



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

## Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

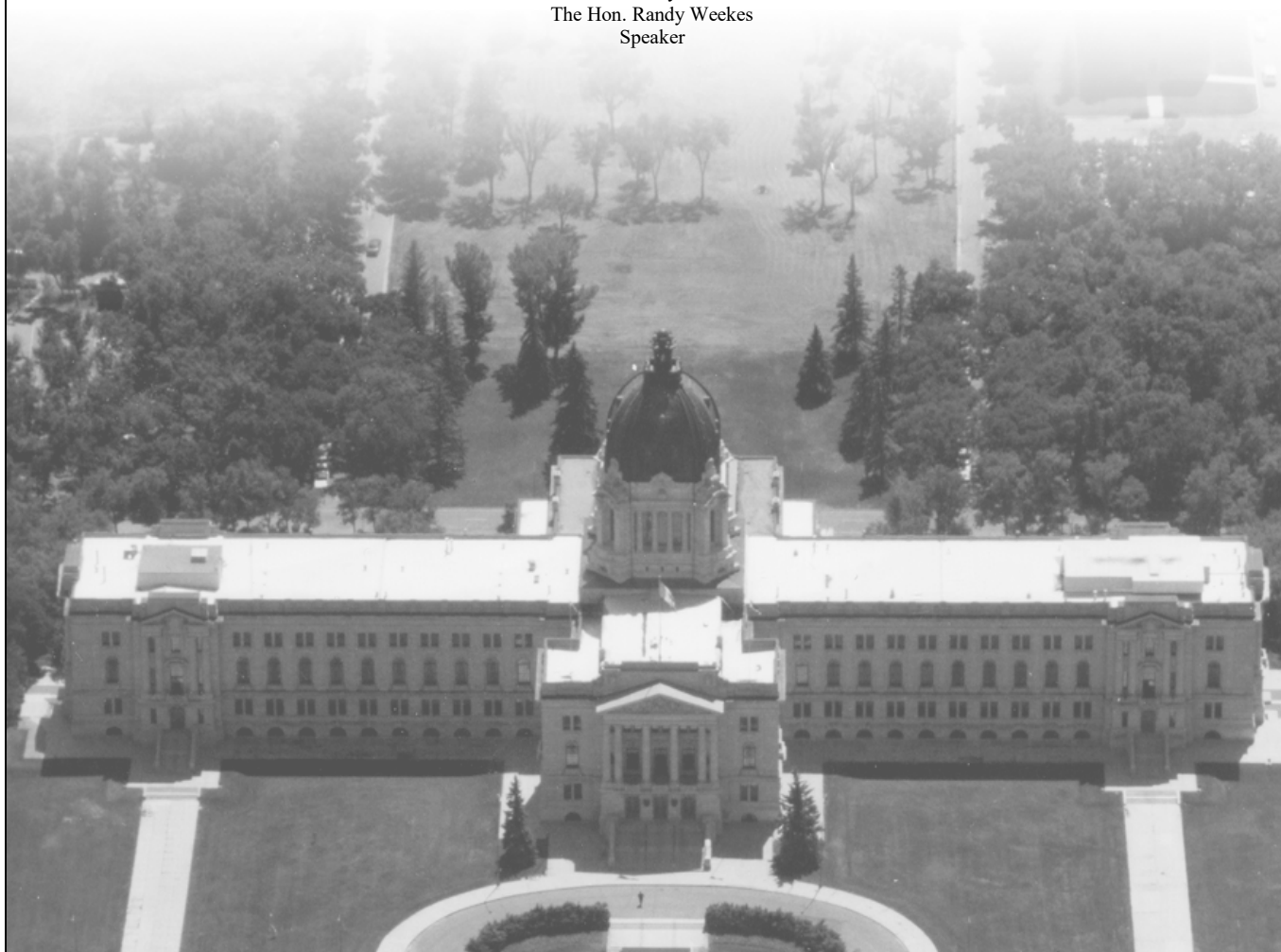
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# DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
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

**Beck, Carla** — Regina Lakeview (NDP)  
**Belanger, Buckley** — Athabasca (NDP)  
**Bonk, Steven** — Moosomin (SP)  
**Bowes, Jennifer** — Saskatoon University (NDP)  
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**Wotherspoon, Trent** — Regina Rosemont (NDP)  
**Wyant, Hon. Gordon** — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)  
**Young, Aleana** — Regina University (NDP)  
**Young, Colleen** — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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**Clerk** — Gregory A. Putz

**Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel** — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

**Principal Clerk** — Iris Lang

**Clerk Assistant** — Kathy Burianyk

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

**The Speaker:** — Why is the Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on House Services on her feet?

**Ms. Mowat:** — To request leave to present a report to move a concurrence motion for the Standing Committee on House Services, recommending modifications to the Legislative Assembly's rules, procedures, and practices for the remainder of this sessional period.

**The Speaker:** — The Deputy Chair has requested leave to present a report and move a concurrence motion for the Standing Committee on House Services. Is it granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. The Deputy Chair may proceed.

#### Report of the Standing Committee on House Services

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, I've been instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to present its first report. I move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Deputy Chair that the first report of the Standing Committee on House Services is now concurred in. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To move a subsidiary motion for the implementation of the recommendations of the first report of the Standing Committee on House Services.

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader may proceed.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move:

That the recommendation of the first report of the Standing Committee on House Services be adopted as a sessional order for the period Tuesday, December 1, 2020 to Monday, March 1st, 2021 of the first session of the twenty-ninth legislature.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That the recommendation of the first report of the Standing Committee on House Services be adopted as a sessional order for the period Tuesday, December 1st, 2020 to Monday, March 1st, 2020 of the first session of the twenty-ninth legislature.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

#### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### PRESENTING PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Keisig:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps to stop the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Lloydminster, Marshall, and Lashburn. I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to end unacceptable emergency room wait times. We know that ER [emergency room] waits have been a significant challenge. They were a significant challenge before COVID happened, and things are getting worse. There are so many added pressures onto our health care system. We know that hospitalizations have been increasing because of COVID. It's a ballooning issue that is going to continue to get worse, and it has spiralling impacts on our ability to provide acute care to non-COVID patients as well.

I'd like to provide a bit of background here. These residents wish to bring to our attention that despite the Sask Party government's promise to eliminate emergency room wait times in 2012, wait times in Saskatchewan's emergency rooms continue to grow; that instead of making smart investments to meet emergency room targets, the Sask Party government weakened down targets

to the point where they no longer exist; and that the Sask Party has cut funding to address emergency room wait times and has no meaningful strategy to get emergency room wait times under control.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to fully fund and execute a plan, as they promised to do in 2012, to lower and eventually end ER wait times across Saskatchewan.

This petition is signed by individuals from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents that *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act* was introduced in 2018, but it has not been passed because it did not receive the support from the Sask Party government; that suicide continues to affect Saskatchewan families throughout Saskatchewan; that the rate of suicide among First Nations girls is 29 times higher than other girls.

I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to address suicide in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many good people of the province. I so present.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon University.

**An Hon. Member:** — That would be Regina Elphinstone-Centre. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I am sorry. Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

#### World AIDS Day

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to recognize today as World AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] Day, Mr. Speaker. Wearing a red ribbon, I stand in my place and I take a moment to remember those who have lost their lives to HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] and to AIDS. The millions of lives lost due to inaction, stigma, and ignorance is a stark reminder of the absolute necessity to lead responsibly and emphatically in the face of a public health emergency.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, the HIV crisis continues across the country, but nowhere more dramatically than right here at home in Saskatchewan. We have the highest rate of HIV of any province in Canada, Mr. Speaker, nearly three times the national average. The main cause of transmission in Saskatchewan — the

sharing of injection substance equipment. The lack of harm reduction services is driving our rates of transmission, and the consequences of continued inaction on this front are as disastrous as they are preventable.

I want to take this time to acknowledge the good work of AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan operating in my home constituency of Regina Elphinstone-Centre, as well as Prairie Harm Reduction in Saskatoon which recently opened a safe consumption site despite many obstacles, including inadequate funding from this government.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all members to join me today in recognizing the resilience of those on the front lines of the continuing HIV pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

#### Spirit of Community in Saskatchewan

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have spoken on the spirit of community in this House many times, but during these unprecedented months never have we seen a finer example of the power of a community in Saskatchewan.

We have front-line workers in our care homes who have now become family to the elderly folk they take care of. We have grocery store employees taking on new responsibilities and longer hours to ensure the safety of us, their customers, remains their number one priority.

And many in the health care sector have redeployed to support efforts of contact tracing and to help us navigate this pandemic. I'm thankful for my eldest daughter, Katelin, working in public health as an RN [registered nurse], spending long hours in doing testing and tracing duties.

Mr. Speaker, this is what community does. It's coming together and going above and beyond to be a good neighbour. And as their government we thank you, Saskatchewan. Thank you for wearing your masks. Thank you for slowing down, reducing your social circles, and adjusting your day-to-day life to protect one another.

Our front-line workers, thank you for going the extra mile. The longer hours and new restrictions that have arisen because of the current state are not easy. We cannot thank you enough for helping out your communities. Because of your efforts, we will come out of this stronger than ever before.

Thank you to the local businesses, healthcare workers, and front-line experts across our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

#### Remembering Fred Sasakamoose

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fred Sasakamoose was the first player in the National Hockey League with treaty status, and he grew up living his life in northern Saskatchewan. He was the WHL's [Western Hockey League] most valuable player in the 1953-54 season, and during that season he made his debut with the Chicago Blackhawks.

After his hockey career, Fred returned to northern Saskatchewan where he spent four decades elected to the band council of the Atahkakoop Cree Nation, serving one term as chief. He also gave back to his community by developing sports programs for all Indigenous youth in the area.

Fred was recognized for both his sporting contribution, by the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame, and for his leadership, by the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] and the Assembly of First Nations. And in 2018 he became a member of the Order of Canada. Fred died November 20th from COVID-related complications.

I ask all members to recognize the resilience of the late Fred Sasakamoose and the legacy he leaves for the North.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

And in my language I said he was a kind man, a great man, with many accomplishments. So I ask all members of the Assembly to recognize the great contribution of Fred Sasakamoose of the Atahkakoop First Nation. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Prince Albert-Northcote.

### World AIDS Day

**Ms. A. Ross:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we are all wearing red ribbons to recognize World AIDS Day. Each year on December 1st, we show our support to those who live with or know someone who has been affected by HIV/AIDS [human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome].

Mr. Speaker, this year the World Health Organization will join their partners in paying tribute to all those working to provide HIV services. This is very fitting for the year 2020, as so many in our health care system in Saskatchewan and across the world are going above and beyond to deliver the best services they can during these uncertain times. Mr. Speaker, with early diagnoses and proper treatment, people can live healthy and productive lives.

During a year where health and well-being has never been more important, it is critical that today we take the time to reflect on our own communities and to see how we can better support those in our province who have been affected by HIV/AIDS. As a government, we will continue to consult with our health care providers, community organizations, and constituents to ensure that we can deliver the best quality of life for those living with the disease.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to please join me in recognizing World AIDS Day. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

### Veteran Honoured by Canadian War Museum

**Mr. Domotor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize an incredible man, Philip Favel. On November 8th,

Mr. Favel was honoured for his many years of service in the armed forces by the Canadian War Museum. Mr. Favel is from the Sweetgrass First Nation in northwest Saskatchewan, which is in my constituency of Cut Knife-Turtleford. He enlisted in the Canadian army in 1942 at the age of 20 where he served in the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps.

Mr. Speaker, Favel has been recognized with many medals for his service, including the 1939-1945 Star and the National Order of the Legion of Honour. Mr. Favel served our country in the Second World War, and since being released has dedicated much of his life to advocating for Indigenous veterans and their fair compensation. Along with his recognition, a portrait of Mr. Favel painted by Ottawa-based artist Elaine Goble was unveiled at the Canadian War Museum. This portrait will be on prominent display until January of 2021.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, we give thanks to the men and women of Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities for their service and sacrifices for our country. I now ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Mr. Favel on his recognition and thanking him for his service. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Martensville-Warman.

### Wanuskewin Heritage Park Recognized for Tourism Excellence

**Mr. Jensen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wanuskewin, which means "gathering place," holds an important place in Canadian and Indigenous history. Additionally to its important history, it also includes many natural wonders like the various walking trails along Opimihaw Creek, the South Saskatchewan River, and the bison reserve.

This year the heritage park was nominated five times in 13 categories for the Tourism Saskatchewan Awards of Excellence. On November 10th, Wanuskewin Heritage Park brought in three of those tourism awards. The park won the Business of the Year Award for a company with more than 20 full-time employees, as well as the Gill Carduner Marketing Award. Lastly, Wanuskewin's chief archaeologist, Dr. Ernie Walker, was honoured as a tourism builder.

Mr. Speaker, 2020 marked 31 years of provincial tourism awards and a first for the heritage park capturing more than one of the award categories. Nearly 90 nominations were received for the 13 various categories. Unfortunately, like many events this year, due to COVID-19 the gala was originally scheduled to be in Regina and it was cancelled. However that gala was still able to go ahead this fall with it being held remotely.

What a remarkable achievement for this great Saskatchewan landmark. Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the folks of Wanuskewin and Dr. Walker on their achievements. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

### **Eatonia Cowboy Wins National Bull Rider Championship**

**Mr. Francis:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to share with my colleagues a proud Kindersley native that now resides in my hometown of Eatonia seeing his professional career goal through to completion. Dakota Buttar recently competed in the 2020 Canadian Professional Bull Rider Championship this past month. Now beginning the season with one mission in mind, he actualized that goal on November 7th, finishing first in the weekend-long championship in Grande Prairie, Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, Dakota entered the 2020 tour finals week with a strong hold atop the national standings, ninety-nine and a half points in front of the number two cowboy. Beginning the season with a record-tying 11-consecutive-ride streak on home soil, he won two of the four Monster Energy Tour stops and two of the five touring pro division events.

Determined not to repeat history, with the national title eluding him last year, Dakota was rock solid from the moment the first bull bucked. The week of the championship, Buttar highlighted an 86.5- and an 87-point ride, putting him well ahead of the second point leader.

He had one little stumble, bucking off Saturday night, but came storming back on the final night with an impressive 88-point ride winning the event and clinching the 2020 championship.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating the most humble and down-to-earth professional athlete you'll ever meet. Congratulations, Dakota Buttar. Thank you.

### **QUESTION PERIOD**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

#### **Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we begin this, the twenty-ninth legislature in Saskatchewan, we face an unprecedented challenge in COVID-19. And today the people of Saskatchewan are dealing with the results of missed opportunities on the part of this Premier, opportunities to show leadership, to listen to experts, to the front-line health care workers, and to take meaningful action.

Today in Saskatchewan we have three times as many cases of COVID-19 as we did on November 1st, five times as many active cases. This virus is everywhere. We've surpassed Ontario and Quebec with double the cases per capita and we're catching up quickly to Alberta.

And yet on the day of the Throne Speech, instead of committing to further investment and further action, the Premier gave more breathing room to Buffalo Party anti-maskers and he mused about opening up for Christmas. Well at this rate, the only thing he'll be opening for Christmas is a field hospital, and that's entirely due to inaction on the part of this government. Will the Premier acknowledge today that his current plan is failing Saskatchewan people, and that if we're going to save lives and livelihoods, we need action and investment right now?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just open this answer with, first of all, expressing my condolences to four families that lost a family member to COVID here today. That was in today's news release. And I would offer my condolences to the over 50 families in Saskatchewan that have lost family members due to COVID here in the province of Saskatchewan since we began battling the spread of this virus in our province, Mr. Speaker.

The approach this government has taken since day one of the COVID-19 response in Saskatchewan has been a balanced and measured approach. Mr. Speaker, it has been an approach that ensures that, yes we are doing everything that we can to ensure that we are preserving lives in this province, saving lives in this province, and also, Mr. Speaker, preserving the opportunity for livelihoods today, livelihoods in the future, Mr. Speaker. We have always said this response will focus on ensuring that we are not . . . ensuring that we can preserve the capacity of our health care system, Mr. Speaker, preserve the opportunities, preserve jobs in our communities, Mr. Speaker, and to ensure that we have the opportunity for our next generation, for the youth to have some semblance of normalcy, Mr. Speaker, so that they may do things like attend school, and as well as the athletics and the opportunities that we have in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are experiencing a second-wave surge here in the province, like much of the rest of the nation, like much of the rest of North America, Mr. Speaker. We will continue taking a balanced and measured approach. We will continue to take the advice of our chief medical health officer, Dr. Shahab, and we will continue to work with the people of this province to curb the spread of COVID-19, to preserve lives but also to preserve livelihoods in this province.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, this Premier is demonstrating that he fails to comprehend the seriousness of what we're dealing with today. This is not a minor surge. The number of cases is rising exponentially. Hospitals are overwhelmed. Small businesses are barely surviving. And people are worried about the health of their loved ones. People are losing loved ones, Mr. Speaker. And this government has accepted hundreds of millions of dollars in federal support, dollars that are earmarked to tackle COVID-19. So far it appears that the decision of this government is to use those dollars to backfill their own financial failures instead of helping Saskatchewan people.

So can the Premier today provide a full accounting of how those federal dollars have been spent? And in particular, can he identify what new supports have been brought in since the summer budget? Since those funds have come in, what new supports for people and businesses have been created with those federal dollars?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The federal Safe Restart investment that they had made to all provinces and territories across this province was one that had much discussion at the Council of the Federation table, of which



I chaired throughout that discussion, Mr. Speaker. We met weekly with premiers and then weekly also with first ministers — including the Prime Minister, and the now Minister of Finance, then deputy premier and minister of intergovernment relations — to negotiate this agreement with the provinces, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan received well over \$300 million, of which we invested, Mr. Speaker, in personal protective equipment alongside with the federal government. We invested over \$90 million in our testing and contact tracing as well as our data management, Mr. Speaker. I think we all need to remember, last January no province was doing any COVID testing. Now our seven-day rolling average in this province is 3,500 tests per day.

Mr. Speaker, we invested in vulnerable populations. We invested in children across this province. More specific to the question, we augmented an already . . . provincial and school division investment of about \$40 million . . . 40 million from the school division savings, Mr. Speaker; \$40 million from a direct provincial investment. That was augmented by \$75 million in the Safe Restart Agreement, which flowed through the first tranche in an application based to the school divisions. The second tranche is open today, and school divisions will be actively applying for the rest of those dollars.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week's mid-year report revealed that this government is sitting on a contingency fund of \$260 million, a quarter of a billion dollars that was set aside to help Saskatchewan people during COVID-19. What is the Premier waiting for? Our ICUs [intensive care unit] are overwhelmed. Our hospitals are overwhelmed. We've got outbreaks in long-term care. We've got outbreaks in corrections. Things are going very badly. This isn't a contingency. It's an emergency. And it's clear from this government's own modelling, when honestly presented, that this is only going to get worse.

Now is not the time to be cheap with Saskatchewan people. Now is the time to invest. Why won't the Premier invest those contingency funds right away, support Saskatchewan businesses, support our health care system, support Saskatchewan people during this difficult time. What is he waiting for?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, that is true. We did put a 200 million contingency in the budget. We actually augmented that at the mid-year update with an additional \$100 million revenue offset, should the revenues of the province start to dip due to COVID-19. But, Mr. Speaker, with respect to that contingency fund, a portion of that has been invested directly into the youth of this province, into our education system, made available to the school divisions. As I said, the second tranche of that application is available today, even previous to the federal funding arriving here in January.

So we are backfilling the federal funding in the interim, Mr. Speaker. We are adding to that with our provincial funding and we didn't wait. We didn't wait, Mr. Speaker, with respect to supporting the people of this province, supporting jobs in this

province, taking that balanced and measured approach to ensure, yes we are curbing the spread of COVID-19, but also to ensure that we are supporting people in communities across this province.

Over \$50 million invested in the small business emergency program. Mr. Speaker, we invested \$2 million very early in this pandemic in the self-isolation support program, which was then backfilled by the federal government to make it continuous across the nation. We've partnered with the federal government on a temporary wage supplement. We partnered with the federal government on the Canadian emergency rent assistance program, which has now since been changed to make it much more effective.

Mr. Speaker, we have been there in supports for people, we have been there in supports for Saskatchewan business, and we have been there to work with the people of this province to ensure that we can curb the spread of COVID-19 across Saskatchewan. We need to continue that for the next few months, Mr. Speaker, until we have some widespread access to a vaccine. And that is the work that the Saskatchewan Health Authority has began and is continuing to work on today, is to ensure that as the vaccines arrive in this province, we can deliver them to the people of the province.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a record number of active cases of COVID-19, record numbers of people in the hospital with COVID-19, and the Health Authority is scrambling to recruit and train physicians and nurses to staff field hospitals. Things are not going well. We're moving in the wrong direction and this Premier has spent less than 20 per cent of those dedicated COVID-19 funds.

What is he waiting for? How does he think that this is good enough, instead of investing in people and sitting on those dollars? That's simply insulting to the needs of the people that are struggling across Saskatchewan right now. Why isn't this government doing more? Why aren't they releasing those contingency funds for COVID-19 to support small businesses, to staff up in long-term care and health care? How much worse do things need to get before this Premier will actually do something?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is referencing \$338 million that we received as Saskatchewan's share of the Safe Restart program, of which I chaired the Council of the Federation to work with other premiers across this nation to negotiate with the federal government so that we could receive some backfilling of funding that we have provided to, in this case, Saskatchewan residents.

What the Government of Saskatchewan has provided to the COVID response in this province is a little over two and a half billion dollars, \$2 billion in infrastructure in community after community to ensure that we are poised to have a strong economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I listed a few of the supports that we have put in place in the last answer. But we can go on, Mr. Speaker, to

supports in the agriculture industry and in the energy industry, some of the supports to our community's most vulnerable as well, Mr. Speaker, to our students. Supports to our students to ensure that in these very trying times that they have the financial resources to ensure that they are able to continue with their studies or continue in ensuring that they can become everything that we believe they can come.

Mr. Speaker, this government, this government has been there time and time again throughout this pandemic taking that balanced and yes, measured response. We're going to continue to be there for the people of the province. We're going to continue to work with all of those interested to not only procure, alongside the federal government, vaccines for this province, but now we're going to work on how we are going to get those vaccines out to the people of this province, end this pandemic that we have been dealing with, in the months ahead, Mr. Speaker. That is the next target. That is the finish line for the people of this nation.

[14:00]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to hear distressing news from our health partners on our health system's ability to manage the dramatic spike in hospitalizations and intensive care admissions. Despite modelling documents from the spring planning to develop 400 ICU beds, the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] reports this past week indicate that we're already approaching or over capacity in our intensive care units.

To the minister: why weren't those additional beds added? How many ICU beds are currently operational in the province? And how many of them are already full?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to echo the Premier's comments and my condolences to the four families that we just lost and all the families that have either lost a loved one or are suffering from this pandemic right now in multiple ways, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with Dr. Shahab and the SHA, operational side of Saskatchewan Health Authority to be able to make sure that we are continually balancing the needs of what is coming up with us with COVID, what we were experiencing in the last month, and balancing that off with what we are doing within our normal health care system, Mr. Speaker.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, over the last few months we have ramped back up our surgical capacity, Mr. Speaker, to be able to deal with what is going on just on a normal situation. Now we are continuing to find that balance, Mr. Speaker, between our normal operations and the surge of patients that we're seeing from COVID. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really disappointing to hear that the minister didn't even attempt to

answer that question. It was about ICU beds. I was incredibly concerned to hear the Premier was openly musing about reducing restrictions on gatherings before Christmas. Maybe that would have been possible if he had taken the advice when experts had called for action earlier, but instead our case counts, hospital admissions, and the number of patients in intensive care are still climbing.

The last thing people across Saskatchewan need are more mixed messages from this government. We know staff are already training for the possibility of being deployed into field hospitals, and if we stay the course, the Premier might be trying to open up for Christmas at the same time that we are trying to open field hospitals. To the minister: what is the exact threshold to trigger the Health Authority to open field hospitals?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by thanking all of those in our health care on the front line and all those supporting the front-line workers, not just in our health care system but in our long-term care facilities and our group homes, Mr. Speaker. They're taking care of all of us. They're taking care of our friends and our family, and I want to thank them very much for doing that.

Mr. Speaker, in reference specifically to the question, we have been planning for this, Mr. Speaker. We've been working on this with the Sask Health Authority to be able to make sure that we had the right complement of COVID beds, that we had the right complement in ICU, Mr. Speaker, and we're continuing to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the plan for the field hospital was done months ago, Mr. Speaker. We do have that ready, Mr. Speaker, but we have to find the resources from somewhere, Mr. Speaker. So what we are continually doing is adjusting some of the needs within the SHA and within our rural and urban hospitals to be able to get the staff to fully be able to take care of those peoples that are in the ICU. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope that at some point we don't have to use those field hospitals, but if we do, Mr. Speaker, they're ready to go.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, of course we thank the health care workers. They don't want our thanks. They want us to help them. We have doctors, nurses, and infectious disease experts that are all sounding the alarm, and they're telling us that we aren't ready, that we need to change course or we simply won't have the resources necessary to get through this.

Chronic short-staffing was the norm in health care before COVID-19, and with more than 250 health care workers contracting the virus since March, there will be fewer health care workers available as the need for health care workers grows. Is the minister confident that when the time comes we will have enough health employees to safely run our field hospitals?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and as I mentioned before, the field hospitals are certainly a last resort,

but we're going to work within our health care capacity that we have right now, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we have been continuing to work with the steady hand and the guidance of Dr. Shahab and his team, and it's not just those members at Dr. Shahab's level. He is consulting with our business response team. He's also consulting with our educational stakeholders across the province as well as the Sask Health Authority and the FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] counterparts across the province, Mr. Speaker. He also consults on a regular basis with all the medical professionals within the health care system, Mr. Speaker, and we want him to continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud of the work that Dr. Shahab has been able to do to guide us through this, and I'm very confident that he will be able to continue to guide us through this until we can see the end of this pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, once again he didn't answer the question. Yesterday's rate of active cases was 330 per 100,000 people. It was the third highest in the country and just below Alberta's rate of 376. We know the way the situation plays out if we don't get our numbers under control. Just this week Alberta Health Services issued a memo indicating COVID-19 put pressure on the province's oxygen system, and measures needed to be taken to reduce demand. Rationing oxygen, Mr. Speaker.

What confidence does the minister have that we have an adequate supply of oxygen to support further surges in our health system? And what's his plan to ensure that what's happening in Alberta isn't going to happen here?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the government Health minister.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In specific answer to the oxygen question, I hear that our neighbours to the west are having some challenges with that. But, Mr. Speaker, way back in the summer we identified this as a potential issue that could be coming down if there was a second wave, so we did secure oxygen from our contractors. We have signed contracts and they are going to deliver that oxygen when we need it, Mr. Speaker.

But this goes to the larger picture, Mr. Speaker, is what we're planning months ago is now coming to fruition today. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my predecessor, the previous Health minister, on all of the preparation. But it's also the SHA as well as the ministry that have been working on this, Mr. Speaker, so we aren't in the position where we are caught behind the eight ball. Mr. Speaker, we've been planning for this for months, and we're continuing to plan for months until we can get that vaccine and we can get past this pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

#### **Government Response to COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Homes**

**Mr. Love:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand

and be recognized for the first time in this Assembly, but it's also disappointing that it comes at a time when we have reached a dangerous milestone in the province's battle with the COVID-19 pandemic.

This disease is currently ravaging our long-term care homes, and we are seeing a dramatic spike in the loss of lives amongst our seniors. This government could have done so much more to prevent this tragedy. The situation we are now in was and is predictable, and this could have been prevented. Saskatchewan people want to see a government that is in touch with the facts.

To the minister: as of today, how many care home residents have contracted the virus, and how many Saskatchewan long-term care homes are now experiencing outbreaks?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, this has been a challenge for our government, not just here in Saskatchewan but across the nation. And I would like to thank those that are staffing the long-term care homes, taking care of the most vulnerable people.

This has been a difficult balance for the officials in the health care system, Mr. Speaker, trying to protect those residents in our long-term care homes, protect them from COVID-19, but also allowing them the ability to have visitation with family and with loved ones, Mr. Speaker. We've taken a number of measures since April to make sure we try and strike that balance, recognizing of course that this is a very challenging situation for us, Mr. Speaker.

The utmost importance for this government and for myself, as the minister, and the Minister of Health and the Premier, is to make sure that we're protecting those that are most vulnerable in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we'll continue to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, we called on this government to staff up to help prepare for the second wave in long-term care months ago. The Premier said the status quo was good enough. Clearly it's not good enough. Things are going in the wrong direction and that is a fact. This government has failed to step up to the plate in yesterday's Throne Speech. Instead of investing now, they kicked the promise for desperately needed care aids until after the next budget. These seniors don't need a plan to develop a plan. They need action and they needed it yesterday.

Will the minister commit to start using the contingency fund to move on the Premier's election promise today and get more desperately needed hands to the front lines of long-term care?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The short answer to the question is yes; we will take a look at using those contingency funds that the Premier has spoken about earlier, Mr.

Speaker. And in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would say this as well. We have taken a number of measures in our long-term care facilities to try to make sure that we're protecting those residents that are in our long-term care facilities, that are in our personal care homes, the ones that are, you know, amongst the most vulnerable in our province.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would also point to the rapid testing that is now going to be deployed into long-term care facilities so that we can get a handle on COVID-19 and try to limit the spread of any outbreak that takes place in our long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker. Those are a couple of the initiatives that we'll be implementing here in this province. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, the total COVID cases among seniors have spiked 86 per cent in just two weeks. That is a fact. This fact should terrify that minister. As should the fact that each day more and more long-term care home staff are contracting the virus and being forced to isolate. This is incredibly problematic for a hard-to-recruit workforce that is already strained and for which there are routinely dozens of unfilled positions even in the best of times.

The Sask Party ran on a commitment to hire more workers in long-term care. Well what are they waiting for? We need a plan to staff up today, not waiting until March when it could be too late. Again to the minister: will he commit to showing leadership and start deploying staff to the front lines today?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I answered the question earlier, a couple of previous answers here, Mr. Speaker, with respect to accessing the contingency fund. But it's important to recognize, you know, the number of additional workers that have been committed to being hired here in the next budget year, the 300 continuing care aids — 180 of those to work in long-term care homes, Mr. Speaker; 63 of those will be working and employed into existing home care services, Mr. Speaker; as well as 57 supporting rural and remote expanded home care services across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to work very hard to make sure that we're striking this balance between making sure that we protect those that are in our care homes, but also making sure that we're allowing them access to families and to their loved ones, Mr. Speaker. This is a very serious issue for this government, Mr. Speaker.

We know that we have to be very careful managing this virus throughout this global pandemic here of COVID-19. We'll continue to work with our partners in the SHA, Mr. Speaker, and take advice from Dr. Shahab. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina University.

## Support for Small Business

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, things are grim for many of our province's small business owners — the heartbeat of the economy — and unfortunately they're currently living in a worst-of-both-worlds scenario. Businesses are being told to stay open, yet their customers are being urged to stay home. While this month should be the busiest for most retailers, the government has concocted a recipe for economic disaster that shuts many out from federal support. Not only are businesses shuttering and people losing their jobs, this government seems to believe its own spin that they haven't effectively shut down the economy.

How many businesses . . . and how long does this government believe they can operate at 50 per cent, at 30 per cent, or at 25 per cent capacity and for how long? What is this government's plan to help Saskatchewan small business?

[14:15]

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

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And firstly I'd like to congratulate the member opposite on her appointment as my critic, and as my immediate family could attest, it is not a hard job to be my critic, Mr. Speaker.

So with regard to the specific question, which is serious, I would say that the reality is that this government has stepped up with the most comprehensive supports for small business of any jurisdiction in the entire country. We work incredibly closely with our business community, Mr. Speaker, through all facets of the pandemic. We came forward with the small business emergency payment early on in the pandemic to support small businesses; 6,500 small businesses took advantage of that program. Over \$30 million was distributed through that process.

We then came forward, Mr. Speaker, with the tourism sector support program, which was the benchmark for supporting tourism and hospitality industries in the entire country — over \$35 million allocated to that program; over 450 businesses supported directly — and designed very closely in consultation with the leadership from that industry, Mr. Speaker. And the results have been positive. We've seen the lowest unemployment rate in the entire country, Mr. Speaker, by a significant margin. We've seen merchandise exports leading the country in growth.

We're going to be continuing and have been continuing to work very, very closely with our business community, and I would encourage the member opposite to stay tuned.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Crown Corporations.

### Saskatchewan Economic Recovery Rebate

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to announce that every single SaskPower customer will be receiving a 10 per cent rebate effective today. This rebate is known as the Saskatchewan economic recovery rebate because it

will help Saskatchewan families and businesses recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic. Ten per cent off of everyone's power bill is a simple and effective way of lowering costs during these uncertain times. The rebate begins today and will run until the end of November 2021. Today's announcement fulfills one of our government's key commitments to make life more affordable for everyone in Saskatchewan.

The rebate will apply to the electrical charges section of customers' bills, which includes the basic monthly charge, energy charge, and demand charge. The rebate doesn't apply to taxes on the bill, such as the federally imposed carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also happy to confirm that this rebate will not negatively impact SaskPower's bottom line. The rebate will be fully funded through the General Revenue Fund. This government will not pillage our Crowns to keep our promises. In total, we estimate that this one-year rebate will put \$262 million directly back into the pockets of Saskatchewan families and businesses. We're also working directly with Saskatchewan's two municipal utilities, Swift Current Light and Power and Saskatoon Light & Power, to offer their customers this same rebate.

There's one important note that I'd like to bring to the attention of SaskPower customers. The rebate will not be applied to power consumed before December 1st, 2020. Bills arriving the first days of December will account for consumption of both November and the initial part of December, but only power billed for the period of December 1 and later will have the rebate applied. Customers' January bills will have the 10 per cent rebate applied to their entire power bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan economic recovery rebate will help all customers and all sectors of the economy rebound and help to drive a strong recovery in 2021. It is another promise kept by this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina University.

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister Morgan, especially for the courtesy of providing a copy of your remarks in advance.

We have to ensure this plan is actually benefitting individuals and small businesses who need the break most right now. Well any help for people who are struggling is better than nothing. These measures will be small comfort to businesses who are being told to stay open while their customers and patrons are being told to stay home.

I understand the government's goal of passing this election promise during this brief session, but I also urge them to recognize that our economy is sliding rapidly and that they need to adapt quickly to the realities that the province is facing. Businesses need to know that they can keep their employees on the payroll so that we don't see further job losses in this province, and that they will be able to pay their bills to weather the storm of the coming months where operating at 25 per cent is simply not going to keep the lights on.

Furthermore, over the last 13 years of the Sask Party government,

power rates have increased by 57 per cent for families. The Sask Party should look carefully at how this measure impacts families and business and make sure that it's the small and independent businesses and families that are hurting the most who see the largest benefit. All business is important, Mr. Speaker, large and small, and while 10 per cent off may be a simple way to apply this, the rates for small and industrial consumers will be wildly different. Families and small businesses may see tens or hundreds of dollars in rebates whereas others may see millions. The government should immediately provide the meaningful investment and supports that are going to provide real help to those who need it most. Thank you.

## PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on House Services.

### Standing Committee on House Services

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, I've been instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to present its second report. I move:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Deputy Chair:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

**The Speaker:** — Members of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to rule 44, it is your duty at this time to elect a member to serve as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly. I now ask the Clerk to initiate proceedings.

### ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

**Clerk:** — Pursuant to the procedure specified under rule 43(1) and rule 46(4), the following member has declared her intention to stand as a candidate for election as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committee of the Whole: Ms. Nadine Wilson, the hon. member for the Legislative Assembly for Saskatchewan Rivers.

**The Speaker:** — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to inform you that Ms. Nadine Wilson, the hon. member of the Legislative Assembly for Saskatchewan Rivers, has been elected by acclamation as your Deputy Speaker and Chair of the

Committees of the Whole Assembly. I give the opportunity to the Deputy Speaker to make a few comments.

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to express my humble acknowledgment in the role I've received today as Deputy Speaker. I will endeavour to work fairly with all members of the Assembly, Clerks, and staff in ensuring the business of the House is progressed and strive for mutual respect for each other and the institution. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — The House will now proceed with orders of the day. Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To request leave to move a motion to appoint a Deputy Chair of the Committees of the Whole Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move a motion to appoint a Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. The Government House Leader may proceed.

## MOTIONS

### Appointment of Deputy Chair of Committees

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That Mr. Muhammad Fiaz, member for the constituency of Regina Pasqua, be appointed to preside as Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That Muhammad Fiaz, member for the constituency of Regina Pasqua, be appointed to preside as Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To request leave to move a sitting adjournment motion.

**The Speaker:** — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move a sitting adjournment motion. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. The Government House Leader may proceed.

## Sitting Adjournment

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That when this Assembly adjourns at the end of the day on Thursday, December 10, 2020, it shall stand adjourned until recalled by Mr. Speaker upon the request of the government, and when recalled, Mr. Speaker shall give each member, if practicable, clear notice of such date and time; and further,

That when the Assembly reconvenes, the rules of the parliamentary calendar shall apply and the completion day of the session will be set in accordance with the rules.

I so move.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That when this Assembly adjourns at the end of the day on Thursday, December 10, 2020, it shall stand adjourned until recalled by Mr. Speaker upon the request of the government, and when recalled, Mr. Speaker shall give each member, if applicable, clear notice of such date and time; and further,

That when the Assembly reconvenes, the rules of the parliamentary calendar shall apply and the completion day of the session will be set in accordance with the rules.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

## SPECIAL ORDER

### ADDRESS IN REPLY

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

**Mr. Francis:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured and extremely humbled to have the opportunity to be the first to address you and the members of this House, offering not only my comments and support of the Speech from the Throne but to also have the privilege of moving the motion of support.

I would like to be the first to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election yesterday. We had six great candidates, including the member from Regina Coronation Park who served us very well as our previous Speaker. Your job will no doubt be difficult at times but rewarding as well, and I do wish you the best.

I would also like to welcome my colleagues both new and old,

government side and opposition side — whichever that is at the moment — on your recent election wins. It does take a lot of work and, more importantly, a lot of help from so many people to get here. Sincere congratulations to all and your respective teams. Also a big thank you and congratulations to all the management and staff at Elections Sask for conducting a very safe and well-run election period under extremely difficult circumstances.

I myself am very grateful to once again have the support of the people of Kindersley. And I'm excited to start what would be my first full term as their MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. The last two and half years has absolutely flown by. I know full well the next four may very well be difficult. I also know that this upcoming year is pivotal and very crucial to the future health and well-being of the province and its people. I am confident though that we as colleagues in this Assembly will do our very best to guide the province through this challenging time.

As I mentioned before, it takes a lot of hard work by a lot of people for us all to get here. I myself had so much great support. For me it begins and ends with family, and I would assume this would be holding true for most if not all of us. Without the support of our parents, spouses, kids, none of us could do what we do. So I want to thank my family and my wife, Karen, and my kids Dacey, Dylan, and Dexter for their love and support. I think they know that I threw myself into this business of politics for them, their future, and the future generations yet to come. I reflected on that once again hearing the Deputy Premier's remarks from our swearing-in ceremony when she reflected on exactly why she ran for the first time.

I also need to acknowledge my stellar campaign team that were instrumental in my re-election. They're young, they're bright, and they're ambitious. They're three of the strongest, most determined young ladies I've ever met. And yes, they held all the attributes that the candidate lacked, which made for a very balanced team.

My campaign manager was Marley Ervine. She's the first part of our one-two sibling combination, along with her sister, Monique Neigum. Even though Monique was just a new mom just a few short months ago, she still agreed to be our business manager. Both girls are certified professional accountants, U of S Edwards master's graduates that both worked for major accounting firms in Saskatoon prior to relocating to their hometown of Kindersley this past year. They also happen to be my nieces.

[14:30]

Their good friend and our family friend, Kayla Flanagan, agreed to be our office manager during the election. Kayla was also a new mom this year. She was on leave from her battery operator position so was available to help us out for the month. They all did a great job for me and, quite honestly, it was a lot of fun working with them for that month. And I want to formally acknowledge all the appreciation and all they've done for me in the constituency. I hope these three keep provincial politics on their radar. We certainly need young people like them to get involved down the road.

As MLAs, we are very aware of the constituency association executive's importance. Although the roles were changed quite a

bit from the last election because of COVID, they were still there providing guidance and resources. From financing requirements and decisions, to sign installs, they had it all covered. And I want to thank Keith, Isabelle, Connie, and Wanda for all you've done in the past and what you continue to do for the constituency.

My constituency assistants thankfully have agreed to stick with me for the next term. Their job has always been tough, but of course it's even tougher right now. Judy, Rita, and Crystal, thank you very much for continuing to help me serve the people of Kindersley. Hang in there. We're part of a good team and we will get through this together.

Getting through tough times together. I see that as a main theme of the Throne Speech. I cannot recall a time of more division in my lifetime. Our Throne Speech clearly encourages unity and respect for one another. I see it as a guide to getting us on the right path not just as a government but as communities across the province.

The first step on that path of course is to manage and get through our current health challenges. It will take a diligent and concerted effort. We've come so far and have done so well compared to other places because of the hard work and sacrifices we all made early on. I know many are fed up or over it, but we are getting so close to turning a corner.

Human nature draws us to focus on our own problems, wants, or needs. I find it best to think how others are coping day to day. Essential service workers, people in grocery and retail, front-line health care folks, first responders, firefighters, police — the list is lengthy. Think about them, their day-to-day versus yours. Think about and focus on the people you can help by following the guidelines instead of focusing on what you're missing out yourself.

As mentioned in the Throne Speech, let's draw on our determination, resilience, strength, and compassion for one another, no matter what side of the pandemic argument you are on or if you're somewhere in the middle. We don't have to look very far east or west to see that we are doing better than some other areas of the country. It's far from perfect here but we've been and continue to do a better job of protecting lives and livelihoods than most other provinces.

We know full well that there are financial and personal costs to shutting down the economy. Being the fiscal conservative that I am, I'm very pleased with our province's current financial position. Our fiscal foundation, as mentioned in the Throne Speech, is very solid. Statistically we are leading the nation in several important categories, and we are well positioned to be the first province to recover post-pandemic.

Some statistics: we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. Our merchandise exports are growing faster than any other province. Our provincial debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio is the best in the nation and is forecast to remain there among the lowest. We have managed to maintain the second-best credit rating in the country, a AAA, and our ag industry just pulled off one of the biggest crops on record and in record time.

We're the first province to table a budget and release a four-year

plan to get back to balance, and we are on track with that plan. That is not a fluke. It's sound fiscal management and policy that helps make that happen. Our government realizes that the provincial economy, while among the healthiest in the nation, is still in serious jeopardy and will need a boost to continue to the path to recovery. That is why we have not only proposed but have already implemented a detailed plan for economic recovery once we get on the back side of this pandemic.

We have, as mentioned, provided some immediate relief for the people of the province. The SaskPower rebate program, which was just mentioned, will save customers 260 million in the upcoming year. Everyone benefits from this. Very few government programs reach everyone. This one does. An important note on this is that the government is allocating the funding to SaskPower to keep it financially whole.

We're certainly hoping, and quite confident, that the home renovation tax credit will stimulate construction in trade sectors. That, along with the commitments made to build additional schools, hospitals, long-term care centres, highways, and new utility projects — all part of that plan. Part of our plan: a seven-and-a-half-billion-dollar infrastructure plan which will spur job growth and boost our economy.

As important as making investment is, ensuring that the money is well spent is just as important. Moving SaskBuilds to ministry status is a great step in achieving best value for our investment dollars. Adding procurement and information technology standardization to that ministry makes perfect sense. Streamlining and finding efficiencies in government operations continues to be a core value and dedicated focus of this government.

As a government that does not believe in undue interference into people's lives or businesses, we are very aware of the negative effects COVID and subsequent restrictions have had on people and people in the business community, especially small businesses. That is why we have focused on other measures first. In order for our economy to recover and grow, small business needs to be the driver as they employ hundreds of thousands of people across the province. Along with the temporary support programs like the small-business emergency payment, we have also committed to reduce the small-business tax by 2 per cent. Retroactive to October 1st and running till July of 2023, this will help small to medium-sized businesses weather the downturn.

We have also joined chambers of commerce and business organizations to promote and support local business. The \$6 million investment in this is a very valuable one throughout the year, but especially during this Christmas season. Since last spring I've seen this trend growing in my home community. People are once again realizing the importance of supporting local. Businesses are expanding their customer access using innovative marketing tools like social media, as well as offering pickup and delivery service — keeping us apart, keeping us safe. Adaptive and innovative, that is what Saskatchewan business people are. In these last few weeks prior to Christmas, please remember your small businesses are depending on you. Remember that they were there for us over the years as sponsors for our recreation and community events.

My constituency was one of the four large oil- and gas-producing

areas of the province and has been hit very hard by the global pandemic pressures as well as by destructive federal policies like the carbon tax. Our government is making efforts to help mitigate and relieve some of those pressures. We have extended expiring mineral rights by one year and have reduced the industry administration levy by 50 per cent for the fiscal year. The SaskPower rebate will also be a big help to producers, as electricity is one of their largest costs.

As much as I despise our federal government's energy policies, I do need to acknowledge their commitment to partner with us and provide 400 million to our accelerated site closure program. To date that program has engaged 250 Saskatchewan-based businesses, and estimated that up to 8,000 inactive wells and facilities will be cleaned up and more than 2,000 jobs created, and just as importantly, will remove that liability from the taxpayer.

During the election campaign we heard very clearly that a good number of our constituents are fed up with perceived unfair treatment from our federal government. Well aren't we all. That's why I was extremely happy to hear that our government will continue on with and wrap up the fight for our provincial rights. The appointment of the Legislative Secretary tasked with exercising and strengthening our provincial autonomy is an important move in the right direction, and I cannot think of a better person to be put in charge of that file than the member from Lumsden-Morse. No one in this House is a better fighter than him. Your job is important, sir, and we know you will represent us well and we are depending on you. We wish you all the best.

Autonomy is something this government has already been working toward. Our appointment of a provincial Chief Firearms Officer will be a great advantage dealing with the massively overreaching federal firearm legislation being proposed. Defending the rights of law-abiding firearm owners will always be a priority of this government.

We've also taken some steps to meet the commitment of sourcing our own markets, as our federal government has made some very controversial missteps on the world trade front. We will open three additional trade offices in the new year. We'll have provincial representatives working for us in Japan, India, and Singapore, in addition to the existing office already operating in Shanghai, China.

With my recent appointment as Legislative Secretary for Trade and Export Development, I'm very excited to play a direct role in maintaining and expanding our provincial trade base. I cannot think of a more important component in rebuilding our economy than the operation of this ministry, and I'm very grateful and appreciative for the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

Saskatchewan has what the world needs, what the world needs to pull out of a post-pandemic downturn. Food, fuel, and fertilizer will place us high on world trade lists. We plan to be ready, willing, and able to fulfill those world demands. As the Lieutenant Governor stated in his address, and I quote:

We are world leaders in agriculture, energy, mining, manufacturing and processing.

Saskatchewan is making the world a better place.



He is 100 per cent correct.

Just before I wrap up my comments and get to the motion, I just want to touch on something that I think is of utmost importance, especially right now, and that is leadership. As mentioned in the Throne Speech, there has been inspiring and exceptional leadership shown at every level. Times like this are when not only leadership but faith and fellowship in one another are tested to the limit. We have the right leadership. The voters of Saskatchewan loudly voiced who they feel is best capable to carry us through to a recovery. We all need to listen, trust, work with, and get behind that leadership as we move forward, and we need to put our own personal agendas aside for the sake of the most vulnerable, our health care staff, our essential service folks, each other, everyone, period.

To be 100 per cent honest, I'm not very comfortable speaking from this side of the House, nor wearing a mask while doing it, but these few petty sacrifices and inconveniences, as insignificant as they are, are pieces of the puzzle we need to contribute together to help get through this time safely. There are many sacrifices made every day by so many. Some are big. Some are small. But they all count.

So please think of others. Think of your family. Think of your neighbours. And please make every effort to follow the guidelines, as they can help change our case numbers and infection rates. So let's continue to do the little things that can save us from having to do far bigger things down the road. They all add up to make a really big difference for everybody.

Everyone's situation is certainly different. Some are doing well. Some are doing better than others. Some are doing not very well at all financially, physically, or mentally. No, we're certainly not all in the same boat but we're in the same storm, so we need to take care of one another. So please remember: do your best to be vigilant, tolerant, and be kind.

So again I'm thankful to have this opportunity to speak in favour of the Throne Speech. And I would like to put forward the following motion, which will be seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

To His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

I so move.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Kindersley, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Riversdale:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the

Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

[14:45]

**Mr. Friesen:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to stand in the House today and second the motion put forward by my colleague, the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Speaker, a few weeks into my new position as the MLA for Saskatoon Riversdale, I was in my third caucus meeting when I received a text summoning me to the Premier's office immediately following the end of our meeting. I felt like I was being summoned to the principal's office. As a new MLA, I wondered what I had done wrong. I made the walk up the stairs, and through the door, and the Premier asked me to come in and sit down. Anxiously awaiting what he would have to say to me, he asked me to second the Speech from the Throne. My demeanour was instantly changed. I can say I am absolutely honoured and privileged to be here today. Thank you to the Premier for this incredible honour.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer my congratulations to you in your election as Speaker of the House. I would also like to take a moment to congratulate all the newly elected and re-elected members on both sides of the House on your successful campaigns. Even though we may have a difference of opinion from time to time, we are all here for the right reason. We are here to make Saskatchewan a better place, a place where our children can be successful. I understand the work it takes to be nominated and more so to be elected. For myself, this was a six-year job interview.

Mr. Speaker, my involvement in politics started at an early age, whether I liked it or not. My parents were very involved with politics throughout their lives. As the youngest of five, I was brought along to deliver flyers and to go door knocking, possibly because they didn't have the money for a sitter, but more likely that they wouldn't trust me at home alone.

I learned the values of hard work, integrity, and the importance of helping others from my parents. My dad would always help the person at the side of the road to change a tire, give them a boost, or with a meal for the hungry. Even though money was tight, he always had a \$50 bill when he saw a genuine need. He felt it was better in their hands than his.

My dad would bring people and families who needed a hand up into our house on a regular basis without even telling my mother. Some of them lived with us for years. My mother was a true hero

with all the added meals, laundry, and entertaining, and yet I never once heard her complain. My dad hand dug the basement in the first house that I lived in on Avenue O South. My dad was not scared of hard work and neither am I.

Recently while door knocking in my constituency, I had the pleasure of chatting with the current owners of this home. They are under major renovations with a large addition to this once one-bedroom home. Sadly my father couldn't see this, as he passed away in 1998. I know he would be happy to see the revitalization that has been happening, and is happening, in my constituency with many renovations being done and new homes being built.

As a young boy I loved to tear things apart, see how they work, and see if I could improve them. At least I thought I was improving them. My passion started with bicycles, fixing my own and even some for the neighbours. I very quickly realized that I wanted to start my own business. At the age of 14, my father purchased a '69 Volkswagen bug and it didn't run. He mentioned if I could get it running, he would give it to me. My first job was to figure out what was wrong. I determined it required an engine and found one for sale for \$50. I was able to get the vehicle running, only to hear my dad say, it just runs so good your sister should have this car. So he gave the car to my sister. At least he gave me the \$50 back.

My passion for automotive had started in a huge way. Against my mother's wishes, my dad would let me buy my first car at the age of 15 and the fun began. Building my first engine when I was 17, I'll never forget my father saying, it runs rough, Son. I remember trying to explain, with the performance additions it's supposed to sound that way, Dad. In 1994 I received my Red Seal journeyman's automotive certificate and in 1995 I started my business. I've been extremely fortunate with a great clientele and staff over 25 years to be able to give back to my community.

Mr. Speaker, my mother had a great interest in politics as well. I'm happy to say she was at my first nomination. In 2017 I lost my mom to Alzheimer's. Even though she had only about a one-minute memory at that time, she remembered almost every day that I was running for the Saskatchewan Party and told me how proud my dad would have been. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I'm not the only one to walk up those steps of the legislature for the first time and just take a minute and reflect on everything and everyone that brought me here today. Again, what an honour to be here.

Mr. Speaker, I first began to think about joining politics back in 2014 when I was encouraged by my accountant, Tom Plishka. He saw something in me that I hadn't quite considered yet. Oftentimes he would refer to me as the member from Riversdale even though I wasn't quite ready yet.

This decision to enter politics was a team decision. I knew that I wouldn't be able to join into politics without my family's support, but thankfully they, like Tom, believed in me and saw a future here for me. I am grateful for the support as it has led to me being here today. The member from Riversdale is no longer a nickname; it's my new title, and I am honoured.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take some time to thank the inspirational people that helped. Even through a narrow margin of loss in the

2016 election, they remained committed to volunteer their time to campaign once again. This started right after the provincial election in 2016, taking what we had done right and wrong and planning to be more efficient and effective in my second run to represent the great community of Riversdale.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I'd like to thank my family: my fiancée Robyn Pelletier, who has cooked many meals and always been there for me, sometimes just to feed me and watch me fall asleep as I was exhausted; my three children Danielle, Morgan, and Christopher who supported my decision to run right from the beginning in 2014.

My two close and best supporters, Elias Nelson, who was my campaign manager, and Noah Kelleher, who did anything and everything along the way. These young men have become like two of our kids, and with the amount of time we've spent together in the last four-plus years. With Elias and Noah, we added Cameron Schwengler and Ross Gadzella to our core team.

I'd like to thank my sister Val Penner. I can't thank her enough. Val seemed to be trying to door-knock as many doors as I did. Val helped with the campaign in so many ways right since 2014. I'm pretty sure her husband couldn't wait for this campaign to end. I'm proud that every one of my siblings were a part of the campaign in some form as well as extended family.

There are three others that I should mention that have wanted to win Riversdale and worked to that end for many years: Jim Mcallister, Fred Ozirny, and Bert Sutherland. A heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers that helped me as we all had a common goal. I can't forget to mention all of the Sask Party staff helping with all the concerns that I received at the doors and helping me through the process. It takes a team to win an election and a team to form good government.

I'm immensely proud to be part of the Saskatchewan Party team. Mr. Speaker, I'm excited to part of a government that has a plan. We have a plan to balance the budget, which we do in our own households. So why would we not do this in government? We have a plan to build and strengthen our economy, which has been evidenced since 2007 when the great people of this province voted for change. This plan has created and will continue to create jobs in our great province. This plan has and will continue to generate revenue to do the things in our province that need to happen.

The opposition likes to talk about cuts and so do I. This government likes to cut ribbons: ribbons to 57 new schools since 2007, 28 major school renovations, cutting ribbons to new hospitals like the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, cutting small business tax, cutting our power bills, cutting ribbons to 14 new long-term care facilities with a 15th currently under construction, as mentioned in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, another thing this government has done a great job of is investing in our highways. Not too many years ago, we used to know when we drove into Saskatchewan with the poor quality of our roads. Although there is more work to be done, our record investment of over 9.8 billion over the last 12 years has been nothing short of amazing. Our growth plan includes a commitment to build and upgrade 10 000 km of highways, just another way we are looking ahead with consistent improvements.

For this I'd like to thank the members in our previous Saskatchewan Party governments for making our province move forward. That is one of many things this government does a great job of — planning for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to be part of this government that continues to work on growing our population. Since forming government in 2007, we have increased our population almost 170,000 with 130,000 of these being immigrants, 71 per cent of which were employed compared to 64 per cent nationally — over 77,000 new jobs. This is one of the best job creation records in our country.

In October of this year our unemployment rate was at 6.4 per cent, lowest in the country for the third consecutive month, well below the national average of 8.9 per cent. It doesn't stop here. Our growth plan includes creating another 100,000 jobs, growing our population over the next 10 years to 1.4 million.

Introducing the small-business tax rebate. Small businesses are key drivers of our economy. Small businesses contribute so much more to our province than just being part of our economy. They serve our communities, sponsor local events, and even give space for our local craftsmen and entrepreneurs to sell their products. This year has been especially tough on so many of our shops in the province, and I have seen how hard they have worked to keep their doors open for their loyal customers. They deserve this break and they deserve our support.

Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned before, many of us in this House are here today because we want a better Saskatchewan for our families. That is why our Throne Speech made significant commitments to helping life be more affordable here at home.

We know that we can do more to improve care and reduce financial burden on people with diabetes and their families, but covering the cost of an insulin pump for everyone in Saskatchewan who needs one under the age of 25 is a great first step. Another way our government is working to make life more affordable is by covering the cost of continuous glucose monitoring for children under the age of 18. Mr. Speaker, it breaks my heart to hear the stories of families having to check on their child at all hours of the night just to make sure they are okay. But as parents, that is what we do. We will always sacrifice what is needed to ensure our kids are okay, even if that means longer nights, early mornings. You can't put a value on knowing our kids are safe and healthy. I am proud to stand with the government that shares in this value. Covering the cost of these pumps will benefit about 600 children in the province and will likely give many parents a restful and peaceful sleep, knowing their kids are being taken care of.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, seniors are the backbone of our communities. They built the foundation that Saskatchewan stands on and it is our duty to take care of them. That is why our government is going to make life more affordable for our seniors by significantly reducing the cost of ambulance calls for seniors and increasing the maximum benefit under the seniors' income plan for low-income seniors.

It baffles me, Mr. Speaker, to think that before 2007, the benefit

was just \$90 a month and had been frozen for 16 years. It is encouraging to see this government take action to ensure our seniors are taken care of, unlike the previous party. We owe everything to our seniors and they deserve a life of dignity. We will continue to build long-term care homes, continue to add new staff as mentioned in yesterday's Throne Speech, and will continue to honour them. They built our Saskatchewan and we will continue to build on this foundation for future generations.

Another way we are giving back to this community is by a significant increase in the veteran service club support program. There are 160 Royal Canadian Legion branches in Saskatchewan, and many have had to make significant adjustments to their operations due to COVID-19. Clubs across the province serve as a safe haven for many veterans and their communities, whether they are open for social events, memorial ceremonies, or hosting fundraisers. They are the heart of many towns and cities in this province. I know this increase from \$100,000 to 1.5 million a year will ensure the services clubs can continue to contribute to the well-being of their members and our province for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I have shared my story here today and have spoken about making life more affordable in Saskatchewan. The Speech from the Throne, our investments, our commitment to this province, all run under the common theme of being strong — strong for your family, your communities, and for Saskatchewan. But I know, and many others will agree, sometimes it's hard to be strong. Sometimes you just need a little help. I'm especially proud to be part of this government. We have recently named a new Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. This is a serious issue, Mr. Speaker, and we as a government must do what we can to lend a hand out, just like my father did, to those who may need a hand up.

We have started by investing a record 435 million in mental health and addictions services this year. This makes up for 7.5 per cent of the entire budget. We have opened treatment spaces and beds across the province to help those who are struggling with drug addiction. We are also introducing initiatives that will align with our Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan, including a program to train a mental health first responder in every one of the province's 744 schools.

There is more to be done, Mr. Speaker, but it's a step in the right direction. To be a strong Saskatchewan, we must have strong communities. We are making strides toward that and will continue our efforts in supporting mental health and addictions services in our province.

I offer my congratulations to this new minister and vow to help this government continue its focus in mental health. This is a personal passion of mine. I have worked with youth for over 30 years and I have seen the effect mental health can have on so many. It feels good to be part of a government that sees this as a major priority.

Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up my remarks, I want to take this time to speak about what being a part of this government means to me. Fortunately my family has seen great success here in Saskatchewan and I know my kids will stay because of the Saskatchewan advantage. My parents had a wonderful life and received the best opportunity and care they could. This being my

first Throne Speech as an MLA seems fitting, as so many of its investments and promises will impact my life and my constituents' lives.

Investing in our economy is investing in our services. It is crucial that our economy continues to recover, and as a government we will do what we can to ensure that we remain on track for this. We are well positioned to recover. This summer we started the work. We announced a 7.5 billion, two-year capital plan to stimulate economic recovery. We created projects which created jobs, which brought people back to work.

And now we are putting forward this Throne Speech filled with investments, commitments, and action that will push our province closer to meeting our 2020 and 2030 goals. We are on the right track, and after this fall election it is clear that the province is on board. By focusing on jobs and our economy, our children and families are staying here and building their lives in our province. My hope is that all the members remember how we got here and who we serve and never to forget that.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today and be the seconder of the motion of the Speech from the Throne, and I will be supporting it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today, the first time I have the opportunity to rise in this Chamber since the election, to join in on the debate regarding the Throne Speech. It won't be a surprise to you or to other members of this Assembly that I will be moving an amendment at the end of my remarks and will be voting against the Throne Speech motion for many different reasons of which members opposite seem interested in. So I encourage them to continue listening, because I will be giving several different reasons why they should also be joining me and not supporting the Throne Speech motion as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity first to congratulate all of the new MLAs who have entered the Chamber, be it returning MLAs like myself, returning for the first time; those who have returned for the fourth or fifth time; and those who are newly elected for the first time. Mr. Speaker, I think every time it's an absolute honour. The role we serve here is incredibly important and it's one that I know all of us take very seriously, our ability to represent those who are in our constituencies and who do not have the opportunity to be voices in this legislature like we do, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, in your new role and to thank the member for Regina Coronation Park for the work that he did in your role for the last couple of years. As you know it's a very important role and, as the member from Regina Coronation Park knows as well, it's an incredible honour to be in that seat and I congratulate you in your new appointment.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who was involved in my campaign. It was a very strange campaign, as everyone else in here knows, but we were able to have a lot of fun through the process despite it being a challenge. In particular I want to thank those who are on my staff — Rick, Taylor, and

Jonah — for running an excellent campaign that, like I said, was also a lot of fun. I wanted to ensure that this election we took the time to enjoy ourselves and to have laughs along the way and to not take life too seriously, because so much seriousness was happening all around us. And I think we were successful in doing that.

And I also want to thank the members of my election planning committee, specifically the two members who have been around for the entirety of it. We've had some people come in and some people leave as roles dictated. But in particular Eric and Nathaniel, I want to thank them for their tireless work and countless amount of volunteer hours that they gave in the Regina Douglas Park re-election process.

Of course I want to thank the volunteers as well. As we all know, success in an election is not dependent on the work of the MLA and cannot be attributed to the work of the MLA or the candidate, but is because of the work of the people around them and the quality of the people around them. And we are forever indebted, all of us, to those who surround us and who support us. So with that, I want to thank all of the volunteers who joined in the campaign, be it with me on the doorsteps or picking up the phones or putting up signs or dropping off leaflets.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, there's a lot of roles that are important in an election campaign. All of them are incredibly valuable. And in a time like a global pandemic, it creates an extra challenge for volunteers who are pulled in many different directions personally and professionally on a good day, let alone in the middle of a pandemic, like I said. So for them to have given up some of their time to work with me is an absolute honour, and I'm incredibly humbled by the folks who did join me on the campaign trail.

I also want to thank my family, in particular my parents, for being involved in my campaign. I remember saying this in 2016. I say this again. I dragged them into politics reluctantly, I would say. We're not a particular political family, Mr. Speaker, but they've really taken on the role with gusto and helped out in many different ways. This time it was a little bit different than 2016, where their assistance was more on the home front, helping out with our kid at home and also helping put out signs as well.

In that vein I also would absolutely like to thank my spouse, Jared, for his support and assistance throughout the campaign. It was actually his first-ever experience in a campaign, which I would say was quite an eye-opening experience for him, the amount of work that it takes. And the amount of time that it takes you, as a candidate, away from home, I think was eye-opening, Mr. Speaker. But he handled it extremely well, especially since I left him home alone with a very active and very opinionated toddler for many evenings and weekends throughout the course of the campaign. I'm forever grateful to him because I know how much work that is, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank the people of Regina Douglas Park for giving me the honour of serving them and representing them. Whether they voted for me or not, I will work as hard as I can, absolutely tirelessly to continue to represent them in this role. It's not something that I take lightly, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank the other candidates that were involved in the campaign, in particular Nadeem Naz who ran with the Sask

Party and Victor Lau who ran with the Green Party. It was a different campaign. I never got the opportunity to actually see them face to face although I did see Victor on the doorsteps once. The times I did get to speak to them was quite wonderful, and I do hope they stay engaged in politics because I did hear some pretty phenomenal things about them as people on the doorstep, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank those who were my constituency assistants between 2016 and 2020, in particular Nathaniel and Taylor. Nathaniel was with me for about three and half years. Taylor actually took over right at the beginning of March, which I think you can assume was a very interesting time to start a new role, Mr. Speaker. I think she was in the office for about a week before we had to close the office down and start working remotely. So that's a difficult challenge for anybody, to have to learn a new role, to do so virtually, Mr. Speaker. And although both of them have left for other opportunities, I'm so proud of them and so grateful to them for the time that they've committed to the office, and I know they will do wonderful things. I'm looking forward to working with my new constituency assistant, Kelsey, in the next few weeks.

[15:15]

I also want to take the time to thank my colleagues on this side of the Chamber — I used to say this side, but now we've got folks from both parties on this side, so I don't even know — in this corner of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, who either retired or weren't successful last election, in particular, Yens Pedersen, Nicole Rancourt, David Forbes, Cathy Sproule, Danielle Chartier, and Warren McCall.

Every single one of them I learned so much from. I know they are so passionate about the province and worked incredibly hard in their roles, and to see those who didn't retire not come back was very difficult, Mr. Speaker, but I know that they continue to work hard for their communities, Mr. Speaker, despite not being here in the Chamber with us.

I also want to take the opportunity before I move on to the Throne Speech, to thank the front-line workers in Saskatchewan right now — those in health care, those in emergency services, but I would be remiss if I didn't include custodial staff, those who are delivering products to homes, those who are working in restaurants, and teachers and staff in schools, Mr. Speaker — for the incredible work they're doing under extreme, extreme distress is something that we need to remember, I think, in everything that we do right now and all of the work that we do and all the advocacy that we do, Mr. Speaker, that there are folks out there who are truly putting it all out on the line. And every single one of us as citizens of this province are incredibly grateful for what they're doing.

And speaking of that, I think that is a good segue into really what is on the front of minds of nearly every single person in this province right now, and that is the global pandemic, the health crisis that we're faced with right now. And when I look at the Throne Speech, I really see it as a missed opportunity to take seriously what is happening in this province today. Not what is happening in this province 10 months ago or even what the state of the province was in three months ago, but today, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing our numbers of COVID cases grow exponentially.

We're seeing contact tracers be overwhelmed. We're seeing teachers who are frustrated. We're seeing outbreaks in long-term care. We're seeing outbreaks in our correctional centres.

Yet the Throne Speech speaks little of that, Mr. Speaker. It seems to be completely ignorant of the reality that we're faced with in Saskatchewan right now. In fact in the Throne Speech it specifically says, "Saskatchewan has fared better than many places." We've the third-highest rates of cases per capita right now in the country, Mr. Speaker. And people are suffering, small businesses are suffering, yet we keep hearing all this talk about a strong economy, a strong Saskatchewan. And I'm very curious to know who is a part of this strong Saskatchewan because that's not what I'm hearing from people in this province.

And I want to particularly quote from a small business in Regina who put out a Facebook post four days ago. And this is indicative of a lot of small businesses we're hearing from in Regina and Saskatoon right now, Mr. Speaker, who are really, really suffering. Because you know, it's not good for the economy when a large portion of the population is being mandated to go into self-isolation because they're direct contacts or because they're COVID-positive. Cannot have a strong economy until we address our high rates of COVID.

This Facebook post is from a business in Regina called Bodhi Tree Yoga, posted it four days ago. So as you can tell, they're a fitness facility, Mr. Speaker. They say:

Important announcement:

Effective Monday, December 1st, Bodhi Tree Yoga is cancelling all in-person classes for the rest of 2020.

Like many other gyms and yoga studios, we have been struggling to pay our bills. We are staring down the barrel of a tough winter and do not want to close our doors. But it has become apparent that our provincial government will not make the difficult decisions that need to be made in the interests of public safety. That leaves it to us.

The people of this province are going to have to make the difficult decisions on our own. With no support or assistance from our provincial government, we are returning to live-streaming online classes only. Not because we want to. Because we do not see another viable option.

And then they go on to say:

It is my hope that our government will be inspired by our example and will take the kinds of measures required to actually support small local businesses. Providing emergency funding to ensure small, locally owned businesses can keep paying our staff and our rent/mortgages is the only thing that is going to help until we arrive at a wide-scale immunity through immunization.

Continually saying we need to protect the economy does not protect the economy. It is the virus, not the restrictions, that are killing our businesses. Until our governments step up, we humbly ask you all to support us in any way you can.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a stand-alone comment from one rogue business.

Now I could talk through all of my time on the areas that I've just touched on, but I want to focus on the current major crisis in one of my critic areas in particular, and that is the outbreak in our jails. Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic began in March, ministry officials did a good job of enacting proactive measures to reduce numbers in our jails. The amounts of inmates, both remand and sentenced, in our prisons dropped significantly. That was a coordinated work by Corrections, Justice, and prosecutions as well as our police forces, and I do commend them for that. The Ministry of Corrections also implemented quarantining new inmates, which we were happy to see. That resulted in no outbreaks in the spring.

However during the summer we saw a slide in the numbers of individuals entering the jails. They went back up again. Right now they're at almost pre-pandemic levels, which was massive overcrowding before the pandemic. It's been an issue for years in this province. And now what we're seeing in the jails is — like we always see in our prisons — what goes ignored in our communities and what our failings are in our communities always manifest themselves in greater proportions in our prisons.

So because of the larger spread of community contacts, the community spread of COVID in our jails, we've now seen it enter the prisons. Because of the overcrowding, inmates aren't able to isolate from COVID-positive inmates. So inevitably where we're at now, which is COVID-positive cases of inmates and staff in nearly every single one of our prison facilities and major, major problematic outbreaks like the one we're seeing right now in Saskatoon Correctional. Mr. Speaker, this is getting worse and worse. Many inmates are immune-compromised. Staff are afraid; they're worried for their families. Inmates are afraid; they're worried for their lives. We ask so many questions about why the reduction of inmate numbers didn't continue, knowing we were going to be entering a second wave in the fall. Why weren't inmates all getting access to PPE [personal protective equipment] and masks, Mr. Speaker? And where is the Minister of Corrections on all of this?

Mr. Speaker, if I had more time I would speak directly to some of the correspondence we've been receiving from stakeholders who are very concerned about this issue and very concerned about the possible deadly consequences of the lack of action by this government in the outbreaks that we're seeing in our prisons right now. I know that my colleagues who are eager to enter into this debate will do justice to not just this issue but all of the problems we're seeing right now in this province and the lack of action by the Sask Party government.

Like I said, because of this and all the reasons I mentioned, I will not be supporting the motion for the Throne Speech. But instead I move:

That the motion be amended by adding:

And that the Assembly does not support the agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne because it fails to provide the investments needed to support Saskatchewan people, their jobs, and the health care system they rely on in the face of COVID-19.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Regina University:

That the motion be amended by adding:

And that the Assembly does not support the agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne because it fails to provide the investments needed to support Saskatchewan people, their jobs, and the health care system they rely on in the face of COVID-19.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina University.

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure and remarkable privilege to rise and give my maiden address in this Assembly located on Treaty 4 territory and the homeland of the Métis. The joy and the honour of this occasion has not escaped me, Mr. Speaker, despite the unusual situation in which I and all of us give this address. But, Mr. Speaker, joyful and unusual are the best words to describe my election, and joyful and unusual are appropriate to describe the campaign and journey over the last six years.

I've always had political aspirations. The Young family lore recounts the ascent of Kim Campbell as prime minister in 1993. And when I heard the news over the radio at the already determined age of five, I burst into tears, rather inconsolable, as my aspirations to become Canada's first female prime minister had been foiled.

And while today, nearly three decades later, we find ourselves in times which may seem more contentious, less kind, more polarized, and less thoughtful than ever before, I do believe that politics is still an honourable calling and a service. And when we all remember this, but specifically the members opposite who find themselves in a unique and privileged position of power, we can do great things for this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as a young girl growing up in Eastern Canada, I never imagined that I would be rising here today on the wintry Canadian Prairies. And as a young woman who was first elected as a school trustee in 2012, I certainly never imagined having a child the night before the provincial election nor having my daughter squawking in the members' lounge behind me here today.

But it is a privilege and a joy to have her here with me today, not only because she's wee and only a month old and needs to stay relatively close to me, but because for too long, women have been kept out of elected office or prevented from doing their jobs due to pregnancy or motherhood. A baby does not prevent me from doing my job, Mr. Speaker, and I will endeavour to do my job, which is to serve the good people of this province.

And I intend to serve, Mr. Speaker, with a strength of character, integrity, good humour, and likely a frustrating commitment to honesty and to right and wrong. The experiences of my life have shaped who I am and who the good people of Regina University elected to this legislature.

Of course I would not be here today without the incredible work and strategy of my campaign team or the dozens upon dozens and dozens of volunteers who helped me by knocking doors, ringing phones, and occasionally making me stay home and stay off my feet. These people, Mr. Speaker, came out for a better

Saskatchewan. I certainly can't list everyone, but I would like to mention in particular my formal campaign team of Cass, Danika, Mathew, and Maria, who helped me run such a joyful and ultimately successful campaign.

[15:30]

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the former member, Tina Beaudry-Mellor, who was well liked by members on both sides of the House and gracious in defeat. I would also like to take a moment to pay tribute to my former campaign manager from 2016, John Millar, who died this Sunday. John spent many hours working in this building, hundreds of hours, and was committed to head-to-toe denim and the values of the New Democratic Party and in electing members in what is now Regina University.

I'd also like to take a brief moment to recognize my close friends, some of whom are in the legislature working today — Eric, Kent, Nicole, Nathaniel, and Deena — for their emotional support; and to my staff at my business for allowing me the grace to run in this election; and to all of the moms throughout the campaign who aided me with things like granola bars or winter jackets, despite my commitment to not buying one and thinking I could somehow manage with Saskatchewan weather to avoid a parka in October.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I should also take a moment to thank my wonderful, wonderful family who supported me, starting with my brother Brodie; my dear old dad who had not knocked a door since volunteering for Grant Notley, but knocked hundreds of doors, I think, despite his initial discomfort; and my wonderful husband, Taylor, who has been incredibly supportive, a true partner and now a co-parent, and has been here all day supporting me in holding sweet baby Hara, who I should also recognize and thank for being an easy fetus and a relatively sane baby thus far.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what makes campaigns unique, and certainly what made mine unusual and special, were the people who came out to help. Campaigns, like politics, are about people, and my people were young, old, black, Indigenous, trans, queer, male, female, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, retired, rich, poor, professional, and underemployed. And those aren't the factors that make them unusual, but what made them unusual was that the majority of our volunteers were first-time volunteers, and what was truly remarkable was that the majority were not New Democrats. They were rather newcomers to campaigning and they were out because they believe in a kinder and a more ambitious province here in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm a young woman. I'm a business owner. I'm a daughter. I'm the eldest of three and I'm someone who's experienced both the privileges and the challenges of life. I grew up in a family of economic boom and bust, and have lived with the anxiety of scraping together money to buy food or pay for transit. I attended one of the best universities in the country, but I did so with tens of thousands of dollars of student loans and a part-time job to accompany full-time studies. I've had family members on social assistance struggle with addiction. And I've experienced the helplessness and terror of having a loved one thrown into a woefully inadequate mental health system.

My experiences are not unique, Mr. Speaker, and indeed they are shared by many in this province. And this is a remarkable

province, Mr. Speaker, a province of small communities, warm people, and opportunity. But it is a province with challenges. And with this I will launch into the slightly more partisan response to the Throne Speech part of my remarks.

This is a province where the government has celebrated their response to a global pandemic while numbers skyrocket and more and more people die. And to quote Warren McCall, a former member, friend, mentor, and much funnier bard than myself, "This isn't the first time nor will it be the last time that the truth got in the way of a good Sask Party story." And now this matters not just for cheap partisan points, but because when people do well, the economy does well. And, Mr. Speaker, for the economy to do well, people need to do well.

This is a province where the government waddles about and bedecks itself in their economic record, but sadly, Mr. Speaker, the emperor has no clothes. This is a government that believes that it is right and it is just and it is the sign of a successful economy where people work 40, 50, or 60 hours a week and yet they rely on food banks to feed their families. This is a government that fetes their unemployment record while the people of Saskatchewan bolster those numbers by working two or three jobs to afford themselves what little economic security and dignity they can.

This is a government that doesn't care that it has the lowest minimum wage in the country and has somehow convinced itself that people working full time should be living in poverty. It's especially shameful, Mr. Speaker, when most of the workers we know who earn minimum wage are women and women with children.

This is a government that feigns support for small businesses while leaving \$18 million of committed support on the table and, through their own pigheadedness and blind commitment to their own mythology, refuses to support businesses operating at 50 per cent, 30 per cent, or 25 per cent capacity, preferring instead to slowly bleed them dry. And this is a government that delights in championing the economy and jobs but somehow forgets to care about jobs when people are locked out or laid off right before Christmas just because they happen to be union members.

And none of this is to mention the tragedy of our child poverty, hunger, and mortality rates. And, Mr. Speaker, you can't have a healthy economy or a successful future if your children are sick, starving, and dying at the highest rates amongst provinces. And it remains a deep shame for all of us, Mr. Speaker, that we have the highest rates of domestic violence, and a budget this year that included no additional funding to address this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I begin to serve in this role, I'll do my best to be guided by common sense and basic decency and hopefully a sense of humour, and most importantly, the memory of conversations I had on the doorstep, especially those conversations with former Sask Party voters. I won't forget the out-of-work and near retirement oil and gas worker who was laid off just a little bit too close to retirement, and who is now worried that his retirement won't be what he pictured and worked towards but rather, as he has been unable to find a new job in the past six years, be spent watching his comfort and quality of life deteriorate.

I'll remember the conversation with the Chinese immigrant who was sickened by the racism she was now facing 15 years after moving to the province and 25 years after moving to Canada, as more of her colleagues, themselves facing economic insecurity, began to tell her that she and the other new Canadians were taking their jobs.

I'll remember the numerous mothers concerned with the lack of consideration for child care and safe classrooms, and new and expecting mothers unable to access the prenatal care they had hoped for. I'll remember the staunchly Christian family raising their children to walk towards reconciliation and unable to vote for a party that wouldn't walk across the front lawn.

So, Mr. Speaker, here today I will be supporting the amendment moved by my good, dear friend, the member from Douglas Park, and not the original motion before the Assembly. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

**Hon. Ms. Eyre:** — Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election. Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have been re-elected in October and to stand here today, over four years since I made my maiden speech back in 2016. And I remember being full of ideas and energy and so proud to have been elected to serve alongside the former premier. And I'm still full of energy and full of ideas, Mr. Speaker, and proud again to serve under the new mandate with the current Premier.

Mr. Speaker, how can it already be three years ago last month that I gave one of four send-off speeches to the former premier at our party's convention, another true honour. Time flies. I would like to sincerely welcome new members on both sides of the aisle to this intense adventure and to the great privilege of serving the people of Saskatchewan during this extremely challenging time and beyond it into recovery. The people I serve are in beautiful Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota, one of only a few urban-rural constituencies in the province. It was my pleasure to door knock and connect with constituents and their families, both in and out of the campaign, and to hear from them directly. It is always so affirming of everything we want to do and to achieve here to hear from the common-sense, earnest, decent people of this province.

I want to thank Dustin Clark, my wonderful campaign manager and friend, and Carrie, also Doug and Justin Ulrich and Garry Derenoski who showed up like magic people every day and every evening to knock with me. And of course my executive, Allan, Jim, Joan, Brenda, and Brent Banda. Also Senator Tkachuk for your friendship and support, and every single volunteer, every household that took a sign, and every donor to the campaign. I'm currently in the process of personally hand writing almost 300 thank you cards to each and every one of you. And it's a nice problem, but it's quite a long list.

Mr. Speaker, since door knocking was allowed again at the end of July and into the election, COVID of course was the major preoccupation, followed then by back to school. But it was the economy that loomed largest over all conversations. One business owner told me that he was in favour of mandating masks indoors. Why? Because he said he could not afford to shut down again.

I also spoke with energy and resources workers, one who is no longer working at a nearby mine, whose wife, a small-business owner, was suddenly the only breadwinner for their family of four — lots of economic subtext there — and another energy worker who was back on the job with a service company who had been contracted under our well abandonment program, so that was good news.

Mr. Speaker, I talked to teachers who themselves found it challenging to go back to work if their children couldn't go back to school, parents who said their children had tuned out of remote learning and were struggling academically, students who missed their friends and the activities that they loved. And that has struck me a lot these past few months, the effect all this has had on young people. They have only one young life, and this pandemic has been hard on them and all their energy and drive to live it to the limit. At the same time, of course, we have all worried as children of our elderly parents, protecting them, and some tragically have had to mourn parents and others who have been lost. And our hearts break for them. For everyone in terms of lives and livelihoods this has been such a challenging time.

Mr. Speaker, that challenge on livelihoods certainly applies to the energy and resources sectors. In our mining sectors even before COVID there were, let's not forget, rail strikes, rail blockades. There were layoffs at potash mines. And the potash sector, while generally stable, this past year hasn't been immune from global market cycles and disruptions, similarly with uranium. The oil and gas sector, of course, faced the perfect storm with COVID and the OPEC-plus [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries plus] price war.

And perfect storm is saying something. There were major challenges in the oil and gas sector last year. I did a lot of calls during the spring and summer months, a lot of stakeholder round tables, some with my fellow MLAs from oil and gas areas. And some of those calls were very humbling. Saskatchewan people are pretty stoic. They don't want to complain. They don't want to ask for things. But during this time there was a lot of pain, and that came across.

And obviously the spring and summer in particular had a big impact on a lot of smaller communities. The oil and gas sector has had such a positive impact on communities. Companies have sponsored everything from rinks to choir programs. Companies hire summer students. You name it. And there is a great trickle-down of activity when things are rolling. As the sector goes, so go many of these communities. And when times are tough it has a true, real impact. We've seen that impact this past month unfortunately with layoffs at Evraz in Regina. More are feared. And our hearts go out to affected workers and their families particularly at this time of year.

Mr. Speaker, policies matter. In this case pipeline policies matter. And they have an effect on people's lives, on people and their livelihoods. Positions matter. Even casual positions, such as the new member for Saskatoon Nutana's offhand remark, "instead of pipelines we need to embrace . . ." whatever it was. Or the member for Regina University's simple like of a tweet announcing the layoff of Alberta energy workers.

[15:45]



We stand with those workers, not just when it suits or when it's this pipeline but not that pipeline. Of course we stand as well with innovation and diversification, and to that end we've been making our way through the periodic table these last few months with exploration project announcements around hydrogen, helium, lithium, not to mention developing mining exploration projects for copper and gold as well as non-periodic table diamonds.

In August we announced a rare earths processing plant which has significant economic and geopolitical potential. Bottom line: we want to build on and complement what we do well, but not at the expense of the existing energy and resources sector and the workers and operators who are already being innovative and diversifying. Colleagues have heard me quote many times this great factoid, that if every country in the world that extracts oil and gas extracted it the way we do here in Canada, global greenhouse gas emissions would instantly fall by a quarter.

In terms of incentives for R & D [research and development] and for infrastructure for new projects, Energy and Resources offers to the sector transferable royalty credits. And importantly, government money follows; it does not lead. So only once projects are up and running does the percentage of credit transfers actually flow. And that government investment is recouped through royalties over time, which is important because we always have to be mindful of being sound economic stewards of tax money, whether it's provincial or federal.

In terms of recovery, Madam Deputy Speaker, and on top of the sound and very real potential of the projects that I've listed, it was a significant announcement during the provincial campaign that power rates will be reduced for one year for all customers, whether residential, commercial, or industrial. This will have a significant positive impact on the energy and resources sector and allow operators to invest or reinvest much-needed capital.

We are proud of our well abandonment program. With funding announced by the federal government in June, we immediately set to work administering it with the first goal to get service sectors back to work and to take the time to make sure that procurement is done Sask-first. The program has avoided many of the pitfalls encountered in neighbouring jurisdictions and is regarded as pragmatic, efficient, and fair.

At the last budget in March we announced an export incentive, also based around transferable royalty credits, specifically designed around infrastructure — we hope pipeline infrastructure — to leave no stone unturned when it comes to projects that could help egress, help get oil to tidewater. Many challenges in that regard remain in the regulatory sphere certainly: the federal carbon tax, Bill C-69. Those challenges have been well documented.

But on the horizon now is the proposed federal clean fuel standard, which sounds great. Everyone likes clean fuel. But this regulation, which aims to reduce the carbon content in all fossil fuels, is not being properly debated in the federal parliament because it's a regulation. There's been next to no consultation on it with provinces. The federal data is weak and outdated, which is another serious issue with methane regulation. And in Canada, there is simply not enough sufficient renewable fuel infrastructure to make such a massive move in this direction at

this time.

So if this goes through, we will end up having to import massively from the US [United States], which will help US workers, but hurt our own. This second carbon tax will be applied on top of the federal carbon tax, on the same emissions. It is estimated it will cost Canadians 15 to \$20 billion a year in higher household gas bills, higher prices at the pump, and about 15 per cent higher fuel costs for industry.

Is that what we want? To further cripple people at this critical time, our sectors, our workers? Because make no mistake — this fuel standard will mean significantly higher costs for the oil and gas sector and the mining sector. I'm speaking to colleagues from Alberta and Ontario later today, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I hope we can present a united front on calling for a pause on these regulations until more real consultation is done with provinces. I've also repeatedly raised these concerns with federal Minister O'Regan and I'm grateful that, despite our differences, we can talk and discuss things because that is so important.

Finally, Mr. . . . Madam Speaker — I apologize, Madam Deputy Speaker — I'll come back closer to home. I want to welcome my new constituency assistant, Betty Anne Stevenson, to the job. She is well qualified, and we'll be a great team. And I want to thank my team here in Regina. We were sad to lose Jennifer Clarke to the Minister of Finance's office, but we've welcomed Krista Heisler. Thank you to Sam Sasse, Cole Zawislak for your great work. And as always, my formidable chief of staff, Jeremy Brick, who's a wonderful ambassador and so bright and so gracious under pressure.

I want to thank my family. My parents, Sigrid and Wayne, who I love so dearly. How lucky I am to have them, and that we have each other. And my little Max, who's 15 so actually not so little. I'm so proud of him and of his passion for life. Never lose that, darling. We must remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there are many working parents in this Assembly and have been for some time. It is not a new phenomenon and we do what we do, working, each of us within our own personal circumstances because it matters to do this job.

Many of us, Madam Deputy Speaker, have been watching *The Crown* and will know the line stated by the talented Gillian Anderson playing Margaret Thatcher: "God needs no faint hearts for his ambassadors." I believe that, and that that notion of boldness should, in our own personal way, guide us in terms of what we aim to achieve here and to make a difference in this place. So we've got this, Madam Deputy Speaker. We will recover and Saskatchewan's richest possibilities, our people's great resourcefulness, will see us through.

I support the motion moved so eloquently by the member for Kindersley and seconded by the equally eloquent member for Saskatoon Riversdale, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Melfort.

**Mr. Goudy:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am delighted to have you as the one that I am able to speak to for this motion today, and just congratulations on your position. You are a classy lady that we all appreciate and look forward to serving

us well.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this morning when I woke up I looked in my closet for what I was going to put on, and there was that green tie of Kevin Phillips hanging where I've got it so that I see it in the morning when I open it up. In reality, up until this day I served on behalf of a good friend. So this morning was a time I prayed for April. I prayed for all of the people that have missed Kevin over these last two and a half years, and I thought of all that I have learned in this time in filling in for him.

This is an interesting day. It was supposed to be, according to my plan, the first time I would speak to the Throne Speech and I would have been joining with a lot of my colleagues. This would have been my first opportunity, but it was a different plan that God had for all things. And as I look at those last two and a half years, I've had an opportunity to serve on his behalf.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I picked a different tie this morning to wear. And this tie also has significance in my life. It may look like those are stars on my tie. Every time I put it on I think, you know, it looks a bit like an American tie but really what's on this tie is starfish, and these starfish have significance. And the Justice minister, oftentimes you'll see a pin on his lapel. He has a starfish as well that means the same thing to him that mine do to me.

And I heard a story once of a young boy who was standing on the beach after the storm came through and the beach was littered with starfish. His friends were playing, fooling around. And an old man came up to that young boy and was talking to him because he had seen the young boy spending his morning throwing starfish back into the ocean. And they were talking for a bit, and the older man said to this young boy, you know, why are you wasting your time here, why don't you just go and play with those other young kids. And he said, you know, if you look up and down the beaches here, you're not going to make any difference. So that young boy picked up a starfish and he looked at the old man and he said, well you know what sir, I bet you it'll make a difference to this one. And he threw it back into the water.

So you know, as I was reading through this Throne Speech I was thinking of the role of government, what it really is. It's to serve the people and to make a difference. And you know, there's four groups that I see have worked together so that this document isn't just empty words and empty promises. I see government. I see communities. I see families. And I see God. And as I read through this, it's been a joy to be able to be a part of some of the committees that see the need in our province. It's been a pleasure and as all of the other MLAs have had the opportunity to go to the doors of our constituents and hear what is on their hearts, what's on their minds, what are their needs, what's their advice. And so I would like to touch a little bit on those four aspects of a solid, what I would call a hope-inspired, hope-filled document that speaks well for the future of our province.

So I'd start with the government, and first of all say to all of the new MLAs, most important thing for every MLA is the CA [constituency assistant] that they have. Somebody has said to me before, I phoned and I talked to your secretary. And I always make sure that they realize that's actually not my secretary. That's the lady who keeps me in line, and that's the lady who's probably more important than I am to our constituency. So Peggy

Gordon is the lady back in our constituency who is our main CA. And she served under Rod Gantefer. She served Kevin Phillips, and she's serving alongside of me. And I just want to say that if it wasn't for Peggy, my world would be a different world filled with stress and difficulties, and that she has done a great job.

The other CA that I do have part-time that looks after the office when Peggy is away is April Phillips, Kevin's wife. And I truly appreciate her friendship. The third one is — actually it's a guy — his name is Bart Bessey. And back in Kevin's day of serving as MLA — I'll never forget — he said, Todd, if I need some piece of advice I go to Bart Bessey. When you're the MLA, he says, you need to befriend Bart Bessey. So Bart retired as one of the employees with SaskPower and I went to him and said, Bart, would you work part-time because you are far more capable and far more informed of some aspects of government than I am. And if you would serve alongside of me, go out to the RMs [rural municipality] and into the country at times, I'd love it. Bart has been just a great friend and support. So I would encourage every MLA, make sure that you get the right CA.

Beyond that, when I look at government, Madam Deputy Speaker, I see the importance of having guiding principles to guide us as we move forward. And so one of the documents that I love to pull out regularly is "Guiding Principles" of the Saskatchewan Party. And you know, it may not seem very exciting but when I read that through, I think, you know what, that the guidance that those men and women had when they drafted that document was, as it says in the back of our Throne Speech, I believe that that is divine providence that has guided, as the Sask Party has been the government of power in Saskatchewan.

When I see things like . . . I believe it's number 5 where it says, democratic reform to keep government responsive to the people that it serves. That's what we were doing as we were going door-to-door. Not just asking, can I get your vote at the next election? It was, you know, here I am. I'm serving as your MLA or I'm desiring to serve as your MLA moving forward. What are some of the concerns that's on your heart? What are some of the things that you would like to see change in this province? And you know, that's a guiding principle of this current government.

[16:00]

And when I look through this document, I see examples of where people in this province said, we need to improve this. We need to add this. We need to subtract a little taxes so that we can give a little breathing room. And when I read through this document, I can see the people who were speaking with me at their doors were heard by this provincial government. We have a Premier who was appointed by the people of his party to be our point person. He has the character and the values that line up with the Saskatchewan Party's guiding principles. And as he and the cabinet lead us, and as the people guide us, we have come to a place where a lot of the things that I heard at the door have been fulfilled and are going to be fulfilled over the next few years in this province.

One of those that was really near and dear to my heart — the Premier gave me the opportunity to serve on Human Services Committee and actually with yourself, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I think you will remember that day when we were sitting in

the room, and parents with children who had diabetes were lobbying us to add some of the things that we see in the Throne Speech.

And I'll never forget that day. I certainly thought more highly of the Health minister at that point to see how difficult it is to have a limited budget. And yet, you know, as I believe Rod Gantefer would put it, you have a mile of fence but only a half a mile of paint. And you know, as different family groups and community groups would come lobbying our government to put in new supports, it was so difficult to be able to say, well, we'll certainly bring that before the minister and we'll certainly bring that before our government and we'll see what we can do.

To see in our Throne Speech, "We will cover the cost of an insulin pump for everyone in Saskatchewan who needs one." You know, COVID-19 spreads, but so does hope. COVID-19 is contagious, but so is hope. And you know, when one parent is able to say to his neighbours or his friends, you know, we lobbied the provincial government and we said we need insulin pumps for our children, and more importantly than that, this continuous glucose-monitoring system.

I remember the parents saying, you know, sometimes we put our children to bed . . . And I've been a young parent thinking, oh my goodness, is my kid . . . he's sick, maybe got the croup. You're putting him down, you've got the monitor on, you're doing your best to be a good parent — is my child going to be all right through the night? And so these continuous monitors for glucose are going to be provided by our government for those children who are in need in this province.

Six hundred children in Saskatchewan will be affected by this statement in our Throne Speech. To me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's one of those starfish. You know, we can't make a difference for everyone all at once, but we sure can to those who are in need.

The other thing you and I had heard too, the autism spectrum disorder, you know, funding for those families with those children.

I see some of the other things that we heard of. Seniors. At the doors, seniors. Certainly they're in this Throne Speech. Watson, Saskatchewan, I know the mayor there. She would love me to bring up the fact that, you know, she has been lobbying for specific things and pushing for specific things. You know what brings hope? It's when you see somebody who's further up the ladder in the line because they have more need than we do. In Watson, Saskatchewan they are receiving a long-term care facility, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I see that and it brings hope because it shows this government, yes, we know the needs that are out there. We can't provide everything all at once, but we are certainly moving the football forward. So I appreciate that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some of the other things that I heard at the doors was, we can't in Saskatchewan just keep depending on Ottawa to look after all of our needs. We need to be able to, and as was said by our member from Kindersley very well, we put the right person as the Provincial Secretary, the member from Lumsden-Morse. This month the Premier, it says in this document, appointed a

Legislative Secretary with the job of examining how Saskatchewan can exercise and strengthen its autonomy within the federation. I heard that at door after door after door.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is what this government, who have a guiding principle that we have democratic reform to keep us responsive to the people that we serve, that is the kind of government that we serve. That is the group that is working together with the communities and the families and with our God to serve faithfully the people of this province. And I am very proud to be a part of . . . as the member from Kindersley said, we can no longer say, this side of the House. We're all together.

And I'd just like to make a statement about that. You know, I cut my hair by myself quite regularly. You can probably tell. It's getting quite thin. It doesn't take as long. Actually it's harder to cut your hair when it gets thin than when it's thick. But I cut my hair by myself, and you know, there's times when I'll walk out in public and I'll have some uncut strands, and somebody . . . And you've seen it yourself, maybe on me, maybe on somebody else who cuts their own hair, but you can always tell a guy who cuts his hair. Every once in a while there's some strands that are loose in the back.

You know why that is? Because we all have blind spots. And so this government is not just the one that used to just sit on that side. We also have an opposition who serves our Queen as well and serves our people, and sometimes there are some things that we don't see. There are some blind spots. And so we have to say that we also appreciate the official opposition, but the guiding principles of the Saskatchewan Party that is in government have allowed us to get to this place where there's hope in this province.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we've got a government that's working together with communities, families, and God. And I just want to touch quickly . . . Does anybody know when I started because I hope I don't go overtime.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, communities. I just want to mention something. You know, one of our guiding principles as the Sask Party is that we're a smaller, less intrusive, more efficient government. The number 2 one says that we are working together with private industry as the economic driver to stimulate our economy. So we're smaller, less intrusive, and we have a partner for the economy, to drive, to earn the wealth, and create the wealth that's able to provide all these services that we need to give to our citizens and keep our infrastructure in place.

So socially though, if we're a smaller and less intrusive government, who is it that we're working with? I would present that that's communities and families. They are the social driver of this province.

So when I look at some of the things that we are wanting to do, one of the beauties of this document is that we appointed a new minister of remote and rural health also as the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. That is one thing that we are hearing at all the doors: we need to do more for mental health and addictions. And so this government was responsive to the people that we serve and we appointed a Minister responsible for Mental Health and Addictions.

Can the government be the lone soldier to solve the mental health

and addiction problem in this province, Madam Deputy Speaker? I would say that, no, if we're depending on the government to solve the problems in society, we are going to be waiting a very, very long time. But when government works together with the communities, working together with the families, and our God, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are going to move the needle and we will see hope in this province to help deal with mental health and addictions.

So I have two men in my life that I am accountable to. One is Mark Jago. He's a super good friend of mine . . . And not this member who's pointing to himself. And also Dr. Robert Steffen. So these two men in my life, we meet quite regularly and we're honest with each other and we encourage each other.

So I was talking to them about the government's desire to work with the communities and the fact that we need help in dealing with mental health and addictions. So Dr. Steffen said, you know what? I think we might be able to provide some help with that in a way like an AA [Alcoholics Anonymous], starting a mental health support group in our community. So Robert Steffen and Mark Jago started looking for a location, started looking for content, and they found something that was called Emotions Anonymous, Madam Deputy Speaker. And so they set out on their own dime and their own time and they started a support group in my home community.

One of the ladies that showed up at that mental health support group was Laura Alexander. And here I have a Facebook post from the Saskatchewan Health Authority. And Laura showed up one evening, and it says here:

Hope — in a time of uncertainty and darkness  
By Laura Alexander

I was inspired [she says] by a leader from the Emotions Anonymous Group I attend in Melfort, to spread the work and bring it to light . . . literally!

She goes on to explain how she asked if she could hang hope up in a window. I was talking to her husband later. He said, she owes me a pair of pliers. But she got the Christmas lights. She got the permission. She went out in a stormy night, put up H-O-P, and then the next shift she put an E on the end, just to put some kind of symbolism of hope up at the hospital.

She goes on to explain how her co-workers are more than just friends and co-workers; they're family. She went on to explain how the support that she has within her community helped her to be able to deal with her mental health issues. She is a hero in my book, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's people like her and Dr. Steffen and Mark Jago that are making a difference in this province as a community standing together with the people who are in need.

Another example of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, was my brother-in-law, Kade Martin. I'm a little jealous of this guy. He's everything to everybody. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, Kade Martin, when he saw some of the businesses shutting down in our community, he had an idea and said, you know, why don't we do what we can to help out.

So he went to one of the businesses that was hardest hit, which

was the movie theatre in our community, and he said, would you mind if I put a Facebook post out there. Why don't we have family movie nights at home but we can buy our popcorn and our condiments from the movie theatre? And so the owner, a good friend of ours, and his wife said yes, absolutely. So what they did was they opened up. They say, we'll open from 5 until 9 Friday night and Saturday night. By the time 9 o'clock came, Madam Deputy Speaker, they had to keep the doors open because so many people from the community were coming to support our local movie theatre.

I think I must be getting close to the end of my time, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I just want to close with this. Oh boy, I haven't even said my wife — a great wife, family. We all have families, whatever our family may look like, Madam Deputy Speaker, our government, our communities, and our families working together for the people of this great province.

I just want to mention my wife quickly. She has been there for me. She has been my rock, and she's at home today with our kids. I appreciate everyone, all the doors that we knocked. The support that she has been for me, Madam Deputy Speaker, has been immense.

And the last thing I want to mention is our God. And when I see in this document:

May divine providence continue to bless our province and guide this Assembly in all of its deliberations.

God bless Saskatchewan.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we talk about food, fuel, and fertilizer. And I would say that those things were given to us providentially by our God. And today I just want to thank him for that. And one other thing. There's family, friends, and faith that are a gift from God to us.

And so I want to say that I will be standing and supporting this motion that the MLA from Kindersley has put forward, and I'm proud to be a part of this government. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Makowsky:** — Well thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's so wonderful to be back at the legislature after an election cycle here. I guess you never know if you're going to make it back. There's always doubt there, of course, any time you go into an election, as I mentioned. But very, very happy to be back and representing the people of Regina Gardiner Park once again here in the legislature, my third election. And maybe I'll talk about that in just a second here.

I haven't been up in a while speaking about things going on in my constituency. It's been one of those things where schedules differ and whatever, or maybe the Whips aren't interested in hearing what I have to say, or my colleagues, so I'll take notice

on that, Madam Speaker. But it's a pleasure to get up and put together a few words on behalf of again, the folks in Gardiner Park, about the Throne Speech put forward by this government.

[16:15]

This is certainly a time of thanks, and as I mentioned, I'm thankful to be back, but also I have a lot of people to thank for being back in this wonderful building, Mr. Speaker. And like the other members . . . I've listened to their speeches previous to mine, and a tough act to follow and outstanding speeches. And everybody has all worked very hard to be here. The member from Riversdale said he'd worked for six years straight just to earn that seat, and well deserved and earned. And that is something to behold there.

And many people worked so hard. Everybody worked hard to be here. And I've always considered myself to be a competitor, Mr. Speaker, and I guess there's a little bit of competition here. And I always say, competition always makes you better. Even if you're not successful, it makes you better. And a lot of people got better. And hours and hours on people that were successful, people that weren't. But it's a real honour to see that work. And when people care a lot, they put in that competition, and it's obvious here by the faces I see back and the new folks.

And obviously we're in a different situation here and I feel a little bad I haven't . . . It's obviously very difficult times for so many in the province. This set-up here, how we went through the campaign. Some of my new colleagues, I haven't even seen their faces in person. And so boy, what an interesting situation. And certainly there's difficulties all around. This situation is a very minor and trivial one compared to what's all going in our province and our country and right across the world right now.

So before I got off on my tangent, I wanted to give some thanks. And of course I thank, for the reasons I got here, my campaign team, of course. So many people worked so hard, selflessly. Everybody's going to say that, I know, but I feel I have to. I won't mention too many by name because, of course, I'm going to forget a few and then afterwards I'll feel terrible about that.

But it was great to have so many people quite a bit younger than I. It's great, that youthful enthusiasm. They care about their province and they care about seeing a certain sign. And I'm sure it's on all campaigns. They want to see this philosophy or this platform or this Throne Speech — that sort of idea — be part of the government. And it's wonderful when you see youth getting involved in such a strong way.

Of course there are some older folks too. And they put on so many miles and boy, I just can't thank them enough.

I know I'm getting older now, Mr. Speaker. I certainly felt it in the old hips and the knees as we were going through. And the unfortunate part, I didn't notice a significant weight drop, which was what I was hoping for. A lot of extra work, but the calories didn't come off this time, Mr. Speaker. They don't melt away the older you get, so that's the way it is, Mr. Speaker. So you know, it's a real pleasure being back again. I'm thankful for those folks that helped me and couldn't . . . well obviously wouldn't be anywhere close to here without their significant efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly have to thank my family. Of course my kids are getting older and they're involved in different things and they have different interests, of course. And as they get a little older, I think they get a little less interested in what Dad's up to. Dad's not quite as cool anymore but — I never was cool, unfortunately — but they are certainly, you know, they're getting older and they're dealing with things.

And I have a son in university now, and obviously things are different there and competitive sports have obviously been sidelined a little bit here, of course, and missing out on some of those important things, those experiences, those things you learn as you grow up and you go through the sporting realm. The time frame as you go through high school is brief as it is, and when you miss a season or a chance to play, it has those ripple effects as we go on.

And as I mentioned before, there's so many people that have been affected, obviously, in major ways. This is sort of one of those minor ways we talked about. I do have a family member contributing in a major way to the efforts on the COVID side of things. I have a spouse who is a registered nurse and that's always a very, very challenging time at the best of times, when things are going smoothly. Of course we're not there right now as a province.

Mr. Speaker, I talked a little bit about competition and how it is. And you always look at the results of your particular area and, you know, how you were able to do and, you know, kind of look back at the numbers a little bit. I found it kind of interesting that I was able to — again, not because of me, because of a lot of hard work by a lot of great people — I won. We won by the exact same number of votes as the last time, the exact same number. Things changed a little bit at the end there. But I'm pretty sure the last time I looked, and I think it was accurate, 1,800 votes exactly, 2016 and 2020. Of course the numbers . . . different votes. The number of votes was different, the third and fourth parties were different, all that. But anyway, it added up to the exact same thing so that's kind of an interesting thing. It's kind of one of those weird things.

The other interesting thing, I guess, Mr. Speaker, is the three elections that I've been able to make my way here, I've got 60 per cent of the vote, 60 per cent of the vote each time. And that's kind of an interesting number from my past that I find that sort of, I don't know, serendipitous or whatever the word is for that. It was interesting. All three elections have been that same 60 per cent part of the vote. And so the member next to me, he would maybe scoff at those low numbers, Mr. Speaker. He's up near that Don Narcisse number, Ray Elgaard number, 81, 80. Maybe even up in the Fantuz area, 83. So that was his number, and I guess that's how you might look at things.

Anyway, you know, an interesting situation. Mr. Speaker, we all have these different interesting things that come up on the doorsteps, and I guess a couple real quick. I had a — I'm sure we've all had this, Mr. Speaker — is getting to chase a dog. I was able to chase a dog three or four blocks. I can't believe I made it. I finally cornered the dog. It was just a little puppy, thank goodness, and couldn't run fast. But we got it corralled, and thankfully that was the case. There was a couple small kids that were very concerned about the future of their dog that ran out unexpectedly.

The other time, Mr. Speaker, I was on the doorstep and I was talking to a young lady, and her son came to the door with his mom, and he said, hey, I know you. You're . . . and then he said my name. I think, well what the heck. This kid's four or five years old, six years old maybe. I don't know how the heck he'd know who I was. But apparently there's a bus bench with my lovely face on it. He remembered that, so he knew who I was. And so he did point out to me that I have to clean my bench more. It's pretty dirty. So he wanted me to make sure I handled that because he, I guess he sits on it every once in a while or goes by there. And so I guess the moral of the story there is advertising does work at some point. Maybe in a few years he'll be a part of that vote.

But anyway, enough about me and the campaign, Mr. Speaker. It certainly was another rewarding experience, and certainly I can't thank all the folks who put in countless hours, not only in Gardiner Park but right across the province. And we got some decent results here for the government side and the Saskatchewan Party. So honoured to be a part of that again for another four years.

And I thank, as the member previous talked about — paraphrasing of course; I'm not as eloquent as him — but counting our blessings for all the things we have thankful to be for, thankful to be in this province, and I'm honoured and so lucky to be part of this province.

Mr. Speaker, directly to the Throne Speech is what we're talking about here today, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we talked about some of the . . . heard in the campaign about some of the cuts that were anticipated. And I think we talked . . . The answer to that is there certainly are, Mr. Speaker. There's cuts to the SaskPower bill, just announced a 10 per cent cut to a SaskPower bill. We've seen these, of course, these threats from the party opposite since 2003 about sell-offs and cuts, sell-offs and cuts, and fearmongering about that, you know. And there are cuts, but again to the SaskPower 10 power . . . Sorry, 10 per cent SaskPower bills. I'll try and say that correctly.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, I believe there's a bill passed today, or introduced — and I hope it does get passed — about the home renovation tax credit, Mr. Speaker, to help with some of those bills to help stimulate our economy, Mr. Speaker. I noticed, Mr. Speaker, one of my constituents, and I'm very proud to represent Mr. Stu Niebergall, president and CEO of Regina & Region Home Builders' Association. Again I'm proud to represent him very much. He thanked the government for that initiative. Helps with the cost, helps to ignite the economy for all those folks that rely on that type of work. And there's so many of them right here in our province. Happy to part of that first promise.

And again as a government, I think one of the hallmarks of our government is being able to follow through with what we say we are going to do. We've done that over and over in the time I've been in government and very proud to be part of that. And of course this will help home, businesses . . . small businesses in home improvements I should say.

Mr. Speaker, something that I'm glad to see also part of the campaign, and that was directly put forward in the campaign, and also we referenced it in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, is the insulin pump, Mr. Speaker. This is very close to our family. I

know very much about this. I'm not really adept at technology, but I certainly do know about continuous glucose monitoring and insulin pumps.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great initiative. It's great to see, first of all, the technology that has come so far in a relatively short amount of time. Not that long ago people had to prick their fingers to check their blood sugar levels, Mr. Speaker. That's difficult for a 17- or an 18-year-old to get used to. I can't imagine having — and I know people in the community — a three- or four- or five-year-old to constantly have to do that, constantly have to check it, not during waking hours, not when someone's cranky or you know when things aren't going well, and you have to check the blood glucose. That's very difficult, I can imagine. Overnight as well. Parents are, as referenced by the member from Riversdale as well . . . And boy, you know, not being able to sleep well or setting the alarm literally at 3 a.m. or 2 a.m. or whatever it is or randomly to check that, to wake everybody up and to make sure, and not having that peace of mind.

This system is certainly that. It gives parents and caregivers, whoever it may be, the peace of mind overnight. And the technology is just amazing. Right on your phone or whatever device you might have, you can check in real time what the blood glucose monitor is. And of course this is a life-and-death situation. It potentially could be if the numbers go too high or even more dangerous for, in the shorter term, is if the blood sugar levels go too low. And again, very scary situation. And again, someone who's a six- or seven-year-old, that's a very tough situation. So that is going to be, you know, honestly we use the word game changer or whatever it might be — and maybe we overuse that — but this is certainly the case in this announcement. Of course and as well as the pump program is being expanded as well to those . . . so folks can monitor and not have to use needles all of the time, Mr. Speaker.

[16:30]

I was able to talk to someone on the campaign trail who, unfortunately a young mother, who has two children with autism, a situation of autism diagnosis. And I believe they were both under six and they were, of course, coming to do the old program. There's individualized funding, and it's a great thing to see where parents decide, not somebody else, as to what services they'd like to access for their own individual children. Everybody's so vastly different of course. Those children, like any children, are different and have different needs and different way of doing things, etc., etc. So individualized funding is a great concept, I think.

And expanding the age available, I believe those children — well obviously at some point, and I think it was close to the mother I was talking to — were going to age out of that program. This gives them several more years to be able to access that individualized funding. And so those things are on page 8 and 9, more services for Deaf-blind individuals within our province, Mr. Speaker.

Again we often talk about growth and we talk about, you know, having a strong economy and strong finances, and those are obviously extremely important if we want to be able to have programs sustainable. But things I've just mentioned here are, of course, a direct result of those decisions that we made during the

campaign, but years earlier in order to make sure these are sustainable and affordable going forward. And those are very important.

Very honoured and excited about the chance to work in the minister's office for Advanced Education, obviously a very important sector for the future of our province. And one thing I put within the Throne Speech, and of course a commitment during the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, we're increasing the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship. That is a benefit, estimated around 8,000 students will benefit from that program. That'll be \$3,000 for a four-year degree. We're increasing that by 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That is good news for those students who qualify for student aid and need some help in financing their post-secondary education, which is so important, Mr. Speaker, to the future and to the economy of our province. A highly skilled workforce that is nimble and able to meet the new labour demands within the province is so very important, like I said, for our economy.

Our institutions right across the province do a wonderful job and have for many, many years. We have many graduates, I'm sure, in this very quiet building right now, Mr. Speaker. This is again notable how different things are. It is very, very quiet with fewer members, of course. But many people sitting in these chairs I think have benefited from either the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], U of R [University of Regina], Sask Poly, all the regional colleges, affiliated and federated colleges out there.

We have a wonderful program. I'm learning more about it as I go along here and, like I said, very excited to be in that chair, Mr. Speaker. Certainly things are a little bit different of course, as we talked about earlier, in everybody's lives in terms of . . . Those institutions have had to pivot with the situation with COVID-19 of course, but have done a lot of work. And that is important work that continues.

Well we're back to a little bit of normal, Mr. Speaker, here. It was so quiet for so long but the member from Athabasca is back. He's back as well and we're used to hearing from him . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, we're certainly glad to see the member back with his — well, maybe not — with his interjections from the back there, from the opposition, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I spoke too soon about it being quiet within the Chamber here tonight, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know the member was over there.

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is coming to an end here. I very much appreciate, like I said at the top, Mr. Speaker, how honoured I am to once again be able to represent the good folks in Regina Gardiner Park. And what a wonderful building, what a great group of people I get to work with. I look forward to meeting more of them as we go forward here, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly I want to thank all the folks that had great conversations on the doorsteps when I was out there. As I mentioned, I was out there quite a bit and I was able to, even if someone wasn't too thrilled with, you know, my political viewpoint, they were great Saskatchewan people as always. They were engaged. They were respectful. And of course if they didn't agree, we agreed to disagree and that kind of thing. And you know, I represent everybody in the constituency, whether they might have voted for me or not of course. And it's important to

hear those concerns or those thoughts from everyone. And I'm happy to bring those back here to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, a beautiful place, a beautiful building. And I'm honoured to continue for four more years.

I very much look forward to working with my colleagues to deliver things in the Throne Speech. And as we go through these difficult times, and hopefully sooner rather than later, on the other side of the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, and just whatever challenges may come, try and meet those and do the best we can on behalf of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I am going to support the Throne Speech for sure, and I won't be supporting the amendment from the members opposite.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Kaeding:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, in providing an opportunity to provide a reply to the Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new job. I'm certain you're going to fill that role admirably and certainly with distinction.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to congratulate our new members on both sides of the aisle. It's very unfortunate that you do not get to experience the complete thrill of a full Assembly crowded with friends and family. And although it was only four and a half years ago that many of us got to experience this for the first time, it is still very much, every day, an honour and a privilege to walk up those stairs into this majestic building and be able to proudly serve this province.

Since 1905 this province has had 27 general elections and has had a total of 1,643 MLAs. So we represent today 4 per cent of the total of MLAs that this province has elected in its history. It's a proud moment in your life, and so I hope that you get to revel in this experience.

Mr. Speaker, this opportunity to be in this room tonight was provided by the support of many people in our lives that I'd like the opportunity to acknowledge for a few minutes. And certainly my wife, Carla, is the most important person in my life. She has provided support in many different ways throughout my career. Much of it was spent on her own, unfortunately, at home by herself.

So whether it was while I was busy building a career in agriculture, or later as I was elected to serve the great people of Melville-Saltcoats, it has involved me spending a significant amount of time away from home. She took our two boys to many of their hockey and ball games by herself, sometimes across three prairie provinces. She would drive two hours in the middle of the night on a parts run, or just simply shovelling the driveway off so she could get to work while I was in Regina. And I am not sure that that debt that I owe her could ever possibly be repaid.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank our two adult sons for their support. Michael, our oldest, is a design engineer for Rockford Engineering Works here in the city. His wife, Laine, works in central services. And they have two extremely precious grandchildren: Brynn and Tessa. If you'd like to see many of the thousands of pictures that I have of them, I can take the time any time to show you that. But Michael and

Laine are two incredibly hard-working, generous . . . They're a generous family that really want to give back to their community and to their province.

And they are certainly part of my motivation for being here — to provide them a province where they can live, work, and raise a family, and are able to take advantage of a thriving economy. And those two granddaughters, they are so special. And I want to continue to build a province where they will be able to be involved in an innovative, progressive career, maybe in a career that doesn't even exist right now. Mr. Speaker, the growth plan 2020 that this government had kept Michael and Laine here in this province. The 2030 growth plan is going to keep our grandchildren here, their kids here. The graduate retention program that this government initiated helped keep our kids here. And the increase in the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship is going to help keep their kids, many of our grandkids, here in this province to work.

Our youngest son, Matthew, is an aerospace engineer working in Toronto, and he motivates me by always asking, why can't Saskatchewan have an aerospace industry in their province? Really, what unique and innovative manufacturing industries can be supported in this province? Why does Toronto claim to be the centre of the universe? Why can't that be Saskatchewan? And this government's 30 goals for 2030 is going to help us get there, to be the centre of the universe.

Mr. Speaker, another extremely hard-working person who doesn't get enough recognition is my constituency assistant, Rick McIntyre. As the face of an elected official who may even engage with constituents, probably more than the elected person does in the constituency, he's brought an era of professionalism and engagement to the residents of Melville-Saltcoats. Rick, as all constituency assistants, is really that calm voice on the end of the phone dealing with an angry or maybe a frustrated or even just a concerned constituent who would like to provide very helpful advice in solving the province's or maybe even the world's problems.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the constituents of Melville-Saltcoats who've renewed their trust and faith in me to represent them once again in this legislature. As I often explain, re-election is a validation of whether voters believe that you have represented them well enough to renew their trust in you. In the present-day reality of COVID, I wasn't able to get to the door of many constituents. And quite often that's the only opportunity that many of them have to engage with you, their elected person, to discuss what's concerning them, or providing them an opportunity to express themselves. And I look forward to being their representative once again, and will find a way for them to engage in a way that is meaningful for all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we need to thank our Elections Saskatchewan personnel and the thousands of election workers who provided a very safe and efficient election for our province. Their willingness to work under less-than-ideal conditions, whether dealing with COVID, freezing rain, cold weather, or even blizzard-like conditions in some locations has shown that that get-it-done attitude in Saskatchewan does still exist.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we also owe our Premier a debt of gratitude for navigating us through many difficult situations in

the very short time that he has really held this position as Premier. Premier Moe has been called on 24-7 since his initiation in February of 2018. From fire to floods, labour unrest to pandemics, his unwavering hand has provided stability to this province when it could have gone much differently. The message provided by Saskatchewan voters on October 26th was a validation of the work and the guidance that he and the party that he leads, the one that I am very extremely proud to be a part of, in keeping Saskatchewan a great place that so many people want to be.

Mr. Speaker, I've been given the opportunity to represent our rural and northern residents in health care, and it was a responsibility that I took very seriously. There are a number of incredible people that are providing tremendous service in a very difficult time to the residents of Saskatchewan. From our paramedics, who have experienced more work in the last few months than what many of them have seen in years, to the nurses and the health care professionals trying their hardest to get around the misinformation and reluctance of some when dealing with so many issues that are coming in their front doors. And to the CCAs [continuing care assistant], who have in many cases been the only ones to hold a senior's hand, or providing that calming voice to a resident who's become confused with this new reality. To them and their colleagues in health care, I say a big thank you.

[16:45]

There has been no playbook that has given us the answers to every new and unique situation that we've been facing. So also a very big thank you to Dr. Shahab, whose thoughtful and careful guidance has provided that voice of reason and calm that you need to have in the time of crisis. I would like to think that his experience in dealing with us in Yorkton at the start of his career maybe helped prepare him for this time in his life.

Mr. Speaker, I was also given the opportunity to represent seniors in this province, the older adults in this province. And I had so many engaging conversations with folks like June Gaudun, who is the executive director of the Saskatoon Council on Aging; Holly Schick, the executive director of the Sask Seniors Mechanism; John Fryters, the founder of Prince Albert Seniors Advocacy Centre; or Dwayne Turcotte, the past president of the Sask Seniors Association, and so many other passionate advocates for senior care in this province.

We are pleased to recognize a number of initiatives, as noted in the Throne Speech, that pertain to seniors: the elimination of charges for inter-facility transfers and reducing the maximum cost of other calls by over 50 per cent. This is going to result in the cost of an ambulance call for a senior being reduced from \$275 to \$135 a call. To some seniors in this province, that is almost a monthly trip in that ambulance.

We will increase the maximum benefit paid under the seniors' income plan to low-income seniors. Over the next three years, it's going to end up with a maximum benefit of over \$360, over four times what it was in 2007. We're adding 300 new continuing care aids to the workforce: 180 to work in long-term care homes and 63 to support existing home care services and 57 to support expanded home care services in rural Saskatchewan.



Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to have released the Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan while holding this portfolio. This was a strategy designed to implement many one-year initiatives and provide a working document to provide engagement with all stakeholders to determine what the next steps are going to be, what it needs to be to reduce suicides in this province.

During this time, I signed an MOU [memorandum of understanding] with the federal government and with the FSIN, which strengthens our government's resolve to take steps that will reduce suicide rates within our Indigenous population and particularly the youth. The designation of a minister who will oversee mental health and addiction programming in our province also shows our commitment to support the people of this province who are struggling with mental health and addictions. And that role will be so very well served by the member from Swift Current.

Mr. Speaker, my new role as Minister of Environment provides me an opportunity to ensure that this province stays in a competitive position on the world stage. That table was so very well set by the previous minister, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. Many federal government initiatives, as recently as the announcements in their fiscal update yesterday, are not going to leave this province in the best position to remain competitive, especially in those areas where we export commodities or manufactured goods.

We will continue to oppose the federal carbon tax, as it is unconstitutional and ineffective in reducing emissions and will put our export-based companies at a significant disadvantage, competing against non-taxing countries. A tax that started at \$20 a tonne in 2019 is going to increase to \$50 a tonne in 2022. That effect will continue to put our businesses and our manufacturers at an unfair disadvantage to those jurisdictions that they compete against in the international marketplace. Just the effect on a senior living on a pension will make that \$75-a-month power bill go to \$80 a month, or add another \$60 a year in expenses to their limited budget.

Mr. Speaker, the clean fuel standard that the . . . [inaudible] . . . government is proposing will result in regulatory stacking and will put Saskatchewan again at an economic disadvantage with competitors in jurisdictions who do not face similar regulatory burdens.

The newly introduced federal Bill C-12 — that's their move to net zero greenhouse gas emissions — is about to legislate five-year carbon budgets in order to make national greenhouse gas emissions carbon neutral by the year 2050. Just to get to the federal 2030 targets, it will cost this province — the provincial government and industry in this province — over \$12.4 billion in the next 10 years to reach that goal. And that was noted in a recent study put out by Queen's University.

And really that's just taking advantage of the low-hanging fruit to achieve reductions. To get to net zero, we're going to need significant federal investments and infrastructure, especially in the electricity and transportation sectors. They will need to support and promote our leading-edge technology that we produce in this province in regards to carbon capture and storage, no-till farming, uranium mining, and land management.

We have our own climate change plan — that's the Prairie Resilience plan — that's going to reduce emissions while ensuring our industries remain viable and sustainable. We have some of the best in the world in this province here. Our goal to reduce annual emissions by 40 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030 in our power generation. That's an ambitious target. This is going to be accomplished by a multitude of initiatives which will include a commitment of up to 50 per cent electricity capacity from renewables through innovative projects in wind and solar energy and geothermal production.

We're continuing to work with our partners on the potential application for carbon capture utilization and storage globally. We're continuing to fine-tune our carbon capture process and evaluating the viability of extending carbon capture use and storage technology to our existing coal plants in the province.

Mr. Speaker, another exciting initiative in this province is our government's commitment to explore the development and deployment of small modular reactors to generate low-emission power in the province. In addition to power generation, this development could lead to a boost in uranium production, nuclear research, and jobs in construction and facilities operations.

As part of an MOU including the provinces of Ontario, New Brunswick, and very recently Alberta, we expect a strong Saskatchewan contribution from power authorities, research institutions, the mining sector, Indigenous organizations, and the provincial government. However deployment of small modular reactors in Saskatchewan and across Canada, again, is going to require significant investment from the federal government in siting, public engagement, and regulatory development.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to building a strong Saskatchewan. This was evident in the announcement made in May where we announced a \$7.5 billion, two-year capital plan to build a strong Saskatchewan and stimulate an economic recovery. This will result in our communities throughout urban and rural parts of the province continuing to invest in and see investments in below-ground and above-ground infrastructure.

From big investments in health and education facilities to highway improvements to community renewal projects, these investments are going to support job growth and provide communities the opportunity to expand as our growth plan continues to come to fruition. Whether it's funding to support the Esterhazy regional water system expansion, or the RO [reverse osmosis] water plant investment in my community in Churchbridge, or the new Department of Highways shop in Melville, all of these investments are going to enhance each of these communities as they prepare for the next wave of growth in this province.

Mr. Speaker, wrapping up, I believe that this government has a plan. It's a plan to get through to the other side of this pandemic. It's a plan to build on the successes of what has already been accomplished in this province. It's a plan to provide a prosperous, thriving province for our kids and our grandkids. This is a place where Brynn and Tessa can be very proud to be from and glad that their parents lived here, worked here, and had their family here. A plan for a province that in 2030, our colleagues here are going to wonder, what can they possibly do to make it even better in 2040?

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will support the motion put forward very eloquently by the member from Kindersley. I will not be supporting the amendment.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to stand in my place again to give my response to the Speech from the Throne. And needless to say, Mr. Speaker, I sat here and listened to the whole gist of what the Throne Speech was supposed to provide to the people of Saskatchewan, just a scant several weeks away from the last provincial election. And, Mr. Speaker, what really struck me in the Speech from the Throne is that we had the pandemic issue affect Saskatchewan — what was it, March of 2020? — and there was a lot of issues that were impacting the province as a whole. And then we looked at the whole notion, Mr. Speaker, around the preparedness at that time. There was a shutdown. I think there was a pretty dramatic shutdown at the time. And then COVID hit and I remember in the Assembly, we shut down the Assembly fairly quick, and people all scurried home because there was some worry about the exposure of COVID and what the real impact would do to not only to our homes and our families but to our economy and our way of life.

So there was a real drastic issue at the time, and members across the way that were here clearly recall that there was a sense of panic. And that panic was all throughout our province, not just on the economic front, Mr. Speaker, but on the health care front, and of course families that were quite worried about the impact of COVID-19.

So the first wave that came along, Mr. Speaker, nine months ago, we saw that people responded and people certainly provided a lot of leadership, unlike the Saskatchewan Party government, and I want that on record. Right from the start, Mr. Speaker, when the pandemic hit, the Saskatchewan Party government hid in their offices or they hid in their homes. There was no leadership whatsoever. When we tried to get some answers after the first COVID hit in March of 2020, Mr. Speaker, there was no leadership, no response at all.

And then the second wave hit several months ago. Mr. Speaker, again no response from the Saskatchewan Party. And the worst part about all this whole process, Mr. Speaker, is every single one of them knew there was no responses, and now we hear today that they got \$440 million from the federal government, from Trudeau, to help battle COVID-19.

Now the question that we would have is, where did that money go? \$440 million. Did they backstop their normal operating costs? Did they take from the federal Trudeau Liberals \$440 million, put that in their back pocket, Mr. Speaker, put it in their back pocket, turn around and say, oh our deficit is now going to be worse than we thought? We're looking at a \$200 million deficit. Did they actually think the people of Saskatchewan would follow that logic?

And then they get up, Mr. Speaker, and then they rail on about the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. That's what they rail on about, but in the meantime they're getting \$4 billion from the federal Trudeau Liberals for an irrigation project that's going to help the agricultural economy. And then they get federal transfers, Mr.

Speaker, and then they get money just coming out of their treasury that the federal Liberals are giving them. And one of the members . . . I said, how could you guys sit there and complain about that and in the meantime take it? Then you get up day after day and rail on how bad Trudeau is. And the one gentleman — I'm not going to mention his name — said, well that's how it works.

Well who you're deceiving, Mr. Speaker, is you're deceiving the people of Saskatchewan. And I want to make reference to that \$440 million that they took from the federal Liberals, put in their pocket, and they turn around and spend a pittance on resolving the COVID-19 challenge that the province has faced. And the problem with COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, is not only the people's health and people that are dying from this disease. And this is a huge problem, Mr. Speaker.

And I can tell the people of Saskatchewan that I have personal experience with COVID-19. My family and I both tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. It was a result of travel to the city. And I'm not going to mention names, but we got the in-home transmission cause. So we went through COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, and that means isolation in a hotel room for 10 days. But we are going to talk more about this, Mr. Speaker, because I see our time is up very quickly.

And I want to tell the Saskatchewan Party what many, many families and many areas went through as a result of COVID-19. The devastated impact on families, the health care system, and the economy is a direct result of the inaction of the provincial Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker, and they hid it before the election.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think my time is coming up fairly quick. I want to point out that at 7 o'clock we're going to resume the sitting and I want to tell the people our story from the North, exactly what the Saskatchewan Party failed miserably on. But to hear today that they took \$440 million from the federal government, put it in one pocket, and sent out a pittance . . .

**The Speaker:** — It being 5 p.m. this Assembly stands recessed until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]



# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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