



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY
2007**

Mr. Kevin Yates, Chair
Regina Dewdney

Mr. Randy Weekes, Deputy Chair
Biggar

Ms. Doreen Hamilton
Regina Wascana Plains

Hon. Deb Higgins
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Delbert Kirsch
Batoche

Mr. Eldon Lautermilch
Prince Albert Northcote

Mr. Lyle Stewart
Thunder Creek

[The committee met at 20:25.]

**Bill No. 32 — The Superannuation
(Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2006**

Clause 1

The Chair: — Thank you very much, committee members. The business before the Committee of the Economy today is Bill No. 32, An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act and to make consequential amendments to The Provincial Court Act, 1998. I open the floor. Yes, Mr. Cheveldayoff.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to begin by saying that . . . certainly not our preferred way of dealing with this legislation. We had asked many questions and many questions were unanswered. We listened to the superannuates, the group led by Mr. Zimmerman and others, who brought up some very good points. And we in the opposition feel that we would be willing to work on those. Whether it's death benefits for surviving spouses or others, we feel that there are a lot of points that were not fully explored.

But given the situation and the government's intimidation tactics regarding this Bill, we have chosen to let it go at this time and continue to work with the superannuates. We were very pleased to work with the superannuates, to bring them to their Legislative Assembly, to fill the galleries, to force the government to answer questions that they were clearly uncomfortable about answering.

But at this time we tried to work with the government to ensure that we could improve upon the Bill, but our gestures were not well received. And at this time we will proceed with the voting on the Bill but continue to work with the superannuates and again voice our concern the way this process was handled by the government.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. I'll open the floor to the minister.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would simply note that the Bill that we have in front of the Assembly tonight will for the first time provide legislated indexing at a percentage of the CPI [consumer price index] for pensioners. The opposition Saskatchewan Party, for all of their pompous posturing, has failed to provide any substantive alternative. They have failed to maintain a consistent position, having varied on everything from 100 per cent to even less than what the government has offered. They have failed to provide any constructive alternatives. They have failed to articulate how their plan is affordable, which I guess for those of us who have served in this Assembly with them for some time have come to understand that this is simply par for the course. I think it's unfortunate the approach that they've taken, and the political posturing tonight is frankly beneath this Assembly.

That being said, the choice of how the Sask Party votes tonight is up to them. The New Democratic Party will vote tonight. The New Democratic Party tonight will vote to legislate the indexing of pension benefits for seniors. That is the support the

New Democratic Party will provide tonight.

The Chair: — Mr. Weekes.

Mr. Weekes: — I want to make a couple of points on what the minister just said. First . . .

The Chair: — Order please. Order. Mr. Weekes has the floor.

Mr. Weekes: — First, the first point . . .

The Chair: — Mr. Weekes has the floor.

Mr. Weekes: — The first point has to be said that it would be ruled out of order if we brought in an amendment that would have anything to do with money in the Bill. And so there's no room for an amendment to raise the amounts that is in this Bill.

And certainly we have worked closely with the superannuates. And I don't know what else to say. But we've been part of the process. We've been very supportive. And if we're not able to make an amendment, what else could we do?

So as my colleague said, the minister threatened to pull the Bill. And so this is the Bill that we have to deal with. And it's not perfect, but we will support it.

The Chair: — Thank you. Any further . . . Mr. Cheveldayoff.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Just to respond to the minister, I take great exception to his comments, and he can question my motives if he like. But call it naive on my part, but I approached him in all honesty about putting improvements into this Bill. And he came back with a threat to pull the Bill.

So if that's . . . They're the government. They can make the final decision. And I'm just very disappointed about the way this was handled. I thought that there would be ways to do it. If he expressed his desire in a way that just would show that they weren't interested, I'd accept that. But to go on and on like this, I take great exception to it.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Are there any further speakers? Yes, I'll recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The rhetoric coming from the Sask Party I think is indicative of the lack of moral centre that these people have as a compass. As we listen to them, what I said to that critic opposite is that we do not need, in order to undertake the approach . . . In order to undertake the approach that we have identified, we do not need the indexing legislation. We can embark on the continued ad hoc process that we've identified.

If the member does not support the indexing, he should vote against the indexing. If he has a consistent position which he has not yet articulated, in terms of what that indexing should be, he should put it forward tonight. But it has been everywhere between 50 per cent, which is what the Albertans receive, and 100 per cent to 60 per cent to 75 per cent, and it just depends on who is talking to that opposition.

That's been their approach. If they want to vote against the

legislation and the legislative indexing, they should do so tonight.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If the minister is arrogant enough to believe that his Bill is as good as it ever could be without any discussion, then that is his choice. We feel that there are improvements that could be made. We wanted to discuss it. We know that we are governed by the rules of the legislature, that we can't put forward an amendment that calls for increased spending. And we are fully aware of that, but we wanted to approach it in other ways and to be creative.

But to question my morals, to question the morals of the . . . I'm not questioning the minister's morals. I didn't for one instance in this. We're all trying to work to make this the best Bill possible for some very deserving groups who took the time to come here and to make their presentations. So what use is their presentations? What good did their presentations do other than us hearing it first-hand? Did the minister for one instance consider any of the ideas that they had or any of the proposals they had? I don't think so. Because when we were asking about the costs of them, nobody could even provide us an answer. And it was very clear that you didn't want to provide us with an answer.

So I'm very disappointed in how this has been handled. Not questioning anybody's morals, but if he wants to continue to do that to us that's fine. We'll reserve comment to fight this another day.

The Chair: — All right. Mr. Lautermilch.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Just as opposed to reserving comment, I'd like to hear . . . and I heard the other evening. I was here. The minister wasn't. Some junior officials were here attempting to answer questions. What I didn't hear was what the opposition members of the Saskatchewan Party are proposing. I heard a myriad of different numbers in the legislature over a period of time, but I haven't heard a conclusive proposal by any members of the Saskatchewan Party or in this committee.

Now obviously I haven't been part of the discussions that you, Mr. Cheveldayoff, may have had with whoever. My point is this. The range that I heard was from Alberta's proposal to whatever. My point is if you had legitimate proposals — and I'm sure you do; you must have a position — share it with the committee . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well just make a suggestion. And what is your policy?

The Chair: — Order. Order. All comments through the Chair. At this point . . . I'll recognize the minister in just a minute. I am going to just outline for the members . . . A number of issues were raised by the opposition in the previous meeting that don't fall within the purview of this legislation. I had made a commitment that we will have the opportunity as a committee to discuss those issues at a later date because — seeing as they're not directly pertinent to this legislation, issues like death benefits and survivor benefits — those types of issues that aren't directly related to this piece of legislation . . . [inaudible] . . . we will take an opportunity at a later date to have a full discussion on those particular issues.

With that I'll recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The opposition has tonight a very simple job to do, which is to provide an alternative to what it is the NDP [New Democratic Party] government has offered. If they do not agree with the percentage that we have put forward, put on — tonight — the record what the percentage is that they would offer. What is the percentage that they want?

An. Hon. Member: — I'm not talking about CPI. We're talking about other ideas that were brought forward.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Oh so does the opposition then say that they support the position that we've taken on the CPI? Dead silence. Dead silence which shows that this is nothing more than political posturing on the part of the opposition because if they don't agree with the percentage of CPI increase . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. Would the members please come . . . Members of the committee, could I please have your attention. Through the Chair please. Through the Chair please, all comments through the Chair.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, the question is a very simple one. If the Sask Party does not believe that this is a sufficient percentage, then they should say so tonight. Tell us what that percentage is that they think should be implemented in this Bill, and we will be able to then debate the ongoing affordability of it.

If however this is just political posturing, continue to take the tack that they are.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Seeing no further . . . Yes, Mr. Cheveldayoff.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Chair, I would propose that we would put forward an amendment at such time is . . . if the minister will agree to Royal Assent today.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Cheveldayoff, that isn't possible to do. And seeing no further speakers, clause 1 of the Bill, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enacts as follows: An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act and to make consequential amendments to The Provincial Court Act, 1998. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Could I have one of the members move that please. Moved by Ms. Higgins. All those in favour?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Opposed? It's agreed. Could I have one of the members move that we report the Bill without amendment.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I so move.

The Chair: — Moved by Ms. Higgins that we report the Bill without amendment. Thank you very much members. Seeing as we have completed the work before the committee, I would now move that this committee is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 20:37.]