



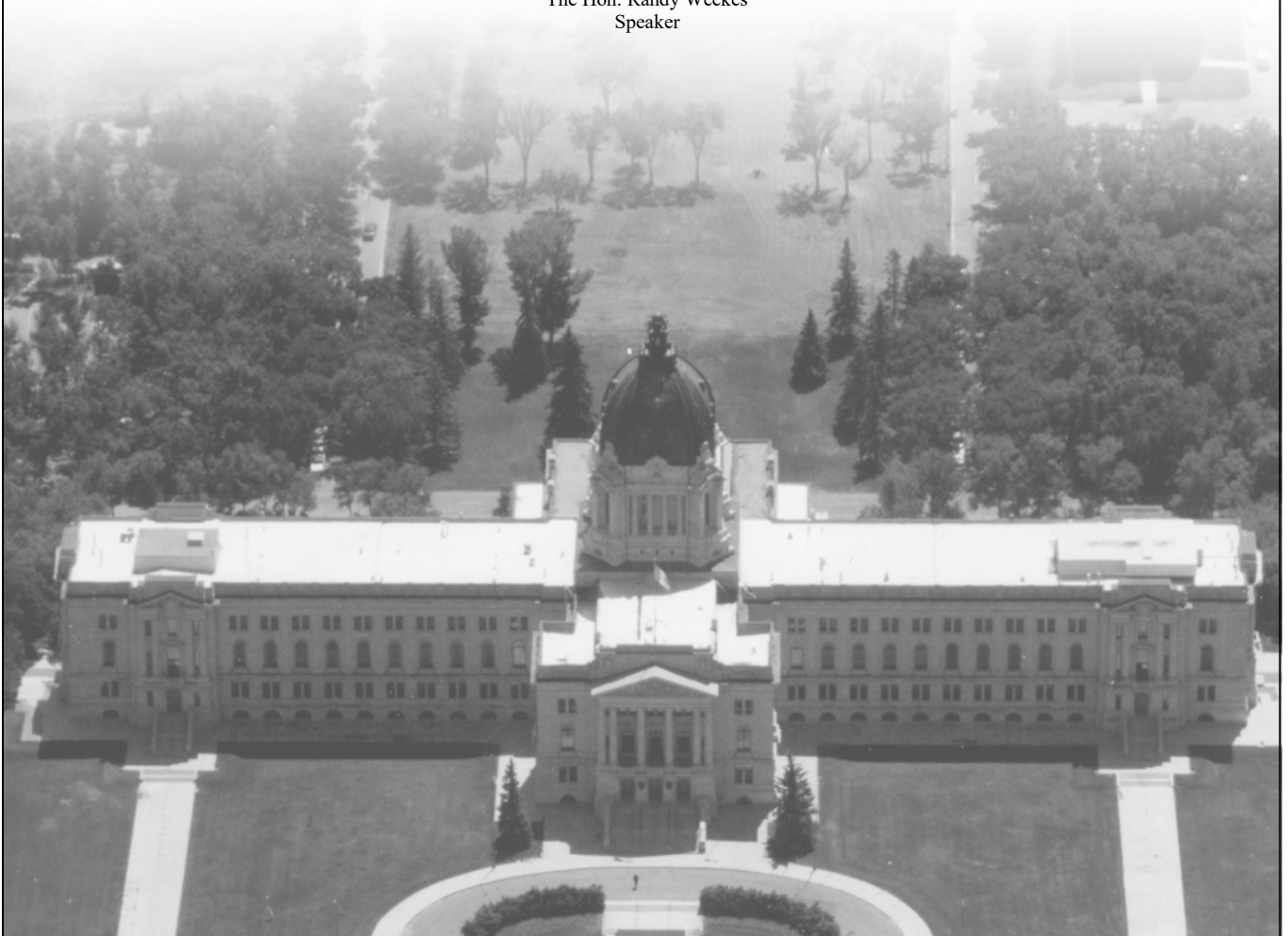
FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

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The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 29th Legislature

Lieutenant Governor — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

Speaker — Hon. Randy Weekes
Premier — Hon. Scott Moe
Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 13

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Speaker: — Resume debate on the Throne Speech. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'm very pleased to take my place this evening to begin my response to the Speech from the Throne.

And as I left just before 5 o'clock here, Mr. Speaker, I spoke about the personal experience around COVID-19 and some of the challenges. And I want to reiterate to the listeners that are out there that this government, the Sask Party government, got \$440 million, almost half a billion dollars from the federal government to help battle COVID, Mr. Speaker. And the question that we have on this side of the Assembly is, where did that money go?

We are talking a lot about some of the challenges around COVID-19 and some of the other resulting issues that society in Saskatchewan as a whole faced, whether it's youth suicide or whether it's the drug issue in many northern communities, the mental health challenges that people are speaking about right across the province, Mr. Speaker. Some of those challenges were not addressed. So the question I have for the Saskatchewan Party government this evening is, you received \$444 million from the federal government for the COVID-19 pandemic planning. What did you do with that money?

We would like to know. And as we have said before the Assembly broke for supper, Mr. Speaker, we saw the Saskatchewan Party take that money from the federal government, put it one pocket, and gave us a pittance out of the other pocket to help battle COVID-19 and some of the other challenges that I spoke to and alluded to earlier, Mr. Speaker. Their priorities have always been off base with the Saskatchewan people, and Mr. Speaker, that is something that people in Saskatchewan obviously know. Now today, Mr. Speaker, as we listen to some of the Sask Party's rhetoric across the way and they speak . . . as we mentioned, carbon tax.

So I want to congratulate some of the new members that have joined us in the Assembly from both sides, from of course the NDP [New Democratic Party] opposition and from the Sask Party government. We have some new MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] that come into place, and when you have people that come to you and chat with you about ongoing issues, whether it's youth suicide or whether it's agricultural programs or whether it's social services issues that many people struggle with.

And now we're noticing a lot of times that because of COVID-19, when the federal government gave the CERB [Canada emergency response benefit] money out, the Canadian emergency relief program, some families on assistance got the CERB money, Mr. Speaker. And lately we're finding now that the Saskatchewan Party not only pocketed the \$440 million that

the federal government gave them for COVID-19, they are now going back to the people that are on assistance saying, well hold it; you got CERB money; we want our money back that you now need for housing and for food and for shelter because we quite frankly need more money, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the crying shame about how this particular government handled the pandemic. They had no game plan. They were not to be found anywhere. And they provided zero leadership.

Now as we broke for supper, I was about to explain my own personal experience with COVID-19, Mr. Speaker. Because of in-home transmission, my wife and my grandson and I all tested positive for COVID-19. And of course when we found out the positive results — my results came several days later — we, of course, were quite stunned by the announcement. We had no idea where we could possibly get COVID-19 from. It just didn't make any sense. And there was obviously something that we had to think about and talk about because it really is a traumatic experience. You hear all the horror stories and you see all the deaths that are attributed to COVID-19.

So I think one of the things . . . There's three particular challenges that we went through as a family. First is that obviously you want to make sure that you are isolated and that you are not presenting any danger to anybody else. And that includes my elderly mother, my aunts, and of course, some of my other family members.

So we knew we had to keep away from everyone because of the positive test. And as a result of that . . . We had another granddaughter of mine that was a resident of our home and she tested negative, so we had to remove her from the home. And we couldn't put her anywhere else because obviously she may have had the COVID-19 virus, and if she went to a different home, then she would be a risk to the residents of that home.

So with the help of our Métis Nation area director, who has really stepped up to the plate on many occasions, they book a bunch of hotel rooms where people that are forced to isolate can actually stay. So these rooms are open. So as a result of the dynamics of our family, where one member tested negative and the other three inhabitants tested positive, we had to remove my granddaughter from the home. She moved into a hotel room, and they isolated me in the adjoining room. Of course I couldn't go into her room because she was negative and I was positive, but at the very least I was right next door to her to be able to provide her that support and certainly advice and to keep her company, so to speak, through text messages and telephone calls.

And you know, as young people they go through a lot of thought as they deal with COVID-19 because this is an unprecedented challenge to all public health and all people throughout Saskatchewan, and of course throughout Canada and the world.

So there's no question that as we grappled with our initial prognosis that we were positive for the COVID-19 virus and we wanted to isolate my granddaughter, it forced us all to make changes to our home and to our lifestyle for 14 days, Mr. Speaker.

In those days that we spent in the hotel room . . . And that's the second significant issue is that as I was in the hotel room — it's not a very big room — you know, you're dealing with the headaches, you're dealing with the fever for a couple of nights, and you're dealing with the loss of taste and smell, and of course, you're coughing quite a bit. And it's very, very uncomfortable.

And you hear the stories of how COVID-19's affecting a lot of people. And I spoke about Fred Sasakamoose today, dying from COVID-19. And so you listen to all these stories on Facebook and the media is all around this whole COVID-19 issue.

As you struggle to regain your health alone in a hotel room, that is in itself a secondary challenge. Not just getting the initial shock of being tested positive. But the reality is that as you're struggling there by yourself . . . And thank goodness the health professionals explained things to us and they checked on you each day. But the rest of the days and nights you're alone with this COVID-19 in a hotel room. And a lot of people go through it. And so the initial prognosis was disturbing and it was scary and it was really worrisome. My wife went through some very traumatic moments in the realization that she was indeed COVID-19 positive. The younger lad didn't really seem to be overly concerned because he's young and he was healthy and you know, he didn't realize the danger that could possibly exist for him.

So as a result of all that activity, you had to do the secondary challenge which was sitting in a hotel room for 10 extra days as you recover. Because the rule is it's a 14-day window in which you get exposed, you have the symptoms, and then you have to recover for four or five days before they allow you out of that room.

And being in a 8- or 10-by-12-foot room, whatever the hotel room is, day in and day out, 14 days is not something to scoff at. Yes, we had people calling and we had that support mechanism, but to sit there hour after hour for 14 days locked in a hotel room you can't leave. And you're really, quite frankly, isolated.

So the isolation factor is the secondary issue that many people from COVID-19 struggle with. It's a significant problem. And the health professionals were offering mental health supports and we obviously didn't take them because, quite frankly, I knew that other people needed those supports greater than I. But the issue is really, really important . . . is that I had a support mechanism. I had my family. I had the availability of these isolation rooms that are open to anyone. I had people that were calling me, and so we had those support mechanisms in place.

And the third most significant problem, Mr. Speaker, after the prognosis of COVID-19 is the fact that what happens now? Obviously the medical professionals say you do not have the ability to transmit the virus so you're no longer a threat to the public is what we were all advised once we were deemed recovered. And as a result of that, you feel a bit better about being able to go out in the public. But the fact of the matter is, can you get COVID-19 again? And thank goodness we have a medical professional on our team who says your risks are lower but still quite high in terms of being able to get . . . the probability of getting COVID-19 again is certainly there.

So what happens after the vaccine comes? Is there any lingering

after-effects? Is the vaccine available to you after you've been exposed to the COVID-19? Is there any long-haul, as they call it, long-haul issues that you have to deal with? And as you can tell, Mr. Speaker, shortness of breath is not one of my long-hauling experiences as a result of COVID-19. But those three challenges that face families . . . I was lucky we didn't have the fourth and final challenge, which in many cases results in death. And the issue around the exposure to older people or those that have immunity issues or their health are compromised in some way, shape, or form. That's the real group of people that we have to keep in mind as we deal with COVID-19.

Now I'll say this, Mr. Speaker, it really burns me and agitates me when I hear that this government got \$440 million to deal with COVID-19. And I know, Mr. Speaker, from personal experiences, the trauma that many families go through. La Loche had over 300 COVID-19 cases and climbing. Buffalo Narrows, Beauval, every single town in my constituency had COVID-19 issues. And in this Assembly we told the minister what to expect. And all this stuff was kept quiet before the election — the \$440 million. And when the North asked this government for help, Mr. Speaker, guess what they offered. They offered 325,000 bucks for the entire North. That's what this government offered out of that 440 million.

But to add insult to injury, Mr. Speaker, that 325,000 bucks, it came from the northern revenue-sharing trust account. What the northern revenue-sharing trust account is, Mr. Speaker, it is a fund where everybody that leases land in the northern administrative district, they pay their taxes to that fund. And that fund then turns around and it helps the communities of the North put in a water and sewer extension for their community, or perhaps buy a new grader, perhaps improve their community hall. That's what it's basically meant for. It's a capital grant fund which these communities have to allocate and use over a five-year period.

So when you sit here and you listen to the issues around COVID-19 and the responses by the province . . . And how many times did we ask the province of Saskatchewan on COVID-19 to help, you know, with highway closures, with security of our community, with extra resources, PPE [personal protective equipment], with shutting down the liquor stores in the North, just till we get a hold of the COVID-19? Every time a response was requested of the government, you could not find them and you could not get clear direction nor leadership from Saskatchewan Party government.

That's why today I stand in the Assembly and I tell our story, our side of what happened in the pandemic. And this government failed miserably on that front. They failed miserably.

[19:15]

Now as a result of what we're seeing today, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that one particular group of people stood up in the North. It was the mayors, chiefs, and councillors that got together and showed a lot of leadership.

And I can tell you it was the women in our community, the women of faith that prayed hard and heavy for many days. These warriors prayed for all the family, and I believe prayer helps. I'm not a very religious guy. I'll go to church maybe once a month

but, Mr. Speaker, I believe in a higher power and I believe in the power of prayer. But prayers in this instance were helpful, but there was no leadership, no resources afforded by this government to complement those beliefs by those ladies, particularly in my community and many other communities that are praying their hearts out for help.

The other party, Mr. Speaker — surprise, surprise — was the federal Liberal government. They came and they offered help. They went to the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. They went to the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. They went to the communities and they offered real dollars to help with the pandemic.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Saskatchewan Party get up every day and do their forte argument around the carbon tax, I can tell you when I'm sitting in that hotel room trying to deal with my fever, the carbon tax is the last and furthest thing from my mind. And as we bury some of these families affected by COVID-19, carbon tax is the last thing from their minds. And if they're dealing with the pandemic to the level that it's affecting all of our health and scaring many people, the carbon tax is the furthest thing from our mind, Mr. Speaker.

And the worst part of this all, the worst part of this all, Mr. Speaker, is how this government tries to deflect what they did to the people of Saskatchewan. They pocketed that \$440 million and put a pittance out to help deal with the COVID-19 crisis. People were struggling with their mental health. And I view myself as a very stable guy. I think I'm fortunately in great health, but the problem is that despite the strength that I afforded facing this COVID-19, many people did not have the luxury of supports, decent health, and in my case a stubborn mind, and those are the ones that struggle and hurt the most.

So I'm sorry, I don't buy any arguments, Mr. Speaker, around how we are \$200 million shy of this COVID-19 crisis that hurt our bottom line. I don't buy that at all. People suffered, and they suffered greatly. And I'll also add, Mr. Speaker, that when you look at the warning . . . And I asked this Premier one day: when did you know COVID-19 existed? You had to know before March 2020. Well they knew several months. First mistake, they didn't advise the public. The public responded. First wave wasn't as bad as what we anticipated. But they had the modelling. They had the numbers. They sat on it. And they even tried to call an election during a pandemic, and they were shamed into backing down from that election. And they can't deny it. They knew they had it planned. We knew they had it planned. And they backed down out of public shame.

Now the secondary wave, the one that's hitting us now, Mr. Speaker, they knew about the second wave. They had the modelling that would show the numbers of a second wave, and again they sat on it. Do you know why? Because there was an election coming up. They knew very well what was going on.

So as they were getting money from the federal Liberal government to deal with COVID-19, as they were ignoring all the science and all the information that was given to them, because they had an election in front of them. Mr. Speaker, that's not leadership. That is downright dangerous. So they played with the health of many of our families in Saskatchewan, and that is perhaps the greatest betrayal ever, the greatest betrayal ever.

And I can say from the northern perspective, our leader showed up with some supplies right at the border. He wasn't allowed in, but he brought supplies up. Nobody from the Sask Party showed up. And I can also point out that during the pandemic our leader went back into the medical profession to offer his support on the front line.

Now, Mr. Speaker, nobody has the monopoly on mercy or goodwill or support. But I would point out that when action speaks louder than the words of the Sask Party, we ought to recognize that. And this is the reason why I am here today. I'm here to recognize the fact that at the very least we provided leadership when it's necessary. But had we had the information and resources that the Sask Party had in their back pocket, Mr. Speaker, this outcome would have been lesser. We would have had a greater impact in protecting people's health and livelihoods in the North.

My final few minutes on this sombre occasion, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that you look at the economy. Day in, day out this Sask Party brands the NDP as being anti-business, a bunch of communists, and people that are socialists and whatever word they throw our way. And the unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker, if that's all it takes to be government, then Saskatchewan needs to stand up and recognize exactly how the Sask Party operate, Mr. Speaker.

The economy was in tatters as a result of the lack of leadership. On this side of the Assembly, protecting people's health was darn important to us, making sure the economy wasn't ravaged and shattered. And that's exactly what has happened to the economy today. At the same time, when these guys get money and hide the facts and hide behind COVID-19, that's what you call a lack of leadership.

So when some of these folks come knocking on your door for help, especially the new MLAs, try the carbon tax argument on them. See how far that gets you. Or say, well I didn't know. I'm just a brand new MLA.

That's the legacy of the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. They've been doing this to Saskatchewan people time and time again. And come an election, all you've got to do is call down the NDP and that's good enough for them. And I'm urging the people of Saskatchewan to relook and rethink governance in this province because as you do the comparison, Mr. Speaker, we have been unfairly and unwarranting in terms of the ability to provide good governance to this province by the accusations and the hypocrisy and the bad language thrown our way from the Saskatchewan Party. Governance is better than that and we demand better of our current government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Speech from the Throne and I point out that I'll be supporting our amendment to this motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations on your successful election. I'm sure you will serve this historic Chamber very well.

Congratulations to all here today on their victories in the 2020 provincial election. Whether first or fifth term, it's very rewarding to receive the trust of the electorate and do the good work that follows.

To those listening at home who choose to put their names forth, thank you for your willingness to commit and prove the mechanics of voting and democracy is in high performance. Our greatest glory . . . in not ever failing but it's in rising every time we fall and then having the courage to move forward.

This year, 2020, signified focus and relationships. The energy represented by the number 2020 resonates with teamwork, and the motto for the year 2020 was, "I'm sorry. I have to take care of me." How this prophecy was to play out as we got further into the year. Perhaps there was a meaning for each of us in this as our communities struggled to make sense of these last few months. Family and friendships all strengthened and rekindled, reconnected by spending quality time with our loved ones.

This election demonstrated our province's willingness to still work hard on what we believe in, our values of prairie resiliency and strength. In saying that, Mr. Speaker, thank you to my core team during the election of Marcus, Linda, and Brigitt; helpers Cora, Ellen, Julie, and Victoria for your support and encouragement. My campaign office was a wonderful place to live for that month thanks to Merv and Rachel.

Mr. Speaker, my family support and love still spurs me on. Thank you Doug for 40 years of married life we just celebrated this November. I know, I look much younger, don't I?

Thank you to our grown children for lending their awesome kids to help grandma when needed. They're little sponges soaking up the political world, as they have only known me in political life. I usually take them to Remembrance Day to honour and understand our fallen soldiers and veterans. And I'm very grateful for our freedoms, our ability to voice an opinion, an idea to take root with solutions, and our wonderful province of opportunities. Of course, this year it was a little different.

I would also like to express my gratitude toward the people of Saskatchewan Rivers who put their trust in me to be their voice. We have many talented, hard-working individuals and families working in our communities and then resting in our numerous regional and provincial campgrounds that frequent the riding.

Our government will continue to work to ensure our province remains an affordable, strong province to work and to play in. Restarting the active families benefit to help with the cost of children's hockey, dance, and music activities. Upgrades such as boat launches, visitors' reception centres, and campsite developments are all welcome in our resort communities, making a healthier and a stronger Saskatchewan.

Members, we are marking history today in many respects. The mantle of responsibility and duty in governance lays heavily on our shoulders as we cautiously but steadily move into the first session of the twenty-ninth legislature during a global pandemic, COVID-19, of the year 2020. We were elected to represent the specific interest of our communities but are also representatives of the province of Saskatchewan and must consider the province's needs as a whole. Our government will draw on all

our strengths and skills in the next four years to defend and support Saskatchewan people's interests.

These next few years will be like no other. Our province possibly will be facing the most serious public health challenges each of us have ever experienced. Our province needs our help to work together to protect and defend the citizens of this great province. As we look to the future, I trust we will forge respectful and positive attitudes of friendship fundamental to Saskatchewan pillars of strength, resiliency, and democracy.

The road ahead is not clear, but I trust in our journey together with our collective strength, we will remain confident. We will protect, care, and prevail in the business of session and governance. We will be called upon to give security, compassion, and strength to those communities that we have been entrusted with. And I in my role shall endeavour to remember those words: stability in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers.

This decade will bring us more inspirations, more challenges facing families, and more of a need to be involved in our communities to make a difference. Our province has more to achieve and accomplish in the next few years. We want to empower families to be able to make meaningful contributions to their children's education, their family's health, and even their neighbourhood infrastructure. Our desire to be the best we can be, experience the best we can, whether in our beautiful, pristine parks or our ability to create meaningful employment, is a strategy we can work towards. With the Saskatchewan people guiding us with their principles, needs, and vision, we can continue to accomplish more — more roads to be built, more hospitals, and more measures that will strengthen Saskatchewan.

Achieving a good future for the next generation with our province's potential realized is a continued work of this government. The practices this government embraces, along with the public consultation, will continue to advance and allow this province to thrive and to grow. What will define the growth of the next decade and forward movement is our government's ability to listen and act on what the people of Saskatchewan ask for. Our government has demonstrated a strong growth plan to advance our economic future and take control of our province's resources and policies.

[19:30]

To continue to come into our full realization of use of Saskatchewan resources, we will take action to deliver on key commitments. 4G, LTE [long-term evolution], and wireless networks require ongoing investment as Saskatchewan residents abandon older wireless technology.

Added infrastructure to new neighbourhoods and increased capacity in existing communities is a commitment our government is fulfilling. Our government supports the transformation of the economy through innovation and technology and the growth of Saskatchewan's technology sector. We will continue to seek advancement for a stronger and affordable Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there are many incredible entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan, and Saskatchewan Rivers constituency is no exception to the number of incredible stories of people and their

accomplishments. One of these people is my neighbour, lifetime farmer and visionary, Leonard Yungwirth. He has been involved in agribusiness ventures for decades and brings much agriculture industry knowledge through fabrication and equipment design while working as a grain producer.

I felt compelled to share his story, for as a society we are looking for alternatives to keeping food fresh and nutritious for longer times. A passion for environmentally friendly technologies, foods, and nutritional supplements that help people live a higher quality of life are at the core of the living force behind what has become the business called Gentle Processing.

Leonard first become involved with Quantum Mechanical Technology, a Sask company situated in Prince Albert, which develops technologies to enhance the food commodity. Mr. Yungwirth brings with him over 40 years of commodity production and processing experience. Through this research and discovery, the Gentle Processing technology was custom engineered to suit individual processors and their specific production variables of food and ingredients. Now this process has an element of drying food that is cost-effective for pulse crops, cereals, nuts. Gentle Processing has the ability to increase the shelf life for foods and oils with no additives, while maintaining the integrity of the nutrients with the food.

I wish to thank Mr. Yungwirth for sharing his story and expertise with me, as it is very advantageous to have this knowledge for Saskatchewan. The team he works with has much experience, both globally as well as in design and manufacturing. I wish Mr. Yungwirth the best in this exciting health and business entrepreneurship. We can only admire these business ventures, and as a government, provide frameworks to help them succeed, grow, and prosper.

Our government supports businesses to help Saskatchewan grow, thrive, and remain strong. Buying local has never been more important. Our government invested 6 million in marketing campaigns to encourage Saskatchewan residents to support local businesses such as this. The small-business tax rate will be temporarily reduced from 2 per cent to zero to encourage businesses to invest and retain workers. This is something that will really help our Saskatchewan citizens.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our government benefits citizens of the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers in the community of Big River. This town will now have speed display signs visible and the people of this community will benefit from our government's traffic safety fund grants. Traffic safety improvements were asked for and successful applicants were awarded the grant. Across Saskatchewan our government is investing in municipal and highways infrastructure to build a strong Saskatchewan, create jobs, and stimulate our economy.

Attending the rural crime meetings in my communities is still quite relevant. This past year I, along with my two local MPs [Member of Parliament], spoke at well-attended meetings to discuss fighting crime and various initiatives, cures, and causes of crimes.

Our government has provided more police officers and trained officers. We enacted protection and response teams designed to help respond and reduce crime in rural Saskatchewan. Investing

in crime reduction teams and strengthening trespassing laws to address issues surrounding rural land owners will further take steps in reducing the impacts of crime on rural and remote communities. A new mental health and addiction program in our province will oversee this focus on better health. New detox beds are available across Saskatchewan.

Our government will defend Saskatchewan in examining how Saskatchewan exercises its autonomy within Canada. We will fight the carbon tax while implementing our own Prairie Resilience climate change plan. We will exercise our Saskatchewan right to select our own chief firearms officer to manage firearms and give Saskatchewan citizens a voice regarding these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership millions in funding will advance crop-related research projects in Saskatchewan. This will support our producers and agribusiness in Saskatchewan as a world leader in agriculture research. Our government will continue to support our agriculture industry through more investment and innovation, strong farm supports, and seeking new markets for our food and our fuel across the world.

Mr. Speaker, on one of the coldest days last year we had a very warm reception and invitation to tour the new Saskatchewan Aviation Museum & Learning Centre in Saskatoon. The members from Yorkton and Carrot River Valley were also in attendance to view this historic collection of aviation artifacts. One of the airplanes was a Cessna 180 rescued from Peter Pond Lake after being submerged and missing since 1959, so it was an incredible story. A wedding ring of one of the downed pilots was actually found in the plane and considered a valued and sentimental gift to the surviving family members. Documenting, preserving, and displaying photos and artifacts from our aviation pioneers is a mandate of this society. Once again, Saskatchewan volunteers are doing an incredible job of preserving and sharing Saskatchewan history with its citizens. They host school tours and even provide rides in a Tiger Moth airplane to inspire visitors of all ages for future generations to enjoy.

Our government understands our many senior volunteers make Saskatchewan a better place to live and will take action to make life more affordable for seniors. We will increase the maximum benefit paid under the seniors' income plan to low-income seniors. We will reduce the cost of ambulance calls for seniors which was so burdensome. Previously, we introduced the Saskatchewan veteran service club support program, which was well-received.

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, despite the global pandemic, the adverse weather conditions and financial challenges, our government still has our AAA credit rating affirmed by Moody's. And we're moving forward, Mr. Speaker, I believe in Saskatchewan people. We are steadfast, determined, resilient, and we'll persevere.

I support the Throne Speech and the motion, however, not the amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I'd like to recognize the member from Swift Current.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the opportunity to put a few remarks on the record here tonight with respect to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset here I would like to first offer and extend my congratulations to you on your successful campaign to represent the government and to take the Speaker's Chair and to take this very pivotal role here in the legislature, of course. And you have served for a long time in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and in a variety of different roles. And I congratulate you on your election to the Speaker's Chair. It is well-deserved.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank our outgoing Speaker, the member for Regina Coronation Park who, you know, served this House very well in the couple of years that he served as the Speaker of this Assembly. You know, Mr. Speaker, I did not know the member for Regina Coronation Park particularly well prior to him taking the Speaker's Chair, but got to know him very well in the years since that time, serving with him on a couple of committees at the Board of Internal Economy level. And just got to know him as a very good friend and a source of wise counsel as well. And I thank the member for Regina Coronation Park for his time in the Speaker's Chair.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on this issue of thanking people, I want to thank a few people back home in the community of Swift Current. I want to thank the constituents of the city of Swift Current for their vote of confidence in me as their MLA.

You know, there's been a lot of campaigning in Swift Current and as well for the members of Kindersley and Melfort. In addition all three of us ran in contested nominations and then ran in by-elections in 2018. And then we're back at it again this past fall in the general election. And to say that this was not how I envisioned my first general election to be would be an understatement, but it was what it was nonetheless. And I just want to thank the constituents of Swift Current.

It was a very interesting campaign given the circumstances around COVID-19, Mr. Speaker. I recall having conversations with my campaign team over the summer months as we were trying to determine, you know, what a full election might look like, if we would be actually on the doorsteps or if there would be, you know, a greater presence in terms of social media — Facebook and Twitter and YouTube and all those sorts of things — or utilizing the phones to reach out to people.

And it turned out to be a little bit of everything, Mr. Speaker. And to be part of that campaign was quite an interesting time for me obviously as a candidate. And I just want to thank again the people of Swift Current for their support and for allowing me the honour to serve as their Member of the Legislative Assembly in this chair here today, Mr. Speaker. And I will continue to represent them honourably in this place.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank, of course, my campaign team for their support. For all of us, Mr. Speaker, these people are all volunteers, taking time out of their busy days and lives to try and help us, no matter what side of the aisle or which political party you're running for, and I want to thank the campaign team that supported me. It honestly would not have been possible without having that great team of volunteers behind me.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, and of course last but not least, is my family. And I think each one of us in this Assembly would not be doing the job we are doing today if it were not for the supports of those closest to us: to my wife, Anita; our kids, Raven and Adler; our grandson, Axel, who provides entertainment every weekend when he comes to visit. There is nothing that can clear your mind off of work or take your mind off from work than having a grandkid that you're trying to chase around the house for a couple hours a day. That's got to be your focus of 24-7 when you have grandkids around.

So to my family back home for their support, and of course my family back in Melfort: my mom and dad, Pat and Tom Hindley; my sister, Erica Ingram, and her husband, Brad; my sister Melissa in Tisdale and her daughter Elizabeth; and my brother Taylor who lives in St. Brieux, Saskatchewan, and is working there. Of course I'd be remiss if I didn't thank as well — I call her my aunt but she's my cousin — Darlene Campbell up in Melfort for all of her political advice and wisdom over the years and I'm sure is probably watching this at home because there is probably nothing else to watch on TV I'm sure, although there is a lot out there that she could be watching besides this, Mr. Speaker. So my thanks to my family for their support through this venture.

Mr. Speaker, if I could turn to the Throne Speech here and what we were debating earlier this afternoon and tonight, and just to touch on a number of the areas of importance, I think, for not only the constituents that I represent in the community of Swift Current but also, you know, the people of this province.

What we went through this past fall, Mr. Speaker, was a provincial election campaign, and one that allowed the people of Saskatchewan to weigh the two choices that were in front of them between the two main political parties and to answer the question, who it was that the people of Saskatchewan most trusted to lead the province of Saskatchewan through this global pandemic, to lead the economic recovery of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, at the end of October, after a vigorous 28 days of campaigning, the people spoke loudly and clearly in terms of who they supported and who they thought was best suited to lead the province through this pandemic.

[19:45]

And that was, you know, a strong mandate that was given to this government to continue the good work the government has been doing and has been trying to do, not just since the start of the pandemic and how that has changed all of our individual lives in this province, but to continue the work that had even started before that, dating back to previous terms of this government, of course, some of the economic strategies that have been implemented on this side of the House and what it is that will help move this province forward through our growth plan and a number of ideas that we want to continue to pursue there.

Mr. Speaker, that being said, our government's priority has been and will continue to be COVID-19, and making sure that we are doing everything we can as a provincial government to make sure that we are supporting the people of Saskatchewan, making sure that they are safe, making sure that we can try to support our businesses — small, medium, and large — all sectors of our economy, our health care professionals, and everyone, Mr.

Speaker, who is battling through this together.

Mr. Speaker, there have been some significant investments throughout this year to help address some of those challenges, Mr. Speaker. For example, in the area of education our government has allocated more than \$85 million on top of a record budget investment to ensure that our children, that our kids can continue to go to school and pursue their academics safely. And there will be another allocation this month here, Mr. Speaker.

On the business side, we have instituted the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment which has provided \$32 million to small and medium-sized businesses affected by the pandemic. And if I could, Mr. Speaker, I know during the campaign, before that and since then, I've had the opportunity as the MLA to talk to local businesses in Swift Current and to talk to them — small businesses, entrepreneurs, the folks that have the small shops on Central Avenue in Swift Current — to talk to them about what it is and how they've managed to find their way through this challenging time. It has been a challenge, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt about that.

But by and large, they have worked very hard, the small businesses of Swift Current and across Saskatchewan, to try and do what they can to make sure they can survive through this pandemic. They've secured the PPE that's required. They've put the arrows on the floor. They've tried to limit, you know, customer interactions at their store. They've increased their online presence if they didn't have one already. They've moved to curbside pickup when they need to. Perhaps that's something they weren't doing before. They've gone above and beyond to try and continue to serve the people that they serve, the customers of their community, but also to do so in a safe and effective manner, Mr. Speaker.

Our government, as I said, was re-elected with a strong mandate, Mr. Speaker, and a clear commitment to continue to build Saskatchewan and support this economy and to continue to support a strong recovery. And, Mr. Speaker, we are poised very well to come through this pandemic as strong as before, frankly probably stronger than before once we get through what we are dealing with right now.

To help bridge that gap, this government made some commitments during the election campaign which we are going to implement here fairly shortly. And I'll just run through a few of those, Mr. Speaker. For example, SaskPower will be reducing electricity charges by 10 per cent for one year. That applies to everybody — individuals, businesses, CBOs [community-based organization], you name it — to help provide some additional relief for people during this pandemic.

We will be launching the Saskatchewan homeowners tax credit, Mr. Speaker, allowing homeowners to claim a 10.5 per cent tax credit of up to \$20,000 of eligible home and renovation expenses. Not only does that allow homeowners to perhaps pursue some home renovations that they perhaps were putting off, but it also allows to stimulate the local economy by allowing folks to hire local contractors and construction companies to do some of that work.

I spoke briefly about small businesses, Mr. Speaker. In addition

to the great work that they are doing, we're trying to support that by reducing the small business tax rate temporarily from 2 per cent down to zero. And that is effective October 1st of this year and will remain in place until July of 2023 when it will revert back to 2 per cent. It provides small businesses with an additional measure of relief in this very difficult time.

On the oil and gas side, Mr. Speaker — and that is an important part of my constituency back home in Swift Current and in southwest Saskatchewan for the member for Cypress Hills and of course the member for Kindersley and Weyburn and Estevan — this is an important part of our economy, and earlier this year our government introduced a number of relief measures for the oil and gas industry. In addition to that, there was some funding that came from the federal government which we have used to implement the accelerated site closure program, Mr. Speaker. And I know that, you know, there's \$400 million that have been allocated to Saskatchewan in that program. And I know, when speaking to the oil and gas companies in Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan and the service companies, they're appreciative of that particular program. It has helped to engage 250 Saskatchewan-based service companies to date, Mr. Speaker. Up to 8,000 inactive wells and facilities will be cleaned up. And here's the most important part: 2,100 full-time jobs created as a result of this to help provide some support for that very, very important sector of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, if I could, I would move to some issues related to my additional roles that I now have. And it is an honour to serve as not only as the MLA for Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, but as the Minister for Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health. It is a very, very significant file and a significant priority for this government, this particular file. And I'm looking forward to the challenge, and it is a challenge. There are some significant challenges that we are facing, of course, as a result of COVID-19, but it is an important file, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad that we have the opportunity to focus on this particular issue.

We have had some significant investments into mental health and addictions in recent years, Mr. Speaker, record investments into this particular file, including this year, \$435 million specifically geared towards mental health and addictions. And of that 435 million, Mr. Speaker, 57 million of that is directly geared towards the addictions side, Mr. Speaker. The investment into mental health and addictions represents about seven and a half per cent of the entire health budget. That is a substantial amount, Mr. Speaker. We have just this year created some new treatment capacity for crystal meth patients in the city of Estevan, and those particular beds opened just this past September. And if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, I believe they had their first patient admitted in early October. Mr. Speaker, there are new detox beds that are available in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, and North Battleford.

We continue to pursue and implement our Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, it's important to get on the record that there's been some money invested into that particular initiative, Mr. Speaker. But in addition to that we also will be including a program to train a mental health first responder in every one of the province's 744 schools, Mr. Speaker. That is a significant investment.

Mr. Speaker, we will also be supporting our seniors of this province, the people who frankly helped build Saskatchewan. And during the election campaign, we campaigned on a number of items to help provide some affordability measures for senior citizens in Saskatchewan. And during this session our government will be taking those steps to implement those campaign commitments and to make sure that we are making life more affordable for seniors. First of all, we'll be reducing significantly the cost of ambulance calls for seniors by eliminating charges for inter-facility transfers. That's the first part of that piece. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we're also going to be reducing the maximum cost of all other calls by 50 per cent, from \$275 down to \$135 per ambulance call. Mr. Speaker, we think that is an important announcement and will definitely help the senior citizens of Saskatchewan.

In addition to some of the measures that we have announced with respect to affordability for seniors and ambulance cost, we will also be increasing the maximum benefit to seniors paid under the seniors' income plan. And that is a benefit that goes to low-income seniors, Mr. Speaker. You know, when our government was first elected in 2007, the seniors' income plan benefit was just \$90 a month and it had been at that level for 16 years, Mr. Speaker. Sixteen years the seniors' income plan benefit had not moved a dime. Mr. Speaker, since that time, since 2007, our government has tripled that maximum benefit to \$270 a month.

And we announced in the election, and we're going to be following through on this commitment, but over the next three years, beginning in next year's budget, government will further increase the maximum benefit of the seniors' income plan to \$360 a month — four times, Mr. Speaker, four times what it was when we had the honour of forming government in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, there are other issues with respect to health care that we are going to be supporting the residents of Saskatchewan on. We will continue to support people living with diabetes, as an example, Mr. Speaker. We've broadened the province's insulin pump program to include all individuals with type 1 diabetes who are under the age of 25. We're expanding the Saskatchewan insulin pump program to cover . . . to include all provincial residents, Mr. Speaker, and we'll be covering the cost of an insulin pump for everyone in Saskatchewan who needs one. We'll also be covering the cost of continuous glucose monitoring systems for children and youth under the age of 18. And this program alone will benefit about 600 kids in our province.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we're also expanding our coverage for those families that have children who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. And today, Mr. Speaker, about 500 children are receiving individualized funding. Starting next year, children under the age of 12 who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder will receive \$6,000 per year to help cover the cost of individualized therapeutic supports.

Mr. Speaker, I know I'm running short on time, but I just want to get a few other points on the record. Long-term care home investments, Mr. Speaker, we have had 14 new long-term care facilities built in this province since we had the opportunity to form government in 2007. A 15th long-term care facility, a new one is under construction right now in the community of Meadow Lake, something that the member from Meadow Lake has been

advocating for for quite some time. And that construction project is well under way.

Mr. Speaker, we will also be building a long-term care facility in La Ronge, as the member for Cumberland is asking about that question, so that as well. Also, Mr. Speaker, there will be a long-term care facility that'll be built in the community of Grenfell, represented by the constituency or the MLA for Moosomin. So there are more care homes, long-term care facilities being built in this province, Mr. Speaker, more than the NDP built in their 16 years of government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we'll also be hiring 300 new continuing care aids to work in long-term care. That was an election commitment of this government, Mr. Speaker, and that will take effect in the next budget year.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are just a few of the items just with respect to the portfolio that I have the honour to help serve in. If I could, Mr. Speaker, I'll just go back to what the election campaign was about. And it was about, you know, which party is best suited to lead this province through the pandemic and lead the economic recovery, which of these two parties was best suited to help keep our province's finances strong.

And COVID-19 has created some challenges, no doubt, not just for this government, for governments across the country and across the world. But Saskatchewan continues to have the lowest debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio amongst the provinces. Our AAA credit rating was recently reaffirmed by Moody's Investors Services, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is reason to be optimistic and reason to be hopeful. We have a growth plan that has been unveiled in this province, Mr. Speaker, a growth plan that will help lead this province to 2030, Mr. Speaker, and that will continue to grow this province.

One of the shining spots of 2020, and there haven't been a lot, but the agriculture sector had a very good year, very strong harvest. And again, you know, the farm and ranch sector, despite some of the challenges out there, continues to be a leader in this province — sometimes very, very quietly and very steadily. And, Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate for that, for the amazing farming community that we have in this province.

The landscape out in rural Saskatchewan has changed. There aren't many of the small family farms like the one that I grew up on halfway between Melfort and St. Brieux when I was a kid. They're a lot bigger farms these days. And my dad is still farming back home and so many of my family members and friends, not just in Swift Current but across this province, are still involved in the ag sector, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank them for what it is that they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention I need to thank — back to the health care issue just for a second — I need to thank the health care workers, the front-line staff that have been working days and nights trying to provide health care supports for the people of this province through COVID-19, those working in the labs to help process all the tests, everybody that is involved in the health care teams. We would not be where we are today without their support. And we'll continue to support the health care workers

and health system of this province as we work our way through COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on, but with that I think I will conclude my remarks and to say that I will not be supporting the amendments of the opposition, but I will be supporting the Throne Speech moved by the member for Kindersley, seconded by the new member from Saskatoon Riversdale. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[20:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And first I want to take this opportunity to also congratulate you on your election as the Speaker, and it's good to have you in that Chair.

I just want to really say a few things, obviously some thank yous and some acknowledgments, but what it is, it's a real privilege and an honour for me to be able to stand here today and give my reply to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. And the people I have to thank — and everybody will do the same and I think it's only appropriate we do — first and foremost we have to really thank our family for the sacrifices they make in light of us taking these positions and being away from home. And my wife, Lois, is at home tonight and she's there looking after the house there and doing her job there in Assiniboia as well.

And I also want to take this opportunity to thank the constituents for putting their faith in me again as the representative for Wood River constituency. It really is an honour for me to serve for them here on their behalf. And I want to thank, obviously, my constituency assistant, Sandy, and my part-time assistant in Wendie, and both of them in filling in for me in that office when I'm here in my role here as Minister of Agriculture and also in the role as an MLA for Wood River.

And I also want to take this opportunity to thank my ministry team. I think I'm privileged to have the team that I do in my office, led by Amanda and obviously with Tanner, Jean-Michel, and Cheyenne there as well. I just want to acknowledge them and thank them for the work that they do, and also this opportunity to thank my deputy minister, Rick Burton, and his team over at the ministry and the work that they do. And it is endless and their, I guess, devotion to agriculture here in the province of Saskatchewan and the things they do to really assist us in moving a lot of programs through.

I want to take this opportunity also to welcome the new members here in the Legislative Assembly and also congratulate all my colleagues for being re-elected or elected here in this Assembly and look forward to working with all of them once again.

I want to talk a bit about the COVID situation like everybody has done. And I want to talk about it in a different regard as far as the impact it has had, not only on us personally, but as people in the province that I know that have gone through it. And I want to just give a couple of cases, Mr. Speaker, if I can.

Obviously first and foremost I have to talk about, and I have to really thank the people at the Allan Blair cancer clinic. This

summer we went through a situation in our family where our daughter had cancer and had gone through the treatments of it. And the team at the Allan Blair centre really have to be commended for the work that they have done in working not only with my daughter, but all those that are going through cancer at this time and making sure that the treatments are still going forward in a very safe manner.

And she was treated royally there. We're just waiting, Mr. Speaker, for a couple of MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] results just to see how things are going with her. But her and her husband, Darrel, have blessed us with three grandchildren that my wife, Lois, and I had the pleasure to be with quite a bit this summer as a result of Katie going through her treatment process. It has all worked out well, but I think I just want to recognize the front-line workers in the health care system and the work that they do. And I just wanted to acknowledge the men and women at the Allan Blair centre as well.

And if I could, I want to talk about also a personal friend that the former minister of Health and I had the privilege to visit in Moose Jaw. And I think this just speaks well of the people of Saskatchewan, how they adapt and they take on the challenge. I've known Dale Roach for well over . . . well about 35 years, Mr. Speaker. And Dale suffers with COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease].

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to acknowledge, you know, what this young man, or what this gentleman did. He actually converted his backyard for an outdoor gym so that people that were, obviously, suffering COPD and lung issues like that had a place to go and still work out because obviously the facilities were shut down. And Dale converted his backyard and invited both the former minister of Health and myself over for one day to really meet, actually, the people that were working there. And there was people from the Lung Association there as well, and we had a really nice visit. And it was nice to see Dale again. I hadn't seen him for quite a while and I just wanted to acknowledge him because I think it just shows the character of Saskatchewan people. When times get tough, the tough get going. And Dale did that and, you know, him and his wife did an amazing job in really opening their home and their backyard up to everybody to be able to use his backyard for that.

So I guess really kind of the message is, even through all this pandemic period, people still had health issues and had to be treated and the health care system did what it could and the public did what they could do as well. So I think it's just something that had to be acknowledged, Madam Deputy Speaker.

You know, I want to talk about the Throne Speech highlights too. I think it's important for us to do it. And my colleagues have done the same and I'm going to just acknowledge just a few things within the Throne Speech that this government has done.

Obviously we've hired new teachers, custodial workers, and other staff have been hired, which is phenomenal to see those things happening and the government working with the stakeholders. And we also introduced a program such as the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment, which has provided 32 million to small and medium-sized business affected by the pandemic. And we have also provided a temporary wage top-up of \$400 a month for two months to workers in long-term

care facilities, personal care homes, integrated health care facilities, and to home care workers providing care to seniors in their own homes. And I think these are all things that really have to be acknowledged and recognized.

My colleagues have spoken about, obviously, the bill introduced this morning for SaskPower rates. And this is going to be a program that's really going to help every resident in this province regarding if you're renting a place or whether you own it, whether you're a farmer or a businessman or a senior. It's going to help in every way with the 10 per cent reduction in power.

And also, you know, the investment tax credit on home renovations, it's going to help. I actually had the privilege of talking to a young gentleman in my constituency that actually was doing some work in our yard, and I was talking about this through the campaign. I mentioned this tax credit and he said, it's amazing, he said, the work that is coming his way as a result of this and other factors. But he said it's really going to help his business. He's a young man, start-up in carpentry and handiwork. He's got two other young guys working with him. I think it's great to see that this kind of opportunity helps all folks, not only me as one that's getting the work done, but those that are also employing people to do some work as well. And I think that's a key thing.

I think that, you know . . . I'll talk about the agriculture one in a bit. I want to talk about some of the growth strategies around that. But I think another one I want to really touch on just a bit if I can, and it's really important in a lot of the rural constituencies, but in my constituency the largest community is Assiniboia in my community, in my constituency. But the one thing that kind of speaks out a lot in my constituency and a lot of the towns, that the centre of attraction in the wintertime is the skating rink. There's a lot of smaller towns in my constituency but they have rinks and it really is their home or that's where they get together and that's where they've done their socializing. Obviously as a result of COVID that has, you know, slowed that process down. But the one thing we did recognize is that a lot of these communities are going to be impacted financially with the rinks and things like that because they weren't allowed to open their concessions and things like that. So the \$2,500 for the rink program to help assist these communities is going to go a long ways and I know it is very much appreciated by a lot of the folks in there.

You know, there's so much opportunity in here that a lot of my colleagues have touched on and I just want to also touch on the seniors thing. I think it's important for us to reduce the ambulance cost. I know in my constituency I did hear that from seniors, was ambulance cost, so reduce that from \$275 to \$135 per call is a significant funding enhancement for a lot of our seniors in there. And my colleagues have touched about the seniors' income plan where, you know, it was \$90 a month when we got elected in 2007 and had been frozen by the former government for 16 years. And now in this time frame, beginning in '21-22, our government will further increase the maximum benefit to \$360 a month, four times what it was in 2007. So I think that's an important factor.

Another one that I think really has to be mentioned as well is our commitment to helping our legions in our communities. I think with the veterans service club support program, when we raised

that, you know, is up to \$1.5 million a year to ensure the province's veterans' service clubs can contribute to the well-being of their members. I think this is going to go a long way with our membership, you know, about helping the seniors in the legions and working with the legions as well.

I think it's important that, you know, we've kept our finances strong. I think that's one thing we did hear from a lot of my members in my constituency. I heard it pretty loud and clear through the campaign was, you know, keep the economy going. They put their faith in us. And I think in our Throne Speech we say the same thing.

Obviously we'll continue to support our ag industry by investing in research and innovation along with the strong support programs, and also we will be seeking and doing what we can to find new markets.

Right now, the province of Saskatchewan, we do have one international market in Shanghai, China and next year we will be opening three more trades offices, one in Japan, one in India, and one in Singapore. And these offices will be primarily focused on serving Saskatchewan businesses that want to do business in these countries, and also opportunity for business leaders in those countries if they want to do investment and look for investment in the province of Saskatchewan. So we can coordinate that as well.

You know, I just want to give a few examples of the type of investment that has really happened here in the province of Saskatchewan just over the last, really, few weeks if I can. And it really has to do a lot with Protein Industries Canada and some of the announcements that they have made. And on November 10th, Madam Deputy Speaker, Protein Industries Canada announced a \$25.7 million project and partnership. The project aims to improve the functionality of pulse-based food products by using physical processing techniques to turn the commodities into ingredients.

Protein Industries Canada will be partnering with Ingredient, Meridian foods, T Base 4 Investments, and OMD [One Meal a Day] Food Products. The project is expected to create up to 30 new Canadian jobs, Madam Deputy Speaker, and double the processing capacity of Meridian to over 200 000 tonnes.

Now it doesn't sound like a whole lot, but if they were doing 100 000 and they're going to double it and go to 200 000, that's 100 000 tonnes of pulse crops that are not going to leave this province in a bulk commodity form. They're going to be processed here in the province. That's the equivalent of 3.6 million bushels of product that we are going to be processing here. So I think that's an important factor to say.

A week later, Protein Industries Canada, on November 18th, they announced a \$7.2 million project and a partnership. The project will focus on using Western Canadian commodities to develop new plant-based food products for the North American and Asian markets. Protein Industries Canada will be partnering with Mera Food Group, Benson Farms, and Federated Co-op. And Protein Industries Canada, this is their 13th announcement, and I just wanted to say that this is another great project. It's going to be here in the Regina area. So we're seeing investment by companies in this province to value-add processing.

We've also had an announcement just a week ago at . . . [inaudible] . . . BASF chemical announced a \$14-million renovation in their plant facility here in Regina. And the plant is used to formulate and package BASF's line of Liberty herbicides. The Regina plant upgrade is the single largest facility investment BASF has made over the last decade, and the Regina formulation plant employs 130 Saskatchewan people. So these are stories that really have to be told.

[20:15]

And there's one more I want to tell because it's a fairly recent announcement and I think the attraction is going to be great. Raven Industries has announced here in November that they will be opening a new facility in Emerald Park which will serve as the company's Canadian headquarters. Raven specializes in creating precision and autonomous agriculture machinery. The new 21,000-foot building and 5-acre test lot will be dedicated to assembling, manufacturing, and testing Raven's autonomous technologies. This is just going to have an overwhelming effect. I think it gives great opportunity for the young, brilliant minds here in the province of Saskatchewan to establish a career here and stay in the province of Saskatchewan to work. This is exciting news. And this all just goes right in line with, you know, with our growth strategy and where we want to go.

And I think that's exactly, you know, the comment that the member from Swift Current made earlier. Agriculture really is going to, has been a big leader in the economy recovery here in the province of Saskatchewan. We are coming off one of our biggest crops — probably if it's not in the top three, it'll definitely be in the top five — and we're seeing the prices move in the right direction for the grains and oilseeds.

The livestock sector through COVID has had some impacts on it, and the one thing we did as a government is for the cattle and the bison sector is we introduced a set-aside program back in early summer. And what that was is \$2 a head — it's cost shared with the federal government — \$2 per head, and the animals are put into a set-aside program. The one thing I'm proud of on this one, Madam Deputy Speaker, is we structured a committee with the industry stakeholders. And the industry stakeholders take the applications and decide which animals are going to come into the program and which will have to wait. And it's a good news story, Madam Deputy Speaker. And just roughly, I think, of last week the number of cattle that have entered into the program is just under 39,000 head and the bison is just under 1,000 head. And the cost of the program that has been paid back to the producers — the cattle and bison folks themselves — is just under \$5 million in total. So this is money that has been well utilized and for those guys to hold those animals back and for very good reason.

I think now I want to talk about our strategy going forward and our 2030 strategy, and I think it's important when you look at where we want to go. And I know the numbers kind of get . . . Everybody's throwing numbers out but I think these are important numbers for the public to see and to go onto record. I mean we want to increase the primary production to 45 million metric tonnes and livestock cash receipts to 3 billion. This year, with a good crop the way it is, we look that we're going to be in that 37 to 38 million metric tonnes, so we can still . . . We're seeing growth and we have potential for more growth.

Livestock receipts this year were, or 2019, were 2.36 billion. So we can see that we have an aggressive growth agenda. Obviously we made the announcement earlier in the year with the expansion of the irrigation and with the Lake Diefenbaker, where we want to seek and double irrigable land in Saskatchewan to 500,000 acres, and we also want to increase value-added to \$10 billion, and the agri-value revenue for 2019 was about \$5.3 billion.

One thing we do want to really try and increase, and hopefully we can, is the crush capacity of canola. We'd like to see that number increase so that we are crushing about 75 per cent of the canola we're growing here in the province of Saskatchewan, and we think there's opportunity for us to do that. And we'd like to see — and with my earlier comments about expansion in the pulse processing side — we'd like to see that number grow to about 50 per cent of the pulses that are growing here in the province of Saskatchewan to be processed as well. And obviously we also want to see meat processing increase as well here, so we're doing things that we can in that regard as well.

If I can, you know, I would like to just chat a bit about, you know, some of the opportunities or some of the things that the investments have done in my own constituency. And I think it's important for all of us to recognize some of the great work that we have done here in the province of Saskatchewan. When I look at the revenue sharing, and I just want to give a couple of examples of some communities in my constituency.

In the revenue sharing side, Assiniboia has increased 129 per cent from 240,000 in 2007-2008 to 550,000 in 2021. So these are, you know, it's numbers and money that the community can use. And the one thing that I think it's important for us to all recognize, on both sides of the House, that this money has no strings attached to it. The communities can use it what is in the best interest of their community. They make the decision on how those dollars are spent, and I think that's an important note to say.

Madam Speaker, I see I'm getting close to the end of my time. I'm probably a little bit over, but I just want to end with this. The people of the great province of Saskatchewan made it very clear on October 26th who they trust and want to lead this province for the next four years, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think they spoke loud and clear on that.

So I will end by saying I will be supporting the motion put forward by the hon. member from Kindersley, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. And I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a great honour to stand up here today and support the Throne Speech. It's been a busy year with a lot of changes in Saskatchewan, and we look forward to the future and the growth over the next decade here.

First of all I'd like to thank, congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your position, and thank the Speaker who's not here right now, but thank him for putting his name forward and congratulate him. I'd also like to thank the outgoing Speaker from Regina Coronation Park and thank him for all his work over the last four years. It was much appreciated.

The last four and a half years as a rookie I sat in the back, back spot there. I never moved once. I don't know if they didn't have any faith in me or what they did, but finally after four and a half years and winning another election they moved me. And I get moved over here, for crying out loud. I don't know. I don't know if they didn't have faith in me but I hope my having this move over here just doesn't cause me to become negative in this Chamber or anything like that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to lay out a few thank yous to all my people: my office staff, my constituency assistant Gladys Zavislak. She's been working with me for about a year and a half. I'd also like to bring up my past CA [constituency assistant], who passed away this summer. She enjoyed retirement but only for a short time. Carol Sleeva worked for Deputy Premier Ken Krawetz for over 10 years, and then worked for me for about two and a half years, and then passed away suddenly. I really miss her and wish her family well through these tough times.

Also I have a constituency assistant, Deb Gabora, who's been off about the last six months battling cancer and she's doing very well beating the battle. So I would like to wish her well and a speedy recovery and look forward to having her back in my office as soon as possible.

Along with that, I have another casual assistant, Jessica Kwas. She's a young gal that works part time and brings a lot of energy and excitement to our office, which is always great to have.

I would also like to thank my executive: Sean Wilson, Syl Hryniw, Daryl Stevenson, as well as many of my directors too as well that come from Preeceville, Norquay, Kamsack, Burgis, Buchanan, and of course, Canora. They all worked hard in various communities during the campaign and worked very hard for me too as well.

I'd also like to thank my constituents from Canora-Pelly who supported me over the last four years and who continue to support me throughout the past election, particularly during the tough times of the pandemic.

I'd also like to thank Jessica Kwas and Brandi Zavislak for bringing youth and energy to my campaign and making it fun during the tough times that we had. And it was really a tough campaign, but with them, and young gals coming in with a good positive attitude and attitude bringing in some other people, it was a really fun to have them on board during this somewhat of a different election.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the support of my children, Jasmine and Shane in Regina, and along with my two grandsons, Lewis and Oliver, who are growing. They are five and two, and I just have a great time. In fact I made a skating rink out at Crystal Lake and I'm looking forward to possibly over the festive season having them out, and taking them for a skate and a little toboggan ride would be great. And my daughter Jade Dennis and her partner, Jason, work at the Regina correctional institute here, right here in Regina. And my son Carson, who works at the golf course in Melville and is making curling ice too if curling gets going again.

I'd also like to thank my wife, Lorri, who just retired in November of last year. And she's really enjoying retirement —

cross-country skiing, enjoying the lake. She was hoping to do some travelling overseas and some volunteer work over in Jordan until these times changed for us. So hopefully she gets a chance to do that. She really worked hard on my campaign. She was one of my Co-Chairs along with Kris Cherewyk. I think she worked hard just so that I could get back here and I would be kind of out of her hair for the next four years too as well in Regina. So anyway, I'd like to thank them too, as well as my business manager, Gladys Zavislak.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank all our health care workers and our front-line support staff through these difficult times. We are very fortunate to have such dedication and leadership in our province. Also a thank you to the residents of this great province for them following the advice of chief medical officer Dr. Shahab and his staff. And together we will get through this.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank all the front-line workers for their essential service, people like grocery store workers, truck drivers, utility workers, farmers, ranchers, our first responders, firefighters, police, EMTs [emergency medical technician], and paramedics. I'd also like to say a huge thank you to our teachers for their dedication and professionalism in taking care of our children.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Throne Speech lays out a plan for our province to continue the theme of a decade of growth, and that is exactly what our government has done over the past 12 years. Mr. Speaker, in the beginning of 2020 we were on the path of a balanced budget, and then unfortunately COVID struck and times have changed. As we continue to battle through these difficult times, we'll continue on the path of our 10-year growth plan and focus on strengthening our economy.

We're also looking towards the creation of 100,000 new jobs over the next 10 years. Madam Deputy Speaker, over the next two years, to keep our economy strong, we are investing \$6.2 billion in infrastructure projects as well as \$2.1 billion as part of a stimulus package. This will continue to keep jobs and the people working in our province.

Mr. Speaker, health continues to be one of our major concerns. We are planning to renovate and build new hospitals in Weyburn, Prince Albert, and are in plans for Yorkton. We also have recently announced dedicating \$15 million towards building urgent care centres located in Saskatoon and in Regina. These will reduce the continued health pressures on the two cities and hopefully improve our wait times in surgeries. These centres will provide 24-7 a week for non-life-threatening emergencies, including mental health and addictions supports.

[20:30]

Mr. Speaker, our government will eliminate the age restriction on insulin pump program. This pump expansion will cost approximately 4.6 million per year and will benefit approximately 400 individuals. Madam Deputy Speaker, our government will expand the eligibility of individualized autism funding, increasing the age limit from under 6 to 12 years old, beginning in 2021. This funding will help an estimated 1,500 children in our province at a cost of 6 million per year.

Mr. Speaker, our seniors are important to our province. Therefore

we are committing to reducing senior ambulance costs by 50 per cent, from \$275 to \$135 per call. This is an estimated cost of \$8.4 million per year. We are also increasing the maximum benefit amount for seniors' income plan, from \$270 per month to 360 per month, affecting 14,000 low-income seniors who currently receive this benefit. This will be phased in over three years at a cost of \$3 million per year.

We have built seniors' homes over the last 13 years. We have built 14 new facilities and are currently under construction of a Meadow Lake facility. We have also recently announced to build two additional senior homes — one in Grenfell and one in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 we've hired 700 front-line employees and we will continue to hire additional staff to address the staffing concerns. We will continue to increase our services in health care by hiring an additional 180 care aids for long-term care and an additional 120 care aids for home care service, at a cost of 18.4 million per year. Mr. Speaker, we'll also be hiring additional staff for the CNIB [Canadian National Institute for the Blind] and the Sask Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services to improve the services for the deaf and blind people. This will benefit 150 people from these enhanced services.

Mr. Speaker, mental health continues to be a growing concern in our province. That is why our government has invested a record \$435 million in mental health and addictions services. We have a new crystal meth treatment centre in Estevan, and also new detox beds are available in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, P.A. [Prince Albert], and North Battleford. We are also addressing suicide issues with our new plan, Pillars for Life suicide prevention. This includes a program to train mental health first responders in each of the 744 schools in our province, all while the NDP closed 52 hospitals. Right now in our province we have 900 more doctors and 4,000 more nurses than in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, the economy is a priority, and it is showing signs of improvement. Our population has grown by 170,000 people over the last 13 years. We want to continue attracting people to our province in hopes of reaching a population of 1.4 million people living in Saskatchewan by 2030.

In September our unemployment rate was at 5.3 per cent, which is fourth lowest in Canada and below the national average of 5.5. We will continue to grow our economy and jobs over the next 10 years. In order for us to continue, we have announced a new home renovation tax credit for homeowners to claim up to \$20,000 of eligible renovations. The homeowners can save up to 10.5 per cent or \$2,100. This program will run from October 1st of this year to December 31st of 2022 at an estimated cost of \$22 million. This project will keep our construction tradespeople employed while saving 124 million for the homeowners of Saskatchewan.

Small businesses are essential to our economy. Over the next three years we'll decrease the small-business tax rate to zero per cent in 2020, and then up to 1 per cent by 2022, and then back to 2 per cent in July of 2023. The amount that small businesses can earn will remain at \$600,000.

Mr. Speaker, beginning December 1st, SaskPower will reduce electricity charges by 10 per cent for one year. This will benefit

the residential, the farmers, the businesses, the schools, the hospitals, and the universities. This rebate will save the people of Saskatchewan approximately \$260 million.

Mr. Speaker, over the next 10 years we'll continue to grow our province and grow our private capital investment of Saskatchewan to \$16 billion. Mr. Speaker, over the last 10 years, we have increased our exports drastically, and our goal is to continue to increase it by 50 per cent or more over the next 10 years. Saskatchewan is one of the richest resource provinces and we will continue to grow. We'll look at growing international markets and agri-food exports. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to increase the annual value of oil, uranium, potash, and potash sales over the next 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture continues to be one of the economic drivers in Saskatchewan. We are committing to grow the agri-food exports over the next 10 years to \$20 billion. Our growth plan includes increasing crop production to 45 million metric tonnes and livestock sales to \$3 billion. Mr. Speaker, we are currently looking to expand our irrigation plan in Saskatchewan. This will create many value-added and expanded agriculture programs in our province.

Along with irrigation, we hope to increase the value-added revenue over the next 10 years to \$10 billion. Mr. Speaker, we are also looking to increase the canola crushing and the processing of pulse crops in Saskatchewan. We're also looking at creating additional jobs by more value-added processing in our local meat industry. Mr. Speaker, we are also growing the Saskatchewan forestry industry in the hopes to double it over the next 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a difficult year in education. The pandemic has created uncertainty in the classrooms and the schools. Our government is committed to the safety of our schools. School divisions have responded to the challenges of COVID-19 and have online learning and incorporate it when necessary.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the years we have built 54 schools and we will continue to build schools for our children and the future expansion of our province. Mr. Speaker, our government has recently announced \$110.5 million infrastructure projects for new schools in the province. These projects are part of the government's two-year plan to build and stimulate Saskatchewan's economic recovery.

And I've got a list of some schools here: Francophone elementary school in Regina, to replace the Ducharme Elementary in La Loche, K to 12 in Blaine Lake, K to 12 school in Lanigan, renovations to the Holy Rosary High School in Lloydminster, and the renovations to the Lloydminster Comprehensive High School.

These projects are in addition to the funding that was announced as part of the '20-21 budget, where we announced seven schools and to renovate three existing schools. And those are the Regina Harbour Landing School; two elementary schools; new school, an elementary and high school in Carrot River; renovations to our Yorkton Regional High School; the John Paul collegiate in North Battleford; a new elementary school, Princess Alexandra, and King George and Pleasant Hill elementary schools in Saskatoon; and a joint-use facility, elementary schools to replace St. Peter

and St. Michael and Imperial in Regina; and replacements of the St. Frances elementary school in Saskatoon; and finally the renovation on the addition to Athol Murray College in Notre Dame.

Lots of schools. It is great to see all the new schools being built — 57 and counting — unlike the NDP who closed 176 schools, or about one a month, and down 400 teachers compared to us being up over 900.

Mr. Speaker, our government will increase the Sask advantage program by 50 per cent, from 500 to 750 per year. This will increase funding from 2,000 to 3,000 over a four-year scholarship. Our graduate retention program provides up to \$20,000 in income tax credits for grads who stay in Saskatchewan after graduating from school. And this program has helped over 74,000 students and grads stay in our province, and they are at work today.

Mr. Speaker, our province is also fulfilling its commitment by adding 750 new child care spaces. As well, we will also provide families \$150 per child or 200 per child with disabilities to cover participation activities if their wages are under 60 grand.

Mr. Speaker, we have a 10-year program to do 10 000 kilometres of highways as part of the 10-year growth program to build and update our highways. In 2020 we have allocated \$411 million to capital investments in our highways. Just to name a few, we did three sets of passing lanes in my constituency. We did three sets of passing lanes on Highway 10 between Melville and Yorkton and three sets of passing lanes on Highway 9 between Yorkton and Canora. And I'll tell you, I drive that every week and it's fantastic. As well we did a major bridge construction by Kamsack and numerous culvert replacements and resurfacing.

Mr. Speaker, over the last years our municipalities have enjoyed the increasing and stable funding to help with their infrastructure through the revenue-sharing program which we have offered. Over the years from 2007 to 2020, most places have increased by over 100 per cent in communities, without any ties to how they spend it. An example in my area, Canora went up 123 per cent. They used to get 106,000; now they're at 460,000. Kamsack, 133 per cent, went from a hundred and eighty-five six to 431,000. Preeceville went up 136 per cent, from \$108,674 to 256,719.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the 2020-21 stimulus package, we also introduce a MEEP program, municipal economic enhancement program, to help out with municipalities, with local infrastructure projects, and create local jobs. And just a couple examples of the money that we put out, there's an extra \$290,000 for Canora, extra 270,000 for Kamsack. And then as well we did a \$935,000 water treatment plant project at Madge Lake.

Mr. Speaker, recreation is also important to us. And beginning this December we'll be starting the community rink program again, which will allow \$2,500 per rink to help over 375 communities with the cost of starting up their rinks. We'll also be investing in upgrading some parks around the province, a few of them: Duck Mountain, Madge Lake, Good Spirit. And we've also donated some money to the Kamsack Snow Drifters and Duck Mountain water system upgrade.

Mr. Speaker, our government also started the Sask Veteran

Service Club two years ago. We started a program of \$100,000. We will be increasing it this year to 1.5 million this year to ensure that the province's veteran club will be taken care of for the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, over the last four years I've learned a great deal and I've enjoyed the committees I've served on. I've enjoyed working with my colleagues and I have become good friends with all of them. I am excited to be part of our new team. And I know there is more work to do, but I look forward to continuing to do more work for the government and the fine people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I will be supporting the Throne Speech moved by the member from Kindersley and will not support the amendment. I thank you.

[20:45]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Ritchie: — Good evening, Madam Deputy Speaker. As we assemble here today on Treaty 4 territory in the homeland of the Métis, I begin my remarks by offering words of honour and respect. Respect for those who have come here before me, respect for those who have elected me as a representative, and respect for the land upon which we gather. I would be remiss if I did not also take this opportunity to show my respect for all the healthcare and front-line workers who are working desperately hard right now to keep us all safe and secure through the troubling and recent escalation of the COVID pandemic.

Saskatchewan is a democracy, a place where many of us enjoy almost unparalleled freedom and security. We are fortunate to live in such a democracy as Canada. We often take it for granted and we shouldn't. The events unfolding both here and at home, elsewhere globally, reminds us that it is so.

I want to take a moment to sincerely thank the people of Saskatoon Nutana situated in Treaty 6 for electing me as their representative. As has been pointed out before in this Assembly by my predecessors, namely Pat Atkinson and Cathy Sproule, my constituents are a highly engaged and politically astute citizenry. They have bestowed upon me a sacred trust, one which I hold very dearly and which I am honoured to bear. I will do my best to never let them down.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank my campaign team, including the many donors, workers, and everyone who lent a hand during the campaign. In particular my thanks to my campaign manager, Cheryl Lodman, and the rest of the campaign staff: Kerry, Heather, Nick, and Diane. My constituency executive, I also want to thank, so in particular Erika, Robert, Judy, Graham, Eric, and so many others too numerous to mention. They gave of their time and energies in pursuit of good government and effective representation. Without their dedication and hard work, I would not be standing here today. To all of you, I say thank you most humbly.

And like all of you, I have a supportive group of friends and family around me to thank as well. I want to pay tribute to my parents Albert and Eleanor Ritchie for instilling in me the values

of compassion, honesty, and service. I want to thank my spouse Eric and our children Katrin, Monica, Robxn, and Natalia for being part of this journey with me. Our families may grow up, branch out, and take new forms but no matter what, our families are what support us through life's ups and downs, and with whom we celebrate these important milestones. And while this year has been markedly different because of COVID, this experience has been no exception.

My next words are words of congratulations. It is a high honour to be selected by your peers as someone of integrity seen to be guided by fairness and worthy of trust. I want to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on being a person who has been judged by your peers to possess those qualities and wish you and your counterpart well in your important roles. I want to congratulate each and every member who has been elected or re-elected to this Assembly. Regardless of our political affiliation, we all represent the people of Saskatchewan, and I look forward to getting to know and working with members from both sides of the House.

My next words are words of reflection. It might seem odd to spend a few minutes asking and answering the question of what we are here for and why. I realize we all know we are here to serve as MLAs, but is there a perspective or an attitude that we could try to think about that would help in the process? I think there may be, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am here to represent all of the people of Saskatoon Nutana, whether they voted for me or not, and also to seek to represent all the people of the province. We are all here to represent the public and the public interest.

In doing that, I do not consider the men and women on the opposite side of the House to be my adversaries. All of us are here to seek the public interest and to do good for our province according to the beliefs that each of us has. I am going to try, Madam Deputy Speaker, to always remember who I am here for, and that is the public, and what I am here to pursue, and that is the public interest. None of us should ever lose sight of that to the point where we only listen to the group that we are a part of. Our goal is larger than that.

Another important part of my job here and the job of all of us, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to listen. I hope that I will always listen carefully to my constituents and others in the province. I would like to be an active listener. It will still be my responsibility, alongside other people here, to arrive at decisions which are in the public interest from our point of view, taking the best information we possess into account. In that role, spending a lot of time listening would help us bring about the best results.

Of course there will be many occasions I'm sure when we will be engaged in vigorous debate, and we may even be a little bit more partisan than perhaps we should. I may be guilty of that myself on occasion. But if I am, I hope that someone listening to this speech will remind me of my words today, and that I try to keep a balanced and healthy perspective on things.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the government has received a strong mandate from the people of Saskatchewan to continue governing the province for the next four years. In a democracy the people are never wrong, and we respect the result of the election. As the opposition, we too have a critical role to play in the governance of this province, and to represent those who do not feel that they

have been heard by the government.

Our role is not to obstruct the elected government, but try to constructively oppose things that we do not believe are the best measures or being done in the best way and to suggest alternatives.

Someone once said, to get good government, you need a strong opposition. And I think that is true, Madam Deputy Speaker. Governments are more accountable and do a better job when there is someone there to hold them to account. Our system of government, the parliamentary system, depends upon a healthy dialogue between government and opposition, and the public is better served when they have alternative choices available in the event they feel there is a need for change.

In providing good government we need to pursue policies which overall promote social and economic well-being, while at the same time protecting the environment, respecting our treaty rights and responsibilities, remembering the most vulnerable people in society and the need for equality of opportunity, while ensuring a robust public sector and set of programs which serve the common good for current and future generations. In assessing government policy, I will have all of these goals in mind.

Now as we engage in this healthy dialogue, holding the government to account and promoting the common good, I want to spend some time considering the current context in which we find ourselves.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during the past few decades we have observed the pace of societal, environmental, and technological change accelerate to speeds never previously witnessed. As the past few weeks have shown, governing in these modern times has become more complex and uncertain. In such times governments are expected to show leadership by acting with courage, empathy, and humility, while remaining flexible and transparent to the needs of their constituents.

We as legislators would all do well to acknowledge the continuing and rapid changes occurring around us. To ignore that reality is to fail at leading our province successfully and confidently into an uncertain future, one where a worldwide pandemic has caused a global public health emergency. And as a global community we have almost run out the clock on averting climate catastrophe.

But regrettably, while these world-altering events have been unfolding, Madam Deputy Speaker, many of us have lost sight of our common humanity and interdependence, which necessarily means we've forgotten that we share a common purpose underpinned by a social contract to which we all belong. In these perilous times, it has become more important than ever to remember that our happiness and quality of life is best assured when we live in communities that are mutually supportive instead of pitting one segment of society against another.

Now during these past several months, COVID has brought into clearer focus the vulnerabilities of those in our society who experience social inequality. And the weaknesses in our social fabric have become only more pronounced, creating greater urgency in addressing issues related to basic human dignity such as alleviating poverty and homelessness, knowing that in doing

so problems like the higher crime rates, a high incarceration rate, addictions, family breakdown, and health issues are reduced by the same measure.

These are problems which don't just impact those experiencing them first-hand. They impact loved ones, extended families, friends, and neighbours. They impact all of us. They diminish the quality of life of society as a whole. They challenge us to be courageous and long term in our thinking and to believe that we can build a better society. We need to think long term and remember that it is wiser to spend \$100 today on education or recreation for a vulnerable young person than to spend \$100,000 in 20 years from now to put them in jail.

While I believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that government should play a role in ensuring everyone benefits from the wealth of society, I also know instinctively and from my professional life that you cannot share the wealth until you produce the wealth. Economic progress without social progress is not how you create a good society. Social progress without economic progress is not possible. So we need both, to survive and to recover from this pandemic.

[21:00]

But let us also not forget that a healthy planet is essential to a healthy society. My constituents have elected me to be their voice in the Assembly to seek climate and intergenerational justice. They have elected me to relentlessly pursue that objective in a manner that is both proportionate to the magnitude of the climate crisis which we face and the moral obligations under which it places the good people of Saskatchewan.

I look forward to the debate on climate ambition and the urgency upon which we must now act to protect the planet from dangerous climate catastrophe. Now is not the time for the new climate denialism that uses false equivalencies, duplicity, and obfuscations to ignore the climate emergency and avoid protecting current and future generations.

Let me assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I am a practical person. I am an environmental engineer by education and vocational experience. My professional life in both the public and the private sectors has taught me that economic development and protecting the environment are not antithetical. Responsible industry leaders know that to avoid future liabilities and costs, it is best to take care of the environment from the outset, and I consider that objective to be a very important part of my job as well.

But regrettably this government has missed countless opportunities to support our energy sector and energy workers to more meaningfully and ambitiously transition to a clean energy future, opportunities such as supporting homeowners and businesses to retrofit their homes and places of work to become more energy efficient while creating good-paying jobs in the clean energy economy. That is what the world needs from the government and people of Saskatchewan.

Instead they cancelled the net metering program and picked fights with other levels of government as a form of distraction from their own poor record and failure to plan. The lack of ambition on the part of this government to decarbonize

disadvantages us economically, leaving us behind as the rest of the world retools their energy system and economy for 21st century realities.

You can count on your official opposition, Madam Deputy Speaker, to challenge this government to show greater leadership in these areas and present practical alternatives to the grandiose and unrealistic ideas being put forward by this government. So in conclusion, I'd like to say we live in a good society when we do the work to keep it so. We can do better. We have the resources. All we need is the political will.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am humbled and honoured to be here today. I hope to work positively and constructively. I want to always remember that there is only one reason to enter politics and that is public service. If I remember that, then I feel at the end of the day I will not have let my constituents down. And just as importantly, I will not have let myself, my family, and my supporters down.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have tried to remain positive, but since this is the debate on the Speech from the Throne, I must tell you this is one of those occasions when I find myself unable to agree with the overall direction indicated by the government. As has already been pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, at a time when people are struggling, we should be planning to invest to get through this together, not making life harder for families. We need clear, consistent messaging and a real plan that helps people, instead of mixed messages and half measures that won't get the job done.

I will be voting against the government's motion in support of the Speech from the Throne and will be supporting the amendment instead. Still I look forward to the work that we will generally pursue here to make our province and society an even better place than it already is for us and those who will follow us. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thank you. Thank you, colleagues, and thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it is indeed a pleasure to rise in debate on the Speech from the Throne in this legislative sitting, following so closely on the provincial election.

I want to congratulate Mr. Speaker. I want to thank him for his service as the MLA for Redberry in the beginning and for Biggar-Sask Valley, and for his success in becoming Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all six candidates who ran for the position including yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I'm so pleased to see that you are our Madam Deputy Speaker.

I want to say congratulations to all members in the House on their re-election and especially to the brand new members. I can't help but think back to 2003. It is a long time ago when I had the opportunity to be a new member in this House and what an exciting time it is. So to all the new members on both sides of the House, please take every opportunity to enjoy your first year, your first term, and all that it has to offer. I certainly look forward to getting to know each of you better and to understand where you came from and what brought you here and what your goals and ambitions are.

As I mentioned, we're just on the heels of the provincial election campaign and I certainly want to thank the team that elected me and the team that worked so hard. I want to thank campaign manager Brad Sylvester; Merle Sawatsky and her husband Ken, the volunteer coordinators; Wade MacBain from fundraising; Brian Webb, who relocated from Regina to Saskatoon and did a tremendous amount of door knocking. And also to Megan and Orlanda and Jacquie and Michael and Julia and Brianne, Frank, Angela, Trevor, David, and David, and many others — approximately 75 volunteers.

I wish, I really do wish I could mention and name each and every one, because they gave so unselfishly in that campaign and allowed me to get to the doors of the residents of Saskatoon Willowgrove and also gave me an opportunity to door knock and visit other constituencies as well. We tried to make some trouble in the Leader of the Opposition's constituency there in Saskatoon Meewasin. You know, we pulled a Maxwell Smart. We missed it by that much. But we enjoyed it, in jest, but welcome him here as well.

I want to thank my family — Trish, Carter, and Paige — for their support and their love and I really appreciate my family members for sure.

We're very pleased to have had that opportunity to get to the doors, and I want to thank the people of Saskatoon Willowgrove not only for electing me but for allowing me to come to their doorsteps, to have that conversation, albeit socially distanced, but to have that very important conversation that takes place on the doors.

The constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove is very invigorating. People certainly want to talk about the issues and I must say that I heard time and time again that we are on the right track. We weren't perfect in any way, but we're heading in the right direction. And certainly when we talk about the future and the vision for the province, in their opinion, we were on the right track and indeed we had the right leadership.

I want to reflect more on my constituency and the fact that it really, in my opinion, reflects Saskatchewan as a whole. It's a constituency that has had tremendous growth. New areas of the city that weren't even there in the last election, like the community of Brighton, for example. In the last election there wasn't one house, there wasn't one voter in that whole neighbourhood. Now there's 700 homes in the Brighton area. And also in Aspen Ridge. It was very, very early in its development, and now in Saskatoon it's a growing and thriving part of our city and our province.

My constituency also has the benefit of residents moving to it from across the world — from across Canada, for sure, but across the world as well. We welcome so many people from India, from Pakistan, from the Philippines. St. Joe is a school in the constituency. They have flags when you enter into the school representing 91 countries from around the world that represent the students that go to St. Joe's in the heart of the Saskatoon Willowgrove constituency. Madam Deputy Speaker, that indeed is something to be very, very proud of.

I could go on and on and talk about my constituency, but I want to take the time and talk about the Speech from the Throne and

the very positive impact that it has not only on the constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove but on the entire city and the entire province of Saskatchewan. I want to concentrate on five main areas: how the city of Saskatoon continues to benefit from this government; health care initiatives that are undertaken in Saskatoon and Saskatchewan; education; benefit to communities; and our election promises.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's been said in this House many, many times but it bears repeating: the city of Saskatoon benefits from revenue sharing in Saskatoon, in Saskatchewan from the Government of Saskatchewan to the neighbourhood of \$49 million per year. Now, Madam Speaker, that sounds like a lot of money, and it is. But when we first became government, that number was \$17 million. So it's grown to \$45 million with no strings attached. And the city is able to do with it what they please, and they do some very, very good work.

And talking about the city, I want to congratulate the new city council and the mayor of Saskatoon and all those who ran for positions. We have one newly elected councillor in David Kirton, and I wish him very well, and all the best to all the re-elected councillors as well. We had a very vibrant campaign for mayor. Six individuals had put their name forward, and Charlie Clark was the incumbent and the successful candidate, and I congratulate Mr. Clark. And also congratulating Rob Norris and Don Atchison and the other three candidates who I don't know as well, but I thank them for their service and their support and for making Saskatoon a better place.

Saskatoon also benefited from the municipal economic enhancement program. MEEP has been mentioned by many members on this side of the House. It's an investment in infrastructure to stimulate the economic recovery of our province, and Saskatoon has benefited to the point of \$35.5 million. And this is benefiting many projects across Saskatoon, and members opposite as well as members on this side of the House will know about the great things happening at the Gordie Howe athletic facility and many other projects in Saskatoon that are benefiting from MEEP.

Another area that has had great benefit in our city and in the constituency of Saskatoon Willowgrove is education. Our government has allocated \$85 million on top of a record budget investment to ensure that our children can study safely. Another allocation is coming later this month. Hundreds of new teachers and custodial workers and other staff have been hired. Nearly \$15 million has been invested to enhance distance learning capacity in our province, in Kenaston and other areas. I've had a chance to tour that facility in Kenaston, and they do great work. And it's so important the work that they do, and this extra funding is very well needed.

In the Willowgrove constituency, education continues to be one of the most important topics at the doors when I was door knocking. And I'm very pleased that in our last year's budget, \$500,000 was allocated to Regina and Saskatoon to look at the feasibility of where the next schools and the next high schools are going to be. And I'm very pleased to say that I'm hearing that the next high school in Saskatoon will be in the Brighton neighbourhood, a fast-growing area that is in need of that facility.

[21:15]

And again, when it comes to the need for educational infrastructure, Madam Deputy Speaker, this government doesn't hesitate. We get ahead of the curve. We're so proud of all the new facilities that we have. I think another member mentioned 57 new schools, a vast contrast to what members opposite did when they were in government for 16 long years, closing 176 schools. Madam Speaker, I'm sure proud of our record when it comes to education: two brand new elementary schools in my constituency — Sylvia Fedoruk School and St. Michael School in Evergreen. They cost over \$30 million each but indeed they are a great, great investment in our children, in our education, in our future of the province.

Speaking of the future of our province, the advanced education area, the vast dollars that go into the universities and to the polytechnical institutes, \$472 million go into the University of Saskatchewan in the last year, the University of Regina, and the federated and affiliated colleges. So I'm very, very proud of that, and \$158 million into Sask Polytech.

Also in the area of advanced education, many of the constituents, including myself, love to go to take in football games and other things at Griffiths Stadium in Nutrien Park. The government has put forward \$3.14 million to upgrade Griffiths Stadium and replace the existing turf, expansion of the field, the removal of the existing track. And again, Madam Deputy Speaker, it shows our commitment to sports, culture, and recreation from this government. Not only are we about health care and education and social services but sports, culture, and recreation are very important as well.

In the area of health care, we continue to be very, very proud of the 176-bed Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. In September of this year, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the children's hospital in Saskatchewan. Again it was built at a total cost of \$285.9 million. The province, this government, provided 257 million. Overall in health care, this government has increased money to health care by \$2.4 billion since 2007. And indeed each and every year we have been funding areas . . . and in this year certainly a focus on mental health and other areas.

Overall there are \$16 million for additional physicians and clinical staff at the children's hospital as well. So not only do we have bricks and mortar, but we want to make sure that we have the physicians and the staff to ensure that that facility continues to be just an excellent, excellent jewel in our province.

\$1.4 million in new operational funding for Saskatchewan's first free-standing hospice facility, the St. Paul's Hospital hospice at Glengarda, which includes 15 end-of-life care beds in a homelike environment integrated with a palliative care seniors . . . provided by Saskatchewan Health Authority. So again we're very, very pleased of all aspects of the investment in health care. And I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the many private donors who help make facilities like this possible across the province.

We have six new in-patient addiction treatment beds at the Calder Centre, a rapid access to addictions medicine clinic, the RAAM. \$200,000 for Saskatoon and Regina autism resource centres in addition to previous funding, and providing enhanced treatment for autism-specific mental health orders. And so something that we can all be proud of, Madam Deputy Speaker. There's certainly a lot of more work to do, but we will hear more about

that in this session as well.

In the area of innovation, the Speech from the Throne touches on it and certainly it's a central theme when we talk about the VIDO, the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization in Saskatoon. \$3.8 million to support the COVID-19 vaccine research, something that is very timely and we are very proud of. \$2.13 million for the InterVac facility. 1.62 for the VIDO project funding. An additional 400,000 to VIDO for COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing capacity, which couldn't be more timely as well, Madam Deputy Speaker. \$550,000 to support commercialization of medical isotopes using the linear accelerator at the Canadian Light Source synchrotron, again doing leading-edge research and something that we're very proud of in our province; and \$125,000 in additional funding for Co.Labs to expand programming and scale up support for technological start-ups in our province. Those are so very, very important. We had an opportunity to tour those facilities and to see the bright young minds that are in our technology sector here in our province today.

Innovation continues to be a top priority for our province along with small business. And we all know, but it bears repeating again, we reduced the small business tax from 2 per cent to zero retroactive to October 1st, 2020. The rate will be restored in July of 2023. But in the meantime this will cost the Government of Saskatchewan \$189 million, money that businesses will invest back into the Saskatchewan economy to further drive a strong recovery. So I can't emphasize this enough as it is certainly a lot of money, but it's an investment in the future and it's one of the reasons why we are going to have a strong, strong recovery here in Saskatchewan.

We recognize that it's been an extremely challenging time — yes, for individuals but, you know, less so for those that get a paycheque every two weeks. But for the small-business people in our province who risk everything and are out there doing their best, any time that their government can help them, I think that it's money well spent. And I think we're doing that very, very well, not only on our own but in partnership with many business groups around the province, the chambers of commerce. The program Together We Stand is certainly a program to support local business and to support those who buy local in our province.

I want to talk a little bit about the election and certainly its very important promises made, promises kept — not like the previous NDP government that would announce promises over and over again, and not all that often keep them. But you know, some they would but some they wouldn't, but this is something that our government makes a priority.

And you heard that today on the second sitting of the legislature. The first possible day, we have the minister of Crown corporations announce the SaskPower reduction by 10 per cent this year starting December 1st. And that's a promise that everyone will benefit from. Residential customers, farmers, industry, and businesses, as well as institutions such as schools, hospitals, and universities will all benefit from that promise. Promise made, promise kept, Madam Deputy Speaker. This will save the people of Saskatchewan \$260 million and money that they can re-invest in the economy of the province.

The Saskatchewan homeowners tax credit, you can claim 10.5

per cent up to \$20,000 on home renovations from October 1st to December 31st. That is something that is very important and timely and putting a lot of people to work right now I know in my home constituency and home city, as well as across the province.

Other promises we made during the election campaign: support for people living with diabetes; expand the eligibility under the Saskatchewan insulin pump program to all Saskatchewan residents. It's something that I've been hearing unsolicited from constituents how supportive they are of that program.

We're supporting our seniors and making life more affordable. Significantly reduce the costs of ambulance calls — other members have spoken about it, again, but it bears repeating — reduce the maximum costs per call from \$275 to \$135.

And increase benefits paid under the seniors' income plan to low-income seniors. And you know, I had to read this very closely and to make sure that I had the stats right, but we've heard many members across this side of the House talk about it. In 2007 the seniors' income benefit was \$90. And it hadn't increased for 16 years under the New Democratic Party government. You know, we keep saying those were 16 long years that the NDP were in government, but when you look at factors like that, that they didn't increase it at all, that's why they say it's 16 long years that they were in.

Now that tripled very recently to \$270 a month, and with the next budget it's going to be quadrupled to \$360 a month — four times what it was in 2007. And certainly that's something that we are very proud of, and it's something that was very easy. When we came to the door and a senior asked, you know, what's in it for me? What's in it for me voting for the Sask Party? And that was certainly one where money is put into their pocketbooks so they could spend it and enhance the economy.

Another area that's pretty close to me is the community rink affordability program. I had the pleasure and opportunity to be Parks, Culture and Sport minister when this program was first introduced and it provided \$2,500 for help to cover the cost of running rinks. And you know, it was a program that was there when we could afford it, and then we had to take a step back. And we said at that time this would be a program, whenever we could afford it, to bring back because it was so directly impactful to villages and towns and cities in Saskatchewan. And I'm very, very pleased to see that it's back here and that 635 ice surfaces in 373 communities will be eligible to receive support.

Also, support for the veteran services clubs. We were so pleased two years ago when we announced the \$100,000 into the program and it was administered by the Royal Canadian Legion. It was very, very well received, and now to see that budget increase from 100,000 to \$1.5 million, it's a move that is just the right thing to do, Madam Deputy Speaker. And we're so pleased that we were able to do that.

I'd like to go on and on, talk about many more things like the active family benefit, \$150 per year per child. It's . . . [inaudible] . . . but it gets money to people that need it the most. And there's many other things in the election that I could talk about but I don't have time to do right now, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I want to again thank everyone in the House here for this opportunity, and the opportunity to serve. It is my fifth election, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the years go by — '03 and '07 and '11 and '16 and here we are. So I'm very, very thankful for those constituents who see fit to re-elect me, and I hope that I do nothing but serve them proudly in this Chamber.

I want to thank my new constituency assistant, Brienne Toupin. Brienne, thank you for all the work that you do, and I very much appreciate all that you do.

Saskatchewan unemployment rate is the lowest in the country right now. Yes, we say there's more work to do but, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're on the right track. We lead the nation in merchandise export growth, we heard very recently. The minister was talking about it the other day. And that's something to be very, very proud of.

I think when we summarize the election, it really does boil down to the leadership that we were provided by the Premier and the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook, the excellent leadership that he's provided, not only in the campaign but from the day COVID started, and the days and the weekends. And the leadership that he provided is something that we can be very proud of. And that's something I heard on the doorsteps, doorstep after doorstep — you know, I may not be a real strong Sask Party supporter, but I'm going to vote for your government because of the leadership that your Premier and your ministers have been providing. So I want to say how pleased I am to be part of this team under the leadership of our Premier.

I want to tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to conclude by highlighting the writing of something that very clearly hit home to me. And it was the writing of Dr. Hassan Masri. And he wrote an impactful message that I believe bears repeating. He discussed his experience in the ICU [intensive care unit] on the tragic night following the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, and I quote:

I woke up on April 7th to see the whole province had decided that it's one. Every hockey stick was put outside the door. What a powerful symbolic gesture that hockey stick was. The province had its most powerful moment. Hospitals in Saskatchewan were showered with love.

Today in Saskatchewan, we need another powerful moment of unity, a moment of silence for lives that were lost for COVID-19, a moment where we put our spiritual hockey sticks out and tell everyone we are having a moment of unity, a moment where health care workers and hospitals are shown that their work matters and that everyone intends on making this easier on them.

Saskatchewan, you need a moment similar to that moment in April of 2018, so mask up, wash your hands, limit your bubble, do your part. We can't allow this trajectory to continue. The hockey sticks of two years ago are the masks and tight bubbles of today.

[21:30]

Wise words and good advice, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the motion and most

definitely voting against the amendment. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Saskatchewan Water Security Agency.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to rise here today to speak to the Speech from the Throne.

Before I get started, I'd like to thank the great people of Prince Albert Carlton. It's truly an honour to be returned to the Assembly to represent them and the city that has been so good to me. The city of Prince Albert is so important to this province, to this government, and to me. I think the people of Prince Albert must feel the same way as they returned not only one Sask Party member, but they returned two Sask Party members to the legislature from Prince Albert.

I want to take this opportunity to welcome my friend and the new member for Prince Albert Northcote. She's going to be an incredible representative and I'm looking forward to working with her to continue the good work that our government is doing in our home city.

I'd also like to congratulate Mayor Dionne and his council. And I look forward to working with them as we continue to grow the city of Prince Albert and get things done for the city of Prince Albert, which I know with the new member from Prince Albert Northcote will be that much easier to do. And we will make a great team, and we'll help the city immensely.

Madam Deputy Speaker, none of this would be possible without the love and the support of family and friends. And I just want to thank . . . Well there's way too many to thank everyone by name, but I'll give it a shot for a few of them anyway. There's Bill Barzeel, Duane Hayunga, Rob, Paul, Dan, Bryan, Al, Tim, Dennis, Angela, Tami, Janeen, Joy, Abby, Carter, Cole. I mean there's so many more and I know I'll miss some of them. But you know, they worked so hard, not only for the 28 days of the writ period but they worked so hard before that, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's not just a 28-day campaign. The campaign for the next election starts today, and it starts by how we work for the city that we represent or the constituency that we represent. It's an ongoing process. It's not a 28- or a 30-day process. It's an ongoing process. So I want to say thanks to those people.

I want to say thanks to my constituency assistant, Joy Schewaga. Joy has been with me for the four and a half years and is just tremendous. She's the one that people love. In fact, people will come into the office and they say, no, I'd rather speak with Joy, or I want to speak to Joy because she works so hard for people and she cares. And that's one of the biggest things about people is they've got to show that they care. And Joy works hard. She knows everybody in this building. She phones. She can do the casework for them. She can help people out and just does a tremendous job. And she often says and we often talk about it, that we make a good team. Because she can phone me, and I can go see somebody in here and try to help out with a specific issue, and she handles everything in Prince Albert for me. So I'm very, very grateful about that.

I want to thank my family, my son Trent and his wife, Lisa, and their son Elias. I mean he's one of the two partners that took over

the business that we sold a number of years ago and has done very, very well. And they always support me in whatever I do and whatever I've done and I greatly appreciate that.

My daughter Angela, she worked hard for me through the campaign. She did with the last campaign. She worked through this campaign doing whatever — door knocking, coming to the office, just answering the phones — doing everything that she can do. Her and her husband, Joe, I mean they're my other son's partner in the business and, you know, their two children, Layla and Noah, and they're just fantastic kids. And so I'm so pleased to have them.

Then there's Colby. Colby's my son that . . . He's in Prince Albert. He's in the car business as well. And him and his wife, Becky, are both in the car business. And Hannah and Myles are their two kids and again they're two great kids. We're so fortunate that we have five of our seven grandchildren live within a few blocks of where we live. And we do get to see them so often, and we're so fortunate to be able to do that.

Our youngest daughter lives in Warman and she's on maternity leave right now. Our youngest grandson is five months old and he is . . . My wife calls him Lukey, Lukey. His name is Lucas and he is just a little cutie that grandma is just crazy about. You know, Madilyn, our youngest granddaughter, is her daughter and yes, she is grandpa's girl. And lots of times when we go to their house my wife will walk in first and she'll say, well where's grandpa? She just wants to go past grandma just to find grandpa. She just knows how to do that, how to steal a heart, and boy she's only three years old. My daughter's going to have trouble when she's a teenager. But it's called payback.

Who else? There's somebody I'm forgetting. No there's not somebody I'm forgetting. Probably the most important person is my wife, Fran. She stands beside me every day. Every day come heck or high water, no matter if it's positive or negative, she's there and she supports me with everything I do. She travels with me. She's my best advisor by far. She is truly the love of my life.

I'm just so fortunate to have her in my life and, you know, it's funny, our 25th anniversary is coming up. My 65th birthday is coming up. I can't tell you how old she's going to be, but it's one of those ones that ends in zero. It was a plan to have a big celebration. And when we got married there was only 25 people at our wedding. And so our plan was to have our big celebration on the 25th, and my 65th and her birthday. And of course that was supposed to come up here in March, but with COVID it looks like it'll be another small celebration of just the two of us, so we'll have to plan that for another day. But she is the one, like I say, that keeps me on the straight and narrow. She encourages me every day, so I couldn't do any of this without her.

There's two other people that I want to thank and neither one of them are still with us. One passed away in 2012 and one passed away in 2015. My father passed away in 2012. What's so remarkable about that is I think of what we're asking people to do here these days, and to wear a mask, to wash our hands, just to be careful. And so many people are going, but that's a big sacrifice for me to make.

Well my father, when he was younger, he was still in his teens and he made this little sacrifice: he left his farm, he left his

family, he left everybody. He went overseas for four years and he risked his life every day of those four years so that we could have what we have here today, so we could sit here, all, and we could argue across with our . . . the opposition across the street. And we have that right to argue with them and they have the right to argue with us, you know, but he made those sacrifices.

There was so many others that made that sacrifice and so many of them that died. And my father lived to the ripe age of 91 years old, but that sacrifice that he made always sticks with me. And now that we're asking people to sacrifice, to wear a mask sometimes and to wash our hands and to maybe distance yourself a little bit, I think that's a pretty small sacrifice to make for the people of Saskatchewan. He made it for the people of Saskatchewan too. But we should just always remember that.

The other person is my mother, who passed away in 2015, and from complications from Alzheimer's. And Alzheimer's is just a terrible, debilitating disease. And when we talk about the most vulnerable people, I mean, because sometimes that word gets used far too often, people with Alzheimer's are . . . You know, there's kids, those that would have mental challenges, and people with Alzheimer's, our seniors that have Alzheimer's. They are the most vulnerable because they don't even know. They can't even remember if they have been abused.

And my mother lived her last few years with Alzheimer's, and we were very fortunate that she'd have occasional times of clarity in her day, but it wasn't that often. But it was so exciting that when she did, and when she would say your name and that she knew who you were, and it was quite something. And I know both of them would be so proud. And unfortunately neither one lived to see me do what I'm doing now, but I know they would be so proud of what I'm doing and how I am giving back to my community, my province, my country.

My father taught me many years ago about doing things to make a difference. He says, and you know why I do this job, and if you want to make a difference in the world, you've got to get involved. And I use that quite a bit when I'm speaking to people because I truly believe if you want to really make a difference in somebody's life, and if you want to make a difference in the community, if you want to make a difference in your province, you have to get involved. You have to stand up for something. You have to have your voice be heard. And so my father taught me that and lived by that himself, and I've managed to do that.

And I've ran into other successful people. An old business partner of mine, he used the same expression. You know, a number of years ago he said, Joe, if you . . . When I first moved to Prince Albert and him and I started in business together, his advice was if you want to make a difference, you've got to get involved. You've got to get involved in your community. And I did. I was on six different boards in our city of Prince Albert. I was on the national advisory board for Hyundai Canada, which represented Manitoba-Saskatchewan dealers, and I was on the Chrysler advertising board, so for business I was on that.

I just believe that you've got to get involved. You've got to help. You've got to try to make your business better. You've got to try to make your community better. And I thank both my father and my ex-partner, Ted Knight. Ted Knight used to own Crestview Chrysler Dodge here in Prince Albert. He passed away a couple

of years ago, but he was a good friend and a mentor to me and a person that, of course, I'll never forget.

I'm also pleased to rise now, Mr. . . . Madam Deputy Chair — I know I'll probably make that mistake again and I do apologize — to speak today in my capacity as the Minister of Highways. This is an important role in our government as we work to continue our record investments in our roads, and I do not take this responsibility lightly.

A key aspect of this role is our ongoing efforts to improve safety on our highways. Safety on our roads is incredibly important to me personally. During my four years as Minister Responsible for SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], my team and I worked day and night to reduce deaths and injuries from distracted driving and impaired driving. And I'm very proud to say that we did make a difference. We made real progress and our roads are safer because of it.

[21:45]

In 2019 there were 21 deaths on Saskatchewan roads from impaired driving. Now 21 deaths is 21 deaths too many from something that is totally irresponsible to do and totally preventable. But 21 deaths was a 61 per cent decline in deaths from a 10-year average in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan had the worst record in Canada for deaths from impaired driving and now, while the final stats aren't out, but I'm told by the president of MADD Canada [Mothers Against Drunk Driving] that Saskatchewan was probably going from worst to best. And they're very proud of that.

I had the privilege the other day, just the other day, of presenting MADD Canada's award. MADD Canada asked me to present this award on their behalf to two incredible people that live in Saskatoon, Lou and Linda Van de Vorst. And Lou and Linda have become friends of mine over the last four years. They lost their son and their daughter-in-law and their two grandchildren in a tragic accident just north of Saskatoon in January of 2016.

Since that time Lou and Linda have worked tirelessly. They've dedicated their life to preventing any further deaths and injuries. They travel all over. I could ask them any . . . As Minister of SGI, I could ask them to come and speak anywhere and they would show up and they'd be there and most happily do that. And they're two people that are just the nicest people that you'd ever want to meet in your life. And I presented them with the award of MADD Canada. It's the highest award that MADD Canada has, and it's the first time that they presented this award. And it's for outstanding volunteerism because of the work that they've done — Robert Solomon Award — and I was so very pleased that MADD Canada asked me to present this award for them. It was quite an honour.

Now they're a part of a group of people that continue to work hard to keep our children safe, to keep you and I safe when we're on the highways, to keep people from drinking and driving. And there's a number . . . Craig and Bonny Stevenson in Saskatoon; Al Kerpan, and he's an incredible friend and a hard worker for MADD Canada; Marilou and Alex Haughey, and they lost their son in a tragic accident in Saskatoon as well. These people are not statistics, they're friends. They're real people. You know, I got to know so many of these real people in my four years at SGI

and safety has become a passion of mine and it will continue for me as the Minister of Highways.

Anyway, back to the highways. As we come to the end of year two of our government's \$100 million intersection safety plan, we're going to begin to see the real, on-the-ground results of this significant investment. And thank goodness for that.

And now to the Speech from the Throne. Saskatchewan, and the world as a whole, is facing unprecedented times due to this COVID-19. And as we navigate through this new normal, the people of Saskatchewan continue to rise to this challenge. We need to keep working together and following public health orders in order to slow down the number of cases. Our government has chosen to invest in jobs and infrastructure in order to support the livelihoods of our people.

Last spring we announced a \$2 billion stimulus project to help carry us through this time. \$300 million of this was for improvements to highways — 24 new passing lanes and a thousand kilometres of highway improvements. In fact our government has invested more than \$9.8 billion in highway infrastructure since 2008, improving more than 15 800 kilometres of Saskatchewan highways.

The people of Saskatchewan were given a choice on October 26th, and they have given our government a strong mandate to move forward with this plan. It's a balanced approach that invests in job creation, creates a path to balance by 2024, and invests in safety.

The first bill we are introducing this session will create the new Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit. This will allow homeowners to save up to \$2,100 on the cost of home renovations. This will fit together well with our record stimulus investments, putting our contractors to work and supporting the shops that sell the materials needed for construction.

I'm also pleased that starting today, we're also implementing our campaign commitments to make life more affordable by reducing power bills by 10 per cent. This will help everyone from businesses to individuals, saving Saskatchewan people around \$246 million a year.

The small-business rate will be going from 2 per cent to zero for one year, then to 1 per cent for one year before going back to 2 per cent. This will mean that small businesses in Saskatchewan will pay less tax than they do now to help them rebound from this very difficult time. As we get closer to the Christmas season, it's important that we try and do all we can to support our small businesses in Saskatchewan, and I encourage everyone, everyone to shop local.

Next year we plan to move forward with the rest of our campaign commitments. These include bringing back the active family benefit on a means-tested basis so kids of families of all income brackets can enrol in sport; more continuing care aids in long-term care homes; and 750 new child care spaces over four years; increasing the seniors' income plan to \$360 a year over the next three years. Our government will continue to fulfill its campaign commitments.

We have also made a point in working in partnership with our

municipalities. This year we're investing \$28 million in the rural integrated roads for growth program. This is a cost-sharing plan with our rural communities to fund maintenance and upgrades to RM [rural municipality] roads. We are also investing \$7.3 million in the urban highway connector program which, as the name suggests, funds the highways that connect to our major urban centres. These are all increases over last year's budget. Finally, we have 800,000 more this year, or a 114 per cent increase, for a total of \$1.5 million to the community airport program.

This year's highway budget was groundbreaking in many respects. This year we're investing more than \$60 million in northern highways. Not only that, but since 2008 we have invested over \$628 million in northern highways.

Airports is another area that our government has made major investments. Over the last 10 years, we invested \$20.7 million to operate and maintain airports. Some of the major projects include: an expanded tarmac at Stony Rapids; a partnership with West Wind Aviation to bring water and sewer services to the Wollaston Lake airport; installed webcams at the Sandy Bay airport to help pilots gauge weather-related hazards; undertaken GPS [global positioning system] surveys to develop new navigational aids at La Loche, Patuanak, and Cumberland House; and improved the electrical system and lighting at Meadow Lake. These are real, on-the-ground investments to improve the lives of residents in the North.

We must also make investments today that will set the stage for future growth. We must not only build for today but also for tomorrow. That is why the irrigation project at Lake Diefenbaker is such a priority for this government, and estimates show the investment will result in a significant increase in the provincial gross domestic product over the next 50 years. The project is estimated to create 2,500 construction jobs a year over the next 10 years, as well as double the irrigable land in the province, contributing to our growth plan goal of irrigation expansion. This project will revolutionize agriculture in Saskatchewan for the next generation of ag workers coming up. We made it clear before the election that this would be a cornerstone of our plan for the future growth in this province, and we look forward to it progressing.

We have made Prince Albert a significant part of our government's vision for growth. We have spent millions of dollars maintaining and repairing the Diefenbaker bridge, a record amount for any government in this province. We invested \$2 million in annual operating funding towards the Rose Garden Hospice Association in Prince Albert, as well as funding for a new aquatic centre and two new ice arenas for Prince Albert. Last but certainly not least, our Premier announced the construction of a redesigned Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert, which is so desperately needed.

With the recent news as highlighted in the Throne Speech that our deficit is lower than predicted, we are in a good position to balance the budget by the end of the term and keep our economy on track. The policies laid out in our campaign platform and the Throne Speech will serve as the groundwork for our province's continued success.

I would again like to thank the people of Prince Albert Carlton

for their support. I will continue to work hard for the city of Prince Albert and the province of Saskatchewan. I would like to thank the Premier for his unwavering leadership for our province. To all the health care workers, the front-line workers, and the people of Saskatchewan, thank you all for doing what you're doing during this unprecedented time.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion of our government, and I will not be supporting the amendment from the opposition. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'd like to begin by offering my most sincere appreciation to the constituents of Kelvington-Wadena for allowing me to serve them for another term. It's been a privilege to be in this Assembly on their behalf and to represent their aspirations to our government.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the constituency of Kelvington-Wadena is one of the larger ag constituencies in the province. It runs from the northwest area west of Tisdale to near Hudson Bay. In the southeast corner is the community of Theodore, just outside of Yorkton, and in the southwest corner not too far from Raymore. During the election campaign, the first day we did a quick sign tour. And for our urban constituency folks, my tour was 650 kilometres that day, which kind of speaks to the size and scope of the constituency.

My constituency is made up largely of agriculture. We have seven towns and nine villages and, I believe, 14 RMs. And tourism is another part of the constituency, a very big part. We have some outstanding fishing and hunting and opportunities for snowmobiling, quadding, and all kinds of recreational activities. And we border the northern forest fringe, so we have a pretty substantial investment in forestry as well. But largely it's an agricultural constituency and agricultural communities.

I would like to thank my constituency executive team for their support and great work they do throughout the year, particularly leading up to the election period. Meagan, Bonnie, David, Mickey, Dwayne, Ryan, and many others helped with much of the campaign process. And they, along with other directors and executive members, are very supportive throughout the year, and I truly appreciate that.

We also appreciate the volunteer group that acted as scrutineers and observers during the poll process, and they're always greatly appreciated.

[22:00]

I also want to just mention briefly the folks from Elections Saskatchewan, the staff at Foam Lake returning office and the head office staff that were very generous with their time and very accommodating of any questions. We do appreciate their service to the province and to the democratic process. And I think we were very, very well served in this election during very, very difficult times with the COVID restrictions that were in place. And I think what speaks to that is the very, very few issues and concerns and problems that came up during the election. So I

think we should give great thanks to the Elections Saskatchewan team.

I want to pay particular appreciation to my constituency assistant, Chris Grisdale, who has been with me for the full four and a half years. And she is an outstanding assistant, works very well with the constituents of Kelvington-Wadena, responds quickly and thoroughly to any of their questions and concerns and observations, and is quick to look at opportunities that might present themselves, and works very well with the media and all of the folks that we interact with on a regular basis. So I really appreciate having her in the office and she is a tremendous sounding board for me as well.

As we've all expressed, family support is incredibly valuable to us. My wife, Giselle, our children and our siblings have been very active in their support. And each will ensure that I am well grounded and never hesitate to offer a constructive comment on the issues of the day.

We had a very interesting year this year within the family. Our daughter Angela got married in September, so we had a COVID wedding, which was interesting to say the least. Her husband, Pat, both of them work in northern Alberta. They live on Vancouver Island. They both have to fly in to work, so it didn't really matter where they lived. So I'm certainly glad that they live on Vancouver Island. It gives us a great opportunity to visit and enjoy a different weather which we truly appreciate. Pat came to the family with three children — Dominique, Broc, and Alexis. And we're just so thrilled to have them as part of our greater family.

Our middle son, Erik, and his partner, Annie, had a daughter this year so I am a grandfather for the first time. And I am absolutely thrilled and honoured and proud and excited to be a grandpa. And thank goodness for the current technology; we get an opportunity to interact with her on a weekly basis and sometimes quite more often than that. And that's a very exciting time and I am absolutely convinced that she's going to say grandpa pretty soon, even though she's seven months old.

Our youngest son, Mitchell, lives and works in Calgary. Oh sorry, Erik lives in Coquitlam. So again nice to have an opportunity to visit them from time to time. Youngest son, Mitchell, lives in Calgary and he works for Gregg Distributors and is an area manager in their office and is doing excellent work with them. We interact weekly with the whole family on Facebook. And so Mitch is our COVID denier, and so we have great conversations within the family and as many do across their constituencies and across their communities. We try to get a good understanding of what that looks like and what that means and convince him that this is a very real and tangible concern.

So our kids never hesitate to share their experiences and share their concerns and questions and observations and talk about the opportunities that we should all consider. So I'm very, very fortunate that I have great feedback from my family.

Madam Deputy Speaker, others will no doubt comment on the great honour it is for us to serve the people of Saskatchewan in this Assembly. From my perspective, the opportunities we have to meet with stakeholder groups, with ministry officials, constituents, with staff, and with colleagues on issues of

importance and consequences can never be taken for granted.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also have the opportunity to speak constantly with municipal leaders. And I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate each and every one of them for their recent election successes. I know in my constituency we have a number of new mayors, new reeves, new councillors, and they're very much engaged in the learning process that our new members are engaged in here. And I'm quite looking forward to working with them in the coming weeks, months, and years. Municipal leadership, I believe, is one of the most challenging things that we can do. And I really admire those that have stepped forward because they know each and every one of the people that they represent, and they're the first line of concern and question. And I'm particularly impressed with folks that step up for municipal leadership.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Speech from the Throne delivered on November 30th will no doubt be long remembered for its content and context as we face the daunting task of managing our way through COVID-19 challenges. While the speech speaks to several economic supports that our government is putting forward, the greater concern is the physical and mental health of the citizens of Saskatchewan. This is a difficult time in our lives. We are nearly a year into a global pandemic that has taken far too many lives and affected far too many families in their ability to live in some sense of normalcy. Necessary restrictions have been put in place, and unfortunately some have lost jobs, some have lost businesses, and some have lost family members and friends.

I'll take a moment to just talk a little bit about my own family circumstances. My mother lives at home. Her husband is 102, and as the member from P.A. Carlton spoke, also a veteran of the Second World War, and at 102 years old is very physically healthy and doing well but has memory challenges, of course. But he's being very, very well taken care of in the nursing home in Porcupine Plain. And I'm very fortunate because in my family I have a number of nurses, RNs [registered nurse], RPNs [registered psychiatric nurse], LPNs [licensed practical nurse], CCAs [continuing care assistant]. I have a couple of doctors in the extended family. And rest assured, I do hear from them from time to time on what we should or shouldn't be doing, and I very much appreciate that. But I'm really very proud of the work that they have done over the last number of months and I think that we can't begin to honour and appreciate their efforts and what they've worked through.

I also have a number of teachers in my extended family. And I want to give a shout-out to them for the work that they've done in the schools across the constituency and across the province because I have teacher family members here in Regina, Saskatoon, and elsewhere. And I want to just thank them for all the work that they've done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, members of this Assembly are challenged to find the fine line that is a balance between supporting a struggling economy and its impact on families and the challenges faced by our health care system. The citizens of my constituency, and I imagine of all constituencies, are also challenged to understand the complexities of daily life in a pandemic. Let's say clearly and unequivocally we understand the diverse opinions on how this should be handled. We appreciate the input, and have no doubt: that input becomes part of our

decision-making process along with the professional opinions of the chief medical officer and health care professionals that are charged with the responsibility and accountability of managing our way through this.

We have a number of big-picture issues being pursued by our government. These opportunities to define Saskatchewan as a principal leader in the Canadian family will, I believe, give every citizen a sense of pride as they move forward. We await the Supreme Court decision on our challenge to the Trudeau government's ineffective, and we believe unconstitutional, carbon tax. We have announced that we will appoint our own chief firearms officer to oversee the administration of the federal firearms legislation. In June, our Premier put forward a call to action on revisiting the equalization program to address the inequities of the program.

Furthermore, over the past year our Premier has chaired the Council of the Federation, an organization of the 13 premiers and territory leaders, and has led many of the discussions in building a better relationship between provinces and with the federal government. His leadership set the stage for current discussions on the Canada Health Transfer, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, and infrastructure funding. Keep in mind this leadership was during a period of extraordinary challenge to provincial and federal governments faced with COVID-19 challenges.

Saskatchewan is committed to building our own international trade presence. We currently have a trade office in Shanghai and we'll soon be opening offices in Japan, India, and Singapore. We have what the world wants and needs. Our world-class agriculture products, manufactured goods, uranium, oil and gas, potash, and scientific and technical expertise are in great demand, and building on our exposure to these nations and regions will serve us well as we focus on Saskatchewan's Growth Plan.

On behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, we have set out 30 goals in the Saskatchewan Growth Plan that establish our targets by 2030. One of the key goals of our government has always been, and continues to be in the future, that of job growth. Our 2030 target is 100,000 new jobs, supported by population growth to 1.4 million people. Madam Deputy Speaker, there's a reason why job growth is important. Jobs provide people with a sense of purpose, a sense of accountability and responsibility, and a sense of contribution to society. Jobs create wealth and a tax base that supports the healthy community, which in turn supports health care, education, law enforcement, social services, highways, and all the amenities we have come to expect.

New citizens, whether from other provinces or international sources, bring new skills, new ideas, new investment capital, and new families that build our communities, keep our schools full, and contribute to our social fabric. In fact since 2007, 130,000 immigrants from over 180 countries have settled in over 430 communities in the province.

We have a number of economic targets, including growth in our ag sector, that I'd like to touch on. Those include to grow Saskatchewan's agri-food exports to \$20 billion, increase crop production to 45 million metric tons, increase livestock cash receipts to \$3 billion, increase agriculture value-add to \$10 billion, double meat processing and animal feed value-add to more than \$1 billion.

Specific to value-add, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to give a shout-out to the people building the vegetable ag industry in the province. In my constituency, the Marquettes at Perigord have developed a growing business of farm gate and wholesale production of potatoes, cabbage, horseradish, onions, and garlic. They also market corn, cucumbers, and carrots, and are always experimenting to grow their business along with a number of other producers across the province. I think this is a perfect example of innovative agriculture that we should and will be encouraging as we grow ag in this province.

[22:15]

Another example of innovative ag production in my constituency is undertaken by Darren and Tracey Sauer and their family in the town of Kelvington. They have created a 5-acre garlic farm, producing a variety of products ranging from raw garlic to garlic salt, garlic pepper, and several other iterations. The latest is Dam Good Garlic Scape dip, which I must get at the earliest opportunity.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these are but two examples of ag innovation undertaken in the province. Saskatchewan people continue to invest time and labour into new ventures, as they have throughout history. We should collectively congratulate and celebrate these talented innovators.

We are also seeing a lot of interest in ancillary value-adds to pulse crop production, including protein powders and feed products. These innovations will clearly lead our evolving export market. I fully expect we will see massive investment in ag value-add over the next few years as the science and technology evolves. It is an exciting time in that sector of our economy, notwithstanding the challenges faced in this highly sensitive to weather and international pressures industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are many good things in this Throne Speech and I will try to deal with just a couple more as they affect my constituency. Of most importance to our municipal partners is our commitment to funding. The municipal revenue-sharing program has provided certainty to our partners since its introduction. The formula is based on three-quarters of one per cent of the provincial PST [provincial sales tax] and is unconditional funding in 2020-2021 of \$278 million to municipal governments, meaning they decide how the funds are spent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to just touch on a few of the municipal economic enhancement program grants that were given out in my constituency this summer. There were water treatment plants in Foam Lake, a water valve replacement, decommissioning landfills, library roof repair. In Porcupine Plain, road and streetscape upgrades. In Wynyard, a truck, some hall lighting improvements, community hall upgrades, etc. In Elfros, a purchase of gravel for municipal roads. In a resort village, new mower, municipal shop, and things like that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there was many, many, many projects across the constituency, and I believe there was about \$2.4 million of municipal economic enhancement program grants in my constituency alone. And each and every one of those provided some new opportunity in the municipal governments to hire, to train, to add some new resources to their municipal asset base. And they were tremendously appreciative of that particular

program.

I just want to touch quickly on a couple of things. Our government will increase the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship by 50 per cent from 500 to 750 per year. We continue to invest in the graduate retention program.

It was mentioned earlier, the support for seniors. I want to just comment on that. It's incredibly important and was raised by the seniors in my constituency a number of times. But in particular the ambulance reduction call costs is incredibly important, and also the increase in the maximum benefit under the seniors' income plan, which I think is going to be very, very valuable.

The support for the veterans' service clubs is incredibly valuable, and I think that the Legions across the province will be most appreciative of what we've provided in the Speech from the Throne.

A couple of things in legislation that I think are particularly important: *The Residential Tenancies Act* amendments that will allow those who have been sexually assaulted in their rental accommodations to unilaterally break a long-term lease. And one that's particularly close to me is our government will introduce the protection from human trafficking Act. Some of my colleagues will know that I, for most of my last 30 or 40 years, have been involved with Crime Stoppers in Canada and internationally. And Crime Stoppers has an incredible program around human trafficking through work with Interpol and police agencies around the world. So I'm particularly pleased to see our government acting on . . . [inaudible] . . . issue.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to take this opportunity again to thank my colleagues in the legislature for their wisdom, their advice, their guidance, and their friendship. I truly appreciate each and every one of them on both sides of the House. Thank you to all.

And with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to say that I will be supporting the motion by the member from Kindersley and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, and I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition. And at this time I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Kelvington-Wadena has moved adjournment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Being near the hour of ordinary adjournment, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved that this Assembly do now adjourn. Is that the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:21.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Education

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Energy and Resources

Hon. Joe Hargrave
Minister of Highways
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Trade and Export Development
Minister of Immigration and Career Training
Minister Responsible for Innovation
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Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
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