



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

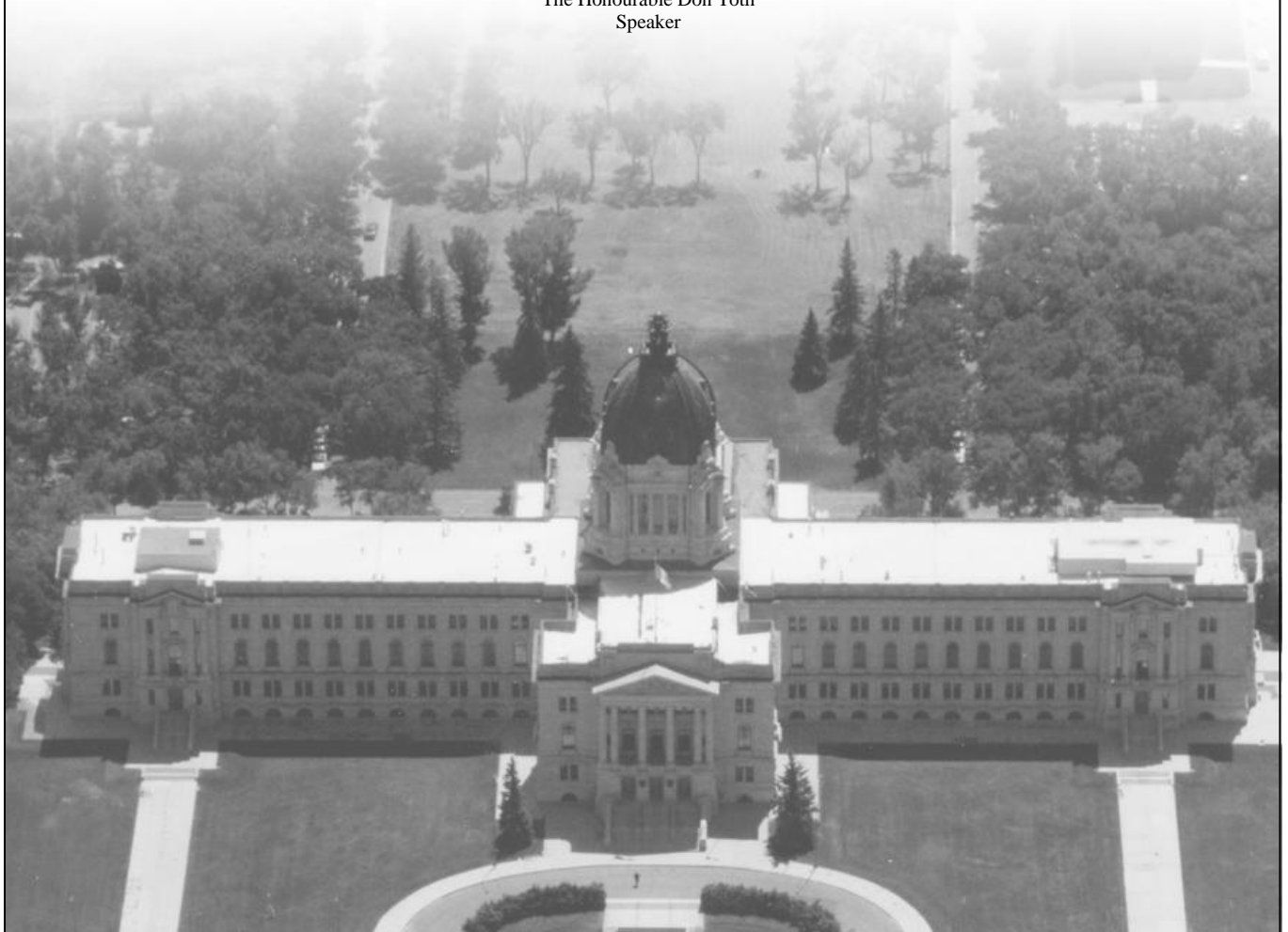
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to welcome through you and to you to all the members the following prominent northern municipal leaders here in our legislature today, for a meeting of the northern round table: Their Worships Georgina Jolibois, mayor of La Loche; Gordon Stomp, mayor of Air Ronge; Bruce Fidler, mayor of Creighton; Alex Maurice, mayor of Beauval; and Councillor Doris McDonald from Stony Rapids.

And, Mr. Speaker, these northern leaders are here to participate in today's northern municipal round table and we look forward to discussing a wide variety of issues of interest to our northern municipal sector partners. I urge all members to welcome our honoured guests in their Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition and as the Municipal Affairs critic, I too would like to welcome all of the representatives from northern Saskatchewan here to attend the northern round table. This is an important process that has a great importance to northern Saskatchewan. And I know that these leaders have travelled a great distance to be here today and, Mr. Speaker, I hope that they have a very productive day. And I would ask all members to join them here to the legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before we proceed, I would ask members — and I actually did hear a number of members on the government side of the House — to respect the right of individuals to introduce their guests without interference. I recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you Michael McCafferty. Michael was an aide to the former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. He was a writer for Grant Devine's government. He was and still is a great collector of political memorabilia. He's currently fighting a battle with cancer, and I ask all MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to join and wish him well. Those accompanying him are Helen McCafferty, his mother; Frank McCafferty, his brother; and John MacGowan. So please welcome them to our House.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature a group of elementary school students in the east gallery. They are from St. Anne School, which is in my constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin. I can't introduce all the students by name, unfortunately, but I can introduce their teachers and chaperones to you: Mr. Sanche, Mrs. Johnson are the teachers with them; chaperones, Ms. Stephen, Ms. Canaday, Ms. Thompson, Ms. Kudryck, and Corrine Sparling. I hope that all members will join me in welcoming these students from Saskatoon Meewasin to their Legislative Assembly. I hope they have an enjoyable and interesting visit.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the House today Dave Marit, who is no stranger to this House. But Dave is from Fife Lake, president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], but I think equally as important this morning, played a big part in the water program for farmers and ranchers out there that we're going to announce later this morning. So really appreciate his part he's played in designing that program and ask all members to welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the Minister of Agriculture in welcoming Dave Marit to the legislature. I'm looking forward to see how this program rolls out in the southwest part of the province, and I know that Mr. Marit will have a great deal to do with that. So welcome on behalf of the official opposition.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the legislature, in your east gallery, being that it is May Day — and I understand there'll be a bit of a gathering outside on the steps of the legislature later on — we have been joined by some trade unionists in the east gallery. I just acknowledge, I see Dave Winters there, Paul Meinema, Tom Graham, Marianne Hladun. I see Patti Gieni has joined us. Marlene Brown.

I ask all members to welcome these people — who have, some have travelled far and some come from the city here — to our Assembly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I present a petition on behalf of Moose Jaw residents and my constituents that would greatly improve the access to health care delivery in our region of Five Hills. And the prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present on behalf of my constituents.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present a number of pages of a petition in support of Station 20 West in Saskatoon — petitioners who are concerned about the withdrawal of funding from that project. And the petition reads, or at least the prayer of relief does, Mr. Speaker:

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon and every neighbourhood of Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions. This time it's for affordable housing in Saskatchewan, one of the major, major issues facing many people in Saskatchewan. I'll read the prayer:

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

I do so present. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I present petitions today in opposition to government's Bill 5 and 6, essential services Act and the 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 residents of Leroy, Spalding, Watson, Englefeld, Quill Lake, St. Gregor, Meadow Lake, Rapid View, Dorintosh, Moose Jaw, Flying Dust, Battleford, North Battleford, Gallivan, Edam, Cut Knife, Loon Lake, Livelong, Turtleford, Cochin, Maymont, Meota, Speers, Vawn, Pierceland, Goodsoil, Saskatoon, Colonsay, Allan, Elstow, Aberdeen, Grenfell, Wolseley . . .

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Prud'homme, Vonda, Davidson, Prince Albert, Dalmeny, Ituna, Shellbrook, Meath Park, Wakaw, Paddockwood, Christopher Lake, St. Louis, Lanigan, Jansen, St. Walburg, Paradise Hill, Spruce Lake, Wadena, Margo, Bruno, Cando, Frenchman Butte, Lloydminster, Maidstone, Marshall, Marsden, Debden, Shell Lake, Muskoday, Weldon, Canwood, Spruce Home, Kindersley, Mildon, Watrous, St. Benedict, Regina, Biggar, Estevan, Kipling, Corning, Simpson, Young, Birch Hills, Kinistino, La Ronge, Vanscoy, Humboldt, Domremy, Yellow Creek, Guernsey, Drake, Viscount, Coppersands, Hafford, Borden, Theodore, Sheho, Sturgis, Canora, Endeavour, Preeceville, Norquay, Weyburn, Stoughton, Yellow Grass, Wawota, Redvers, Kennedy, Swift Current, Cadillac, Wymark, Stewart Valley, Wynyard, Clavet, Warman, Martensville, Melville, Duck Lake, Dundurn, Osler, Mervin, Glaslyn, Ruddell, Delmas, Sonningdale, Denholm, Silton, Cabri, Waldeck, Shaunavon, Success, Lancer, Maple Creek, Bienfait, Zelma, Coronach, Nipawin, Tisdale, and Waldheim. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

**President and Vice-Chancellor Named
at University of Regina**

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, as we sit in the legislature this morning, a significant announcement is taking place at the University of Regina. As a member of the U of R [University of Regina] alumni, I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to inform the members of the Assembly that the university is at this hour naming the seventh president and vice-chancellor in its history, Dr. Vianne Timmons.

Dr. Timmons comes to the U of R with a wealth of academic and administrative experience, as well as a history of community engagement. She is currently the vice-president of academic development at the University of Prince Edward Island. A professor of education, she has also served as Chair of the Education department at St. Francis Xavier University and dean of Education at the UPEI [University of Prince Edward Island].

Through the teaching, research, and service to the community that takes place at the U of R, the university has an increasingly important role to play in the social, cultural, and economic development of the province.

Dr. Timmons's academic accomplishments and exemplary record of senior administrative leadership make her the ideal choice to lead the university at this important time in the institution's history.

Dr. Timmons will begin her tenure as U of R president on July 1.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming Dr. Timmons to our province and wishing her all the best as president of the great University of Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

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

Canadian Team Qualifies for 2008 Summer Olympics

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to share news that Canada's senior men's water polo team have qualified for the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

This is the first time that the Canadian men's team has qualified in water polo. Canada beat Romania 9 to 8 in the quarter final of the last qualification tournament and this was a huge upset as the win occurred in Romania's pool. And the win was hard fought, but especially sweet, Mr. Speaker, because Romania had soundly beaten Canada in a game the week before. Canada finished fourth in the tournament and thereby clinched a ticket to Beijing.

Now there is a Moose Jaw connection in all this, Mr. Speaker. Sophia and Kasper Randall will be watching closely from Moose Jaw as their grandson Robin serves as Canada's goaltender. Robin's parents call Drinkwater home. Robin still calls Drinkwater home and that's where his parents still reside, but he divides his time between Drinkwater, the national team training centre in Calgary, and Sydney, Australia where he plays in a semi-professional water polo league at Sydney university. Robin summed up the experience so far by saying, "No longer would we be training for a faint glimmer of hope. Now that hope is an Olympic flame."

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating

the Canadian senior men's water polo team — I know there'll be some avid fans in Moose Jaw — and wishing them all the best in their quest for Olympic success. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Remembering the Holocaust

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the eve of Yom Hashoah or Holocaust Memorial Day. This day is set aside for remembrance and contemplation to look back on the horrific events of the Holocaust and to resolve never to forget the suffering and strength of an entire people. Not only do we mourn the many victims of the Holocaust, we also mourn what could have been. Six million futures disappeared in the cattle cars and concentration camps of the Nazis. We will never know what kind of a world we would be living in now if their voices had not been silenced.

Saskatchewan is a province of many cultures, built on a foundation of tolerance and diversity. Our vitality comes from that diversity. Hence our provincial motto, "from many peoples, strength."

Yom Hashoah compels us to remember the tremendous price we pay when we forget the source of our strength. We remember because the lives and the futures of millions of people were ground down and destroyed in the Holocaust. We remember because intolerance and brutality continue because innocent people around the world suffer for no reason but for their birth. We remember because for the survivors and their children and grandchildren, the Holocaust has never truly ended. We remember because those events sprang from the worst impulses of human beings.

We must take the terrible lessons of the Holocaust and remember that the perpetrators, the resisters, and the victims were all ordinary people, Mr. Speaker, just like us.

Never again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

100th Anniversary of Saskatoon Institution

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague the MLA from Saskatoon Massey Place and I had the pleasure to attend a very special 100th Saskatoon YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] AGM [annual general meeting] and volunteer recognition banquet last night.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the YMCAs across Canada can often be seen as one of the first gateways for so many, including youth, newcomers, and immigrants to healthy and strong communities. Saskatoon YMCA is very much one of these gateways and has done so for the past 100 years.

Last night, Katie Dueck was recognized as Volunteer of the

Year. As she was introduced, it was clear her commitment to the YMCA and her work is second to none. Michael Weil, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of YMCA Canada said to the group that meeting the Y's mandate of supporting strong, healthy communities simply could not happen without the volunteers.

I also want to congratulate Terry Gibson as the incoming president as the Y begins its 100th year of operations and to recognize the strong leadership of Jeff Leaper, now past president, for his many contributions to the YMCA. It should be noted that just a few short years ago, the YMCA had a membership of 1,100 and now boasts a membership of over 2,500. Truly, Mr. Speaker, this is all about strong and healthy communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the volunteers and staff at Saskatoon YMCA for their outstanding work over the past century, and we are looking forward to the next 100 years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Public Servant Retires After Distinguished Career

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has had a long and storied history of innovation and leadership within the public service. Today is a special day in the life of David James as he retires, a contemporary example of vision, leadership, and dedication within the federal public service here in Saskatchewan.

David James is the acting assistant deputy minister at Western Economic Diversification, WD, a federal department that has helped change the economic face of Western Canada to the benefit of all.

Prior to launching western diversification, David worked with the Department of Regional Economic Expansion, DREE, in Ottawa and Saskatchewan. David worked hand in hand with federal cabinet ministers like Bill McKnight, Charlie Mayer, Larry Schneider, Ralph Goodale, and Carol Skelton, enabling them to implement leading-edge public policy. I can recall several initiatives that David has been involved with. One that stands out in my mind is the Moose Jaw revitalization projects. David consulted, listened, and worked proactively with community leaders to turn Moose Jaw into a Saskatchewan tourism jewel. The results speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, David James led by example. His skills and consensus building and his dedication to partnerships have provided an example for all. His advocacy and promotion of service to his country and province through a career in the public service have convinced many to follow in his footsteps.

Mr. Speaker, I've had a chance to learn from David first-hand as I started my career in the public service under David's guidance. Today I am proud to call him a friend and truly one of Saskatchewan's good guys. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in wishing David James and his wife Susan all the

best in his future endeavours and thank him for his commitment to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

New Wingate Hotel and Tim Hortons in Regina

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Tuesday I had the privilege of attending the grand opening for Wingate by Wyndham Hotel in lovely downtown Regina. I understand a number of MLAs attended to this opening, including members for Walsh Acres, Lakeview, Wascana Plains, and I was able to attend a part of the proceedings with the members for Regina Douglas Park and Regina Rosemont.

It's a beautiful new hotel, Mr. Speaker, with seven storeys, 118 rooms, and approximately 40 employees. We were treated to some heartland hospitality by general manager Laura Armitage and staff and had the opportunity to tour some of the brand new suites that have been welcoming guests to Regina since March of this year.

One of those rooms, Mr. Speaker, is the Tommy Douglas boardroom and I and my colleagues were very pleased to present Ms. Armitage with a limited edition print of a portrait of Tommy Douglas by Richard Widdifield.

Our congratulations to host, Laura Armitage; owner, Regwin Hotels; president, Harold Rotstein; developer, Anthony Marquart; CEO and blues harp player, balladeer extraordinaire, Ian McDougall, and everyone else who helped to get this new venture off to a great start.

After the opening of the Wingate I had the pleasure of stopping by the neighbouring establishment which just happens to be the largest Tim Hortons in all of Western Canada. I had an opportunity to say hello to owner/operators Pat and Pam Doyle. The Doyles and their staff have been serving out the piping hot double doubles since Monday.

The launch of this remarkable venture has served as something of a homecoming for the Doyles as they are Regina born and bred, but have been living and working in Saskatoon for the past 10 years. So welcome home to the Doyles and congratulations to them and their staff on being the people that make the magic happen in making my wife, myself, and others very happy.

Congratulations to Wingate by Wyndham and to the folks at the Doyles' Tim Hortons. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Oil and Gas Royalties

Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP might not have a clear position on much these days, but on Tuesday night we learned their true position on the issue of royalty review, namely that

they're in favour of one.

The NDP Energy and Resources critic, the member for Battlefords, made clear not only the NDP's [New Democratic Party] continued inspiration by the *Regina Manifesto*, a document calling for the eradication of capitalism, but also said, and I quote, "I'm definitely supportive of an ongoing review of royalties." Perhaps not an unrelated positions, Mr. Speaker.

Our government believes that this is an incredibly irresponsible decision. The member should know that the amazing growth in our oil and gas industry is precisely because of this government's clear commitment to maintain the current royalty structure.

The party opposite has formed government in the past, and although they'll probably never get there, aspires to again in the future. Industry's watching what goes on in this place, and they don't like what they're seeing from the party opposite. It seems even in opposition the NDP are doing all they can to slow the ...

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The member from Meadow Lake.

Mr. Harrison: — It seems even in opposition the NDP are doing all they can to slow the growth of our great province. Mr. Speaker, we believe in the future of the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan. We believe that an important part of securing this future is sending a clear message to industry that our royalty structure will be stable into the long term. Perhaps it's time the NDP dropped its 1930s radical socialism and got on board with the future of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Rural Saskatchewan

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to the drought, the Minister of Agriculture said that he was going out to the southwest part of Saskatchewan after seeding. One year ago, just about to the day, the minister — then the Sask Party Ag critic — asked what aid farmers could expect as they are planning seeding intentions right now and need to know very quickly what will happen.

Well the Sask Party is now the government. Before producers put in their crop, can the minister tell us what exactly the farmers in the southwest part of Saskatchewan and the cattle producers, what can they expect from your government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to

the member, the first thing they can expect today is rain in the Southwest — a good sign for everybody, I'd say.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Now unlike the NDP I won't take credit for the rain out there, but I think the member, Mr. Speaker, should very well remember this drought did not start this year. We've had a 16-year NDP government in this province that did absolutely nothing for agriculture in rural Saskatchewan. The drought in the Southwest, this is going on the fourth year. And maybe the member wouldn't mind in her next response telling us all the great things they did for agriculture.

Later this morning we're announcing a water program for the Southwest that's long overdue, long needed — the group in the gallery today that are going to have helped with that program. We're actually doing things for the Southwest, unlike the former government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it turns out that everything the Minister of Agriculture has said since coming into this Assembly needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Quoting from his scrum yesterday he said, and I quote, "In opposition I could say just about anything I wanted and I did on a lot of occasions for 12 years." The problem is when the Sask Party toured rural Saskatchewan making promises, people actually made the mistake of listening and believing, Mr. Speaker. What other promises did the Sask Party make over the past 12 years that they have no intentions of keeping?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well I think, Mr. Speaker, to the member, what I was saying yesterday is that, yes for 12 years in opposition you can say just about anything. When you're in government, you're responsible. What I was saying, you can say just about anything, like the member from Nutana is saying — totally ignoring their record for 16 years. You ignored rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, they paid no attention to rural Saskatchewan. Where was their water program? Southwest Saskatchewan just didn't run out of water this year.

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize there's heated passion in the debate, but it would be appropriate to allow the members answering and placing the question to be heard. The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess all I have to do is look across, Mr. Speaker, and see how many rural members are on that side of the House, and that tells me what rural Saskatchewan thinks of the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, we are, as I said, we're very close to going back down there again and touring the area. And I might add that's something the former minister on the NDP side would never do even though he had the invitation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, rural people believed the Sask Party when they said they wouldn't close rural schools, and rural schools are closing. Rural people in the southwest drought region believed the Sask Party when they said they would do something to help. Rural people believed the Sask Party that there'd be additional training seats in rural Saskatchewan through our regional colleges. Not much help there. Rural people believed the Sask Party when they said that they wouldn't take services out of the Humboldt Court House. When did that say-anything Sask Party become the do-nothing government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question. The member talks about closing schools. How quickly they forget their track record. Wasn't it last year — 23 rural schools under their leadership? You were in government for 16 years. You ignored rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, no wonder they're not getting any votes in rural Saskatchewan. And now the member has the nerve to get on her feet and say, solve all the problems. Clean up our mess for the last 16 years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I make this commitment today. We are starting to clean up that mess, but the problem is it's very, very big because 16 years, they did a lot of neglect to rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

Email and Labour Legislation

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we heard two days ago how the Minister of Labour and his colleagues don't respect their constituents enough to actually meet with them. And we heard yesterday how this minister doesn't have much respect for their privacy either.

Many people contact minister's offices through email — in this case, 1,300 people. And let's not forget that many people use their entire name as part of their email address. The last thing they expect is to see their name on a public document. The last thing they expect is to see their name on a list of people who disagree with the government.

The minister has had a whole day to look into the matter. Can he now explain why he violated their privacy? And more importantly, will he apologize to the 1,300 people?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate this opportunity to turn and say how much we regret the oversight. Obviously what we've done is we put in place within our office . . . It was a clerical error. As soon as the individual involved made that mistake . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No. But I want to just clarify for the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Please allow the minister to respond.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The great, the great question here, Mr. Speaker, if there is a concern about privacy, it's for the single mother who works in my office whose name was not deleted as they sent that to the media, Mr. Speaker. That's the problem, Mr. Speaker. So we have regrets, and obviously I will take steps to extend that. But the question remains on that side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure regret is apology. But this incident does raise serious and troubling questions. It seems that this minister's emails keep coming back to haunt him. First we heard about the email made . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Saskatoon Massey Place should have the privilege of being able to place the question without having to raise his voice to be heard above the roar in the Assembly. Member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — First we heard about the email made in the middle of the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] labour dispute, and now we hear about an email breaching privacy.

Since the minister has a tough time with more complicated questions, like who is actually included in his Bills, maybe he'll answer a simple one. If the minister can't get the small things right, like email, why should we expect him to get the big things right, like his legislation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan got a big thing right on November 7.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, obviously as we move forward with these two pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker, we see that there's a new labour relations environment coming to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

This is important, the essential service Bill, Mr. Speaker. It ensures the people of this province that they'll have public safety balanced with the right to strike during labour disruptions, Mr. Speaker. And as far as the amendments to The Trade Union Act, Mr. Speaker, it has something as radical in it that we should have the LRB [Labour Relations Board] produce an annual report to this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

These are some steps, Mr. Speaker, that will allow greater, greater accountability, Mr. Speaker, and transparency, Mr. Speaker. And obviously this is part of a new era in Saskatchewan — an era of growth and optimism, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Essential Services Legislation

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport knows that 45 of her department staff are considered essential under the legislation. Two groups that the Sask Party has not talked a lot about in regards to Bill 5 are social workers and CBO [community-based organization] employees. I know that the Minister of Social Services has been fairly busy in recent weeks, first learning about, then rewriting, her first budget. But I'm hoping she's had time to figure out who within her ministry will be covered by Bill 5.

To the minister: how many workers will the Sask Party deem essential within the Ministry of Social Services, and what about the CBO sector?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, the significance of the essential service Bill is that it's actually meant to empower and ensure that the parties actually agree to come to a consensus on who will be deemed essential, Mr. Speaker. That's the first significant point. That is, it's a different paradigm than unilaterally declaring any individual essential from a government vantage point. This is about the individuals coming together. As far as the scope of the legislation, Mr. Speaker, it's addressed within the legislation.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, what we have said is based on consultations. Again we met with nearly 100 individuals as well as individuals from various communities. And what we saw, Mr. Speaker, is people coming forward as they did at the NSBA [North Saskatoon Business Association] lunch. There were members from opposite. They came forward and said, could we

please be included. Mr. Speaker, obviously that's under consideration. That would be part of the regulations. The groups that are covered, Mr. Speaker, are actually embedded in the legislation. Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two of the Sask Party's favourite examples for why essential services was necessary are corrections workers and police officers. Now we know that the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing hasn't been busy trying to keep the mill in Prince Albert open, because he's had nothing to do with keeping his promise. Surely he's had time to figure out how the legislation will impact the areas of his responsibility. To the minister: what percentage of corrections workers, youth workers, and police officers will be impacted or deemed essential under this Bill?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what we can see, Mr. Speaker, is actually, despite over 20 hours in committee, there still seems to be a gap, a knowledge gap, on the other side, and perhaps it's the same person writing the questions, Mr. Speaker. The paradigm, Mr. Speaker, is one where the units come together, Mr. Speaker, and there's agreement between the employers in the bargaining unit about who would be deemed essential, Mr. Speaker. That's, that's the key element here, Mr. Speaker.

Now how significant is this? Well the significance is that this negotiation is consistent with other jurisdictions in Canada. So we see the federal government, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Newfoundland require similar negotiations, Mr. Speaker. These are some of the best practices drawn from across the country, Mr. Speaker, and that, that, Mr. Speaker, is a key part of why we're moving forward with the essential service legislation that we are. Thank you, sir.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, Bill 5 specifies that workers in any of the courts of Saskatchewan will have their right to strike stripped away as the Sask Party will deem them essential. We know that at least one court worker in Humboldt who doesn't have to worry about being deemed essential, but others are worrying and wondering about whether they'll be covered.

The Sask Party has done a lot of fearmongering with respect to essential services. But, Mr. Speaker, they have no explanation for how preventing the delay of court dates for parking tickets is a public safety issue. My question is for the Minister of Justice, not his seatmate: how many people under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice will be deemed essential?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we see the same author, the same question, the same philosophy, the same approach, same paradigm. That is, after 20 hours of committee work, they don't understand that there's negotiations between the public employer and, Mr. Speaker, obviously the bargaining unit. They've reached their own agreement, Mr. Speaker. There's a 90-day window. There's a 30-day window. The list is then offered, Mr. Speaker. It can then be accessed by the bargaining unit. It can be referred to the Labour Relations Board, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, they could have spent a little more time in committee because the quality of the questions are quite puzzling.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, when still in opposition the Minister of Education certainly spoke as if he thought teachers and education workers provided an essential service. The Sask Party broke their promises to save schools from closing and to keep teachers and workers within rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 5 may not name education specifically, but no one, including the Minister of Labour, knows if education workers and teachers will be specified in regulations. Because of how the Sask Party operates, the people of Saskatchewan aren't likely to know what will happen until it does. Besides, as the Sask Association of Community Living will attest, the Minister of Education isn't exactly fond of consultations.

My minister is not to the Minister of Labour; it's to the Minister of Education. How many teachers and how many workers within education will be deemed essential?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I wish we could say, I wish we could say there was a surprise here, Mr. Speaker. You know, in the recent *Commonwealth*, it was from December '07, what we see, Mr. Speaker, is that the commentary relates to a certain — what would you say? — opinion about how the NDP has approached the labour policy issue. That is the quote: "Rather than create a new labour policy of its own, the government instead chose to reach back into the 1990's . . ." That's a former government.

Mr. Speaker, the easy answer is I can offer reassurance to this House that obviously what we've done is we've identified four key criteria — that is life, property, environment, and the courts, Mr. Speaker. And I can offer you this reassurance that schoolteachers are not included, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon

Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one knew that essential services legislation was coming under a Sask Party government, including the Minister of Health. Only a short month before the election he said the Sask Party would not legislate essential services, but a month after the election, the Minister of Labour announced it had been in the works for over a year.

My question now to the Minister of Health is, how many nurses, doctors, therapists, medical technicians, paramedics, and support staff will be deemed essential under the sweeping power of Bill 5?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, maybe what we could do next time is I could ask special permission and that way we could have a PowerPoint set up so we could actually walk through this all at once.

An Hon. Member: — How about one of your \$14,000 videos?

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, the key to this, Mr. Speaker, is to actually understand the paradigm. The paradigm, Mr. Speaker, is that the bargaining unit and the public sector employer would come together. They would then reach their own agreement, Mr. Speaker. That's the key of this. That's the key of this initiative and enterprise. It's common practice across Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And to that comment there, I think you should check your math again, ma'am.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Labour Legislation and Workers' Benefits

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell you about a paradigm, the word we use over here. Mr. Speaker, the gap is growing. We know the gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening, and it's clear the members opposite have no plans to make this better. In fact their only plan so far have been to cut programs that help low-income earners and introduce legislation that will limit how working people can negotiate better wages.

To the Premier: evidence shows that the gap between the rich and poor is widening, so why on earth is he trying to hurt instead of help Saskatchewan people?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, as our government came into power, there was a strike going on that affected working families right across this province, but especially in Saskatoon.

One of the questions that was raised during committee is where did we come up with the 400 people per day that were being affected by that strike regarding medical services, Mr. Speaker. We went through that last night in committee, Mr. Speaker. Four hundred people per day were being affected by that strike, Mr. Speaker. The key question remains, Mr. Speaker, will the members of the official opposition . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Actually what we see, Mr. Speaker, is the key question is will the members be standing on a free vote on the essential service piece, Mr. Speaker. That's the key question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite are doing nothing to address affordability in our province, they are actively working to undermine the ability of people to earn better wages and improve their quality of life. Saskatchewan people are feeling the pinch of skyrocketing rents, gas prices and now — thanks to the members opposite — rising utility rents. Yet this minister wants to even be more difficult for Saskatchewan workers and that is in their ability to negotiate wages.

To the Premier: what does he have against working people and why is he so opposed to making life better for Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what we've seen March over March, 14,000 new full-time jobs for the working people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — What we've seen, over 16,000 people coming back to or to Saskatchewan for the first time, Mr. Speaker. What we've seen, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity to grow the economy so that there's more money to make reinvestments, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the two labour Bills in question, first of all, what they do is provide an opportunity so that the people of this province can be assured that during labour disruptions they can have access to medical care, that they can have chemotherapy, Mr. Speaker, that their highways can be plowed, Mr. Speaker. And they do something as radical as offer a free, secret ballot, Mr. Speaker, so that someone can consult their own conscience.

Mr. Speaker, we're delighted with the work that's under way for the working people of the province. We just wish the official opposition could understand it's with those people in mind that we continue our efforts.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the question was about affordability for the working people of this province. That was the question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this Premier is unwilling to extend to low-income workers the same benefits he and his friends are accustomed to. With all the talk of rising costs of living — increased costs of gas, food, and shelter — this Premier's refusal to implement a minimum wage indexation, all this points to, is he is mean or incompetent or maybe both?

Otherwise how could he look minimum wage earners in the eye and tell them they aren't entitled to the same increases he receives. While his minister continues to study indexation, minimum wage earners are struggling to make ends meet.

To the Premier: why is he deserving of a better wage, one that addresses cost of living, but other Saskatchewan workers aren't?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that as it stands under the former government, what we could see was that Saskatchewan was only fair to middling regarding minimum wage. It's going up today, Mr. Speaker. It's going up again next May 1, Mr. Speaker. That will place Saskatchewan as the second highest minimum wage in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

What we've said, Mr. Speaker, is that it makes sense to actually take some time and study this issue. After 16 years of being in government, those members opposite certainly didn't . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — After 16 years in power, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite didn't touch that one. What we can report on,

Mr. Speaker, is a 20 per cent decrease in EI [employment insurance] insurance claims, Mr. Speaker, within Saskatchewan — leading the country.

Mr. Speaker, the challenges of growth are obvious, but they are challenges of growth, and we will address them appropriately.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Silver Springs sitting over there looking smugly — he was the one that agreed to indexation before the election. He agreed. Mr. Speaker, just as the Premier promised, the members opposite have gone to war against the working people of Saskatchewan. They cut the Station 20, the cancelling of the dental sealant program . . .

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Their axing of the vulnerable workers benefits program are clear examples of their contempt for the working people. And now they want to make changes to Saskatchewan's labour laws, which will make it harder for employees to negotiate a better wage. In stark contrast, they have handed massive wage hikes to their political friends and advisers without hesitation. All the while the Minister of Labour, who should be on the side of working people, he's just gone along for the ride, Mr. Speaker, bungling his file all the way.

To the Premier: will he finally admit that his minister is not able to meet the needs of Saskatchewan workers and ask him to step down?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I know the ride on the other side is a little bumpy. I know that it's driven through the rear-view mirror, Mr. Speaker, but the rest of us are actually moving forward.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — For example, Mr. Speaker, for example, the Saskatchewan employment supplement, Mr. Speaker, the largest increase since the introduction of this program, Mr. Speaker. There's evidence, Mr. Speaker. Today minimum wage goes up, Mr. Speaker. What we see is economic growth across the province, Mr. Speaker. So with that, we see increased opportunities for reinvestments within communities. That's why we created 5,500 new training spots, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're addressing the needs of regional colleges, Mr. Speaker. And what we see from the official opposition is an inability to frame questions that are relevant to the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, talk about relevant questions. We're asking relevant questions to the working people. It's the answers, I think, we're concerned about that we're getting here.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, like many of the minister's answers, that one again was inadequate. But, Mr. Speaker, the Labour minister who should stand for workers is now contemplating again whether the minimum wage earners should be entitled to the same cost of living as he himself gets. And he is actively engaged in undermining employees' ability to earn a better wage. It is clear, it is clear, Mr. Speaker, that this minister has lost his way. He cannot be trusted to do . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Members can either come to order, and we'll have one more question. Or the members can proceed with their interference, and we will move on. That goes for all members. The member from Saskatoon Fairview can place his question.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is clear to this side and the people of Saskatchewan that this minister has lost his way and cannot be trusted to do the right thing for Saskatchewan workers. To the Premier: will he ask the minister to do the honourable thing and resign?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate all the attention, and what I can say, Mr. Speaker, is I'm happy to hear there's a new motto, and that is, we were going to get to that. That's the motto of the official opposition, Mr. Speaker, and on that we're happy to be moving forward labour legislation. We're happy to be moving forward with a growth agenda whether it's in the budget or whether it's in every policy that we're moving forward for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The House will come to order. The House will come to order.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Human Services Committee.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act with amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered in committee? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill, and that the Bill and its amendments be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act, and that the Bill and its amendments be now read the third time.

Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Oh, pardon me. We're just on leave here. We're just on leave. So we have to vote. We can get to the question afterwards.

Is leave granted? Leave has been agreed. We need leave, and then we can get into debate on the first reading. Okay. Right. Leave wasn't granted. Pardon me. Right.

And when will the Assembly now be able to proceed to first and second readings of the amendments?

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting of the House. I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave to move a motion of condolence.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

CONDOLENCES

Wesley Albert Robbins

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan I would like to propose the motion, and to read into the record information about the passing of Wesley Albert Robbins. Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

Wesley Albert Robbins, who passed away on March 12, 2008, was a member of this Legislative Assembly from 1964 until 1967, and from 1971 until 1982. He represented the constituencies of Saskatoon City for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the constituencies of Saskatoon Nutana Centre and Saskatoon Nutana for the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Robbins was born on August 14, 1916 on his family's farm near Laura, Saskatchewan. He attended local schools before pursuing his studies at the Saskatoon Teachers' College. Mr. Robbins was a lifelong learner and continued to take classes at the University of Saskatchewan for decades after he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Mr. Robbins married Marion Nicol on June 14, 1946. He is survived by his wife, three children, and six grandchildren.

Mr. Robbins's professional career encompassed many fields. He was first employed as a teacher in rural communities. Later he pursued his interest in the co-operative movement by assuming positions with a number of organizations. Mr. Robbins served as an accounting clerk and publicity director with the Saskatchewan Co-operative Wholesale Society. His tenure as secretary-manager of the Co-operative Superannuation Society extended over 16 years and initiated his advocacy for defined contribution pension plans. The Saskatoon Credit Union and the Co-op Trust Company also benefited from his contributions.

In his personal life Mr. Robbins was an active participant in a number of community and sport organizations. He continued to participate in tennis competitions into his 80s. Mr. Robbins retained a passionate interest in his family's farm and would participate in the operations as time permitted.

Mr. Robbins was first elected to this Assembly in 1964 and served one term representing the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in opposition. In 1971 he was elected as a member of the New Democratic Party and successfully retained his seat in the following two general elections. Mr. Robbins was appointed to cabinet in 1973 and remained in the executive until his retirement from elected office. He held a number of portfolios over this period, notably Finance, Health, Consumer Affairs,

Co-operation and Co-operative Development, and Revenue.

In recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly expresses its most sincere sympathy with members of the bereaved family.

I so move.

[11:00]

The Speaker: — The Deputy Premier has moved that this Assembly recognize with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of the Assembly, Mr. Wes Robbins. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it is traditional, but I would be very happy to second this condolence motion and in this case particularly happy to be able to say a few words about a man who was a great friend to the people of Saskatchewan, not only his home community of Laura and the constituencies that he represented, but a great friend to the people of Saskatchewan. A lifelong social democrat was Wes Robbins — a great friend to working people and a great friend of rural people in this province.

Many of us will have memories, Mr. Speaker, of Wes Robbins, and I'm sure that those of us that have these very happy memories will all remember a very, very, quick mind, a very, very, sharp intellect particularly when it came to the issues and the subject of mathematics and numbers. I don't know if in my life I've ever met anyone as able with numbers, calculations, mathematics, which understandably led him to study the subject of economics while at university and then earning a major in economics, which made Wes Robbins an extremely able Minister of Finance when he served in the portfolio of Finance, and a man who brought to that portfolio his own passion for balanced budgets, for solid, financial stability, and for the ability of the treasury to provide those programs and services that people need and deserve.

Wes was, as we've heard, a very strong member of the co-operative movement and gave many years to the question of superannuation in the co-operative movement and then took that passion, if I may say, Mr. Speaker, and shared it with a province and shared it with a nation.

Again I'm not sure I have ever encountered anyone with a deeper commitment to the right of working people, all people, to have security in retirement, to have security in their pensions. Wes laboured and changed this province's pension plans to ensure they were vested and locked in and that includes those of us who today sit in this legislature. And interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, it also included the church to which both Wes and I belonged. I think my first encounter and experience with Wes Robbins was not in public life or in politics but was in the church when he was helping us to understand what we needed to do to ensure a secure retirement for clergy.

He brought to this House as an elected member his passions, his skills and abilities, his very, very sharp wit on occasion. Now Wes Robbins was always, always in my experience — and I

think in the experience of those who worked with him in this House and have known him in political circles — always and always a gentleman. But that should not be confused with any lack of a competitive nature and determination. And on occasion that competitive nature and determination . . . well ask Mr. Dick Collver about Wes's determination.

We've lost a great friend — a great friend of the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation], the New Democratic Party, a great friend of the people of Saskatchewan, and a great friend particularly of those who today have a much more secure retirement because of Wes Robbins.

And I just want to conclude by saying this, Mr. Speaker: this man could serve up a budget like none other. He could serve up pension legislation and pension understanding like none other. He could serve up a witty comment like none other. But I tell you what else he could do, Mr. Speaker. He could serve a tennis ball. He could serve a tennis ball like none other.

The very last . . . maybe not the last, but clearly one of the last conversations that I had with Wes Robbins, and that's some years ago, was about his experience as a senior playing tennis, well over the age of 80. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: I would not have wanted to have been on the other side of the court when Wes Robbins was serving. He won two titles after the age of 80.

That kind of passion that he had on the courts was the passion that he brought to public life and to making this province and its people a little better because of his work. And so we extend, on behalf of the opposition, deep condolences to Wes's family and encourage them, in now its third generation, to keep the passion of Wes Robbins. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well it is indeed an honour for myself as the member of the legislature for Saskatoon Nutana to pay tribute to Wesley Robbins this morning in this Legislative Assembly.

My first memories of Wes Robbins as an MLA was when I was a young person in university when I was a member of the Saskatoon Nutana executive. And, Mr. Speaker, this was at a time when Wes Robbins was very much an active cabinet minister in the Blakeney government. He had held a number of portfolios. But one of the first memories of my experience at the Saskatoon Nutana executive meeting was Wes Robbins giving us a lecture on why it was important, as young people, that we have a pension.

And he always used the example of a young woman, I think her name was Susie Brown, starting work at the age of 21 — and that was about how old I was — and the importance of getting into a pension plan that allowed you to have an income when you retired. And there were several young people on our executive, and I have to tell you that every one of those young people who are now middle-aged people or postwar baby boomers, we made it our business to have a decent pension plan so that when we retired, we would have a lifestyle that was not sort of leading one to the poorhouse, Mr. Speaker.

Wes Robbins can take full credit for the kinds of pension plans that people have throughout the public service, throughout the Crown corporations in our province, and throughout the health care system, where the money we put in is matched, it is allowed to grow and, Mr. Speaker, we can't take it with us. If we are leaving to go to another workplace, we have to leave it there or we can take it someplace else, but it has to be put in a fund that will allow us income when we reach the age of retirement. And I think Wes Robbins can take full credit for the work that was done in this province in the '70s to allow people such as myself and other members of this Legislative Assembly to have a pension plan that will meet our needs in our old age.

The other thing I remember about Wes Robbins was this. You know, when you're a young person you're wanting government to do everything — to introduce new programs, to improve programs — and his view was that you only do what you can do within the confines of the revenues that come into the provincial treasury. He was a firm believer, Mr. Speaker, in having balanced budgets, that if budgets weren't balanced it was because you met a situation that was unforeseen, but you had to make it up in future years. He did not believe in the province having long-term GRF [General Revenue Fund] debt.

And after 1982 when Grant Devine came to power and he watched the province go to rack and ruin with mounting debt that was not associated with Crown debt, but debt that was associated with ongoing operations of the provincial government, he found this unbelievable because he knew at the end of the day that the next generation was going to have to pay that debt back. And he was so proud when our government was the first government in Canada to balance the budget, because he was telling us, make sure you balance that budget as soon as you can and then you start paying down that debt, Mr. Speaker. And we knew that it would take decades to pay off that debt, and we certainly contributed as we could to the reduction of the long-term debt of our province.

The other thing that people spoke about earlier was his competitive nature. He was an athlete and he was a tennis player, and often he would come into the constituency office to share with Judy Gossen, who is my constituency assistant, and myself, how many games of tennis he had played up until that point. And there were years when Wes Robbins played literally hundreds of games of tennis, and, Mr. Speaker, he also let us know when he won. And he won quite often when he was over at the Riverside tennis courts, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Wes Robbins leaves behind a family: his wife, Marion Robbins; his son, Jim Robbins and his wife, Nettie Wiebe; along with Barbara Scott and her husband, Peter Scott; and his daughter Janis Robbins. In addition to that, he leaves behind six very talented grandchildren who loved their grandfather deeply. We have Elizabeth and James Scott, who are young adults, along with Martha, Katie, Will, and Margaret Robbins.

And his granddaughter was named one of the 100 young people in this country to watch. And Wes brought in the *Maclean's* magazine to tell us that his granddaughter, Martha Robbins, was one of the 100 young Canadians that we should pay attention to. And, Mr. Speaker, if we're wise, we will, because I think Martha Robbins some day will follow in her grandfather's

footsteps.

In addition to his immediate family, he also leaves behind his sister Norma, Norma Hymers. And Norma loved her brother deeply. And I think it's fair to say that Norma was proud of her brother and all that he was able to do on behalf of the people of our province. Mr. Speaker, this is a day where we pass on our condolences to Wes Robbins's family, immediate family, his grandchildren, and his sister Norma. I'm very pleased that we've had this opportunity.

It's been an honour for me to speak to Wes Robbins's condolence motion this morning, but it's also been a real honour for me to have been the representative of his constituency for the last 21 and a half years. And I have to say that it doesn't matter where I go, over the years people have spoken about Wes Robbins.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the members on both sides of the House to pay respects and condolences to Wes Robbins. I'm a long-time resident of Saskatoon and we both attended Grace-Westminster United Church for a number of years. And my family certainly didn't share Mr. Robbins's political views, but we certainly shared and respected his values and his commitment to the church.

My late father in the 1980s served on a building committee with Mr. Robbins. And he came home after the meeting and said, I might not agree with Mr. Robbins, with Wes's politics, but he certainly knows how to read a balance sheet and knows how to look at a bank account. And the member from Nutana would know my father and will certainly know that that would be an ultimate compliment.

During my university years I met his son Jim and daughter-in-law Nettie. And while I may not necessarily agree with their politics, I certainly can't deny Mr. Robbins's passion and commitment to the province, his church, and to his family. And his sister, Norma, is a good friend of my mother's. And I certainly want to wish the very best to the family and my sympathy and condolence. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and it's also with some humility that I rise to speak to the example set by Wes Robbins. I didn't know Wes when he was an MLA very well, and moved to Saskatoon about 1980 and not to his constituency. So I got to know him more after his retirement from politics, at least on a personal basis.

And after that time, after he had retired from politics and the current member from Saskatoon Nutana had, after a short

interregnum, had taken over that constituency, Wes would tell me stories about his life. And some of the stories were about his public life and some of his stories were about his personal life and about the adversities and challenges that shaped him and perhaps shaped the values and principles that those people of that generation brought to public life in Saskatchewan.

[11:15]

And it's always tempting to look back, Mr. Speaker, and say there was a golden age and the people who preceded us were so much better. But it's hard not to have that view when you think of gentlemen like Wes Robbins and the values and the principles that he brought to every aspect of his life, including to this Chamber, Mr. Speaker — values of frugality, of conservatism in a sense, fiscal conservatism, and a concern about the environment that usually is given to my generation and the generations that follow me. But Wes once said to me that it was one of his goals to live simply so others could simply live. And he also brought values of integrity and of decency and civility. Perhaps only one notable example of him ever losing his temper, Mr. Speaker, and I would admit that that was probably fairly notable.

He was also a temperate man in many ways, and even in the literal sense that I don't believe he ever had a sip of alcohol. And he, as a rule — with only one exception that I know about — always refused to pay for it.

Someone who attended family dinners told me that Wes would always generously pay for the entire meal — and it's not a small family, Mr. Speaker, and with, you know, with their boyfriends and girlfriends and then later on spouses and then grandchildren; it's not a small dinner bill — that Wes would always agree to pay the dinner bill, but the bar bill was to be divided up and paid for by those who drank it.

But Wes told me of one exception and it speaks to his strong belief that public money is to benefit the public. When he was a minister of the Crown here in Saskatchewan, a fellow named Jean Chrétien — who I think was Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs — was coming to visit our province. And the provincial government wanted to put on a banquet for him, and at this banquet they wanted to serve wine. But because of the cost of the banquet, whatever role Wes Robbins was playing at that time — it may have been Minister of Finance, it may have been Minister of Revenue — he had to sign off on the expense of this banquet. And he wouldn't do it because he wasn't going to have public money buy wine at this banquet.

Two other cabinet ministers — well known to people in this legislature, but who I will not name because it's not relevant to the story — pressed upon Wes to sign off on buying this wine for this banquet for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. They said to him, Wes reported to me: he's from Quebec; he won't understand why there's no wine at the banquet. He refused to sign off.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, he said, I will buy the wine. And that is the one instance of Wes Robbins ever buying alcohol because he refused to let the people of Saskatchewan buy it.

Now that story may seem a little quaint now. We've moved on

and some of the positions that Wes Robbins took in public life seem a little quaint, irrelevant to the current circumstances. But I think the values and the principles that were behind his strong feelings on matters like that, those endure, Mr. Speaker. And I hope they endure in the hearts and minds of all whoever sit here. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the motion by the Deputy Premier:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of Mr. Wesley Albert Robbins and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask leave of the Assembly to move a motion of transmittal.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked for leave to move a motion of transmittal. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, I move:

That the resolution just passed, together with the transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that, by leave of the Assembly:

That the resolution just passed, together with the transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved family on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave, I would ask that we go to motions for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to move to motions for returns (debatable). Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

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

Return No. 33

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the question that was asked was to the Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, and the request was:

The percentage of spillage and breakage over the last 20 years or since the location was opened, on a store-by-store basis.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the question from the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow that:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: the percentage of spillage and breakage over the last 20 years or since the location was opened on a store-by-store basis.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Government Services.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find this question and the series of questions that the former minister of Liquor and Gaming asked on these particular issues interesting. I would have expected that a former minister would have been aware of the spillage that had taken place while under her tenure. I would have expected she would have been familiar, Mr. Speaker, with all of the procedures that took place in dealing with spillage at Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming.

Obviously she hadn't been paying attention to her portfolio in not knowing what was taking place there and not understanding what the procedures were like at Liquor and Gaming and dealing with issues like spillage and breaking. There have been no changes, Mr. Speaker, on the procedures there so these procedures have been in place for some number of years under her ministry at that particular point in time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues about this particular question that the former minister was asking about involves going back 20 years and dealing with items that have been archived. Those records are now under the provincial Archives Board, in the provincial archives.

And I should point out, Mr. Speaker, unlike her ministerial documents from the time when she was the minister, those have not yet been archived, Mr. Speaker, even though under The Archives Act those documents are to be returned to the provincial government and to be archived. And that former

minister has not done so, Mr. Speaker. She's in contravention of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, from the point prior to 1999 going back, that information about spillage and breakage is in a hard copy form in the archives, Mr. Speaker. It would take considerable amount of work, cost, to retrieve those particular documents. And I don't believe that the opposition caucus has offered to pay, Mr. Speaker, for the work necessary to retrieve those particular documents.

I would have expected that she would have known — because she kept her own files, Mr. Speaker, instead of archiving them — what the spillage and breakage would have been, particularly under her tenure.

Mr. Speaker, the spillage and breakage is extremely low at SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] about two one-hundredths of a per cent, Mr. Speaker. You know, the issue that somebody said, we're not talking about the 1990s. Well the question was, go back for every store for 20 years, Mr. Speaker, 20 years. And everything has been archived in particular prior to 1999, Mr. Speaker. It's archived in a hard paper form that would have to be gone back into the provincial archives to find those particular documents, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support providing those answers to the former minister opposite when she should have been aware of the procedures in place under her tenure, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I would advise that the ministry is not prepared to provide those answers.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I think I may have spoke out of place here, but I would actually like to make some comments to the question not being responded to.

The Speaker: — I have to advise the member that the member has already spoken to the issue and therefore is not allowed to speak. The member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a sad day in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, when a minister will stand up and say that he won't answer a question. Now this was a relatively simple question, Mr. Speaker. The member asked to know the spillage over a number of years, Mr. Speaker, and that question was being asked for a reason, Mr. Speaker. And the reason for asking that question, Mr. Speaker, is very simple.

We wanted to establish the baseline of what the spillage was over a number of years, Mr. Speaker, and then compare it to the future because, Mr. Speaker, we have a concern. During the 1980s we had a period of time where we saw alcohol from the Liquor and Gaming Authority delivered to this building, Mr. Speaker, along with things like 60 pounds of ice, Mr. Speaker — 60 pounds of ice, Mr. Speaker. So that should give you some idea, Mr. Speaker, of what was going on in this building during some of the 1980s, Mr. Speaker.

So that was a lot of spillage during those years, Mr. Speaker, and so we wanted to establish a baseline, Mr. Speaker, to find out just what's going to happen over the next few years, Mr.

Speaker, which we'll be monitoring very carefully, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that the current minister or some official or some staffer doesn't order up again alcohol, 60 pounds of ice at a time, Mr. Speaker, cups, and . . . We don't know quite what happened with all that, Mr. Speaker, but in the future we want to make sure that we have a mechanism of checking that the spillage doesn't go up as it did in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I would not normally enter into debate about a question of spillage at the liquor store or any liquor stores in Saskatchewan and for me that's not really the issue here. I think the issue here is the fact that the minister is refusing to supply the information.

He's taking the point of view that, because the information is in fact in some archives and therefore is hard to retrieve, therefore we should not retrieve the information. Now if that's the precedent that this government wants to set, if that is now the benchmark, Mr. Speaker, for the government answering questions — that it may be difficult to get the information so therefore we don't want to provide the information — that then, Mr. Speaker, is a 180 per cent change from the practice of this Legislative Assembly.

And I think this government needs to rethink this before they get branded as being secretive and not forthcoming in terms of the information that belongs to the people of Saskatchewan. We have a right to ask for it, and they should be supplying it, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I too would normally not be entering into the fray around spillage of liquor in Saskatchewan's liquor stores. This should be a very, very straightforward question. This is not a question of where those records are maintained. This is a question about a minister of the Crown refusing to ask a question that was written, put in written form to give the department all kinds of time to establish what that answer is.

This is a question of accountability. As has been pointed out, what we want, Mr. Speaker, is to establish a baseline. Because there is some history with members opposite around liquor and liquor coming from the liquor commission to this very building, liquor that . . . We need for those reasons, and others — the primary one, as my seatmate said, is the opposition has a right to ask the question . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Debate might proceed much smoother and quicker if members would at least allow the member on their feet to respond. There'll be lots of ample opportunity for other members to respond. Member from Regina Coronation Park.

[11:30]

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It astounds me to hear a member from the now government today, like 30 seconds ago, say that they have better things to do than answer questions from the opposition. Well what a difference a day makes, Mr. Speaker, especially when that day is an election day for a Sask Party government. Shame.

This is about the ability of the opposition to ask questions and it is surprising . . . My final comments, my final theme, unless, unless they keep feeding me with ideas, my final theme, Mr. Speaker, is the now, in opposition the now minister responsible and colleagues made demands, asked questions, many of which on the surface seemed totally, totally unreasonable, seemed to demand huge effort and huge resources from various departments. We provided answers. That's the job of the departments and of the government in a democracy, Mr. Speaker. Our job is to get the answers, particularly when it's answers to eminently reasonable written questions. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members opposite are fully aware of what the opposition's role is. And the opposition's role is to scrutinize the goings-on of the government and what happens in the legislature. That means we have to ask questions and that means we have the right to have those questions answered, Mr. Speaker.

It is absolutely unconscionable, absolutely unconscionable that they refuse to answer questions that are posed to them. And clearly there are good reasons, as the member for Regina Dewdney already stated, that there is a history to that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, there is a history that we're still not comfortable with.

Because since they've come into government, Mr. Speaker, I as a newly elected member in 2003 have seen more faces from the Devine government show up in this building than I have in the last four years. Only in the last few months, Mr. Speaker, am I seeing those faces reappear. So am I comfortable with the goings-on of the current government? Not in the least. As the member for Regina Coronation Park said, it seems that they are too busy to answer this question.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this speaks to another Bill that they have already tried introducing, which is Bill No. 31. They were too busy to have to deal with any expenses that were over \$50,000. They wanted to increase that, Mr. Speaker, to \$350,000 — seven times the amount that this government, the NDP government reported its spendings on. So this is just another example of how this new government is too busy to be open and accountable to the citizens of Saskatchewan. It is absolutely unconscionable, Mr. Speaker.

And I would suggest, I would suggest that they go back to the platform document that they gave to the Saskatchewan public during the election that took place on November 7, 2007, Mr. Speaker. I suggest they go back and read their platform

document because their platform document claimed — and I use the word claimed — that they were going to be open and accountable.

They were trying to shed the skin of the Devine Conservative years. They were trying to shed the skin of the debt that they left this province in. I was a young person at that time who thought, good Lord, I'm going to have to leave this province because this province was left with a \$15 billion debt when they lost government in 1991 — \$15 billion debt.

The Speaker: — Order. The question is a simple question in regards to breakage and spillage. I believe we're deviating far, exceedingly wide in our debate. I bring the member back to the question. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I concur. It is a simple question. It's a simple question of simply, what is the amount of breakage that occurred? The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has presented the question. She has the right to have the question answered.

And if they are true to their word, Mr. Speaker, they will answer the question that has been presented to them and not hide behind the fact that they're too busy or whatever else it is that they have reasons for not wanting to answer the question and be open and accountable to the public of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from Kelvington-Wadena has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's a great pleasure to introduce 30 students from Robert Melrose Elementary School from my hometown of Kelvington. With them is Tracy Ziola and Val Anderson and 11 parent chaperones. But I know they don't need 11 parent chaperones because these children are very well-behaved. But welcome to the legislature.

Kelvington is a great hockey town and a great football town and a great place to live. But I'm really pleased you have a chance to visit us here in the legislature.

I look forward to talking to you later on. And welcome to your legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

Return No. 33 (continued)

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the question by the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow:

That the Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority record the percentage of spillage and breakage over the last 20 years.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the nos have it.

Some Hon. Members: — On division.

The Speaker: — On division.

Return No. 35

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have asked by written question in the House on April 15 and in the Human Services Committee, April 17, a specific question that I will read into the record at the end of my remarks. It is now May 1, and no answer is being presented to this House. Mr. Speaker, given that the Minister of Labour . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Saskatoon Eastview has been recognized. Allow the member to place her question.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's now May 1, and there's no answer to my question is being provided to this House. Mr. Speaker, given that the Minister of Labour has used the fearmongering tactic of saying that 400 patients were turned away per day, were turned away from medical care — and that's in *Hansard* of March 17 — he says they've been turned away from RUH [Royal University Hospital] during the CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] strike at the two universities in '07. It is strange that there's no evidence of that assertion being provided. He simply can't back it up.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health should know if this is the case in the health system that he oversees. Such a remarkable number of patients a day would surely be known to the Minister of Health who would provide those numbers to this Assembly when asked. There is obviously no substantiating evidence for the wild allegations. Quotes from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, the *Leader-Post*, and CJWW are not evidence. Even those quotes, when used, use the words affected rather than turned away.

These allegations are being used to justify the need for essential services legislation that has been in the works, as the Minister of Labour has said, for over a year. Surely if you're going to allege a circumstance that can so quickly turn to inspiring fear in the public, you would thereby try to justify the serious erosion of workers' rights to bargain. You must be able to provide solid evidence for those allegations.

So far, after all these days looking for the answer and coming forward with none, we have to assume that you can't back up your statements. As usual the Sask Party will say anything and be accountable for nothing.

Mr. Speaker, the motion reads, I move that an order of this Assembly do issue for return no. 35 showing:

To the Minister of Health: (1) the number of patients who were turned away per service or department from Royal University Hospital for each day of the 2007 University of Saskatchewan labour strike; (2) the services or departments that were affected; and (3) the services or departments that were not affected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the question placed by the member from Saskatoon Eastview. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to question 555.

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I would like to remind the members that we have a question on the floor that has to be voted on and it might be appropriate for the minister to even read into *Hansard* the answer to the questions.

The question before the Assembly is the question placed by the member from Saskatoon Eastview that . . . I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in on this discussion about the motion that's return (debatable). It is a little puzzling, if the answers were at hand, if the information was known, why that information was not provided earlier and why that information would not be read into *Hansard* for the permanent record for the benefit of the people in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and for the benefit of the people in the gallery, and the people at home watching on television.

The question that was asked by the member from Eastview, there were three components to the question. The first part of the question was a concrete number of the number of patients who were turned away per service or department from Royal University Hospital. So the number of patients who were turned away. The second component of the question was what services or departments were affected. And the third area was what services or departments that were not affected.

So there were three components and when looking at these three components, three questions came to my mind concerning the motion and concerning the information that we haven't been receiving from the government and why they would choose not to do so.

The first question is, why are these questions important? We know they're important because the government has used this information, this claim, as a justification for things that they have been doing, namely Bill 5. So they've used it as evidence, and then they've used it as the underpinning of why they needed to proceed with a certain course of action.

Another reason why this question is important is that it is necessary for the Assembly and the public to have a full understanding. It's not enough simply to have one raw number, but it's important to have a full understanding of the details of the question. A full understanding allows the people in Saskatchewan to know the facts and to judge a claim as to if it's a claim with merit or if it's a claim that does not have merit.

It's also an important question because it determines or indicates how open and transparent a government is. It's again related to the previous question that was asked and which the government wasn't willing to provide a reply.

The role of opposition is to ask questions. The role of opposition is to look into matters and seek answers. So it is concerning when the government is not prepared to act in an open and transparent manner. It actually has many similarities to the notion of consultation and how consultation should be conducted, whether it's consultation with a select few that are chosen or whether it's broad consultation that is open to all.

So the first question that we just touched on was, why are these questions important? The second question that came to mind to me was, what have we seen so far? And so far when we asked the question, we saw a refusal to go on record. We saw a refusal to put it down on paper as to what the breakdown was during the labour dispute, how departments were affected. We saw a refusal, and to me that's puzzling, and it's puzzling for one of two reasons, Mr. Speaker.

When thinking about it, I was led to believe, well there's really two things going on here why they're refusing not to provide this information in written form. The first is, well maybe they don't know, and that is a problem and quite concerning because if they've used this for the justification, they surely ought to know what the breakdown of the numbers are and whether or not these numbers are correct.

The second option, maybe they do know but they don't actually like what they know. They don't like the numbers and they don't like the breakdown. And that's another reason for not

willing to go on record and be public and open and transparent with the numbers. What we've seen by members of the government concerning this question about how many people were affected, we've seen a muddying of the waters. We've seen a situation where they have twisted and changed the language of the question.

The first part of the question that the member from Eastview asked was, how many patients were turned away? The question was not how many were affected, but the question was, how many were turned away? There's a clear difference between those two aspects. So the first question that came to my mind was, why are these questions important? The second one was, what have we seen? And the third question, after touching on one and two was, what should the minister now do?

Well to me it's a simple question. The minister should be open, transparent, and forthright with the answer.

And what should this answer look like, Mr. Speaker? Well first of all the answer should be detailed. It should have concrete numbers with dates, with departments, with areas. It should be very detailed in the type of information it provides.

[11:45]

The second characteristic of how this answer should look like, what it should look like, is that it should be comprehensive, Mr. Speaker. It should include all of the areas — not just areas that they want to state, but it should be comprehensive with all the information.

And the third characteristic of what this answer should look like, Mr. Speaker: it should actually address the question. Not their preferred question, not the perhaps affected question, but it should address the very specific question of turned away. That's what it should look like, Mr. Speaker.

So with these comments . . . Again it would have been nice if the minister had taken the time to share this information beforehand, to answer the question when it was first asked. It would have been nice if the minister had chosen to take the time and read it into the public record in *Hansard*, but I guess that does speak to his willingness to be open and transparent about the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are arguably many things about Saskatchewan that are different than other jurisdictions in Canada. As an example, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we tend to rely on Crown corporations, corporations that are owned by the public, to deliver various services to the people of Saskatchewan.

This is different than many other jurisdictions in Canada. To be sure, we have other jurisdictions that also have publicly owned corporations that deliver electrical service to customers in their jurisdictions, but I don't believe that there are any others now — maybe there's one — that have publicly owned corporations

that deliver natural gas to customers.

Certainly there are none now that have provincially owned Crown corporations to deliver telephone services and related services to their publics. There are only a few other jurisdictions in Canada that have publicly owned corporations deliver public auto insurance for the people in their jurisdictions.

So it might be said that on those grounds we are different than most, maybe the same as some, but on the whole we are different than most because of our reliance on Crown corporations. That doesn't necessarily mean that we have an inferior product or that somehow we need to change what's taking place in Saskatchewan to approach the same level of service that's produced in other jurisdictions. In fact with respect to Crowns, we pride ourselves . . . and the Minister Responsible for Crown Investments Corporation said yesterday that we in fact were able to provide good services at a lower rate, when you take all those Crown services into account, than any other jurisdictions in Canada. So we have an advantage there.

We are also different, for example, when it comes to health care premiums. We do not have health care premiums in Saskatchewan. Other jurisdictions may well have health care premiums. We don't. That doesn't necessarily mean that we should be changing in Saskatchewan to have health care premiums as they do in some other jurisdictions. Similarly, in terms of municipalities, we have far more municipalities, as it reflects settlement patterns in Saskatchewan, than they do in many other jurisdictions.

The point, Mr. Speaker, that I'm making, the point that I am making is that when it comes to essential services legislation, when it comes to essential services legislation, which this question tries to get at, we have operated in a different way than many other jurisdictions in Canada, but does that necessarily mean that we should be changing the pattern or the system that we have had for 103 years to simply reflect what the government wants today? Should we be changing something that has arguably worked over 103 years?

What we have had, Mr. Speaker, is a system where, voluntarily, workers represented by their organizations, their unions, sitting down with management, determining what essential services need to be provided in the case of a withdrawal of services. So that's been done on a voluntary basis. Unions have known that if you don't do that then, you know, if there's a problem it'll come back on them and therefore they have sought to provide that kind of voluntary, on a voluntary basis, to ensure that essential services are covered.

Now that's the way it has worked in Saskatchewan and we know that there's always the ultimate hammer that if it doesn't work, the legislature of Saskatchewan can be recalled in a matter of hours to deal with that situation. But in the main it has worked over 103 years. Essential services have been provided, have been provided on a voluntary basis for 103 years in Saskatchewan. Now the government says it has to change, Mr. Speaker.

Getting to the motion that's before us, they didn't campaign on this during the election campaign. To the contrary, they in fact

made assurances that no, no, no, that no essential services legislation was required. They were going to continue with the system that we have. Why change it?

Now they're pointing to the Royal University Hospital, the question that services weren't being provided, essential services weren't being provided, in their view, during a withdrawal of services during the course of last fall. They point to that and say, see that's the reason now we need essential services legislation, Mr. Speaker. And now when we ask them, can you provide us the details, can you provide us the details about services not being provided, essential services not being provided to the public, now they're not so forthcoming in terms of their answer.

It seems to me that if you want to have or see change in policy, if you want to see change in terms of legislation such as this, then it seems to me that you need to come up with some good solid concrete facts so that there can be a real discussion about why there should be a change. And now in this particular case, they're not, if you like, they're not able to produce the smoking gun, Mr. Speaker.

So again, if there's a major shift in policies, it requires clear and good reasons to change if it is to be supported. Otherwise, we would say that this is an ideological change, Mr. Speaker. It's driven by their arrogance as a government. They're . . .

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

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. There is a motion before the House and the member is not even anywhere close to the motion. I would ask that you direct him to respond to the motion before the House.

The Deputy Speaker: — I know this House has a long tradition of allowing debate to address and to ramble a little bit, but I also will caution the members to stick close to it. This is a kind of a question does range a little bit, but stick with the health issues and the question. I would ask the members . . . I'd like to allow the debate to carry on. I'd like to allow some free-flowing debate, but I'd also like to remind the members to, you know, address the question too. I recognize the member for Regina Douglas.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, the issue we're debating is a motion for return. What is a motion for return, Mr. Speaker? It essentially reflects a written question, a written question that we put to the government because we don't expect the government to be able to provide that kind of detailed answer during a question period. So therefore we have put in a written question.

The government is given, it's a specified period of time, I believe it's five sitting days of the Legislative Assembly, to be able to provide an answer to the written question. And if it cannot then provide the answer, then it has to be converted. The question has to be converted to some motion because maybe the question wasn't worded right and therefore needs to be redrafted in order to get the information that's required, or maybe they can't get the information in a timely fashion. That is the issue before us.

We put a written question to the government on the question of the number of patients who were turned away from service at the Royal University Hospital for each day for the 2007 University of Saskatchewan labour strike. You'd think that given all of the reference that they have made to that, all of the reference they have made to that in saying that this is the reason that we need a change in essential services, that they would have the answer like that. Why is it taking them this length of time to come up with an answer, Mr. Speaker? My guess is they don't have a very good, clear answer to provide to people of Saskatchewan. This is another case of right wing meddling — if it ain't broke, let's fix it. That's what this is all about.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know we have a motion for return (debatable) that was put in, in written form on April 15 — April 15, more than two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. More than two weeks that question . . . and the government puts out, they call it information, but we have no idea if it is information.

Whenever the question of essential services comes up, the first thing they point to is the strike at the University of Saskatchewan and how it affected people and health care services at the Royal University Hospital. Well, Mr. Speaker, our question is designed so we can actually quantify that. You know, put up the answer so that the people of Saskatchewan and so that the opposition knows exactly what it is we're dealing with because it is overwhelmingly the major, the major excuse — and I say that very, very accurately, I think — excuse for Bill 5, Mr. Speaker.

Today we have a situation where the government can simply stand up and issue a written return on a motion for a return. All they have to do is at the appropriate time do that. Stand up, give it in writing. Instead they wait until it becomes motions for returns (debatable), Mr. Speaker, debatable.

Then, then . . . I want to make this point. If toys could pick up the energy from the now government, they would be spinning with what seems to be perpetual motion. They would spin and weave and bob because the minister stands up today, the minister stands up today and says, oh here, I've got the answer now in writing, he says.

Well if it's good enough to write, Mr. Speaker, it's good enough to stand up and say it once it gets to this point, once it gets to the point of orders, motions for return (debatable). They had all kinds of opportunity to put it in writing previously, and that would have been perfectly acceptable, perfectly within the rules of this legislature, but it's too late for that. Now you can't do by the back door what you should have done by the front door. And that's the shame of where we're at today, Mr. Speaker.

We have got to, we have got to somehow, as an opposition, bring the government to what they campaigned on — openness and accountability, integrity. I think I heard the word integrity come from the Premier's mouth, and I've heard others on that

side speak to integrity, Mr. Speaker. I hope they mean it. I hope this is the last example in this term of this nonsense, of this playing fast and furious with the rules of the Legislative Assembly.

Shame on the government for not answering the question. Shame on the government for not answering it in its proper form. And shame on them for now not standing up and reading into the record what that answer is so that we can have a proper debate and have some intelligent knowledge about what it is that happened during that strike. What are the numbers? We don't know.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've made my point. Thank you for your attention.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'm pleased to rise to speak to the motion for return (debatable). I just want to again emphasize what that question was that the member for Saskatoon Eastview had asked. And the question was simply this: the number of patients who were turned away per service or department from the Royal University for each day of the 2007 University of Saskatchewan labour strike — very simple question, Mr. Speaker, very simple question that could have been answered in a very simple way.

The question was asked weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, and the minister would not answer. And we now know it's a would-not answer given that what has just happened a few minutes ago.

The minister has been using these numbers in the House, as well as the Minister for Labour. And the Minister for Labour has been using the numbers in the House on a constant basis to establish as to why the Sask Party government has decided to implement essential services legislation. This is their substantiation as to why it needs to be implemented.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that they are so willing to use numbers that they as of yet have not been able to substantiate. And why is that, Mr. Speaker? Is it because they don't know the numbers? Is it because they are just too busy to research those numbers, which is clearly what we've seen about the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow's question? They don't want to research those numbers because they're too busy. Or is it the same as Bill 31 — that they're just too busy to report to the public anything that spent more than \$50,000? They'd rather have to only deal with it if it's \$350,000 or more.

[12:00]

So is it just that they're too busy, Mr. Speaker? Or is it simply because they didn't want the numbers to be reported, the actual numbers? Is that the case, Mr. Speaker? Because so far in all the questions that have been asked of the Sask Party government about the numbers that the member from Saskatoon Eastview has asked, so far each and every single question that's been asked about substantiating that with evidence, each and every time the Minister for Labour has quoted from *The Globe and*

Mail or the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* or whatever other anecdotal evidence that he could provide, but nothing, nothing of solid evidence when we have asked the question numerous times. Matter of fact I dare to say 10 times numerous times, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, since we have just come through 21 hours of committee hours on Bill 5.

The minister seems to only be able to answer this question when ordered to do so, Mr. Speaker. Well isn't that a sad day in Saskatchewan when the government, who claims to be open and accountable and who ran on that in the last provincial election, is clearly forgetting all about it now that they're actually sitting in the government chairs, Mr. Speaker, because now they're only doing it if they're ordered to do so. Only when they're absolutely under the gun will they answer the question that has been asked of them.

Clearly so far this has been only used as a fearmongering tactic. There is no question about that. There is no question that it's been used as a fearmongering tactic, or else they would have answered this question weeks ago. And isn't it interesting, Mr. Speaker? I find it amazingly interesting that after the hours have run out in the committee that is scrutinizing the essential services legislation, Bill 5, only after the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Bill 5 has nothing to do with the question before the Chamber, and I've asked the member to have her comments relevant to the question regarding the numbers of patients at University Hospital. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, again I reiterate the question. The question, the number of patients who were turned away per service or department from the Royal University for each day of the 2007 University of Saskatchewan labour strike, these numbers, Mr. Speaker, have been used over and over again, whether it's giving answers to question period in the House, whether it's giving answers to the media when asked about various issues that the government is putting forward and dealing with, or whether it's been in other committees that have been perusing other pieces of legislation.

The answer to this particular question has been used anecdotally and has only been used in terms of their information through articles that have been in *The Globe and Mail* and *StarPhoenix*. The answer, the actual solid evidence, the factual evidence from this answer is something that the opposition has been asking for now for several weeks and, like I said, under scrutiny for many hours — 21 hours in a different committee for instance. So the essence of the government not answering this question leads one to believe that they're either unable, unwilling, or simply too busy to answer the question.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am very shocked, as I said, very shocked that only after the evidence that has been provided to put forward another Bill, which is the essential services Bill, only then do they decide that they will answer the question. Only after the scrutiny for that, the essence of this answer for this question, only when the scrutiny has been completed are they willing to put forward the evidence to that question, Mr. Speaker, that's been posed by the opposition on more than numerous, many occasions — so many occasions, quite frankly, that I can't even put numbers to it.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place. But I encourage the government that in the future that they will answer the questions as they've been asked, and therefore not lead to the fearmongering and such that they have caused in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As all members of the Assembly will know shortly, all of us will be asked to stand in this House and put on record our position when it comes to essential services legislation in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I as a private member of this Assembly have listened with interest to the discussion in committee and also the discussion that has taken place through question period. And one of the observations that I make is that the government very early on in its mandate let it be known to the public and to us that the reason why they had made a decision to change their minds on essential services legislation . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Just like to remind members that the question before the Assembly is a question posed by the member from Saskatoon Eastview asking specific questions regarding the number of patients turned away and how departments were impacted. And it's imperative that members be also reminded of the fact or aware of the fact that their responses or to the question should be relevant to the question presented. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you for that ruling, Mr. Speaker.

One of the essential questions that we need to have determined, given that it has formed a large part of the argument that has been advanced by the government, is that during the CUPE withdrawal of services in the fall of 2007, during the election, that 400 — and the minister has put this on record — 400 people per day were being turned away from medicare during the CUPE strike, Mr. Speaker. And this has really framed the argument that the government has advanced — that 400 citizens in our province were not receiving medicare during the withdrawal of services by the people that work at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I think the question was most relevant to this debate, the question that we put in through a notice of motion. We wanted to understand day by day how many citizens were not receiving medicare in our province during the withdrawal, the work stoppage, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have not yet been able to obtain an answer to that question, which is fundamental to a debate that has raged on in this Assembly and a vote that I as a private member will soon have to stand in this Assembly and vote on.

So I know that the Minister of Health has an answer apparently that he wants to put on the record. But from a private member's point of view, Mr. Speaker, it is a compelling question. And the answers will be compelling in terms of helping members determine whether or not they support this legislation.

So I would urge the government to tell us day by day, department by department, how many citizens in our province went without medicare services, Mr. Speaker? And I believe that the government has an obligation, an obligation to the members of this Assembly to answer that question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a question placed by the member from Saskatoon Eastview regarding an issue for return debatable. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 37

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Tell that **Bill No. 37 — The Parks Amendment Act, 2008** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again on this Bill. It was only a few hours ago that I spoke last on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, but during the course of those hours I've had an opportunity to review some additional information and consult further with my colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier in my remarks I had mentioned about the importance of having additional information on which to base decisions in this regard, decisions that might affect constituents of mine who either use the recreational facilities in The Battlefords Provincial Park, or other provincial parks for that matter, and business interests, Mr. Speaker, those who lease land within the provincial park, lease land for commercial purposes that ensure that jobs are created, jobs are provided, and services are provided to the users of those parks.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I was most interested in in trying to determine how changes in boundaries, those sorts of things might affect my constituents, the group that I was most interested in, Mr. Speaker, was the Battlefords Tribal Council and their lease interests inside the park boundaries. Mr. Speaker, the tribal council has been looking at utilizing additional space within the park for such things as cottage development, expansion of the golf course, and further business interests to coincide with the hospitality and convention sector attached to the golf course that is leased there.

But, Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to review in greater detail the Bill in front of us. It appears that the Bill is dealing primarily with a road allowance, Mr. Speaker, something I don't fully understand yet, but I have been given assurances that

this is the type of information that could be provided through the committee process.

So, Mr. Speaker, while I have the floor I want to indicate to the members of the government opposite and in particular the Minister of the Environment that there are issues relating to the lease arrangements and the expansion of boundaries of the lease agreements within the park. Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Minister of the Environment and the government opposite to review the circumstances with regards to that lease and to discuss these matters with the intention of improving the lease, therefore improving services to the people of Saskatchewan in regards to that specific park.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I realize that the legislation is broader than that. It speaks to a number of the parks across the province. So, Mr. Speaker, I am at this time prepared to acknowledge that the information that I require, the information that we will require to review this matter further can be obtained through the committee process. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I say on behalf of the official opposition, we are prepared at this time to move this Bill through to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 37, The Parks Amendment Act, 2008 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.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, this Bill should be directed to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs.

The Speaker: — The Bill is designated . . . that Bill No. 37, The Parks Amendment Act, 2008 stands referred to the Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs. Thank you.

Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, with leave for the introduction of guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

through you and to all members of the legislature here this afternoon I'd like to introduce some guests seated in your gallery. Mr. Rod Lerner and his wife Terry are seated in the gallery. Rod is an old childhood friend from the good community of Eston, Saskatchewan. We grew up for a long, long time together.

And after we graduated from high school, Rod went on to a career of teaching and moved to Medicine Hat, and I've kind of lost a little bit of track where they've wound up at this particular time. I'll look forward to visiting with them this afternoon. I remember throughout the years of high school driving around town in a little Austin car that he had, had great fun — and keep the stories to yourself.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the legislature to join with me in welcoming to the legislature here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[12:15]

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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 Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm pleased to stand and talk about The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, Mr. Speaker. This particular piece of legislation is important to the environmental protection of our province. It in fact is a piece of legislation that moves land into protected status, or out of protected status, Mr. Speaker. And in this province we have had a long-standing desire to protect our natural habitat for our children and for future generations, Mr. Speaker, and protect those species which are found in some of these protected lands that are at risk.

Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation moves some land out of protected status, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to ask questions of clarification through the committee process, Mr. Speaker, to understand exactly why some of these pieces are being taken out and what usage they will be used for in the future, Mr. Speaker. As well, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to future Bills that will have in fact additions to that protected land status in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, because the very detailed questions we need to have answered are best asked in committee, Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be moved to committee. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the

motion by the Minister of the Environment that Bill No. 25, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2008 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this Bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this Bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

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 Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are on Bill 24, An Act to amend the Trade Union Act, and what this particular amendment is all about is what right wingers in Saskatchewan have long been about, and that is if it ain't broke, well let's fix it.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where a trade union Act has come into effect over a long period of time. Successive governments have made some amendments to it. There's no magic to that. Any legislation that's put into effect this day or any other day is legislation that can be amended and changed in the future, but what we have is a trade union Act that has a Labour Relations Board that works; that works, that we're very proud of, that it works.

Three members — there's a Chair and then a Vice-Chair that is appointed after consultation with specified employer groups, and then another Vice-Chair that is appointed after consultation with listed labour organizations. There's no magic to this. We had a situation where employers on one hand and employees, people working — women and men — in Saskatchewan could be confident that they were being represented, that they at least had someone whose past would lead them to believe that they understood where they're coming from, Mr. Speaker. That's what we've had.

Now we have an amendment which I've heard referred to as the oops amendment, because this is the second trade union Act amendment Bill before the legislature this spring. But we have a situation where we're adding three words and it's "not more than." And what it in effect is doing is reducing from two

Vice-Chairs to one Vice-Chair. And that begs all kinds of questions.

Is it going to be a Vice-Chair appointed out of labour? Perhaps there will be consultations, Mr. Speaker, with the SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour]. Perhaps that's what the government intends; that there be a Chair of the LRB and that the Vice-Chair will come with more of a labour friendly background. Perhaps that's what they mean.

I'm astounded that I'm able to even keep a straight face, because that's not what this government's intention is, Mr. Speaker, that is not where they're going at all. It's a Chair of the LRB and a Vice-Chair of the LRB and labour background will be minimal at best.

What a shame at a time when Saskatchewan's economy is just humming along on all cylinders. What a shame when the government is proud of the record number of women and men that are working in Saskatchewan today, you know, month over month, and this is a continuation of what was going on.

Some of the members opposite actually have the belief that this has all happened since November 7 — that businesses have made hiring decisions or that people have graduated since November 7, Mr. Speaker. And it's just astounding because here we are on Bill 24, An Act to amend The Trade Union Act.

Mr. Speaker I know I have colleagues that have things to add to this debate. This is my second time on speaking to this amendment to The Trade Union Act. It is with significant disappointment that I find myself in a position of having to speak to it.

Clearly all of my arguments have been that the government is not consulting, not consulting with people. I mean, for heaven's sakes, a trade union Act, Mr. Speaker, the very name of it speaks to unions. The very name, trade union Act, speaks to, this is legislation and this is a way to proceed to resolve disputes involving unionized members, involving unionized members. And what's the first thing or one of the early things this government does? Cut off all communications. Cut off all connection, and just make it a trade union Act for employers only. And I say, Mr. Speaker, this is a sad day.

This is a very sad day for the people of Saskatchewan when we have such an amendment, such a draconian amendment, to reduce from three — the members of the board — to two. And the government's main argument or one of the major arguments is somehow this is going to speed up hearings. Instead of having three simultaneous hearings, you can now only have two.

They argue it's going to somehow enhance the written, the written rulings that members of the Labour Relations Board make, these thoughtful — at least till now — thoughtful written rulings. Well how is it if three people are having some difficulty keeping up, how is it that you're going to have better hearings and genuinely hear the employers' side and the working women and men's side, working persons' side? How is it that you're going to accomplish more with two people than you could with three?

Well, Mr. Speaker, of course the answer is you can't do it. It's simply defies logic. This Bill is only about cutting out organized women and men, cutting out organized labour from The Trade Union Act. I say shame. Thank you.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When in opposition, the Saskatchewan Party on a number of occasions complained that Saskatchewan's Labour Relations Board was unfairly biased against business, despite the fact that in one fairly famous case in Saskatchewan, former chief justice Frank Gerein concluded that there is no evidence, quote:

... to conclude that bias exists within the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board or that there is justification for a reasonable apprehension of bias. To conclude otherwise, this court would be acting on pure conjecture or fantasy. That is not good enough.

Now I suppose if chief justice Frank Gerein was as biased as the Labour Relations Board, then that would be the natural conclusion if there was indeed bias on the part of Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board.

Now chief justice Frank Gerein had a career before, a distinguished career on the bench as a federally appointed judge. Of course that career would be a distinguished legal career. And he had a short, I happen to know, Mr. Speaker, a short political career. He ran for this Assembly one time. He did not run as a member of the CCF or as a New Democrat.

The Saskatchewan Party also raised the spectre of political interference in 2006 when one of the Labour Relations Board Vice-Chair's term was not renewed upon expiry. They alleged that this Vice-Chair's term was not renewed because the NDP and labour saw him as too, quote, "pro-business." Now quite a fuss was made — as members opposite I'm sure will agree, quite a fuss was made — because this was not, this term was not renewed, Mr. Speaker. Imagine the fuss if this individual had been fired in mid-term.

That being said, at no point leading up to or during the election did the Saskatchewan Party mention any change to the Labour Relations Board, much like their complete denial that they saw any need whatsoever for essential services legislation up to and including the election campaign. The Saskatchewan Party was elected November 7, 2007, and as the members across the way have said, that was the end of consultation. Or at least as the Minister of Justice would say, the end of any consultation where they might get a negative response.

In their first legislative session one month later, they introduced Bills 5 and 6 to bring what they call balance to Saskatchewan's labour environment. Bill 5 is the essential services Bill, Mr. Speaker, though the Sask Party had told reporters in the days leading up to the election that this would not be legislated. And Bill 6 includes a number of amendments to The Trade Union Act. Both Bills are expected to be passed during the spring legislative session.

Bill 6 is, I take it, to bring about the competitive labour

environment that members opposite talked about when they were in opposition. Members opposite rise on numerous occasions and talk about how Saskatchewan is leading the economy of Canada, and I on occasion — only on occasion, Mr. Speaker — point out that that is all true and that is under this labour environment.

But to return to the changes to the Labour Relations Board as set out in the Bill under discussion, on March 6 reports surfaced that in the middle of a Labour Relations Board hearing — in the middle of a hearing, not the expiration of somebody's term, Mr. Speaker, but in the middle of a hearing — the Chair and Vice-Chairs were fired, all three of them. In the weeks that follow, there's still quite a bit of confusion as to how cases currently incomplete before the board would eventually be settled. The government initially claimed that outgoing members were instructed to continue on with the current cases but not to start any new ones.

This of course is the biased board that the government was so worried about. They wanted to conclude all these cases, and not so concerned about their bias on those ongoing cases apparently, Mr. Speaker. But there have been conflicting stories and opinions as to whether these members have any legal authority or obligation to do so, and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in fact they do not.

The following circumstances around the Labour Relations Board or the appointment of a Saskatchewan Party supporter — active supporter, I think involved in the transition team for the government — as the Chair of the Labour Relations Board with a \$60,000 increase in salary, the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour stated on March 10, 2008 that, quote, "Obviously there's a connection between the new Chair and the Saskatchewan Party. There has been a connection with our party," Mr. Speaker.

This new Chair was provided with a 50 per cent increase in salary, Mr. Speaker, by a government that is now rejecting walking away from the commitment of the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs to index minimum wage. It provides a 50 per cent increase to the Chair of the Labour Relations Board once it is one of their party's supporters in that position. But that's okay, Mr. Speaker, they say, because we're going to cut the size of the board. We're only going to have one Vice-Chair, so actually it will cost less.

[12:30]

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, having brought in Bill 6 to amend The Trade Union Act and to bring about what they call balanced labour legislation and what they would call a competitive labour environment, Mr. Speaker, having drafted this ominous Bill which was to change the landscape of labour relations in the province, they forgot to make an amendment in that Bill to amend The Trade Union Act to reduce the size of the board by one Vice-Chair, Mr. Speaker. And that's why some of my colleagues refer to this as the oops Bill or one of the oops Bills. There's also Bill 31, Mr. Speaker, maybe a couple of others as a matter of fact.

They forgot that they actually had to change the law and that you actually have to change the law in here, Mr. Speaker. And

there are some attempts by not proclaiming sections or repealing proclamations of already proclaimed legislation to try and change the law without coming into here, Mr. Speaker, but I would, I would put forward the position that those are of no force and effect.

So realizing that in this case they had to come here, they brought forward this Bill to go from a not more than two. So they can now try to save their money so they can pay their Sask Party connection, who's now been appointed Chair, an increased amount. They can try to save that money legally by reducing the one position, which they thought they could do just by directive of the minister but they have since figured out they can't do because it would be unlawful. And this Bill is to make what would've been unlawful, and which the government attempted to do, lawful, Mr. Speaker.

And this change is to actually as well as save the money that they want to pay their political appointment from being, you know, being taken from another Vice-Chair, they also want to argue that the reduction that this Bill allows — a reduction by one Vice-Chair or, I guess, two Vice-Chairs, Mr. Speaker, because a zero is not more than two — the reduction by a Vice-Chair or two will speed up, will speed up the actions of this board.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have now an attempt to — well it will be a successful attempt — to make lawful what would've been the unlawful actions of the Saskatchewan Labour minister, which is unfortunate, but typical of the kind of bumbling we have seen on the part of the government and particularly on the part of that minister who seems to be resisting learning what's in his legislation in committee, which I guess was his opportunity to final figure out what was in this legislation. He seems to be resisting that education as hard as he can.

But on the issue of bias, Mr. Speaker, we will soon see bias. We will soon see bias. It's being entrenched in the Labour Relations Board. But was there bias, was there bias being corrected, Mr. Speaker? No, there was not.

Between April of 1998 and March of 2006, that's an eight year period, Mr. Speaker — a period in which the members opposite were very concerned about bias and very concerned about the uncompetitive labour market — the board decided over 1,300 cases. Of these 1,300 cases only six have been overturned by the courts, Mr. Speaker.

We had a Labour Relations Board — one Chair, two Vice-Chairs — chosen by an open and competitive process. And their record upheld by the courts, exemplary, Mr. Speaker — exemplary record, Mr. Speaker, an exemplary record of providing unbiased decisions in accordance with the law, Mr. Speaker. And that is what now, that is what now we are clearly going to lose.

I mean, as I said, all three of these individuals were chosen by open competition. The current Chair of the Labour Relations Board was not. And the Vice-Chair, the Vice-Chair was not going to be, Mr. Speaker. I think that's pretty clear. The Minister of Labour asked if the Vice-Chair would be chosen by open competition. He refused to answer the question. The next day he says to the press, well yes, but the reason I couldn't

answer the question was because I had to tweak the ad last night. Essentially that's what he said, Mr. Speaker.

So we have a Minister of Labour who doesn't read his legislation, doesn't understand the effects of his legislation, but we're supposed to believe he's working on the advertisement for an open competition the government never intended to have until they were forced by this opposition to have it. They certainly didn't have it for the Chair. They weren't planning on having it for the Vice-Chair, Mr. Speaker.

I have other comments to make in respect to this legislation, this legislation that will make lawful what would have been and was the unlawful actions of the Minister of Labour, retroactively will make them lawful, but they won't make them proper, Mr. Speaker. But I will save those remarks for another day. And so therefore I move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order for members to return to their constituencies and meet with the citizens, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this 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 at 1:30 p.m. Have a good weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:35.]

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Premier

Hon. Bob BJORNERUD
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken CHEVELDAYOFF
Minister of Crown Corporations

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

Hon. June Draude
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

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Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Capital City Commission