

FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

## Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

# DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD) Published under the authority of The Honourable Dan D'Autremont Speaker

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### Occupational Health and Safety Inspections

**Mr. Forbes:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the former OHS [occupational health and safety] inspector who spoke out publicly yesterday said, and I quote, “We no longer do . . . proactive inspections. We wait for something to happen and then we go.”

After being embarrassed by this public criticism, the minister said he is going to reverse his policy and have some unannounced inspections, but he provided no details.

We know that the overall number of inspections have been cut from 380 per month to just 120 per month, and the former safety officer says none of those inspections are unannounced.

So to the minister: how many unannounced inspections will be reinstated? What exactly is the plan to reverse this government’s cuts to occupational health and safety?

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. There have been no cuts to OHS, nor will there be. This is something that’s very important. We have an unacceptably high injury rate in our province. In fact, we are getting better on it, but we still have a long ways to go.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue the focus on employers with the highest injury rate. The initial results show a decrease in the injury rate of about 22 per cent. In my view that’s not good enough, but it is a step in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this as well — random inspections are important and effective. They raise public awareness and public safety in a general sense while ensuring compliance.

Mr. Speaker, we’re going to continue to do both random inspections and targeted inspections. We’re going to leave it to the deputy minister and his officials to try and

determine best how they are going to do that. We have faith and confidence in those people. They are driving the injury rate down. We still have more work to do. We will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

**Mr. Forbes:** Talk about continuing. Mr. Speaker, we've obtained inspection records . . . It's a laughing matter to the folks over there. We've obtained inspection records for the Vanscoy mine and they clearly show a disturbing pattern. Not one, not one unannounced inspection since April of 2012. Not one scheduled inspection since August 2013. Just five visits to the Vanscoy mine since then and always in response to a specific complaint.

To the minister: how can he possibly justify this kind of broken system, and how exactly will it change going forward? Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what's the specific plan to reverse the changes this government has made to occupational health and safety in Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** Mr. Speaker, it's the intention of this government to put resources where they're most needed, to target the employers that have a high injury rate, to work with those employers to get a plan, have them sign that plan, and accept that there's an issue that they're there.

Mr. Speaker, we have through workers' compensation, we have Mission: Zero, a plan to try and reduce injury rate to zero. Mr. Speaker, the opposition critic and member for Saskatoon Centre said in the *Leader-Post*, October 22, 2014, "I think it may be time to review Mission: Zero and ask if it's really getting . . . at the offenders." And that's what we're trying to do with this, Mr. Speaker, is try and focus on what the offenders are doing and try and deal with things like that.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP as far back as 2006 said the OHS division targets inspections to those employers with the highest percentage of time loss injuries in the province. It was started under the NDP. It's continued. It's producing results, and we're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.