriate level of spending requiring cabinet approval. And second I will be introducing a House amendment to amend the legislation to leave the threshold as is at \$50,000 until we receive a response from the auditor.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I guess that question does spring to mind. I hear from a colleague in the House, did anybody in that cabinet or caucus review this legislation before it was placed on the Table here?

Mr. Speaker, you know once you've been caught, once you've been caught you can do some quick retreating, and that's what we're seeing today. That's what we're seeing today because, Mr. Speaker, it's either incompetence, which means they hadn't even read the Bill, didn't understand what the Bill said, or it was an effort, it was an effort to escape accountability. So which was it? Which was it, Mr. Speaker? That's my question — incompetence or an effort to escape accountability?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we appreciate input from members of the public. We appreciate input from members opposite. We appreciate input from members of our own caucus. We appreciate input from the Provincial Auditor.

And, Mr. Speaker, in government there is always a balance between accountability and efficiency. Our government is working to improve efficiency. And we feel that part of that improvement is giving our professional civil service more authority to make spending decisions within the budgets that have been approved by cabinet.

However this government should not compromise government accountability, and that's why we're going to be seeking the Provincial Auditor's counsel on how to achieve the proper balance on what would be an appropriate spending threshold for cabinet approval.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, the threshold is going to remain at its current level of \$50,000. We appreciate the point that's been made. We've listened to that point, and we're going to make the appropriate amendment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that this opposition has been able in one day to help this government see the light. But the question is: why wouldn't you talk — if you want to — to the Provincial Auditor before you draft the legislation, before you introduce it, before you try and sneak through this provision which would have allowed this government to spend up to \$350,000 without public notification, Mr. Speaker, for at least a year?

You know, Mr. Speaker, I listened yesterday with interest to the Premier as he tried to justify this by saying well, you know, we're just too busy. We're just too busy to spend time at cabinet. We're just too busy to spend time at cabinet reviewing expenditures up to \$350,000.

Well, Mr. Speaker, then let me ask this question: does this government think it's too much, too much for the public to ask that members of that cabinet would spend an hour a week reviewing decisions that represent \$350,000 expenditures of the taxpayers' money? Are they too important, too busy to do that much on behalf of the taxpayers who elected them?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we have a complex process that we've adopted in our province, and it's a relatively good process. Things go through estimates. Things go through cabinet. Things go through the budgetary process. Things go through Public Accounts. Some things require cabinet approval; some things do not. These things, the expenditures that we're talking about, still will require ministerial approval. They will be approved within budget. They will be subject to ministerial approval.

And, Mr. Speaker, while we still believe that it makes sense to raise the \$50,000 threshold, we appreciate the public's concern and we feel that this can be done, we can make this increase without compromising the public's need for accountability. Mr. Speaker, we recognize that we want the auditor's advice on this and we want to look to the auditor for that advice and suggestion.

The members opposite talk about, are we listening? Are we paying attention? I would encourage them to listen to people like Carol Teichrob. They are out of touch with their own membership. They are out of touch with the public, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as the result of work of opposition, we've seen this government change course on a number of events. The Minister of Social Services was forced to change course on what she wanted to do with the department. We've seen the Minister of Advanced Education, the part-time Minister of Labour change course on now . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Members can come to order or we will just wait to finish question period. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They've changed their mind on social services. Now we've got the part-time Minister of Labour admitting that he better go out and do a public competition, at least for the Vice-Chair of the Labour Relations Board. I think in a matter of moments we're going to see the Minister of Municipal Government, having succumbed to the pressure of the public and the opposition, change his mind on his budget, which will by the way mean the whole, changing the budget. And now we've got this government changing their mind on a Bill they've just introduced last week.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if they're so willing to change their mind, my question is this: will they change their mind on their decision around the dental sealant for children? Will they change their mind around axing the vulnerable workers' program? Will they change their mind about the ill-advised cut to the Station 20 funding in Saskatoon? Will they show the kind of leadership that would make those kind of changes?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we will have a competent, professional government. Bills are introduced. They receive first, second, and third reading. They proceed through committee. And we receive input from the public at each and every stage as Bills progress through the House.

And, Mr. Speaker, we welcome input from the members there. We welcome input from the auditor and from members of the public. And we're not afraid to make a change when it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker. That's what good, competent government is all about. And we will do it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Funding for Saskatchewan Municipalities

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to announce new funding for Saskatchewan municipalities.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Our government is funnelling an extra \$10.41 million in revenue sharing to municipalities in

order to provide property tax relief for taxpayers. Mr. Speaker, this funding was not announced in our budget, but our province has experienced a record-breaking oil land sales rights in . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognized one individual who's been given the floor. I'd ask members to respect the opportunity for the minister to make his statement. Minister for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you very much . . .

[10:45]

The Speaker: — Order. The Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are in a position to help taxpayers who are facing tax increases. This new funding comes on top of a \$7.9 million increase in revenue sharing announced on budget day and brings the total revenue-sharing increase this year to \$18.3 million.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — This enhancement provides approximately \$140.55 million for Saskatchewan's municipalities for a total increase of 15 per cent over last year.

Our campaign promise was to provide 14 per cent over two years, along with the negotiation of a new long-term revenue-sharing agreement. This new revenue-sharing funding allows us to keep tomorrow's promise today and exceed our two-year commitment in one year.

The revenue-sharing enhancement of \$10.41 million will be added to the 2008-09 revenue-sharing amount of \$130.14 million and will become part of the base funding for municipalities going forward.

Mr. Speaker, after consulting with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Saskatchewan Rural Municipalities Association, and New North, we decided to add this new funding to the revenue-sharing base. Although this funding is unconditional, our goal is to help municipalities provide property tax relief to Saskatchewan people, particularly those that are planning property tax hikes this year.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the representatives of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and SARM here today for this announcement. Earlier this week I met with representatives from SUMA and SARM and New North to hear their expectations on what to do with the extra revenue being provided today. That meeting was important because it builds on the government-to-government relationship we feel is vital to building our province and addressing citizens' needs. Our province and municipalities need to be ready for unprecedented economic growth.

This money will not solve all the concerns municipalities have, Mr. Speaker, but we have moved quickly on increases to the revenue-sharing pool until we can negotiate a permanent, long-term solution to revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to this House we are keeping tomorrow's promises today, and with this funding we're helping our municipalities reduce municipal tax increases that might otherwise restrict future growth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Oh sorry, Mr. Speaker, I didn't hear you. First off, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for sending across a copy of his statement this morning. And I'm very pleased that after numerous days of questioning, this minister has finally decided to take our advice and redress the revenue sharing that they have made available to the municipalities and the cities out of this huge mountain of surplus cash that they're sitting on.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member . . . they can laugh and they can jeer a little bit here, but, Mr. Speaker, how many days did we hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs go out to the rotunda and say, we promised 7 per cent; we're delivering 7 per cent. That's it. It's not enough and we may see tax increases. And he stuck by that line until the Premier popped up one day in the House and talked about the glowing economy, the mountains of money that was rolling into the provincial government. And when he went out to the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, he said, well I haven't heard any complaints about this, but we'll have a look at it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you had to be out of province not to have heard the media accounts and reports from municipalities and cities that right across this province every municipality was looking at tax increases anywhere from 3.6 per cent up to almost 10 per cent. That's historical tax increases right across this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, after hearing questions from us, I'm very pleased that the minister and the Premier decided to re-address this issue. And I know that it will be — this extra funding or this additional funding — will be well received by municipalities and cities, but, Mr. Speaker, let's not second-guess ourselves here because many across this province will still see property tax increases. Not maybe as high as first proposed, but we are still talking in the range anywhere from 2 to 5 per cent.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that I will congratulate the minister on. First and foremost there was a number of comments when the Premier first said he was going to look at this. He hadn't heard about it, but he . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Member from Moose Jaw Wakamow can complete her statement.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Premier first went out in the rotunda and spoke that there may be an opportunity to provide more money to municipalities, he talked about dedicated funding. He talked about conditional funding. He talked about it being specific and it may claw back from next year any proposed increases that come from next year.

So there are a couple of things that I'm very pleased to hear, and I'm sure the municipalities will be also. Number one, that this is unconditional funding, and number two, that this money will be in the base. And that's what's important to the municipalities, that they know that they have this funding built into the base and that it's unconditional.

So, Mr. Speaker, while this money is still less than what was provided to municipalities in revenue sharing last year — the increase was 30 million last year — I do want to say we're very pleased that the government listened to this opposition and to the cry of citizens about the concern with property tax and have contributed more money. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, as per mutual agreement to move to a motion to proceed to government orders.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

Proceed to Government Orders

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That this Assembly do now proceed to government orders.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved:

That this Assembly do proceed to government orders.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 37 — The Parks Amendment Act, 2008

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 37, an Act respecting provincial parks, is being put forward to enable more

effective park enforcement. It will also make minor but important legal refinements to park boundaries to allow for proper digital mapping done by Information Services and my ministry.

Instead of park enforcement staff hand delivering tickets to vehicle owners who are in breach of park regulations, the new parks amendment Act will allow staff to place tickets directly on vehicles without the vehicle operator being present. If the receiving party does not respond to the ticket, enforcement staff can legally pursue the matter by mailing a follow-up ticket to the registered owner of the vehicle.

The other aspect of the amendment of The Parks Act involves digital mapping. Digital mapping is an ongoing provincial project that will result in minor legal amendments to many of the provincial park boundaries. Revisions will include incorporating updated language used by Information Services Corporation in describing their parcelization of titled land, and more precisely defining the boundaries between a few private lands and the adjacent parks. These changes will ensure the correct mapping of the various park areas by Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport and Information Services Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 37, The Parks Amendment Act, 2008. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport has moved second reading of Bill No. 37, The Parks Amendment Act, 2008. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased this afternoon to enter into debate on amendments to Bill No. 37, The Parks Act. Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill that although on the surface looks like it's relatively simple and mostly housekeeping in nature dealing with making changes to park boundaries, but, Mr. Speaker, the result of the changes to park boundaries includes new parcels of land or excludes parcels of land from within the parks, Mr. Speaker. And those changes are complex in themselves. And we do thank the minister for sending over the map she did, of each park, that would indicate the parcels of land that are being amended or changed, added or deleted from the park in each particular case, Mr. Speaker.

But it's very detailed work to check out each of these changes to ensure that in making these changes that pieces of land are . . . the implications of some of those changes on the financial well-being of the province, changes perhaps to the industrial capacity of the park, Mr. Speaker. And we are going to need to take some time to work with the minister and the officials to understand the implications of each change.

In fact it would be very helpful if the minister would be prepared to send over the notes that she would have on the particular changes in each of the parks along with the maps so it would help us and speed up our ability to research the particular changes more thoroughly. And if the minister were able to help us in that way, we would be able to move through this Bill much quicker than the individual checks we would have to do park by park, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, due to the complexity of the changes in front of us, even though they may seem to be housekeeping, it's incumbent upon us as an opposition to ensure that the changes are nothing more than housekeeping and are in fact in the interest of the people of Saskatchewan. So until we have the ability to make those checks, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 34

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 34 — The Graduate Retention Program Act** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to participate in the debate of Bill 34, An Act respecting a Graduate Retention Program and repealing The Graduate Tax Exemption Act. This is a measure that I've taken a great deal of interest in over the years, Mr. Speaker. And certainly there's been a fair amount of dialogue, a fair amount of discussion that's taken place in the province over the past years in terms of both how to make post-secondary education more accessible, more affordable for people and at the same time what we can do in Saskatchewan to retain and to attract young graduates to Saskatchewan so that they can bring their increased knowledge, their increased skills that they gained through post-secondary education to bear in our economy and our society.

And in terms of what it takes for a society to thrive, to succeed, certainly the studies come in again and again indicating the critical importance of post-secondary education and what that does in terms of not just the kind of jobs that are available . . . And indeed be it the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] or the Conference Board of Canada, any number of think tanks again come out with stats indicating anywhere from two-thirds to three-quarters to 80 per cent of all new jobs being created requiring some form of post-secondary education.

So again this Bill is tied up in that critical discussion as to what it takes for a society to succeed and to ensure that the human capital is there, the brainpower is there, the skill and knowledge is there to ensure that we succeed in this province.

I had the privilege and the pleasure of heading up a review of accessibility and affordability for post-secondary education.

And I met with hundreds of people across the province, went from Weyburn in the South to La Ronge and points north. In the course of the discussion and the dialogue around that report, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to talk to people that were students. I had the opportunity to talk to people that had family members in the post-secondary education system, to educators, to administrative staff supporting the system, to people that wanted to get involved in the system.

And in the course of those discussions, there were different people that brought up the question of graduate retention and how do you use that as a means by which to round out the package in terms of, you know, both accessibility on the front end of post-secondary education and making sure that you eliminate the barriers to participation in post-secondary education to provide the supports and what it takes to ensure not just participation but success in the post-secondary education system.

And then of course what we can do as a province to ensure that once we collectively have made this investment, what we can do to ensure that the province of Saskatchewan realizes a return on that investment? And certainly members have talked about this particular measure in those kind of terms, using that language of return on investment.

[11:00]

And I think that's a fair point, Mr. Speaker, and it's, you know I think a sad commentary in terms of where we're at in a federal sense in Canada, in terms of, I think, the people in Saskatchewan do want to see a greater return on the, the larger investment that the people of Saskatchewan are forced to make in terms of post-secondary education, in terms of and in response to the retreat from federal standards and a better measure of federal funding for these critical programs, you know post-secondary education being chief among them.

But throughout the '90s we saw the elimination of things like the Canada assistance plan, the replacement of that with the Canada Health and Social Transfer, the greatly diminished budgets that came with that. And as the feds retreated from what had been an area of responsibility, this, this question of a provincial investment and the acute nature of a provincial return on that investment became all the more salient in the discussions around post-secondary education.

And certainly, you know, I attended school throughout the '90s, Mr. Speaker. I was part of that generation that saw tuition double and in some cases triple and the attendant concern that that raised around the very access that the broad many have to post-secondary education. And in that discussion, there's a lot of attention that comes too. If the province is making this investment, what kind of guarantees should the province be seeking in terms of a return on that investment?

So, you know certainly we've had different measures throughout the years in terms of return for service bursaries and, you know, different kind of incentives too. You know once that investment has been made to ensure that that investment is being realized by the province that made it, which is the case when of course it's a provincial investment, much more so than a federal investment.

And I guess that leads me to two points I want to make in this debate for sure, Mr. Speaker. One is that as the federal government has retreated from its responsibility to fund these things, that you know perhaps under the constitution are, are clearly delineated as a provincial responsibility. And I might point out, Mr. Speaker, that in Canada, post-secondary education as a provincial jurisdiction is different from, you know, virtually any other western industrialized federation that provides post-secondary education. And that is because these other industrialized countries have realized the importance of post-secondary education and a knowledgeable, skilled, populous workforce, and the importance of that to, not just society, but to economy and productivity. Pick your measure, Mr. Speaker.

And you know there are different sort of historical reasons why Canada is different in that regard. But the fact remains that in the '60s and the post-war expansion of the welfare state, there were steps taken to ensure that provinces had greater wherewithal to provide a basic level of access to post-secondary education and basic quality in terms of that post-secondary education.

The '90s saw a retreat from that and as such you saw a fragmenting of the system. You saw a fragmenting of what used to bring Canadians together and, you know, wildly different experience in terms of the levels of tuition across the country, in terms of quality across the country, and a lot of that being directly related to not so much whether people are Canadians, but whether or not they have the fortune to be in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick or BC [British Columbia] or Yukon or where they were.

So I think that was a regrettable trend, Mr. Speaker, and that led us directly into discussions, a more urgent discussion of what are the means to secure the return for provinces making an increasing investment into post-secondary education.

Now over the past years, the Romanow administration, the administration that I was part of with the member of Riversdale as our head, there were different measures seized upon by which to try and to secure that investment. You know return-for-service bursaries were particularly important in the health care professions. We saw some good success with those measures in terms of nursing, in terms of bursaries provided for doctors, in terms of hard-to-recruit, hard-to-retain professional items such as technologists.

And I guess it was building on that experience and again responding to things that we had heard as we got around the province and discussions that we'd had with stakeholders and students and interested parties, that we brought forward the graduate tax exemption.

And again in '99, there were different parties that ran on different platforms. I'm sure you remember that well, Mr. Speaker. And arising out of that, there was a compromise on a tax credit that was criticized as being inadequate. We listened to those criticisms, and we responded with one which was much more robust in terms of the value to individuals. And I think that the government of the day has brought forward a measure that goes beyond that certainly, that builds on the experience of Manitoba in terms of what they've done with the graduate tax

situation there, in terms of a refundable rebate.

And I guess the thing that remains to be seen, Mr. Speaker, is there's been a lot of hype about how this is a very aggressive measure and possibly the best in the free world and all of that. But I guess it remains to be seen (a) how much it's actually going to cost. It's booked for \$12 million this year, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to be with great interest that the opposition monitors as to how much this is going to cost the people of Saskatchewan.

And again in terms of how we see that basic measure of accessibility and affordability for post-secondary education, which is tuition, we're going to be watching that very closely, Mr. Speaker. Because when the members opposite were seizing upon the experience of Manitoba and dismissing the measures that we'd taken on the graduate tax exemption side — you know, fair enough that's their point of view — but in using the Manitoba model as an example, they've I think forgotten the basic fact that in Manitoba they've had a freeze on tuition that was only removed this past year, Mr. Speaker, in the budget that was introduced in that province mere weeks ago. But they've essentially had a freeze on tuition. When the Manitoba NDP came to power in 1999, they reduced tuition 10 per cent and then froze it, and that's provided the province of Manitoba with tuition at a level that is the third lowest in the country.

And I guess I point that out, Mr. Speaker, because what we also heard from students and families and stakeholders — time and time again — is that to get into the system in the first place it's important to have a tuition that is reasonable enough and affordable enough so that students can get through that door in the first place. And it's fine to have these wealthy, sort of, rebates post-graduation, but you have got to get into post-secondary education in the first place, and you got to be able to succeed and persist through the post-secondary education.

And I guess the concern that we have with this measure is that in terms of the narrow, sort of, question of recruitment and retention of graduates, it does a not bad job of that. But there is some concerns that I'll get into in a little bit, Mr. Speaker. But in terms of the, you know, people getting into the system in the first place and then succeeding in the system, it doesn't do anything in that regard. And of course the government of the day has said that, well we'll continue the freeze for one more year.

And I find that interesting, Mr. Speaker because in, you know, the last spring, along about this time, we had the member for Silver Springs talking about how we needed to have tuition that was at least below the national average and, you know, why hadn't we taken any action in this regard.

And I guess what I'd say to that is a number of things. Under the member from Riversdale's leadership, Saskatchewan spent the most per capita on post-secondary education. We spent the greatest percentage of budgetary expenditure on post-secondary education. As a percentage of our GDP [gross domestic product], we spent the most in Canada on post-secondary education.

And in terms of the investment that we as a province were

making in this critical area, we made a very large investment in that regard, Mr. Speaker. And again because of the things I said at the outset in terms of the importance of post-secondary education to society and to the economy and in terms of people being able to realize their full potential in a socio-economic way, we thought this was an important investment that needed to be made. So we were proud of that investment.

But where we wanted a greater return and where we wanted a greater measure of accessibility and affordability was around where we ranked federally in terms of the level of tuition being required from students. And we also wanted to make sure that students had some basic relief on the affordability side of things, and some predictability in terms of how they went forward with tuition. And again the only times that we'd been able to specifically secure progress on this front, Mr. Speaker, was with, you know, 2004-05 when we introduced that first year of a freeze and then froze it the next two subsequent years.

Now the government is saying that they're going to engage in a study. They're going to engage in some kind of a consultation in terms of what comes next. I would suggest that they take a close look at, you know, not just what we had proposed in terms of the platform, in terms of a \$1,000 reduction to tuition and then pegging the amount going forward to ensure that students had predictability and affordability, but also making sure that you've got that gain around quality to ensure that that amount is backfilled with the post-secondary institutions.

You know there have been criticisms raised of that approach, Mr. Speaker. But I find it interesting that, you know, fundamental elements of that approach are in practice in British Columbia. They're in practice in Alberta. And you know, I think that the students and the families of students in Saskatchewan deserve to have the same approach.

So we've had another year of a freeze brought in. Again we're glad to see that. But we want to see that basic affordability and sustainability for students that are trying to plan their lives and how they're going to afford this critical investment on their part, we want to see that secured, Mr. Speaker.

So again there are discussions that have been identified to be undertaken by the government of the day. And I would urge them not to look just at the work that had been done in terms of the accessibility and affordability review, but I'd also urge them to look at what's going on in Alberta and British Columbia in terms of their go-forward mechanism which is pegging tuition to some basic measure such as CPI [consumer price index] or some kind of educational price index.

One of the things that we were glad to introduce the graduate tax exemption around was that it wasn't just focused on just university. It was focused on post-secondary education students as a whole because, of course, we think it's important that we've got people going to university and getting undergrad degrees and graduate degrees. But we also thought it was important that we had a measure that extended to graduates from SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], graduates from our regional colleges. And so we're glad to see that in that sort of design aspect, that there is some similarity there with what's being brought forward here in terms of the SIAST grads being able to take advantage of this

program.

Something that we're still . . . you know, we've got a few more questions on and perhaps we can get these nailed down in committee. Different from the graduate tax exemption program that we'd previously had in place, the party opposite campaigned on an approach that only had the exemption available to students that had gone to school here.

And again in the campaign we said, you know, this sends a terrible message to the students of Saskatchewan that for whatever reason need to go to other provinces, perhaps to other countries, to get their education. And you know, it being the global economy and the global village, I mean, why wouldn't we want to send young or Saskatchewan people out into the world to get that education and then bring that back to the province of Saskatchewan? Why would we not want to incent that behaviour as a society, Mr. Speaker?

So the Saskatchewan Party, I think, has shifted on that in terms of the approach that they'd taken in the campaign. There's some room now in terms of certain programs being designated where students can go out to other provinces, get that education, and then bring that back home to the province. So I guess we're glad to see that, Mr. Speaker, but again we'll see how that works out over the long haul.

The \$12 million that has been booked for the program as a whole, we realize — and we'd had some discussion of this in estimates, Mr. Speaker — we realize that's a start-up cost. We expect to see this cost go up fairly aggressively over the years. We'll be watching that closely and I guess we'll see. The amounts that Manitoba has booked for what has been described by members opposite as a less aggressive program, the amounts that the province of Manitoba has booked certainly seem to be much greater. So again we'll be watching that very closely.

[11:15]

I guess it's interesting that this is the investment that's being made. It shows in a sort of a marquee investment on the part of the members opposite at this time, Mr. Speaker, that again we'll see where Saskatchewan stacks up as the data comes in, in terms of whether or not that tradition of leadership, in terms of the per capita expenditure, in terms of the percentage of budgetary expenditure, or in terms of percentage of GDP that our province spends on post-secondary education, we'll be interested to see how whether or not that leadership is continued or if it goes sideways somehow.

But I guess the broader sort of things that I'm not sure that a back-end measure does, Mr. Speaker, is ensure that we make our system broadly accessible in the first place. And I've talked about tuition, but there are other things in terms of barriers to post-secondary education that certainly we heard a lot about from students and their families or people that wanted to be students, throughout the province, Mr. Speaker.

Geography is a huge barrier in terms of access to post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. And again it's fine to incent graduation and again we think that's important. But we think if you put all of your attention there and don't pay attention to who's getting into the system in the first place, that

that's really only catching half of the equation.

And again geography being such a big concern, it remains to be seen where this government stands on things like credit transfer, and better coordination throughout the different component parts of the system. I know the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy has talked about how he was able to go to get his first year of university without leaving home and his home community, and certainly we've got a tremendous advantage in Saskatchewan in the regional college system that enables, enables the post-secondary system to break down that barrier of geography and to make that education more accessible and affordable in home communities.

And again one of the worries I have there, Mr. Speaker, is that in this budget, you know, that was hailed by members opposite as, you know, the \$1 billion historic budget, and ready for growth and all these things, the problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that in the capital envelope for post-secondary education there's \$45 million. And in that subsection of the expenditure there's \$800,000 for capital out there in regional college country.

And again if this is one of our critical means by which we make post-secondary education more accessible, more affordable, and you know, provide better on-ramps for people right across the province in terms of the system, and again the way that that makes our economy more productive, more knowledge-based, and makes our society better running and better suited; then you'd think that the regional college system would have been a natural in terms of where investments would have been made. But again, \$45 million, that's a good amount devoted to capital — but 800,000 of that devoted to regional college capital.

And again you talk to the regional college people across the province, their enrolments are up. They've got a great number of capital needs and \$800,000 doesn't cut it. So I guess, you know, this is the historic capital budget and it's odd that at this time when there's all this self-congratulation and back patting going on, on the other side, that a mere \$800,000 is devoted to capital for the regional college system.

In terms of measures that ensure better access and engagement in the post-secondary education system by First Nations and Métis people, you know there were some measures that we had taken in terms of investment around SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies], around Gabriel Dumont in terms of taking training on-reserve. You know, it seems that it's not quite status quo but they used it . . . These good foundations that we've got built, they haven't really been seized upon by the members opposite. So that's a place where again, if you're going to have these back-end measures around retention and incenting completion that's fine and good. But it's just as important to make sure that you're getting a broad cross-section of Saskatchewan people into post-secondary education in the first place and that's particularly true around First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker.

There are other supports that need to be brought to bear, be it day care, transportation. Housing is of particular importance, you know, increasingly right across the province. So there are a great number of measures to ensure that that basic accessibility in the first place, that we see is not being well served by this

budget at all, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, again we think it's fine and good to have aggressive rebates on the back end of post-secondary education, but something we know that the members opposite have missed is the basic accessibility in the first place. And again, if you're not doing anything to expand the club, to expand the opportunity to that critical experience which is post-secondary education, we think that fails the province and fails the people of Saskatchewan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place and cede the floor to my colleague from Saskatoon Massey Place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the official opposition to make a few comments on Bill No. 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act. As I have visited various campuses and engaged in discussions with students from a range of programs and universities, colleges and technical institutes, I've heard some concerns, Mr. Speaker. Students are concerned about the loss of the graduate tax exemption program that the previous NDP government initiated.

Under the NDP's program, new graduates were able to earn \$100,000 in tax-free income during their first five years of employment. This graduate tax exemption program was broadly available to all graduates of post-secondary certificate, diploma, degree, and journey person programs. And it was a program that was not only designed to retain our young people, Mr. Speaker, but it was also designed to recruit them from elsewhere. The graduate tax exemption program was available to graduates from outside of Saskatchewan who want to start their careers and build their lives here.

But that program has been axed, Mr. Speaker, and replaced with something different, something less comprehensive. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government's new program is not without merit, but it is also not without fault. Young people have told me that this new program is far more confusing than the straightforward graduate tax exemption. On the one hand, the minister says the graduates of select programs will receive a \$20,000 tuition rebate, but when young people read the fine print, Mr. Speaker, they see that it isn't all it's cracked up to be.

When they read the fine print, they see that if they complete a journey person's certificate program or a one-year certificate or degree program, no matter what year they finish, they only receive \$3,000 of their tuition money back, no matter how much they may have paid in tuition. Completion of a two-year certificate or diploma program in 2007 merits just \$3,200 of their tuition money back, but if they complete such a program this year instead, they'll get \$6,400 of their tuition rebated to them — again with no consideration for how much tuition they have actually paid. A three-year undergraduate degree warrants \$5,000 if you graduated in 2007, \$10,000 if you graduated this year, and \$15,000 if you graduate next year.

And wait, Mr. Speaker, because it's about to get even more complicated and confusing. An individual who completed a four-year undergraduate degree in 2007 will get just \$5,000 of their tuition money rebated to them over seven years after graduation. A 2008 graduate, on the other hand, will get \$10,000 of their tuition money back. A 2009 graduate, however, will get \$15,000 in rebated tuition. And only those who graduate from a four-year undergraduate program in 2010 will actually receive \$20,000 of the money they paid in tuition rebated back to them over the following seven years.

It's no wonder that young people are confused because there are a lot of details in the fine print of this Bill, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party program is being rolled out at a snail's pace over the next several years, and young people will receive vastly different benefits depending on which program they complete and when they complete it.

And, Mr. Speaker, further into the fine print, we see that the Sask Party government's plan does very little to actually recruit young people to build their futures here in Saskatchewan. The graduate retention program leaves out the vast majority of out-of-province graduates. I'm pleased to see, Mr. Speaker, that the Sask Party has slightly altered their original plan which completely shut out all out-of-province graduates. It is commendable that after significant pressure from the opposition and the public the minister made some alterations to his plan, but it is not enough, Mr. Speaker.

The ministry's website indicates just eight eligible out-of-province programs — just eight. That falls far short of what it should be, Mr. Speaker. Young people from Saskatchewan who must study in their chosen field outside of Saskatchewan, such as speech-language pathologists, are completely shut out of the benefits of this program. Young people from Saskatchewan who choose to study elsewhere but who want to return home to Saskatchewan to build their lives here after their studies are also completely shut out of this program.

And for young people who are not from here who are completing their post-secondary training and contemplating their futures, the Sask Party program does absolutely nothing to recruit them to come and build their futures here in this great province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Sask Party plan fails miserably in the area of youth recruitment.

This tuition rebate program also fails miserably when it comes to making post-secondary training and education more accessible at the front end. Mr. Speaker, as I have had opportunities to speak with young people from across Saskatchewan, one of the most commonly raised issues is accessibility to post-secondary training and education. A future, partial rebate of tuition spread out over seven years after young people complete their programs does absolutely nothing to help them with the high tuition fees that they face today. When I asked the minister in committee some days ago what was his opinion about current tuition levels in Saskatchewan, he refused to provide his views.

Mr. Speaker, the young people that I have spoken to about this program are confused because they view it as convoluted. They wonder why it doesn't benefit their friends who have left the

province to study but want to come home to Saskatchewan. They wonder why it does so little to recruit young people from other places to build their futures here. And they wonder why this government has done nothing to make post-secondary education more accessible at the front end.

Mr. Speaker, it's well known that the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour is extremely averse to any form of public or stakeholder consultation. So I want to ensure Saskatchewan young people and students in our universities, colleges, and technical institutes have an opportunity to be heard. I look forward to further discussion on this Bill in committee. At this time I would move that Bill 34 be sent to committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture, and Sport that . . . pardon me, the motion responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour that Bill No. 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall the Bill be referred? I recognize the Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — To Human Services, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Bill No. 31

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 31 — The Executive Government Administration Act** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I am very pleased to stand today and make a few remarks on this Bill. Since speaking on this Bill just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we've had some tremendous changes, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday as I spoke at some length about accountability and the lack of transparency and accountability with this particular piece of legislation, with the move from 50,000 to \$350,000 in the limits in which would have to be recorded and moved forward through OC [order in council], Mr. Speaker, and in a mere 24 hours we've seen a complete turnaround, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen what I would call a miracle — a miracle, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the government finally see the light, Mr. Speaker. They decided that they knew they would follow our direction. They would move forward and amend their own legislation just one day after putting it in the House, Mr. Speaker. And for that, Mr. Speaker, we thank them. We thank the fact that they listened to us. We thank them for the fact that, Mr. Speaker, they know when they're doing something wrong, Mr. Speaker.

[11:30]

And, Mr. Speaker, that's the role of the opposition to point things out, maybe things that were oversights, things that hadn't been looked at very carefully, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on this Bill at this time and just thank the members opposite for listening to us.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this Act, an Act that has been referred to as the unaccountability Act, Mr. Speaker, because of the direction that the government was taking us up till this morning, Mr. Speaker.

And as the member from Regina Dewdney indicated in his short remarks here just a few moments ago, after a very short intervention by members of the opposition who had actually studied the Bill, Mr. Speaker, the government opposite has offered significant changes in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reviewed the government cabinet Minister of Justice's remarks in introducing this Bill yesterday, and, Mr. Speaker, in general the comments made by the Minister of Justice were as follows:

. . . these are major [excuse me, Mr. Speaker] these are major modifications to the administration of government, [but] I want to assure the members that the internal mechanisms of oversight and monitoring undertaken by Treasury Board and other offices, including this House, remain intact.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, the Minister of Justice, in presenting the Bill indicated that indeed these are major modifications, and then he says basically, trust us because other provisions are there to ensure that accountability remains in place.

Well in just 24 hours the member opposite on one matter related to the clauses of this Bill has indicated that in fact that's not the case, Mr. Speaker. There are considerable number of other modifications to the delivery of government, Mr. Speaker, that are accounted for in this legislation.

The members of the opposition now have realized that we have to do some intense scrutiny, Mr. Speaker, of all the clauses of this Bill. And as a result we are recognizing that with changes coming, perhaps next week, Mr. Speaker, amendments that the government is proposing, that in fact this Bill is changing, and the Bill that's in front of us right now, Mr. Speaker, will not be the Bill that the government wants to have passed at the end of

this session.

So, Mr. Speaker, given that there are changes coming, given that there is more scrutiny that's required on this Bill on these major modifications to legislation, Mr. Speaker, I would move debate on this Bill be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 32

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 32 — The Executive Government Administration Consequential Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 apportant des modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Executive Government Administration Act** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm pleased to rise today and add a few additional comments to my remarks yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, these are consequential amendments to Bill No. 31. The fact that Bill No. 31, as I stated yesterday, was fundamentally flawed, required significant change, Mr. Speaker, and in fact decreased significantly the accountability and the transparency of government and left considerable concerns in the minds of both the public and members of the opposition.

But, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the minister's announcement today that he's going back to the levels that were there prior to the introduction of this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have to examine in more detail what the implications are then on the consequential amendments, Mr. Speaker. So at this time, I'll conclude my remarks.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too am pleased to rise to begin discussion on this particular piece of legislation. And I thank my colleague from Regina Dewdney for so perfectly raising the issues yesterday and of course our leader from Saskatoon Riversdale who directed questions at government on Bill 31 and the consequential amendment Bill 32.

So, Mr. Speaker, given that this Bill flows from discussions on 31, until we've got 31 resolved and we know exactly what's happening, Mr. Speaker, I think it's appropriate that we adjourn debate on this Bill. And I would therefore move that we now adjourn debate on Bill 32.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved

adjournment of debate on Bill No. 32. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 25

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Heppner that **Bill No. 25 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2008** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to rise and speak again on this Bill. I know there are other people to speak to this. I just want to say again a couple of points. We have some questions about this, about the consultations on the process of identifying these parcels of land, who was involved, and that type of thing. And as well, specifics about each parcel of land because it's important that each parcel of land that's taken out is replaced by some land of equal ecological value.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say as well — and I said this yesterday and I'll say it again today — it seems that we're operating on a bit of hype here, Mr. Speaker. The week that we celebrated Earth Day, this is the kind of legislation that's introduced by the Saskatchewan Party government — one that is from the looks of it a step backwards in terms of protecting lands in Saskatchewan.

We've made great gains in terms of biodiversity in this province. And what's the first piece of legislation they do? They remove lands from The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. This is serious stuff. This is kind of the tone that they're setting and I have great concerns and I know many people throughout Saskatchewan and in fact Canada watch this kind of thing and have some deep concerns and worries about the kind of directions that we're going in.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I know some other people will want to speak to this Bill and so I'll conclude my remarks right now. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to raise some questions about this particular Bill. I know that The Parks Act, which was discussed earlier today, involved a number of parcels of land and a number of changes to the boundaries of parks.

As it relates to The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, there are also many pieces of land and we'd very much appreciate receiving the maps from the minister. I think it would be quite helpful and would speed the House's dealing with this particular legislation if in addition to the maps we could receive

all of the detailed explanations of why certain pieces of land are going into wildlife habitat land and why there's more land going out.

And with that comment, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Lakeview has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 25, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2008. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Bill No. 24

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 24 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise again to enter in debate on this Bill. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying yesterday, the notion of replacing the two Vice-Chairs on the Labour Relations Board with only one Vice-Chair is counterintuitive, given that there is an amount of activity that goes through Labour Relations Board. The government members have already complained that they feel that the decisions aren't being rendered quickly enough, and by reducing the staffing of Labour Relations Board, it seems counterintuitive as to how those decisions would then be rendered in a more timely fashion.

In the Premier's mandate letter to the Minister of Labour, his letter states, quote, "In your capacity of Minister of Labour, establish a fair and balanced labour environment in Saskatchewan that respects the rights of workers and employers . . ." And it goes on to list a number of things.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this speaks exactly to what I was saying yesterday about the fact that the changes that the government is making to not only this Bill but some other pieces of legislation, Bills 5 and 6, actually create a toxic labour environment in the province which is again potentially counterproductive to attracting workers to the province or attracting workers to stay in the province.

And it was interesting, Mr. Speaker, that I came across a number of quotes that were said in the past, one of which was from the Premier. At this time was May 4, 2005, quote, Mr. Speaker, "... what the opposition . . ." at that time was obviously the Sask Party:

... what the opposition disagrees with is labour legislation that hurts both employers and employees because it casts a chill over the provincial economy and turns away investment into the province of Saskatchewan.

And that's exactly, Mr. Speaker, what I fear the changes that the government has brought forward will end up doing to this province.

So it's interesting that the opposition at that time saw that, felt that in terms of an unbalanced labour environment, which is exactly what the government is now creating and unfortunately didn't take their own advice.

The other quote that I came across, for instance, was from the member of Silver Springs in November 24, 2005, quote, "... Saskatchewan's unbalanced labour environment is a deterrent to private sector investment, job creation, and economic growth . . ." Again speaks to the fact that if you don't have a balanced labour environment, a fair and balanced labour environment, it does cast a chill over the economic potential, potential capability of the province moving forward.

And clearly since there has been such a large hue and outcry from the workers in this province that are either represented by unions or not, who are represented by other groups and organizations in the province — there are some serious concerns to be had with the labour legislation, these pieces of legislation that the government has brought forward. And this is yet another one of those Bills.

There are many other speakers that want to speak to this Bill as well, Mr. Speaker, so at this time I will take my seat, and encourage the government members to look closely at what they've decided to do so far, reconsider their decisions, and potentially make the right decision of moving these Bills — all of them, all of the labour Bills — into further public consultation so there can be some true, meaningful dialogue had on these Bills.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to enter into discussion on this particular piece of legislation this afternoon. Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation in itself is not that complicated or that large or complex of change, Mr. Speaker, but the implications of this particular piece of legislation could be far-reaching. And, Mr. Speaker, because we don't have, have not had the opportunity yet to consult and talk to all the stakeholders that may have concerns about this particular change, at this time I would move that we adjourn debate on this particular piece of legislation.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 24, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2008. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to accommodate the good work of the committees, I move that this

House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government Deputy House Leader has moved that in order to accommodate the working of committees that this House, Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:43.]

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