

# Multiple protests converge

BY ANGELA HALL, LEADER-POST MAY 19, 2010



A small gathering of protesters (above) assembled on the west lawn at the Saskatchewan legislature on Tuesday to bring attention to the lack of affordable housing in Regina.

**Photograph by:** Roy Antal, Leader-Post, Leader-Post

Hundreds of protesters united by their dislike of different Saskatchewan Party government policies converged outside the Legislative Building on Tuesday in a bid to be heard before the spring session of the legislature winds down.

Union banners protesting new labour legislation flew alongside placards held by First Nations protesters angry about a government plan to sell protected wildlife habitat land. Health workers frustrated they've been without a contract for more than two years blew whistles and chanted during a noon-hour rally.

Meanwhile, anti-poverty advocates pitched small red tents on the lawn to raise awareness about the need for affordable housing and to call for rent control measures.

The uncommon combination of protests is evidence that the government has failed to listen to the people, said Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations vice-chief Lyle Whitefish.

"We can't agree on everything, but at least let's go to the table and talk about some of these issues, the common issues that we have," Whitefish said. "Look at all these people here and how united and how much voice we have and how much concern we have with this government, and it's not just First

Nations in this province, it's everyone else that's here today. Something is not right."

Dozens of protesters wearing black T-shirts came to oppose labour legislation affecting the construction industry.

Bill 80, which is expected to pass this week, will end the requirement that workers join the union specific to their trade and open the door to unions currently not allowed to organize in Saskatchewan's construction sector.

"This is a last ditch effort to try to bring attention about Bill 80 to the general public and to this government that we don't need Bill 80 and we don't want Bill 80," said Terry Parker, business manager for the Saskatchewan Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council.

"I think they hear what we're saying, but they're just going to go and do what they want to do."

Speaking later to reporters, deputy premier Ken Krawetz said the government is listening to public input but there can't always be a consensus.

"From the information that is garnered from many different groups you develop either a policy or legislation. I know that there are many people who in fact have expressed their opinion on the bills that we're doing this spring and support them," Krawetz added. "You don't see rallies from those people who are organizing to support a particular piece of legislation, you're going to see people who are opposed to things."

During the rally NDP Leader Dwain Lingenfelter urged the protesters to prepare for the 2011 provincial election, saying the battle over specific issues may be lost for now "but we're going to win the war."

He later accused the government of failing to consult with affected groups until after controversial changes are already made.

"In the future any legislation that would be brought forward should be dealt with in a very different way. You take the concept out to the public and the communities that will be affected and you do the consultation before you write the legislation," Lingenfelter said.