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Occupational Health and Safety Inspections

Mr. Forbes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since 2012 the number of occupational health and safety inspections has dropped by 69 per cent. In 2012 there was an average of 385 OHS [occupational health and safety] inspections every month. This year that has dropped in number to 120 inspections per month, and the OHS unit no longer does proactive inspections. They wait for something to happen and then they go inspect. To the minister: how does this make any sense?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I want to correct something that he stated, it was that there was no proactive inspections or no random inspections taking place. That simply is not in fact correct. They've got a method now where they choose to target inspections where they feel they will have the most success at reducing the injury rate.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: that our injury rate in our province is simply too high. One injury is simply one too many. We're now trying through the ministry to try targeted inspections. We support that. We're going to watch and see how that works. The injury rate has come down under that system, obviously not as fast as we would like it to, but it is coming down and continuing to come down. So what appears to be effective, Mr. Speaker, is putting our resources where we think it will have the most effect.

The Speaker: I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: Mr. Speaker, along with the big drop in OHS inspections, this government is also issuing 94 per cent fewer violation notices. To the minister: why has this government so dramatically scaled back OHS inspections and enforcement?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, I've got a quote that I would like to read. It makes reference to the injury rate reaching a high of 4.95 per cent under the NDP in 2002. Mr. Speaker, this is the quote:

I agree totally with the minister in terms of occupational health and safety. It's one that we should just really do as much as we can. It was one that as a government we ... struggled with and we hoped that we could do much more. So I believe we should talk about it specifically and it's really something we can get behind."

That was the member for Saskatoon Centre at a College of Law event in 2002. Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to read from a briefing note prepared, Mr. Speaker, this is a briefing note prepared for the NDP during the time they were in office:

Particular priority will be given to the 10 employers who top the list — that is those with the highest number of injuries over the last three years. Using an injury assessment formula, these 10 large employers account for over 10 per cent of the total time-loss injuries in the province, but only 5 per cent of the WCB-covered workforce.

So, Mr. Speaker, that was something that started under the NDP, continued under this administration. If it works, I don't care where the idea came from.

The Speaker: I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: Thank you very much. And if he's quoting me, it probably was 2012, not 2002.

Mr. Speaker, this would be like the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] announcing that they'll only enforce a speed limit on a certain portion of Highway No. 1 because that's the road on which people speed the most. And that gives free rein to drivers on every other road because they know no one else is paying attention. Saskatchewan has the second highest injury rate in the entire country and this government should be taking it seriously. To the minister: will he restore random inspections and reinstate proper enforcement for occupational health and safety here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, I have another briefing note from 2006:

The OHS division targets inspections to those employers with the highest percentage of time loss injuries in the province. The OHS division will continue to conduct inspections and investigations in the workplace based on specific incidents.

Mr. Speaker, that was what happened when the NDP were in office and, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do that as well as having random inspections. Random inspections have some significant benefit. They have always been done; they will continue to be done.

And, Mr. Speaker, in fact we gave a direction earlier today that we want to do more random inspections.