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DEBATES and PROCEEDINGS

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Changes to Labour Legislation

Mr. Forbes: Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan waited until the last hours of this session for the Sask Party to table their labour legislation. And after six months and over half a million dollars of expenses, they still haven't finished their work. And we still have the essential services fiasco on top of that.

Mr. Speaker, in committee the minister said the Sask Party needs yet another 200,000 for spin and PR [public relations] to convince a province of something they didn't ask for. Mr. Speaker, clearly the best way to use any further resources on this labour bill would be to allow workers a chance to give their opinions to the minister himself and not just through a website or his email address. Mr. Speaker, will the minister get out of this marble palace and meet with the people of Saskatchewan, hold open and public consultations this spring for real feedback from working people?

The Speaker: —I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. To the member opposite and to the citizens of Saskatchewan, I'm pleased to say we've held a large number of meetings in different parts of the province. And I can also add, Mr. Speaker, that we've received correspondence; we've acted on the correspondence.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite seems to be preoccupied with a lot of things on this. Yesterday he did an interview on CJME, and I quote from Don Saxon, the announcer:

An overhaul to the province's labour laws has the NDP concerned about unions are being weakened. David Forbes wonders what the Wall government is hiding in fine print with all this legislation rolled into one.

Mr. Speaker, I quote the member's response:

. . . a former set of bills that were easily understood because they had titles, and

you knew the minimum wage was under The Minimum Wage Act. Clearly you have a situation where they're all rolled in together.

So, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, who is a former Labour minister, ought to have known The Minimum Wage Act was repealed in 1969.

The Speaker: I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: Very, very clever. Mr. Speaker, I understand, I understand the provincial government has just released its new Rights and Responsibilities: A Guide to Labour Standards here in Saskatchewan — another surprise just in time for the holiday season.

Mr. Speaker, sections of this guide appear to be based on the new Saskatchewan employment Act that hasn't even been passed yet. Specifically the section I refer to is the Sask Party's surprise, in the surprise guide, is in regards to layoffs, but there may be other such surprises in this new guide. The Sask Party didn't bother tabling the legislation until a few days ago. It hasn't revealed the complete set of regulations needed to fully inform us of the details of the legislation. But certainly they seem to have had the time to rewrite the guide to labour standards that appears to be based at least on the new legislation.

To the minister: is this government so arrogant that it thinks it can do whatever it wants, whatever it wants, including enacting a new guide for employers before their labour legislation is scrutinized and passed in this legislature?

The Speaker: I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the members opposite wanting to raise questions and ask questions, and we'll certainly work through all of those as we go forward in the next few months. We will look at their questions on an individual basis, and we will look at them with some sense of wanting to do the right thing with all the issues they raise.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to put the member's issue in context. On the 5th of December, a reporter asked the member opposite:

Some of the other concerns that you mentioned yesterday when you spoke to the press is now employers would be allowed to pay their employees with payment cards. Is that a real broad concern? Are we sort of nitpicking now?

The member from Saskatoon Centre replies, "I think we are into a bit of nitpicking."

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I will take the question seriously, Mr. Speaker, but I think we're now getting into a fair bit of nitpicking.

The Speaker: I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.