

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

N.S. VOL. 57 NO. 54A MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2015, 13:30

Workplace Fatalities

Mr. Forbes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Workers' Compensation Board reported 39 workplace fatalities last year, and the leading cause of death for workers was traumatic injury. This is devastating, and it needs to stop. To the Labour minister: what specific changes will this government make as a result of these 39 deaths?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question. Even one injury in the workplace is one too many. Tomorrow we will be reading out the names of the workers that were killed in our province, and it's something that this government, and I'm sure all members, take seriously. On behalf of the government, I'd like to offer our sincere condolences to all of the families that are affected by that.

Mr. Speaker, I can say this: that the work that the ministry is doing by way of targeted interventions is showing signs of significant progress. At 2.41 per cent, the workplace time-loss injury rate is actually a substantial drop of about 51 per cent lower than it was from 2002.

Mr. Speaker, we are making progress. Not fast enough, but we are making progress and we are making changes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: Mr. Speaker, we learned in March that this government has slashed the number of occupational health and safety inspections by nearly 70 per cent since 2012. In 2012 there were 385 OHS [occupational health and safety] inspections every month. But this government cut that to 120 inspections per month and 39 workers died last year. That's one workplace death every one and a half weeks, and the leading cause of death is traumatic injury.

This government needs to significantly ramp up its inspections and enforcement. Does the Labour minister recognize that?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, we reached an injury rate high of 4.95 per cent under the NDP in the year 2002. The rate has continued to drop since then and is dropping now at a faster rate than it has before.

Mr. Speaker, 86 per cent of the businesses in our province, 86 per cent of the workplaces have reached the Mission: Zero target. Unfortunately there are approximately 14 per cent of them who have not yet done that. Mr. Speaker, I have a quote from a College of Law event dated March 2, 2013:

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

Mr. Speaker, that's a quote from the member opposite. We want to continue to target the workplaces that have the highest injury rate. We want to work with those workplaces to try and drive the injury rate down. One is one too many, Mr. Speaker.