

# Broken promises paved Bill 80 path

BY TERRY PARKER, SPECIAL TO THE STARPHOENIX MAY 20, 2010

Following is the viewpoint of Parker, business manager for the Saskatchewan Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council.

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On the night that he became premier, Brad Wall boldly proclaimed that his election win proved that hope beats fear.

The men and women in Saskatchewan's construction industry hoped that Wall meant what he said in 2007 and that he would keep his word.

Sadly, our experience with Bill 80 is a cautionary tale of mistruths, falsehoods and broken commitments.

Others in Saskatchewan should beware of promises made by Premier Wall and would be wise to take with a grain of salt commitments offered by his ministers. Lets look at the facts.

In 2006, we invited him to speak to our convention. There he was asked what his plans were for the Construction Industry Labour Relations Act (CILRA) if he formed government. The soon-to-be premier responded that the Saskatchewan Party did not feel the act was a barrier to growth.

Satisfied with the answer, we went on to ask him questions on other topics.

I regret now that we took Wall at his word because on March 10, 2009, Labour Minister Rob Norris introduced amendments to CILRA through Bill 80.

We were rightly offended that this would happen after Wall's commitment to us in 2006. We were also offended that this legislation, which fundamentally changes the construction industry, was introduced without first consulting with the people who work in it.

At the time he introduced Bill 80, Norris told reporters that he had not consulted with any business entities or construction firms in drafting the legislation. This too, has been shown to be less than truthful.

Material obtained through Freedom of Information now show that Saskatchewan Construction Association president Michael Fougere wrote to Norris and Wall in October 2008 to demand the exact legislative changes now contained in Bill 80.

And how about those consultations on Bill 80 the government held through the standing committee on

human services? In introducing Bill 80, Norris made much of the government's plans to consult, assuring reporters that the consultations would be meaningful and could be expected to generate amendments to the bill.

He even went so far as to commit in writing: "I can assure you that the contents of the report of the standing committee on human services will be studied by ministry officials to identify the implications of the recommendations."

Unfortunately for Saskatchewan people, this was another mistruth. Norris confirmed that Bill 80 would pass with no amendments, and it did so on Wednesday. This despite the fact that the standing committee has yet to produce its report on the consultations.

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