



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

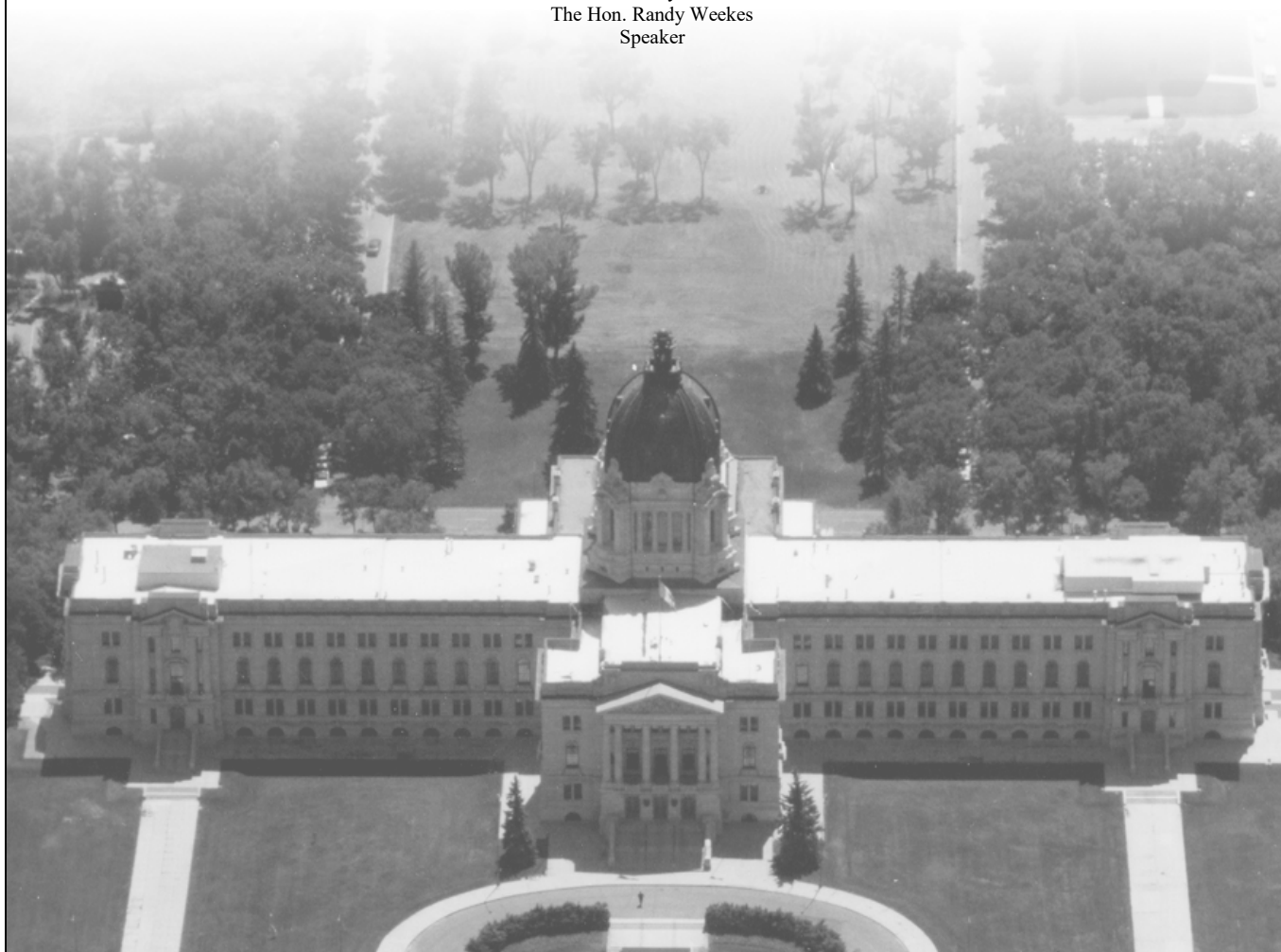
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

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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

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Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents, citizens of Saskatchewan, as it relates to northern cell coverage along the Hanson Lake Road No. 106.

They express that there are many constituents from Creighton, Denare Beach, Deschambault, Pelican Narrows, Sandy Bay, and other east side communities that travel along the Hanson Lake Road without cellular coverage. There are thousands of taxpayers who travel this road for doctor's appointments, shopping, sports and tourism, and for work. There are commercial fishing and outfitting industries in many northern communities which would greatly benefit from this cellular service.

That the remoteness of northern communities increases the likelihood of accidents on roads and other areas where there is reduced possibility of somebody in distress being discovered; that limited access to a phone line or other short-distance radios is a safety concern that could be remedied by improved cellular coverage; that northern Saskatchewan communities should have access to the same quality of cellular coverage as southern communities.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to improve cellular service coverage along the Hanson Lake Road No. 106 for the many northern residents that travel it, and to provide the same quality of cellular coverage that other southern communities rely on. This would provide support to our northern industries as well as mitigate safety concerns associated with living in the remote North.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Air Ronge and La Ronge. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Cockrill: — 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 this province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Cando and Battleford. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today to present a petition calling on this government to restore the rental housing supplement. Unstable and insecure housing is an issue that is well known to the members of my home constituency Regina Elphinstone-Centre, and one that is known to too many people across this province.

The signatories to this petition wish to bring attention to the fact that the rental housing supplement helped people living with disabilities and low-income families pay their rent. This change in circumstance may lead them to lose their supplement and their housing. This is a callous cut, Mr. Speaker. Rent remains high for many since the cost of living has increased significantly in the last decade, and social services benefits have remained unchanged.

The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to immediately restore the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement.

The individuals to this petition reside in Saskatoon and Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Saskatchewan Violence Prevention Week

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November 30th to December 6th is Saskatchewan Violence Prevention Week which is held annually to raise awareness and to address all forms of violence across the province. This important week coincides with the White Ribbon campaign. The white ribbons we wear today pay tribute to the tragic event that took place 31 years ago at l'École Polytechnique which ended the lives of 14 women. These ribbons were worn to raise awareness of gender-based violence.

To underscore how important this issue is, the Government of Saskatchewan launched an interpersonal violence and abuse campaign on Monday, November 30th. The theme of the campaign is "Excuses only cover the truth. Face the issue. End the abuse." It highlights a shared responsibility to shift attitudes and norms that perpetuate interpersonal violence in our province. This campaign is a direct response to the recommendations contained in Saskatchewan's domestic violence death review panel that was released in 2018, as well as ongoing consultations and feedback from our community partners.

Mr. Speaker, abuse and violence have no place in Saskatchewan.

We must work together to send a clear message that we will not tolerate violent and abusive behaviour. I ask all members to now join me in acknowledging Saskatchewan Violence Prevention Week. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Lakeview.

Saskatchewan Education Week

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, last week we celebrated the 30th annual Education Week in Saskatchewan. And while it's always important to show our gratitude to those who work in and around our schools, I think that we can all agree that it is especially important this year.

The theme of Education Week 2020 is Connecting and Learning in New Ways. And that certainly seems appropriate, given the events of the last eight months. Back in March the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] sector and all who work in and support this critical system had to shift online on a dime. We know this was not easy, and I want to thank everyone who has helped make the past several months as good as it has been, often despite the glaring lack of clarity and support from the province.

Special weeks are nice, Mr. Speaker, and what we really need is to listen to and protect those who work in our schools and recognize the crucial role that education plays in our province and in the lives and futures of our students. We need to equip schools to address the current challenges and to ensure that students emerge from this pandemic with what they need to thrive.

I call on all members to recognize the pivotal role that education plays in our province, the recovery in our future. And I would also like to congratulate the new minister on his appointment and call on him to accomplish what his predecessors have so far not achieved — adequately supporting and funding our schools. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Carnduff Company Wins Business Award

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate one of Saskatchewan's many small businesses. On November 14th, Fast Trucking Service of Carnduff was presented with the ABEX [Achieving Business Excellence] Award of Merit. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce introduced the Achieving Business Excellence Awards to the province in 1984, and they are the highest awards for Saskatchewan business.

Mr. Speaker, Fast Trucking has deep roots in our province. Owned by the Day family of Carnduff, they have provided service to oil and gas and other sectors for more than 60 years. Fast Trucking Service and the Day family are local philanthropists and have supported numerous causes in the southeast, earning them this high honour.

As we well know, this has been a challenging year and it is nice to be able to recognize everyday heroes like the Day family and Fast Trucking, who do their best to help our communities through

the difficult times. A great example of this, Mr. Speaker, was when Fast Trucking purchased \$50,000 in Co-op gift cards for employees who were laid off. The company president, Dennis Day, even wrote a letter to each employee and their families. Since then they have been able to hire some of these employees back.

I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, of the accomplishments of this family and I have personally passed on my congratulations to Dennis and the Day family. Mr. Speaker, I now ask that all members please join me in congratulating the Day family, all the staff at Fast Trucking, and all other 2020 award recipients for achieving this great honour. Thank you.

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

Saskatchewan Violence Prevention Week

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Violence Prevention Week, which takes place from November 30th to December 6th. As the critic for Status of Women, I urge this government to take a hard look at some of the reasons Saskatchewan continues to have the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault out of all the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, a report released earlier this year found that 600 women and families are being turned away from shelters in Saskatchewan each month. Saskatchewan is also one of only two provinces that doesn't provide funding for second-stage shelters, which are designed for women and their children who need secure and affordable housing on a long-term basis.

The Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan, PATHS, has reported that remote and rural communities face even greater challenges than cities, especially with accessing safe transportation, and this problem grew after the government shuttered STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company]. The majority of STC riders were women. And since this government killed off STC, women fleeing domestic violence are more likely to be stranded or forced to use unsafe means of travel like hitchhiking.

According to PATHS, women's shelters have not received more than a 1.5 per cent funding increase over the past decade. This leaves shelters scrambling with insufficient resources and staff. Mr. Speaker, I implore this government to get serious about addressing violence against women in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan women deserve more than this government's deadly apathy and inaction.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

Operation Red Nose 2020

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One organization is helping make the holiday season much safer. For 36 years, Operation Red Nose has been reducing rates of impaired driving across the country. Operation Red Nose began in 1984 with the innovative idea of driving impaired individuals home in their own vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, the service is completely free and run by dedicated volunteers from over 100 communities across Canada. Last year more than 1,200 Saskatchewan drivers were able to get home safely during the holiday season, thanks to more than 700 volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, not only does Operation Red Nose reduce impaired driving, but they also help support future generations. Each year a million dollars is raised and distributed to more than 100 non-profit youth and amateur sports organizations.

Mr. Speaker, this year due to COVID-19, Operation Red Nose is going virtual. For the month of December people can visit the Operation Red Nose website to learn about mocktail recipes, discover designated driver accessories, and find tips on preventing a friend from driving impaired.

Mr. Speaker, I now invite all members of this Assembly to join me in thanking Operation Red Nose for their part in reducing the impaired driving over the past 36 years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

University of Regina Professor Awarded Royal-Mach-Gaensslen Prize for Mental Health Research

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton and the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment at the University of Regina. Dr. Carleton has been named as the 2020 winner of the Royal-Mach-Gaensslen Prize for Mental Health Research and has been given \$100,000 towards his work.

The award serves to recognize, encourage, and support researchers under the age of 45 in the field of mental health. Dr. Carleton's research focus is on post-traumatic stress injuries and improving the health and well-being of Canada's public safety personnel. This includes everyone from our police officers to our paramedics that live with depression, anxiety, or suffer from post-traumatic stress injuries. He not only has contributed greatly to research in the field of mental health and offers helpful and valuable solutions for people living with these injuries.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Carleton's work is going to impact the lives of many in this province in a positive way, and I am personally grateful for his efforts in this field. Mr. Speaker, I now ask that all members of this Assembly join me in thanking Dr. Carleton for his research as well as congratulating him on his award. Thank you.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River.

Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has a strong history of men and women serving the Canadian Armed Forces. These men and women have put their lives in jeopardy so we can all live the way we do. And today I stand in this House and acknowledge and thank them through the Scholarship of Honour. This scholarship is a small way of giving thanks to them

for their service and sacrifice.

Mr. Speaker, since its launch in 2009, 234 scholarships have been awarded, totalling \$1.17 million. Included among those recipients are the 35 family members of injured or fallen Canadian Armed Forces members. This scholarship of \$5,000 provides eligible returning Canadian Armed Forces members, as well as the spouses and children of fallen members, the opportunity to pursue post-secondary studies. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the only province to offer this type of scholarship, and we are proud of that.

I am honoured today to celebrate this year's eight recipients. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to please join me in extending our deepest gratitude to the scholarship recipients for their service and commitment to this country and wish them the very best in their academic studies. 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. Yesterday we asked the Minister of Health about intensive care capacity here in Saskatchewan, but he couldn't answer. So to the Premier today: how many additional ICU [intensive care unit] beds have been built and have staff ready to run them?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I did endeavour to answer the question yesterday. Mr. Speaker, we do have ICU beds across our province that are ready to go in our major centres, Mr. Speaker, but it's not just the physical bed that we need. We need to be able to have the resources around that bed to be able to help the patient while they're in that bed, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we're continuously adjusting what we are doing within our health care system to be able to manage what our health care providers are doing, whether we need them in surgeries or whether we need them to be working in the COVID ward. A physical bed is one part of that, Mr. Speaker, and we have looked at that. We do have capacity within our field hospitals, Mr. Speaker, but it's also the people that are in and around that bed to help out that patient that are important as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. ICU patient numbers have increased by over 500 per cent for COVID-19 cases in the last month. Modelling forecasts a demand of four to five times the current capacity for a period of four to five months. We know what that means: that means hundreds of patients being turned away from life-saving care right here in Saskatchewan.

The former minister promised 400 new ICU beds. Today the minister won't even tell us how many beds there are now, let alone how many new additional beds have been brought in, or how many staff are in place to man them. Can we have that

answer now, please?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I outlined in my previous answer, it's not just the beds, Mr. Speaker, that we need. We need to make sure that we have the staff in and around that. We have been working with the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] and with the ministries, with all of our centres, our medical centres across the province, to be able to draw on the resources to be able to resource those beds properly, Mr. Speaker.

Again this is something that we have been working on, and I want to thank the people at the SHA and the ministry under the guidance of Dr. Shahab that were able to get us to a point where we do have capacity within our ICU units, not just in the major centres but some of the smaller centres as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, this is the simplest, most basic question that any competent minister could answer. It's unbelievable. How many beds are there? How many new beds? How close have you got to the 400 beds promised back in the summer?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I can update the House. We do have 24 people that are actually in the ICU beds across the province, Mr. Speaker. We do have capacity to be able to move past that. Again, Mr. Speaker, we have to pull out the resources from other areas that the member has properly identified. There are people that are out there that are waiting on medical care, Mr. Speaker. But we have to continuously find that balance and we're finding it not just on a weekly basis, on a daily basis, and an hourly basis. What do we need to do within our system to be able to continuously adjust to the in-surge of patients that we are seeing that are impacting our hospitals and our health centres across the province? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — No answer on the number of ICU beds. No understanding of what's really going on in our health care system right now. We've 113 health care staff who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last month. Hundreds more are isolating due to contact. How does this government plan — the minister's identified it himself — to have the staff available, the personnel to staff those beds? How and when did they start recruiting the doctors and nurses needed for our field hospitals?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank the question. Mr. Speaker, everybody across our country and across North America is recruiting health care people, whether it be doctors, nurses, LPNs [licensed practical nurse], Mr. Speaker, the care aids. All of these people are in high demand.

We have worked with the SHA in recalling nurses and other health care professionals that have retired back into our system. We've also made sure that we're elevating the scope of every person within the health care system to be able to maximize their scope and their abilities to be able to help out.

Mr. Speaker, this is all hands on deck, and I am very proud that the people in the SHA and within our ministries are able to do this and continuously adjust. We're asking them to make a lot of changes. They've had a lot of sacrifices in the last little while, Mr. Speaker, and they've come up absolutely every time and been able to deliver. I think that they will continue . . . actually I know, Mr. Speaker, that they will continue to do that for us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — One has to wonder why this government took the summer off from recruitment and training, and left us scrambling now.

Now obviously the Premier is regularly briefed on what's happening with public health, and he would have been briefed during the election period as well. So my question to the Premier is, when did he first see the modelling that would have shown the spike coming in November, December, and into the new year? When did he first see that modelling? And why did he wait until after the election to share that information, information that could have changed the situation we find ourselves in today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've been working on this modelling even before COVID arrived in our province. We were working first off the numbers that were coming out of China which saw huge mortality rates and huge infection rates. Then we were looking at what was happening in Italy and other parts of Europe. Then we were looking at what happened in New York. We're continuously adjusting those modelling numbers to be able to meet what we here are seeing in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our modelling numbers are that. This is a forecast, Mr. Speaker; this isn't a fact. This is something that we are continuously adjusting with more people coming into the system with COVID. Right now, Mr. Speaker, we're at 129 individuals in our health care system. We're continuously adapting what our modelling is going to be able to do to meet the needs in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — It's essential that modelling be shared and shared honestly with the public, and in a timely fashion, if we want to see the best results. The modelling that was shared with doctors last week was very different than what was shared with the public. It didn't include the optimistic scenario, a scenario we'd already blown past the first time the minister presented it. So my question is, why is this government telling doctors one thing and trying to sell the public a story that doesn't line up with the facts?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been working, as the member recognized, we have been working with our doctors. We're continuously updating them and we're continuously updating the public. Mr. Speaker, the modelling numbers change almost from day-to-day sometimes, Mr. Speaker. So we are being transparent with the doctors. We're including them in the conversations.

Dr. Shahab and his team have been very successful in keeping the doctors in the loop as to what is happening within our health care systems, within their specific departments, but also on the larger scheme, so the doctors and the staff and all of those that are working with their health care system understand what we could be facing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No explanation why this minister is telling the public one thing and telling the doctors the true story.

When it comes to testing and tracing in Saskatchewan, we know things are not going well. From the time a positive case is identified, it's taking over a week before Public Health is actually able to reach any of those people's contacts — another week for the virus to spread in the community.

And what I have to wonder, Mr. Speaker, is why this government took the summer off, actually reduced testing and tracing capacity in the summer, refused federal tracing dollars until just recently. Why has this government left us scrambling, left us so far behind?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. And I want to clarify for the House: there is two pieces to the contact tracing. There are people that, when they are contacted that they were positive when they do be able to get a test, Mr. Speaker, that we contact them, and our goal is to contact them within 48 hours, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes as the case numbers are up, we have to reallocate resources which I was just talking about, Mr. Speaker, to be able to bring those people in to do the contact tracing.

If it is a negative call, there are a couple of options that they can do, Mr. Speaker. They can go on their eHealth and set up an eHealth account so they can get that information fast. The negative callbacks are coming back at a slower rate, Mr. Speaker. Those are four, sometimes to seven days on a negative callback because, Mr. Speaker, this government feels it's a priority to be able to make sure that we identify the people that are positive first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier confirmed what the Finance minister would not when she released the mid-year report. Three times the Premier admitted that the Sask Party government has used hundreds of millions of federal dollars, not for new supports in the fight

against COVID-19 to contain the virus, but to backfill the woefully inadequate supports offered in the status quo budget this government brought forward this summer, a plan that leaves our classrooms and hospitals without the supports they need and deserve and that doesn't offer one thin dime to local businesses across Saskatchewan working and struggling to stay afloat.

Why is the Sask Party using these dollars — in their own words — to backfill their own inadequate budget instead of extending new supports and actions that are so badly needed right now to save lives and livelihoods?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, we always enjoy the interpretation of the members opposite on words that are said, because usually it's not what's said at all.

However, as the members opposite know, we have received a considerable amount of support dollars from the federal government, and that has helped pay for some of the equipment and the PPE [personal protective equipment] within health care. It has helped support the \$155 million additional dollars that we made available to our school divisions. It's helped with enhancements for vulnerable people.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have asked specific questions on what has been spent within the federal dollar allocations. It's all allocated to the various areas that the federal government has directed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, when the minister presented her budget in the summer, there was no fine print attached saying that these promises were contingent upon federal funding. That budget was presented as that government's response to the COVID-19 crisis. And we knew at that time that that simply wasn't good enough.

When this government received more than \$400 million in new federal supports over the course of the summer, those should have translated into \$400 million of additional supports, new supports for Saskatchewan people to control the spread. Instead they left people to fend for themselves and used the money to backfill previously announced programs that didn't go far enough and didn't keep this virus in check.

Saskatchewan people, workers and families, businesses aren't looking for a bait and switch. They're looking for a lifeline in face of a public health crisis. When can people expect to get that lifeline from this government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yet again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is well aware that the federal transfer shows up within our budget. He knows that. He knows where to find the line, Mr. Speaker. And he knows that the money was spent in health care for purchasing PPE, for purchasing ventilators, for the expenses for COVID. He knows that there's dollars allocated to school divisions to help with the safe reopening of schools, Mr. Speaker.

He knows all of that, so I don't know why he's trying to portray otherwise.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, there's been supports for businesses. Our government was one of the first provinces to have direct support for businesses. That was not federal dollars, Mr. Speaker. That came out of provincial dollars.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The minister can say what she wants, but the Premier said three times yesterday that those dollars were used to backfill. That's in *Hansard* and the minister can reference that.

Those dollars were also used to backfill a contingency fund. They've added \$100 million, and that's in addition to the \$160 million announced this summer that isn't being used at all. This government is sitting on a quarter of a billion dollars, dollars that are needed now, needed to support testing and contact tracing, needed to help our overcrowded classrooms and hospitals and care homes, needed to help drive down class size and keep students safe, needed to help our small businesses from closing their doors for good, helping to get control of this virus.

This government talks about saving lives and livelihoods, but because of their inaction, they're putting both at risk right now. Why won't this government deploy the federal dollars now instead of waiting for the worst — field hospitals overrun and horrible and tragic loss of life across Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — There's so much in what the member opposite said that needs to be corrected. The field hospitals are not overrun. I don't believe there's any patients in them yet, so I think there's some room there.

Mr. Speaker, they also like to portray what we had in our budget, which was the revenue risk allowance. That is not money to be spent. That was to allow for softening within revenues. They want to move it onto the expense side of the budget, which would mean that there would be an additional expense of \$100 million, and if the revenues actually softened then it's a \$200 million shortfall. I understand that it is a concept that we've never used before, and I'm more than happy to explain how it works to the member opposite who doesn't seem to understand.

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

Support for Small Business

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To quote the Throne Speech, "There has never been a more important time to support Saskatchewan businesses and buy local." But when it comes to "buy local," it really seems like with the Sask Party it's do as I say, not as I do. We know that on the Chinook power plant, only 44 per cent of the skilled workers were from Saskatchewan. And yet again the Sask Party has handed the contract for the Moose

Jaw power plant to the same Kansas City-based company.

We've heard both experts and the government say that interprovincial travel is risky, and yet the Sask party is ready to endanger public health by bringing in businesses and workers from outside Saskatchewan. COVID-19 is going pretty badly here, but it's going much worse in the provinces to our east and our west, where our tax dollars are sure to go. Is bringing people from Alberta and Manitoba and who knows where else, during a pandemic, really the best we can do?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly agree with the member opposite that we want to try and foster situations where Saskatchewan companies and Saskatchewan workers can successfully bid and successfully participate in programs and contracts that are led in this province. However on the contract that she raised, there was no Saskatchewan bidders.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are unfortunately a lot of Saskatchewan workers who would have been happy to work on that project.

Mr. Speaker, our economy was struggling before the pandemic, and apparently this was news to the Premier. So an update, Mr. Speaker. The economic situation is dire. Thousands of Saskatchewan people are looking for work, and after leaving Saskatchewan workers off the job at the Swift Current power plant and sitting idly by while out-of-province workers were brought in for the Assiniboia wind project, the Moose Jaw power plant is going ahead. And again the Sask Party is selling out Saskatchewan, and this just isn't right.

Workers are ready to work, Mr. Speaker. Why does this government think that unemployed workers don't deserve a job? Why don't they want these jobs to go to local workers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And the reality of the employment situation in this province is this: we have the lowest unemployment rate in the entire country, Mr. Speaker, by a significant margin lower than the national average. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, what would move that unemployment rate significantly higher, catastrophically higher, and that would be following the proposal from the Leader of the Opposition opposite to shut down the entirety of the small-business sector in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We are working very closely with that sector. We believe and know they can operate safely. They have operated responsibly. They will continue to do so into the future, Mr. Speaker, respecting public health guidelines put forward by Dr. Shahab, adopted by this government, to operate safely and responsibly going forward. We will not put tens if not a hundred thousand employees out of work overnight, which is what they are proposing.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm new to this job, but I hoped we could agree that selling out Saskatchewan was a bad idea. Mr. Speaker, now more than ever we actually need to invest money in the local economy and consider putting Saskatchewan workers, companies, and contractors first.

Now we've got a new Ministry for SaskBuilds and Procurement, and a new minister fresh off his stint at Health. So we need to ensure that this government actually puts Saskatchewan people on the job, and they need to make sure that they're not increasing the risk of COVID-19 for the people of Saskatchewan. Why won't the Sask Party bring in a Sask-first procurement plan to help our economy and help keep us safe?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I would point to the \$2 billion infrastructure support program put forward by this government and this party that has been very successful in keeping people at work. The lowest unemployment rate in the entire country. A \$7.5 billion investment plan over the course of two years, one of the most significant in the entire country, Mr. Speaker.

The other reality is we have come forward with the most comprehensive support package for small business in the entire country — first and the largest support package, Mr. Speaker — the small business emergency payment. Over \$30 million for our small businesses to continue to operate safely and responsibly, which they have done over the course of the last eight months. The tourism sector support program, \$35 million for our tourism and hospitality industry, which has been so hard hit, to continue to operate. All of which would be for naught, Mr. Speaker, because they would shut them all down.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Income Assistance Programs

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I called on the Minister of Social Services to stop the clawbacks of income assistance. In October, after a Saskatchewan woman successfully appealed the clawbacks of her benefits, the Social Services Appeal Board recommended the ministry fix their policies to reflect the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The minister has still not acted on that recommendation. Requiring people to pursue individual appeals would be a failure of leadership, a tremendous waste of resources, and put lives at risk. To the minister: will you stop these unjust clawbacks which have put people out on the street just when they're being told to stay home?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian emergency student benefit plan, also known as CESB, is similar to CERB [Canada emergency response benefit], and the programs are designed to be a wage-replacement program for students that were unable to find work. Treating CERB differently would create inequality for clients who receive

income through other programs, Mr. Speaker.

The income assistance appeal process does allow applicants or clients to appeal ministry decisions about their eligibility and benefits. And when the board provides a decision, the ministry does review that decision and communicates with the client on the next steps in the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, everyone — the federal government, tenant and landlord agencies — have all been calling on this government to reverse this policy. The minister had nine months to alter course and stop these clawbacks. The minister has had five weeks to listen to her own appeal board.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take the minister's inaction on this as a sign that it has no interest in doing what is right. This government would rather backfill — the Premier's words, not mine — backfill their own coffers with federal money even if they have to steal it from the poorest and the most vulnerable.

The solution is simple. It costs nothing and it allows people to have a few extra dollars when they need it most. To the minister: if you're not going to do it, why not?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member opposite for the question again. Mr. Speaker, our provincial programs are programs of last resort, and they should be utilized that way. If somebody's not reporting their income to us or if they're not reporting a change of circumstances, then they are in violation in the terms of the contract that we have with them. Mr. Speaker, our clients know this and that they have to report income and that income will be taken off dollar for dollar against their benefits.

CERB is a wage-replacement program. The ministry treats other wage-replacement program benefits such as employment insurance, Canada Pension Plan, Workers' Compensation as income and deducts those benefits dollar for dollar. Treating the CERB differently would create inequality for clients who receive income through those programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, Seniors and Rural and Remote Health.

Reduction in Ambulance Fees for Seniors

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today to confirm that our government is keeping our election promise to make ambulance services more affordable in Saskatchewan. Starting on December 14th, Mr. Speaker, our government will further support Saskatchewan seniors aged 65 and older by reducing their ambulance fees from \$275 per trip to \$135 per trip. That is a reduction of more than 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, seniors will now receive full coverage for all

inter-facility transfers between hospitals, health centres, integrated health centres, mental health and addictions centres, and special care homes. As we know, seniors tend to need ambulance services more frequently, and many seniors live on fixed incomes. Seniors will receive financial relief through this reduction in their personal health care costs for this service.

Mr. Speaker, having the ability to discharge or transfer patients to a facility closer to their home community without concern about their ability to pay will improve patient flow between our health care centres. This investment by our government is expected to cost \$2.2 million for this fiscal year and \$6.6 million annually. These costs were accounted for in the Minister of Finance's recently released mid-year update.

Our government values seniors in this province, Mr. Speaker. We're working to provide them with quality, affordable health care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we welcome any effort to make life more affordable for seniors, particularly those who might be ill and in need of an ambulance. We recognize this is a small step in the right direction, but ultimately this is a drop in the bucket towards reforming the most unsupported and expensive ambulance system in the country.

Eliminating fees for seniors being transferred between health facilities makes sense. But what this government should be doing is eliminating inter-hospital transfer fees entirely. No other province in the country charges patients to transfer them within the health system. This issue was identified by this government's first EMS [emergency medical services] review in 2008, and again the review conducted in 2018. We know the community paramedicine program has been successful in keeping seniors in their homes and out of the hospitals, and we wonder why these changes did not expand access to these services.

We also know there's been a long-standing practice of excluding First Nations seniors from provincial senior subsidy programs and anticipate hearing whether these benefits will be extended to First Nations as well. Today's announcement does nothing to address the long-standing issues of short-staffing in long-term care. Much more is needed, including minimum care standards. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Francis, seconded by Mr. Friesen, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Ms. Sarauer.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture, Sport, and Status of Women.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on obtaining the position of Speaker of the House. I know we were well served by my colleague from Regina here, and I know you will do very well as the new Speaker of the House. I would also like to congratulate our new Deputy Speaker. I know she is going to do a very fine job.

So I'll start by saying I am going to be supporting the Throne Speech and not supporting the amendment, in case I get kind of carried away and kind of forget to ensure that the opposition realizes I will not be supporting their amendment.

I would like to start by thanking the residents of Regina Rochdale for again very resoundingly supporting me and sending me back here to represent them. I've had the honour of representing that area since 2007, and I've been very well served by my constituency assistant, Kelly Zazula. She's been with me for over 12 years, so between her and I, we've had the opportunity to meet and serve so many residents of our constituency, ensuring that their issues and concerns are being looked after.

I'd also like to thank my campaign team, as we just came through probably one of the most challenging campaigns I have ever participated in. Campaigning during COVID gives it a whole new meaning. A lot of times people sign up to participate on a campaign because they like the fellowship, they like the ideology, they like our platform — they may or may not like the candidate — like the leader, like the team. But they also come because it gives them an opportunity to participate in the democratic process. And that had a really different twist this time because we weren't allowed to congregate in our campaign offices, share ideas, and be able to really socialize with each other and build new friendships. But I was very, very fortunate to have a campaign team that ensured that all the COVID rules and regulations were being adhered to because we wanted to ensure that we campaigned in a very safe and responsible manner.

We figured out different ways to ensure that we had the opportunity to meet people on their doorsteps. We didn't infringe upon their personal space but we sure did realize there's a lot of people that are very fearful with what COVID has presented them. But we got to hear their concerns, their issues, their dreams, and their hopes. And one of the things that's really loud and clear is that they wanted strong leadership. They wanted to know who was going to best serve them, and they chose the Saskatchewan Party. So I want to thank the residents of Regina Rochdale but also the residents of Saskatchewan.

The people of Saskatchewan very loudly and resoundingly brought back a majority government. So thank you for that because it also then now gives us the opportunity to fulfill those campaign promises that we made. And we made promises that were doable. We didn't sit down and blue-sky it and say if I had a gazillion dollars, this is what I would do. We put together a platform and we campaigned on a platform that was very doable. But it also spoke to the people and it meant that there was things that we could do that would really directly impact their lives and directly impact the communities.

You know, we talk about how small business, it's the backbone

of our communities, not just in the small communities but in the cities. We keep hearing, you know, shop local. Shop a door with a store. Amazon.ca isn't located here so let's rethink that. Yes, it's really important that we support those small businesses that contribute to our kids' sports teams, our kids' artistic endeavours. They are the backbone, as we say, of our communities.

So one of the things we thought, well the best way to ensure, especially during these hard economic times for these small businesses, is to look at doing a tax adjustment for small businesses. Well with the successful win of our Saskatchewan Party government, we now have the opportunity to implement that tax adjustment for small businesses. And this is going to probably mean the difference to so many small businesses. It'll be whether they stay in business or not.

You know, there's a really long-term ripple effect of what happens with small business in this province. Because people who own and operate small businesses, those are risk takers. Those are people who have most likely invested their life savings. And if those businesses close their doors, what does that mean in the long run? A lot of those business owners are in the age group of 40 and 50 years old, so their earning potential is not that long anymore. So when they lose their life savings, what does that mean for them in the long run? So if we as a government can do anything to help them, it's incumbent upon us to do so. And I know that this tax adjustment is going to be big to our communities.

Also I know the opposition keeps saying we need to shut everything down. Well I know, talking to small-business owners, they plead with us. They're not just doing it because they've got nothing better to do. They're pleading with us to help them stay in business. So what do we have to do? We have to roll up our sleeves. We can't just sit here wringing our hands. We have to roll up our sleeves and ensure that we support our economy. Because, Mr. Speaker, it is, like I say, the backbone of our whole province.

Now as I said, I was very fortunate to have a smart, hard-working campaign team that ensured that we were very successful in Regina Rochdale. And I had a brand new campaign manager, and she's a retired teacher. And oh my gosh, there's something that you learn, is that someone who has had an opportunity to maybe deal with unruly children in a classroom, she sure knows how to run a campaign. Because she made sure everything was on time in a timely manner, but she also made it fun. And that was probably, you know, one of the exciting things about our campaign team because people kept coming back saying, what's Lorna got in store for us today? So I feel very fortunate. She may have been new to the job, but you never would have guessed it because she stepped up to the plate and made it happen.

I also had an accomplished young woman, Kelsie Rock who ran my GOTV [get out the vote] day. And this was the first time she had ever had that kind of role. So you know, this is an accomplished young woman who had more spreadsheets and more job descriptions for everyone that, when they came out of there, they went, oh my God, I just think I went to school. And they were really pleased because they knew exactly what they needed to do.

And then I had absolutely an incredible, huge support of door

knockers. And I can't stand here and start to name them off because I will miss someone and I will feel very bad. But there is someone who I have to thank very deeply, and that's Warren Steinley. Warren did an incredible job. Warren is like my son. He is there for me. He's got my back and I appreciate that. And so he was there every day, making sure that our door knockers knew where to go and how to do it. So I really do appreciate his support and his friendship. It's most valuable.

And as I said before, I also want to thank my husband Terry. He was my sign guy, but he's also been my biggest champion. None of us would be here if we didn't have our family supporting us. It's the toughest job if you're here doing it alone, but when we have a strong spouse or family member or friends that make sure that when we're having a bit of a tough time, they're there for us, and that's something when you seek public office. Not everybody realizes that you better have your team of champions because there's days where you get up and you say, why am I doing this job?

Now I'm doing it because I love it. Does that mean that every day is a blessed day? No, but you know what? The good days outweigh the bad by far. I absolutely . . . I get up and I look forward to saying, what can I do to make Saskatchewan better? Now that may sound like, man, that woman's got a serious ego. No, because each and every one of us should be here because of that. I'm sure that's why we run for public office. We don't run for public office so that we can see our name on a sign. Go be a realtor. There's lots of names out there. I did that before too, 23 years.

But you know, we do this because we want to make Saskatchewan better — each and every one of us, both sides of the aisle. Now how we get here and the ideology we bring is very different. But the people of Saskatchewan have roundly and soundly supported the Saskatchewan government this time around, so we should thank them for that.

But I also want to speak to some of the opportunities that we will have of different programs that were brought forward in the Throne Speech. And, Mr. Speaker, with COVID our rinks are closed. How do those guys keep the lights on and the payments made? Well our community rink affordability grant of \$2,500 per rink will be able to go a long way to making sure that they pay their bills and that they can stay afloat. Because in the community I grew up, I was a rink rat at Springside. I mean my mom curled non-stop. Bertha was a serious curler. And I mean I grew up sitting beside those old guys smoking in the sardine cans, you know, and stuff like that. But I grew up there and that rink was the important part of the community.

And so we have to ensure that not just Springside's curling rink but every curling rink and every community skating rink is able to maintain their facility so that when COVID has passed and that we have the ability to participate, that they will be there. So as Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport I'm so pleased that our ministry has brought back this program because I think it's going to be the lifeblood of a lot of our smaller communities.

Another important campaign promise and platform commitment was the Saskatchewan veteran service club support program. Now all of us had the opportunity to participate in Remembrance Day in a very different way this year in that we had to participate

virtually. And I watched on television the interviews with the different veterans. And they talked about how important it is that they would be able to receive some funding for their service clubs, because most of them are in really serious financial situations.

And so for us to be able to increase it by 1,400 per cent . . . So we increased it from \$100,000 and it'll be increased to 1.5 million per year. This will make a big difference. And again our Legions, those service clubs, they are an integral part of our communities whether it be in a city or whether it be in a smaller community. I mean all you have to do is drive down Main Street in a small town and you will see the Legion sign. Now the Legion, again, provides a very important space for their veterans and also for the services they provide to the community as a whole.

[14:30]

Our government also really understands the importance of family. And investing 8.9 million to bring back the active family benefit, that's going to really be important. Because I know when I was talking to parents during the campaign, they said, you know, with COVID my job's kind of been cut back. And some have been underemployed or unemployed. And yet they still want to be able to give to their children. Well this active family benefit will provide 5.7 million per year to over 20,000 Saskatchewan families.

This is real. This is stuff that really matters. When someone talks about pocketbook issues, they're not talking about big blue-sky things. They're talking about, what does it matter to . . . What's good and real to my family? Well a program like this is very real to their family.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the Speech from the Throne, there's lots of different programs. Because it was promises made, and it will be promises kept. We're ensuring that the families in Saskatchewan understand that we have their backs.

COVID-19 has absolutely devastated our province. It has made so many people fearful. It's kind of taken . . . People take two ways. They're either deniers to some, which is really too bad because this is real. And then we have people on the other far end which have become very fearful. We have to ensure and I know our Minister of Health and Dr. Shahab and the Premier are bringing strong leadership to ensure that everything can be done for the safety of our residents in Saskatchewan. We are not taking this lightly. COVID-19 is not taking a back seat in this province. It is foremost of every one of our minds.

As members in this House, we know. We get the phone calls. We have people in our constituencies, we have neighbours, we have family, and we have friends that are phoning and saying, now what? And so, Mr. Speaker, we have to govern accordingly. We have to put safety first along with ensuring that we still have a vibrant economy. And how do we do that? Sometimes it's hard choices. There isn't one choice and one decision that has been made that was ever flippant or easy. Every one of these decisions that are being made in regards to COVID is made very carefully, weighed out very carefully to ensure that this is the right thing to do.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure if I've spoken for 20 minutes, but I feel that I would like to allow my colleagues to be able to take their time in the House. And again, I will be saying I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne and cannot support the amendment put forward by the opposition. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your recent election to serve this House and continue with the traditions and duties entrusted to your role. I can't imagine the honour it must be to be elected by a body of your peers.

I would also like to extend congratulations to all of my colleagues as each of us have worked hard to earn the privilege of meeting in this room and serving the people of Saskatchewan. We come from all different corners of this province, various backgrounds, different values, different education levels, different life experience and world views. But we do have one thing in common on this special day and that is that we're not here on our own choice alone but rather thousands of choices made by people who are not here. When we respect one another, Mr. Speaker, we're also showing respect to the voters who chose us to be their representative.

But before I share my thoughts on the out-of-touch and disappointing Throne Speech, I'd like to take a few minutes to say thank you to the people and groups who helped me get here. When I first put my name forward for the nomination contest, I had no idea the level of teamwork that it would take to actually win this thing in Eastview. The sheer number of people who came on board to support my campaign through volunteering and donating is beyond humbling. I truly have no words that communicate my sincere gratitude, but I do promise that my thankfulness will be seen in the hard work and integrity that I will bring as I serve the people of Eastview for the next four years.

Like many of my colleagues that we've heard from, my family is a group to whom I owe the greatest thanks, not just for their sacrifice and commitment during the campaign, but more importantly for helping me to become a better person, husband, father, teacher, and now MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. My wife, Emma, has been with me every step of the way. And as we begin this new chapter, I'm thankful to have a beautiful, wise, intuitive, and loving partner who is here with me to grow as we go through life. Emma is my equal in every way and not just someone who cooks for me when life gets busy. She is the person I go to for advice and there is no one who I trust and admire more.

My three children have also been a huge inspiration. And I'll talk more about them later, but I want to acknowledge their support and sacrifice. Etta, Tom, and Myles are missing their dad today and their dad is missing them and I know that they're watching this from home. I know that for many of us, our kids make great sacrifices for us to be here. I have not had a summer with my children since 2018. As a teacher, those summer months are sacred and they're time to reconnect with family and spend time unwinding from a busy school year. I have spent the last two summers, number one, winning a nomination, and number two, winning this election to represent my community of Eastview. I

know that my kids are behind me and that gives me all the motivation I need to be a great representative for my community and an even better dad when I'm home with my family.

I also want to thank my extended family and in-laws who are spread out across the continent. My mother, Jody, who raised three boys on her own as a single parent; my older brother, Shane; younger brother, Andrew; my father and stepmother, Jeff and Shari; along with grandparents, aunts, cousins, uncles, and my in-laws, Trish, Vel, Greg, and Wendy. I am grateful for their support and for all the ways that they continue to shape me and support me from near and far.

Finally I want to thank my campaign team and volunteers. I truly believe that we had the most incredible, energetic, and positive team in the entire province. What we accomplished together in Eastview is remarkable and I know that it was a result of a passionate and committed team.

I want to say thank you to my campaign manager, Karlie; my e-day [election day] coordinator, Katie Bell; who has now come on as my CA [constituency assistant]. Other key members: Karen; Lee; Stacey, my organizer; Adam; Lisa; Jared, my business manager; and Tracey Lyons, who was with me on the doorstep nearly every single day of the campaign. Also to the over 120 volunteers that joined my work in Eastview, I say thank you. It is humbling for me to see the level of support that we had and I am forever grateful to each one of you.

Now while I am honoured to be in this building and serving as a Member of the Legislative Assembly, I also have to be honest with the members here. This was not a lifelong goal for me. For me, my choice to run in this election was something that felt like the right thing to do at the right time. Prior to being elected, I served my community as a public school teacher. I spent the last decade teaching and coaching with Saskatoon Public Schools, mostly at Aden Bowman Collegiate, which is in the constituency where I live and the same one I now represent. My school community has been a second family to me and the support and affirmation that I've received from my former students, their parents and grandparents, players that I coached on the senior football team, teacher colleagues, and coaching colleagues, that support has been incredible.

The eight years I spent leading the Collective Voice grade 9 program absolutely changed my life, and I truly believe that the work I did as a teacher was just as important, perhaps more important than the work that I'll do here as an MLA.

It was my experience as a teacher that led me to a key understanding, Mr. Speaker. My students' greatest need was not another good teacher. They have lots of great teachers. What they need is a great government, one that believes in their value as the greatest resource we have in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it is deeply troubling to me that this government is unwilling to acknowledge that our education system is faltering and that students are taking the brunt of years of chronic underfunding and neglect. The newly appointed Minister of Education stated in the youth debate just weeks ago that there have been no cuts to education. Well let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that in the hallway where I taught for the last decade, in the last two years alone we have lost staff, as our librarian and our EAL

[English as an additional language] teacher have been cut back to half-time. Our practical and applied arts class for grade 8 is gone. I have a colleague teaching math to 45 students at a time. That's just in my hallway, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly hard to believe that these changes would be taking place if there have been no cuts to education.

When the pandemic arrived in Saskatchewan, it didn't just create new challenges in our schools. It exposed old challenges that have been ignored for a whole generation of kids who have entered school and now graduated under this failed leadership. If there was ever a time to address crowded classrooms and teachers who are overwhelmed with the impossible task of meeting the complex needs in their classroom, well now would be that time.

This government had a chance to do what was right for our kids and our economy by implementing a truly strong back-to-school plan. To say that I was overwhelmed would be incorrect because that's not a real word, and also because the back-to-school plan was so bad that it caused more stress, more anxiety, and more work for teachers, parents, and school leaders to replan and scramble to fill in the gaps left by this government. The whole thing made me wonder, why is it such an uphill battle for our kids to be a top priority for this government?

I've got to say, Mr. Speaker, I think our kids are worth it. As I said, I decided to run in this election because it seemed like the right thing to do at the right time. For the last 10 years I've seen my students do brave things. My students at Aden Bowman wrote a weekly opinion column in the *StarPhoenix* and hosted a weekly radio show on CFR 90.5 in Saskatoon. I witnessed young people first learning about important issues that were affecting their lives and the lives of others, and then advocating for positive change.

I felt like running in this election was my chance to respond to the learning that we had done together, and also to role model for them that speaking up for equality, inclusion, and justice is what strong really looks like. I taught my students that social justice is wanting the same things for all people that you want for your own family, the things that you want for your own loved ones, and then getting to work to make that a reality.

When I decided to enter politics, I had to think about what I wanted for my own children, for my own family, for my own loved ones. I want things like a good future. I think we all want that. Meaningful jobs — I think we agree there, too — a healthy planet to enjoy, a community of belonging, and a sense of well-being.

My daughter Etta is 13. She's the most inspiring 13-year-old I've ever met. She's a passionate activist for women's rights and she's done a lot of work in that area. She was the youngest organizer for the Women's March organizing committee in Saskatoon and she's spoken to hundreds of people at various events around the province, even as a young person.

I want my own child to have the opportunity in life that is unencumbered by her gender or her sexual orientation. And thus I want people of all genders, all orientations to be included in the prosperity of this province. But this government is silent on issues of gender parity. They've done nothing meaningful to address the pay gap and other sexist practices in the workplace.

They don't even acknowledge that raising a rock-bottom minimum wage to \$15 per hour would be of particular interest to women because the majority of these workers are women.

I also want to note the incredible honour it is for me to be part of an opposition caucus that has more women than men, and these women are intelligent, articulate, and strong.

My son Tom is seven years old and I'm in awe of his creativity, his intelligence, and his kind strength. Tom dreams big dreams, like climbing the Dawn Wall or becoming a world-famous zoologist or maybe a pro athlete or a crime-fighting superhero.

[14:45]

Being a parent to a big dreamer makes me think about other kids' dreams, kids like Tom. By any measurable standard, Tom has a good life. If my goal is to fight for the same quality of life for all kids in Saskatchewan, then we have got a long way to go. More children use food banks in Saskatchewan than any other province in this country. In fact children make up roughly 45 per cent of all food bank customers in Saskatoon. More than one in four kids in this province live in poverty, Mr. Speaker.

Suicide is a leading cause of death for kids in this province, and I need this Assembly to know that I've been at five funerals for young men who died by suicide. Most recently it was my student, Ethan. And the experience of walking with his family, his friends, and our school community through his death has over time turned into a great passion for me to advocate for the mental health of young people. Strong leadership will accept that we have a problem. Strong leadership will role model that it's okay to be vulnerable and it's okay to ask for help. Our kids need to see leaders like this. Their lives depend on it.

Our youngest son is Myles and he turned three in July. He's a goofy, curious, and mischievous little guy. And he doesn't look much like me because Myles is Inuk. He came to us through an open adoption when his birth mother sought out a family in Saskatoon. She was five months pregnant at the time, and we were not looking to adopt a child, but bringing Myles into our family expanded our circle to include the families of his birth mother, Catherine, and his birth father, Brian, who live in Nunavut.

As a parent to an Indigenous child, I know that in his lifetime he will face racism. It pains me to face this reality, but it pains me more to know that members opposite openly deny that racism in Saskatchewan is a problem. It's hard knowing that I can't protect my child from this kind of ignorance. We have deep issues in Saskatchewan, but we must remember that racism and all forms of discrimination are learned and they can be unlearned. We can do better as a province to promote reconciliation and anti-racism, and we need to do better for kids like Myles and the thousands of black kids, Indigenous kids, and young people of colour.

Now while I entered this race thinking about the needs of the next generation, I took my time on the doorstep to listen to the diversity of voices in Saskatoon Eastview. We have an incredible community with 10 schools, lots of small businesses, young families, gorgeous parks, and a high number of older adults and services for seniors. After walking over a million steps and knocking over 10,000 doors, a couple key trends emerged.

Number one, people are amazing. I couldn't believe the kindness, openness, and vulnerability that was shared with me on the doorstep. The second trend, it's not just young people being left behind by this government. The most heartbreaking stories that I heard were always about the lives of seniors. It was eye-opening for me. And again what I saw was that these problems are not new. They're just being laid bare by a raging pandemic that is exposing the heartless inaction of a government that so desperately wants to be seen as strong but is abandoning the very people who built this province.

The Throne Speech I heard yesterday was full of political spin and a couple weird flexes. Let's start with the spin. I heard the word "strong" 19 times, but no acknowledgement that things are not going well right now. We are not in a strong recovery just because it's worse in other places. Telling Saskatchewan people that this is going well is not the message that a truly strong government would deliver. I cannot support a Throne Speech that does not offer the people of this province an honest look at where we are at right now.

Now here's another piece of spin: a promise to balance the budget by 2024. This one is especially hard to swallow as this Premier has never balanced a budget and hasn't offered any credible path to doing so in four years. This is like the New York Jets saying that they plan to win the Super Bowl in four years. Well they're not very good right now and they're not headed in the right direction.

Now how about those weird flexes? I was astonished to hear this government brag about increasing the population when our population is actually in decline. What a weird thing to say. We know that more people have left this province than moved here every year for seven years in a row. Finally in the last quarter, that trend caught up with us and our population is now shrinking.

The second one that struck me was the 13-year-old brag about hiring 700 front-line workers in long-term care facilities. You would expect that such an increase would lead to improved health outcomes for residents, increased hours of care, overall improvements in the quality of life, but none of those things are happening. The Throne Speech our people needed to hear would have included a timeline for bringing front-line workers in right now, not in 2007.

I'd also like to take a look at the words and phrases that were not mentioned in the Throne Speech. Yes, we heard the word "strong" 19 times, but we did not hear the word Indigenous, nor First Nations, nor Métis. We did not hear the word class size or complexity at all. We also didn't hear anything about teacher burnout, which is very real. We did not hear the word poverty, nor harm reduction. We did not even hear the word well-being — not related to youth, not related to seniors, and not related to families.

I began my speech with the pledge to show respect to my fellow members in this Chamber and, Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that the members opposite will certainly have a chance to earn more of my respect if and when they take real action to invest in education; to learn about and address systemic racism in Saskatchewan; to legislate a suicide prevention strategy; to provide our seniors with a level of care that they deserve; and to leave a clean and healthy planet for our kids, grandkids, and all

future generations. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Throne Speech, but I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly an honour to stand before you in this illustrious and storied Chamber to debate the Speech from the Throne. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker, on being elected. I'm looking forward to working with you over the next four years.

Walking into the legislature this morning, I paused outside this grand building, Mr. Speaker, and took a moment. In that moment, I thought of all the people who had come before me and I thought of all the people who will come after me, all with a vision for this province and a desire to make all things better for constituents and our children.

I'd like to use this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and thank all the constituents for their support in the election. I told each and every one of them that the work ethic that I learned and used on my family farm will now be applied to my duties as an elected member of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Speaker, hard work alone will never get you to this place. It takes a team. And I've had the support of an amazing group of volunteers and supporters. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first thank Ed and Irma Ivey. Their tireless work hours included installing signs, scrutineering, and always being a sounding board that I found invaluable. I'd also like to thank Bob Huber, Elton Fiege, Jay Dixon, Dennis Spilchak, Bill Huber, Richard Barnsley, Chelsea Manz, Lisa Grudnki, Leigh and Marlene Bishop, and the list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated all of the effort they put in my campaign. Their support and time given will never be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, this campaign was unprecedented. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting constituents along the way and I had the good fortune of meeting a constituent, Mr. Speaker, who used to sit in your chair. Arnold Tusa, a former MLA and Speaker of the House, became one of my best door knockers and somebody that I'd really like to call a friend, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize my predecessor, Glen Hart. Glen served the constituency for 21 years and he left very large shoes to fill. And I hope to fill those shoes for all the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood. I want to recognize my opponent, the NDP [New Democratic Party] candidate, Thera Nordan. I want to thank her for a very respectful and dignified campaign.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and thank my new constituency assistant, Tina Knowles. She has a broad range of knowledge and a great work ethic that is crucial for helping me perform my duties as an MLA. I trust and have the confidence that the constituents of Last Mountain-Touchwood will be well looked after as she has proved herself absolutely invaluable during the campaign and all the work following. She used to work in this House as a Page years ago so she's very well versed.

I want to thank my business manager, Mr. Speaker, Susan

Stettner. Her attention to detail and her fearless attitude kept me focused throughout the election cycle.

I would be remiss if I do not acknowledge the most important people in my life. I have to give a shout-out to my mother and father. My dad, Frederick Keisig, passed away in 2013, Mr. Speaker, but I know he's watching. His wisdom and guidance gives me comfort every day. My mom, Diane Keisig, is a huge supporter and my biggest cheerleader. My sister Melanie was always willing to help in any way needed and is always willing to provide insight into our health care system, having worked as a nurse for over 20 years. I also want to thank my mother- and father-in-law, Grant and Marilyn Hale. Their guidance and enthusiasm always kept a person motivated during the writ and they always enjoyed hearing tales from the campaign trail.

As I stand here today, Mr. Speaker, and I look at my colleagues, I look at the members across the aisle, I see a very large group of very talented individuals, Mr. Speaker. Myself, Mr. Speaker, I'm not that talented except for one. My greatest talent, Mr. Speaker, was my ability to marry out of my league. My wife, Sheila Keisig, was my campaign manager, she was my organizer, and she is my rock. She's incredibly hard-working and the mother of our two beautiful daughters, Shannara and Sharlize. Everyone in this House knows that this is not a 9-to-5 job and consequently can take a large toll on family life. I'm very fortunate, Mr. Speaker, to have all of my family members being my biggest and best supporters.

If I can, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to tell you a personal story from this fall's election. I received a call from the Premier's office to say that he'd be travelling through my constituency the next day; he'd like to stop by and visit myself and some of my supporters. During these unprecedented times we're always cognizant about crowd sizes and social distancing, so I hurriedly organized 15 supporters, and a local agricultural parts supply house allowed us to use their parking lot to keep everything outside and safe, Mr. Speaker. I asked the business if any employees were interested in coming to hear what our Premier and myself had to speak and several of them jumped at the chance.

The next morning our Premier announced an increased support for people living with diabetes. The increased funding for insulin pumps and continuous glucose monitoring is fantastic news for all families dealing with this severe but treatable disease. Diabetes can be debilitating, life-altering, and life-threatening. The support from this government will help ease the burden of the costs associated with the disease. I'm very fortunate, Mr. Speaker; no one in my family is directly affected by diabetes. But I know many people across the constituency and around the province who are.

Fast forward. Later that day the Premier shows up. Our Premier gave a fantastic talk about his vision for the province. He talked about agriculture and he talked about the perennial favourite topic in rural Saskatchewan, highway repair. Then the Premier opened up the floor for questions. A constituent of mine who I haven't quite yet met spoke up from the back and told the Premier that this diabetes support announcement is fantastic news for her family. And also at this business, four employees there all had diabetes. This program is going to help each of them and their families.

I felt something right then, Mr. Speaker. I felt pride. I feel even more of that pride being part of this government today. Our government is bringing forth practical, immediate programs that will be helpful to so many Saskatchewan families. I feel proud to be part of a team that is always listening and bringing real, meaningful aid to Saskatchewan families. We weren't talking about policies. We're acting on what we hear from the constituents.

[15:00]

Another support system that I feel is important to note is the support for our veterans and veteran service clubs, Mr. Speaker. These clubs are incredibly vital to our community, as they provide a space for our veterans to keep their memories alive. Without these memories, we do not have the opportunity to educate our youth on the sacrifices our veterans made to protect our country and our democracy. History must be taught, Mr. Speaker; otherwise we are doomed to repeat it.

The increase in the budget from 100,000 to one and a half million a year will allow for some much-needed repairs for many Legion halls throughout Saskatchewan and allow for a higher degree of support for families. I'm proud to be part of a government that invests in its veterans, their families, and remembering the importance of history.

Mr. Speaker, the steps that are being taken by this government in restarting the community rink affordability program is excellent news for rinks in rural Saskatchewan, providing \$2,500 a year to assist in operating, covering costs for rural areas that desperately need it. Rinks are often the hub of small towns across Saskatchewan. Not only does it provide a place for socializing, but it also encourages a healthy lifestyle for many young people and even adults. The tricky part, Mr. Speaker, is resisting those homemade perogies.

I'm proud to be part of a government that has a plan for growing our exports, our agricultural products, our oil, gas, our natural resource economy, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is changing. It is changing because of the opportunities that are being created and promoted. As noted in the Throne Speech, Saskatchewan has an international trade office in Shanghai, China. I'm delighted that three more offices will be opening in India, Singapore, and Japan. This expansion is excellent news for Saskatchewan businesses, and an overall win for Saskatchewan to be seen on the global stage.

Mr. Speaker, this growth is going to do great things for the people of Saskatchewan. It will allow us to showcase to the international community what our industries have to offer. This includes the provision of food and energy for the ever-expanding world that we live in today. I'm looking forward to seeing industries that are critical to Saskatchewan businesses continue in their efforts for economic growth.

I have a strong connection to Saskatchewan and its agriculture sector. When one describes Saskatchewan, agriculture is one of the first things that come to mind. I believe that agriculture helped to perfect who we are as citizens of this province. The people of Saskatchewan are unique in our values and customs.

Often rural areas are overlooked and believed to be less desirable

due to the lack of opportunity. I think that these negative connotations to rural areas are untrue. Living in rural Saskatchewan offers a way of life and values that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. To fully understand the opportunities of rural living, one must live in a rural setting.

Farmers like myself are some of the hardest working people I know. Farmers work every day, long hours, with no complaints. There are no standard work hours for farmers. We love what we do. We go out to work in the warmest and the coldest without complaint. We do what we do because we have people around the world who depend on us to feed them. While the country around us is hunkering down due to COVID, farmers still went to work every day. This work-hard mentality is ingrained in the residents of rural and urban Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

Thomas Jefferson once wisely said, "Agriculture is our wisest pursuit because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness." I agree with this quote because I believe this province and its people are wealthy in their morals and their happiness. We are a unique group of people who are willing at any moment to lend a helping hand. That is one of the many things I value significantly about Saskatchewan and the great constituents of Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Fourteen new long-term care homes have been built, Mr. Speaker, and a 15th is being built in Meadow Lake. That just reaffirms this government's support for our senior citizens. We will be hiring 300 new continuing care aids, and I know there's many going to be ready to be hired because there's a class graduating in April from Sask Polytechnic, Mr. Speaker, and my daughter's among them. She's looking forward to a rewarding career in the health care field, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's projected 8,000 students will benefit from opportunities like the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship every year, which is being increased by 50 per cent. I believe this is a very wise investment for our students and for Saskatchewan's future.

For years our young people left this province for better opportunities, which the former NDP government failed to offer or provide. Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, under this government we are providing for our students so that we do not have to see our young people leaving. The graduate retention program, which provides up to \$20,000 in income tax credits to post-secondary graduates, is excellent help for all graduates who remain in Saskatchewan. I've personally seen high school graduates move to Regina and Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, further their studies, and return back to their constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood. They move back to rural Saskatchewan with the ability to find jobs in their field, Mr. Speaker. Our young people do not want to leave and I am delighted that this government provides reasons for them to stay.

I just want to add, Mr. Speaker, I've worked many jobs in my career. I've belonged to many boards, I've served on numerous community committees, and I have never had the privilege of working with such an inclusive and welcoming group as this government of today. I really want to thank all my colleagues for that. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure ... [inaudible interjection] ... Thanks, Fred.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I offer my full support to the Speech from the Throne, moved by the member from

Kindersley, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, but I do not support the amendment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it is truly my privilege and my pleasure to stand here today. First I would like to congratulate you on your election. I only had the opportunity to sit down in your office once when you were just the MLA for Biggar-Sask Valley, and now I hope I never end up in your current office, like being called to the principal's office.

I'd also like to extend my congratulations to members on both sides of the House on their successful campaigns. And finally a thank you to our Government House Leader and our Government Whip for the role they've played in getting us all in here today. I know it's been a lot of work for them, but we can be in here and work for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these are difficult and different times around the globe. And I want to recognize another group of people: our front-line workers. The nurses, doctors, teachers, restaurant servers, the people in retail, and every person that goes out there working each and every day to make sure the people of our great province can continue on as normal as possible. I want to thank them.

Mr. Speaker, as I rise here today to offer my support for this Throne Speech, I stand here as one person, humbled to speak in this magnificent home of democracy in our great province. But I don't stand here alone. I stand here as the voice of Christy, the daycare operator; for Luke, the university student; for Dave, the retired senior; and for all those that have seen fit to bestow the great honour of representing the good people of Walsh Acres upon me. I will not take this post lightly or take anything for granted. Instead I will always work hard to represent the high expectations of those in Walsh Acres.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier for his leadership, his guidance, and his friendship. Our leader carries himself with humility and is constantly reminding me through his actions and his words what a privilege it is to be a part of this government and what it means to serve the people of Saskatchewan as a part of this caucus.

And speaking of our caucus, I must thank the women and men of the caucus who came out and assisted me during the campaign. They came out and knocked doors. They provided advice for me, and they were there during a very difficult time.

I'm truly blessed to be surrounded by so many great colleagues here today. I stand here today as one person, but I did not get here alone, Mr. Speaker. My journey started over four years ago with a simple conversation with Tina Beaudry-Mellor, the former minister of Advanced Education. Tina and I worked together for a number of years at Global before she entered into her career in politics, and that's how I got to know her. So when I decided to think about making a run, she was the first person I called.

Then I called an old friend, Kevin Dureau. Kevin and I have been friends for a decade. Kevin ran in the 2016 election, and I wanted some guidance on how to move forward. Then we sat down with

the former Finance minister, Kevin Doherty. Kevin has become a friend, a mentor, and a leader, and a guide throughout this process. These fine people constantly encouraged me, provided me with advice, and introduced me to the people who would eventually form what I believe, Mr. Speaker, is the best campaign team any new candidate had in this province.

My core campaign team . . . Well my campaign manager, Clint Fox, he was invaluable. He literally was a cliché: the first guy through the door, last guy out the door. In fact some nights I told him he may as well just get a bed and put it in our campaign office, he was there so much. Without Clint, we are not successful in winning Walsh Acres.

We had some dedicated door knockers: Megan Mann, Andrea Mayer, Jean-Michel Ferre. They were troopers. They personified it. They had frozen fingers. They had dislocated shoulders. They gave up shifts at work. Those are just to name a few of the things that they put on the line to help us be successful in Walsh Acres.

We had other volunteers. Andrew Milleker took an entire week off of his work to come out and help us during e-week. Ranjith Narayanasamy, president of the Hindu temple here in town, absolutely stunning what he did for us and the people he connected us with and how he came out in his group. My business manager Sam Lichtman. Kyle Addison; Kyle's been with me through the nomination process over the last couple of years.

I also have to thank the party staff. Patrick Bundrock. Dylan Pollon, and man, that guy gave us everything he had. Deanne Marshall and everybody that supported our team. I would not be standing here today if it were not for the dedication of so many. As we heard the member from Rochdale mention earlier, I'd also like to thank former MLA of Walsh Acres and the current MP [Member of Parliament] Warren Steinley for his guidance and all his help bringing his team out and helping us out.

Mr. Speaker, what I started with was a great campaign team, and now that we are here, I have a great group of friends as well. Now, Mr. Speaker, I've been blessed to add to that team, and I'd like to introduce my constituency assistant, Danielle Rodgers. Danielle's going to be the person who works side by side with me each and every day, working hard for the people of Walsh Acres.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't acknowledge those candidates that ran in Walsh Acres in the 2020 election as well. Sandra Morin, Kelly Hardy, and Ken Grey were all formidable opponents. Now while there might have been plenty of talk about the candidates in the constituency of Walsh Acres at varying times over the couple of months' buildup to the election, our team focused solely on what the mission was ahead of us, and that was listening to the voters, not the extracurricular that was going on around some of the other candidates.

I'd like to pass along my congratulations to our newly elected city council here in Regina. In particular, a special congratulations to our new mayor, Sandra Masters, the Queen City's first woman elected as mayor.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today as one man surrounded by my fellow members in this House, but I only stand here because of

the support I have in my own house. Every person in here knows that running for office, there are sacrifices that their families have to make, and mine is no different, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I might say they are my rock and they are my inspiration. To Laurie, my partner, I can't thank her enough; I can't love her enough. This is a woman who literally stood by her man during this election campaign carrying more than her fair share of the load. Laurie spent the entire campaign carrying a child, a baby girl, Eisley, that was born a week after that final ballot was cast. When I really asked Laurie throughout it, you can't go into labour quite yet; we got some work to do. And she held on for an extra week, and we all thank her very much for that.

I have to thank my Star Wars-loving boys, Dayn and Sebastian. They provided plenty of laughs. They even provided some tears. They even knocked the odd door. And Sebastian, my youngest boy there, four years old, he became Premier Scott Moe's biggest fan. Every time a commercial would come on, he would chant out, "Scott Moe, Premier." And it was a big thrill for him to get the chance to meet him during the campaign.

[15:15]

To my brother, Darcy and my sister, Brandi. Brandi is my biggest fan. They're more than just siblings, but they are truly my best friends. To my mom and dad, Blake and Brenda, I cannot say enough for what your love and support has meant through my successes and more importantly through my failures. Dad was my sign guy. He was out there putting up signs on day one. And I even got my mom out to door knock a couple of times. So that was a lot of fun, and then they pitched in on election day as well. I'm forever in debt to the love my family has shown me and the support they give me.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today because I see opportunity in our province. I see opportunity in our people, and I see opportunity in our future. I didn't always feel this way. As a young man growing up in Saskatchewan during the mid-'90s and the early 2000s, I felt like I had to leave our province to have any chance of succeeding and living out the life that I'd envisioned for myself. And like so many young people at that time, I left. I moved to Alberta on a couple occasions for school and for work. However since returning to the land of the living skies over 12 years ago, I now believe that not even the sky is the limit.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I stand here today to support this Throne Speech. Because this Premier and this government is committed to the future, a future where we can all see our opportunity and chase our dreams right here for generations to come. We have an aggressive growth plan to increase our population of 1.4 million people and add a hundred thousand jobs in the next decade. Those are achievable and they are ambitious.

Now if I may, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight a few parts of the Throne Speech that really hit home with myself and with the people of Walsh Acres. Mr. Speaker, over the summer and the fall months I had the chance to meet and speak with thousands of residents in Walsh Acres and got the chance to hear about their stories about hope, about their dreams, about their critiques, and about what it means to them to live in Saskatchewan. Walsh Acres has seniors. It has CEOs [chief executive officer]. It has small-business owners. It has students, teachers, and tradespersons. There are young families just starting out in the

neighbourhood. There are those that are still in the original house — the original owners of the house — that they built. And then there are those who are new to our country that live in Walsh Acres.

Our government speaks of a strong Saskatchewan, strong communities, and strong families. And that just wasn't happening when my sister left in 2002 to go to Ontario for school. Because you know why? She never returned. Our government has worked and is working hard to change those dark years when the ship was listing a little bit. People were jumping overboard and jumping over the borders.

Our government is increasing the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship by 50 per cent, benefiting about 8,000 students each year. The graduate retention program that provides up to \$20,000 in income tax credits, the only program of its kind in the nation. Our government is providing the opportunity for our young people to get educated in Saskatchewan, graduate in Saskatchewan, start careers in Saskatchewan, and raise their families in Saskatchewan.

For our younger kids, our government is investing in their future here in Regina. Children like my little ones and the youth in Walsh Acres will continue to be supported with classrooms, new classrooms, right here in the Queen City. A total of \$121 million is being invested between five new schools in Regina. They were announced by this government.

Mr. Speaker, during the recent election campaign, our team knocked tens of thousands of doors over the course of the summer, and one topic that came up quite a bit in Walsh Acres was seniors. Well, Mr. . . . I keep saying Mr. Speaker. Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. Our government is committing to making life more affordable for seniors by significantly reducing the cost of ambulance bills for seniors and by eliminating the cost of inter-facility transfers and reducing the maximum cost on other calls by over 50 per cent. Our government will also increase the maximum benefit paid under the seniors' income plan to four times what it was in 2007. As well, in response to concerns over staffing levels, our government is responding by hiring 300 new continuing care aids to work in long-term care, a commitment to our seniors and the seniors of Walsh Acres.

The people of Saskatchewan are strong and proud. One of those sources of pride is being able to own one's own home. The neighbourhoods of Walsh Acres are filled with all kinds of different homes, but at each door there's a sense of care, there's a sense of compassion, and there's a sense of upkeep. We have some of the nicest yards in Regina in Walsh Acres — beautifully established, big trees, manicured lawns. I had the opportunity to chat with Jody. She's a homeowner and she was thinking about doing some improvements to her home by putting in some new kitchen cabinets. Our government is bringing in the Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit in which Jody could save over \$2,000 on the cost of her home improvements, another way we are helping out the people of Walsh Acres.

Madam Deputy Speaker, think back to the first home you owned, and think of the sense of joy and the sense of pride it provided you. Then think about what it meant to you to be able to invest in that home. My first house was in Mainprize Park down in southeastern Saskatchewan, and I remember what it meant to me

to be able to buy that home. And then I remember what it meant to me to be able to invest in that home. I think one of my first investments was probably buying a foosball table. I don't know that that's going to qualify under this. I was a little bit younger and a little bit more single. But people like Jody can take advantage of our home renovation tax credit, and all the people of Walsh Acres.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I stand here today blessed to have had many experiences in my life that have framed the man I am today. It doesn't seem so long ago that I was just a young buck learning to stand on my first pair of skates at the Midale rink. I think I had to push a chair around for the first couple of years and some would say I never actually learned to skate much better than that in the end. But starting in sports at such a young age helped my love of sports. I participated in all kinds of sports — curling, volleyball, badminton. Obviously hockey was a big one in my life. The values of hard work and dedication I learned from being in sports have helped me in every aspect of my life and they continue to guide me as well. Saskatchewan has a rich tradition of athletes leading the way. From the Gordie Howes and the Fred Sasakamoose to the Catriona Le May Doans and the Kaylyn Kyles, from the small-town rinks to the city ball diamonds, sports is part of the fabric of our province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our government's commitment to the active families benefit that will provide families under \$60,000 annual income up to 150 per year per child, or \$200 for a child with a disability, to cover the cost of participating in sports, arts, or cultural activities helps give that next generation of young Saskatchewan athletes, actors, and artists a chance to start skating towards their dreams.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you'll indulge me for just a couple of minutes, I want to turn back the clock and tell a little bit of a story here. Fifty years ago, five men came together in the Southeast. Some of them were farmers. One was actually a lawyer. A couple of them worked in the oil field and another was a geologist. These five men started a small business, an oil and gas production business. They worked on tight budgets. They couldn't really risk it all — they had young families at home that they needed to support. But despite the perils, despite taking that chance, they worked hard, they made some good business decisions, and even got a little bit of luck once in a while. Over the decades that company grew. They added permanent staff. They drilled some oil wells. They hired contractors along the way. All the while staying true to themselves and true to the mantra that growth was the best way to navigate their business.

Even in these tough times in the oil field industry these days, they continue to grow. Madam Deputy Speaker, that company is Midale Petroleum, and today it remains a family business, now seeing its third generation of family members with their hand on the rudder, guiding the company through these choppy waters in the oil and gas industry right here in Saskatchewan. But they're still persevering.

This is the place that I learned many valuable business lessons, and some life skills, as I spent a decade there working my way up from a summer student on the maintenance crew — basically the first guy in the hole with a shovel getting the dirtiest — all the way to working in the office, becoming a director and, after a couple of years of school, becoming a consulting geologist

there.

You see, my grandpa, Ervin Meyers, was one of those five men that took that chance and started that small business. And he along with his friends Ken Lee, George and Dale Hardy, his brother Leslie Meyers, and eventually Ran Clearwater, all took a chance to start a small business right here in Saskatchewan. One that has had an impact on the lives of so many for half a century. Ask the members here from the Southeast, and the people that they represent, the impact that's left behind by these small businesses. And I think the Minister of Education can attest to this. They show up at 4-H sales and buy steers. They lease land from farmers. But they don't just lease their land — when it's time to plow some snow, they get the farmers to do it. They sponsor sports teams. High school scholarships are given out. And on and on and on.

Our government will temporarily reduce the small business tax from 2 per cent to zero, recognizing that this has been and continues to be an extremely challenging time for small-business owners like those in Walsh Acres. The reduction will help the dog grooming service, the construction company owner, the restaurateurs, and all the businesses in this province and in Walsh Acres keep their employees working, and continue to give back to their communities. These small businesses, these local businesses continue to be the heartbeat of our city and our province. They sponsor the sporting events, the youth activities, the community initiatives today, just like they did 50 years ago when my grandfather and his friends started that, and it goes on and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today as an MLA, as a life partner, as a father, as I mentioned a new father. This election campaign was a bit of a rollercoaster for me. You see, Madam Deputy Speaker, going into this fall, I was the father of three wonderful children, which is still true today. As I mentioned my family welcomed baby Easley Faith on November 3rd, just a week after our provincial election. She's healthy. She's happy. She just couldn't even wait. She was actually supposed to be born yesterday, but she was so eager to get into this great province she had to come four weeks early.

Now the reason I have three is because Easley shares a middle name with her older big sister Teigha, and unfortunately that is all these two girls will share. My daughter Teigha Faith was a promising young student and an even more promising young athlete. Teigha was my light and she continues to be that. She won medals and city championships in badminton, gold medals in provincial soccer. She won an international championship in Minnesota, and just last year on the pitch, a city banner with her teammates at LeBoldus.

Teigha and I shared so much. From daddy-daughter trips to Disneyworld, going to a World Cup. We went to Washington, DC where I think she actually became a little bit interested in politics for a little while there as well. She was my favourite teammate, my favourite travel-mate. The laughs, well I don't have enough time to go through them all, Madam Deputy Speaker. But unfortunately like others, Teigha suffered from mental illness and Teigha tragically lost her battle against mental illness on September 20th, completing suicide.

Mr. Speaker, I think all of us in this House can agree that there's

no greater loss than losing one's child. People say to me that they feel sorry for me, and I say, don't feel sorry for me; feel sorry for that little girl and the struggles that she had. Feel sorry for what she had to endure. I choose to speak about Teigha and her battle because we need to. Teigha was a strong young woman in this life and I'm determined that her legacy will continue to be strong. Teigha had been my light and now she can serve to be the light for so many others and so many youth that are out there suffering with mental illness.

My children, the children of Walsh Acres, and the children of Saskatchewan have always been and will always be one of my biggest motivations to serve in this Assembly. Former Premier Brad Wall asked the question, did you leave things better than you found them? That is my mission and that should be our mandate. Teigha taught me and continues to teach me how to be a better dad, a better person, and she guides me to be the best representative I can for Walsh Acres and for Saskatchewan.

Our government now has a minister that will oversee mental health and addictions programming in our province. The appointment of Minister Hindley is just one demonstration of our government's commitment to support those struggling with mental health and addictions challenges, and I couldn't be more proud.

Our government is introducing innovative initiatives that 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. And I can speak from experience, this is a great initiative.

These are unprecedented times for our generation, and we've been charged to stand in this Assembly to not only debate and pass legislation but to lead — to lead the battle against COVID and to lead our economic recovery to protect lives and livelihoods. These are days for neither the faint-hearted nor for petty squabbles amongst ourselves. Instead we must plow through this rough land so our next generations can enjoy the beautiful harvest and the future of the seeds we sow here and we sow now.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today and I will be supporting the motion made on the Throne Speech and moved by the member from Kindersley, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

[15:30]

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

Mr. Jensen: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's incredibly humbling to rise in this Chamber today for the first time and give my support for our government's Throne Speech.

Standing here today is really such a privilege. It sort of reminds me of an early summer day in 1997 when I did my first solo in an airplane. My flight instructor was a gentleman by the name of Bob Pearson. He stood to the side of the airplane I was in, and I still remember the call letters to that airplane — charlie, golf, yankee, bravo, India. He gave me a smile and a wave, and I checked and double-checked and probably even triple-checked just to make sure everything was right. I remember pulling onto

the runway and, to be honest, I was so nervous all I could think of was, you've come this far; don't screw up.

After throttling up and barrelling down that grass runway I felt that little Cessna 152 begin to climb into the air. All I remember after that was how good it felt to be under that clear, blue Saskatchewan sky all by myself in this airplane 1,500 feet above the ground and the wind whistling through the doors. Well to make a long story short, I touched down on the numbers and in one piece, and I taxied back to where Bob was standing. His smile was even wider than mine as I opened up that airplane door and stepped out. That first solo taught me a lot about life: put trust in yourself, put trust in others, and be confident to meet those new challenges head-on.

And speaking of new challenges, I'd like to congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your election, and also to our Speaker of the House. Your service to this House is appreciated. And I think we can all agree that in this legislature, we'll be in good hands with both of you in the Chair.

I'd also like to congratulate all the new and returning members on both sides of the House on being elected and re-elected. Like I said before, this is a really humbling experience to walk up the front steps of this majestic, historical building each morning and to be able to stand here representing the people in my constituency of Martensville-Warman and all of Saskatchewan.

I do have some thank yous to say to some very special people in my life before we get started, but these people helped make me who I am today. It's disappointing they couldn't be here today to watch from the gallery, but my wife Angela, our son Asher, and our daughter Kolbie have been my everything. And it's with their support and encouragement that I'm able to be standing in this House today doing something that I truly do love — serving the people of this great province.

We're a typical family of four. Angela is the glue that binds our family together, and I'm constantly amazed at all the things that she is able to successfully tackle in a single day. Whether it's making waffles from scratch for our kids on a snowy Sunday morning, or helping Kolbie get ready for cheerleading, or driving my son to and from the rink for his hockey practices, I can't help but be truly thankful that I have such a supportive and wonderful woman in my life.

Every couple has a story to tell, and Angela and I are no different. We were high school sweethearts. We dated for the better part of a year when we were teenagers. But we went our separate ways and we didn't see each other for close to 15 years. About 17 years ago, a mutual friend from back in those high school days put us back in touch with each other, and we've been inseparable ever since. She's my rock and she truly is my soulmate, and I thank her for everything she does for me.

Like thousands of others in our province, Angela is a business owner and she's doing a terrific job of leading her team during these challenging and unprecedented times, and she's also raising our family while I'm here in the legislature. She's a graduate of the University of Regina with a degree in economics and holds a diploma with honours in interior design technology from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. So as you can imagine, whenever we do renovations around the house, and now that we have a

tax credit, they're going to be done on time and they will come in under budget because she is the one with the economics degree. Let's just say we do make a great team.

My son Asher is 14 and in grade 9 and it's his first year of high school. So like me, he's gotten himself into something new and exciting this year. Asher is growing up so quickly. And he's a young man that is smart, and he cares deeply about people and even this province. He's come a long way since his first early days as an infant in the neonatal intensive care unit at RUH [Royal University Hospital] in Saskatoon, where he spent the first four or five days of his life under observation after a difficult delivery. The doctors and nurses at RUH, and especially the ones in the NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] were fabulous and they made sure he and mom were comfortable and never alone.

But like most teenagers, they grow up. My son loves his video games but he's also an athlete. He loves playing hockey. He's a cross-country runner. He started going to the gym and he's lifting weights, and one of these days I think he may want to arm-wrestle the member from Regina Gardiner Park. Look out. But I think that makes him pretty unique for his age because he also has a deep interest in politics. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if he occupies one of these chairs some day in this Chamber. Once things get back to normal and the legislature reopens again to visitors, I'm sure my colleagues and the legislative staff will get a chance to meet him and talk to him and find out who he really is.

Our daughter Kolbie is in grade 1 at Holy Trinity in Warman, and this little girl does not have an off switch, Madam Deputy Speaker. It doesn't matter where we are or what we're doing, her creative mind is at work. She's making her own story books, blanket forts, handmade birthday cards for her friends. She's certainly got a knack for business too. Just a couple of weeks ago, she made a sweet truck out of a cardboard box and stocked it with candy that she had collected during Halloween. She even completed this sweet truck with a menu on the side. I tried to explain to her that, as a parent, I needed to collect some taxes in the form of a couple of miniature chocolate bars. Well needless to say, she didn't like that idea too much and she moved her sweet truck into a different room where the tax regime was a little more friendly. Clearly she understands how business works, and she's only six years old.

It's been almost two years since I decided to enter the nomination race in Martensville-Warman. And there are so many other people to thank. I'm sure I might leave some out but here goes. I wouldn't be standing here today without the love and support of my parents. I know they're watching from home today and I know how proud they are of all of us kids — my sisters, Lorie, Nonnee, Karla, and their families. There are so many stories that could be shared but I'll leave some of them for another time. As my dad would often remind me, finish the business first and there'll be time for stories later. It's just one of the wise pieces of advice my parents have given me over the years and I am truly thankful for all the lessons that they've taught us. So thank you, Mom and Dad.

I should also mention my other mom, Ruby, who along with Angela has been very supportive of both of us as I make the switch from being a husband and dad who was home nearly every night to one that will be gone for weeks at a time in some cases.

This name has been mentioned from time to time in this Chamber over the years, but it deserves to be mentioned again: my constituency assistant, Whitney Friesen. And he is not your average CA. He's been serving the people of our constituency and Saskatchewan for over 27 years now. I believe that makes him the longest serving constituency assistant in the province. I'm his fourth MLA that he's worked for. I should actually rephrase that. I'm the fourth MLA that's worked for him because he is that good.

I'm grateful to have Whitney's casework experience and political knowledge on my side and wanted to recognize him for his accomplishments, just as his previous MLAs have done in the past. He knows just about everyone in our communities and he stays on top of things while I'm here in Regina, so it's comforting to know that everything is looked after back home. So it likely won't be the last time I do this so I'm quite sure you're going to be hearing Whitney's name from time to time in the coming years.

My campaign team wasn't large but it was dedicated, and boy was it efficient. So to Darlene, Doug, Gerald, Don, Terry, Linda, Bonnie, Nicholas, Diane, Janie, and Carl, plus all of our scrutineers and other volunteers that I haven't mentioned: the work you did was amazing. I can't begin to thank you enough for all the time and effort that you put into making our campaign run so smoothly.

There's also another couple of people in my corner so to speak, and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Richard and Anna Porter. They made me feel so welcome and have treated me and my family so well over these past couple of years, and their advice and words of encouragement have been invaluable. So to them I thank you for all that you've done for us.

A couple of more thank yous. First to our previous MLA for Martensville-Warman, Nancy Heppner. She worked tirelessly inside and outside this building for nearly 14 years, helping build this province into what it is today. Being the MLA for two of the fastest growing communities in the province comes with its own challenges, but Nancy was there time and time again, and time again to make sure that the people were looked after with investments in infrastructure and programs. Most of you will have heard this from her in the past but I'm going to repeat it now again: Martensville-Warman remains the best constituency in the province to live in and our 7,000-plus voters proves that.

I'd also like to thank the people at our party office: Patrick, Dylan, Tye, and all the staff there, Kaitlyn as well. And I also need to give a heartfelt thank you to all the staff back home who are continuing the good work at our family business. You've been all so supportive and patient, especially those frequent times when I come home, where I'd come and go without any warning as I was pulled in so many different directions campaigning for the nomination and then for the election.

Being in the community newspaper industry here in Saskatchewan for as long as I have been has taught me so many lessons about being a business owner. But one of the most important ones is about people. Our staff have never been just another employee number or another face that comes and goes. We always try to treat our employees as team players and, by extension to that, as family. I'm proud of the work that they've

done and continue to do in telling the important news stories that need to be told, and ensuring the residents in our area of the province are informed with local news that is reliable, independent, and trusted. So thank you to everyone who contributes to the success back home at our family business.

As I just mentioned, before being elected I was a community newspaper publisher that spent 15 years working as a partner in the family business with my wife. I was also in Outlook before moving to the aforementioned best constituency in the province . . . the member from Yorkton. We established our newspaper in Warman in 2008. But prior to that I grew up calling a few places home around Saskatchewan, including Outlook, Saskatoon, North Battleford, Prince Albert, back to Outlook, and then finally settling down in Warman. My background is in radio. That's why the member for Walsh Acres and I get along so good — TV guy, radio guy — and also the member from Swift Current.

With my background I got my first job with the Dekker family in the Battlefords at CJNB before I moved on to work with the likes of Jim Scarrow, John Wessel, and Neil Headrick at CKBI radio for a couple of years. But as it turns out, community newspapers were my calling and I wouldn't have traded a single minute working in that industry for anything else.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm proud to have lived, worked, and am now raising our family in the only province that I've called home. As a small-business owner, I can relate to the thousands of other men and women across this province who put everything on the line to do what they love by owning and operating their own business. Whether it's putting in the extra hours in the office or their store getting a job finished, or laying awake at night wondering how to get the bills paid, I've been there and done that, and I can relate to you. Small businesses are the greatest source of jobs in our province and drive our local economies, so that's why I'm proud to be part of this government that is providing things like a temporary reduction in corporate tax, from 2 per cent down to zero.

[15:45]

But as my predecessor would often say, now for something completely different. We're living in a very different world today compared to 10 months ago. It's a scenario that even the most talented non-fiction writer would have a difficult time articulating. Each day it seems we're confronted with new challenges, but in true Saskatchewan fashion, we always find our way and come out the other side stronger.

Despite all the ups and downs we experience, the one thing that the people of Saskatchewan have been able to rely on for the past 13 years is our government's common-sense approach to issues that matter to the people. Madam Deputy Speaker, our track record over the past 13 years across every measurable metric is one that is stellar when contrasted with what we saw in the '90s and early- to mid-2000s under the NDP.

Our government has a plan. It's a plan that's measured, balanced, and when we come out the other side of this pandemic, we'll continue to build on our province's past successes and grow Saskatchewan in the months and years ahead. And it's backed up by the numbers the members opposite don't like to talk about. From 2007 when we formed government until 2019, our province

had the third-best job-creation record in the country with over 77,000 new jobs and also the third-highest average weekly earnings in the country. On top of that, our province has recorded the lowest unemployment rate in the country for the past three consecutive months now, and our government is committed and will work to keep Saskatchewan at or near the top of all these categories.

One way our government is prepared to keep our economy strong and people working is with our seven-and-a-half-billion-dollar investment into infrastructure. These dollars will be used for bridges, highways, schools, hospitals — important pieces of infrastructure that the people of this province expect us to provide.

Speaking as a parent with children in school, I'm proud of our record when it comes to education. The cities I represent have excellent, well-funded schools with teachers and support staff that are second to none. Just in the last seven years alone, our government recognized the incredible population growth in Warman and Martensville and invested into the constituency heavily by building five new schools and substantially expanding and renovating another one, while also constructing much needed new highways and infrastructure.

In 2013 our government opened the new \$18.7 million Warman middle-years school. It's a school that my son went to. In 2016 we completed the \$17.6 million worth of renovations and an addition to the Martensville High School, and then four new joint-use elementary schools with two in Warman and two in Martensville at a total cost of just over \$100 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a couple of years ago our government completed work on two new interchanges: one on Highway 11 out in Warman and another on Highway 12 at the main access into Martensville. These interchanges were badly needed in the name of safety. Our cities were growing exponentially. So to anybody who had driven those sections of highway, they will be able to tell you that those interchanges came at the right time.

In 2020-2021, we've seen improvements to our roads in Martensville-Warman, including work on Highway 16 at Beam Road and Auction Mart Road, as well as the construction of passing lanes on Highway 12 from Martensville to the junction of Highway 312 just north of Hepburn.

As I stated earlier, my constituency has grown immensely since 2007, and the needs that come with that growth are being met and they continue to be met during this very challenging time. As part of the 2021 stimulus package, communities across the province will receive funding from the municipal economic enhancement program, otherwise known as MEEP. This will support investment in infrastructure to stimulate our economy, stimulate recovery, and encourage local job creation.

In Martensville-Warman the MEEP program is providing over \$177,000 to the town of Osler, \$1.38 million to the city of Martensville, and \$1.58 million to the city of Warman, plus — and we're not done yet — another \$150,000 for a BMX [bicycle moto-cross] pump track in Martensville for the kids, and another \$750,000 for the construction of a campground in Martensville. It's investments like these, Madam Deputy Speaker, that help build strong communities. They create jobs and they pave the

way for other local investments by the private sector.

I had a press release cross my desk yesterday, and I thought it would be worth sharing an excerpt. It's from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. It's dated December 1st. In this press release, they comment on our government's Throne Speech:

We appreciate the province's commitment to continue the fight against the federal carbon tax while implementing its Prairie Resilience climate change plan. The government's commitment to support the agriculture industry through investments in research and innovation while seeking new markets for Saskatchewan products is also welcome news for rural producers. SARM applauds the province's commitment to farm support programs while recognizing that more needs to be done to revise the AgriStability program to improve relevancy in the support of the province's agricultural producers.

A letter of support from rural Saskatchewan representatives.

But there's more to our government's plan, Madam Deputy Speaker. We're also making life more affordable for Saskatchewan people across the province by cutting power bills by 10 per cent for the next year and providing a 10.5 per cent tax credit on home renovations until 2022. This will enable families to maybe do some things that they've been wanting to do around the house. It will also create new jobs.

We're also doing more for those with autism and those that require Deaf-blind services across our province. And I have a special message to share from one of my constituents that I received a note from them following the Throne Speech. The email reads, Madam Deputy Speaker:

My son has been enrolled in the Saskatchewan pump program since we arrived in 2013. He has had a pump since he was five years old, in Manitoba. Although this has been great, we have been preparing for the time when he is no longer covered under the pump program when he turns 25. Enhancements to the pump program introduced by the Saskatchewan Party provide greater peace of mind for us and for my son, now that adults will have similar coverage as youth.

Even more exciting for families without good medical benefits is that the Saskatchewan Party government is considering further enhancements to the inclusion of continuous glucose monitoring systems to be covered under the provincial plan up to the age of 18. CGMs have been a lifesaver for many families and have allowed kids to experience more freedom to enjoy things like sleepovers without the added worry of their support systems not being there. Mom and dad can see glucose levels right on their smart phone all the time and alarms go off when they are out of insulin, experiencing severe lows, or high blood sugar levels.

It's stories from people like this, Madam Deputy Speaker, that make me proud of this government and all that we're doing to support Saskatchewan families and building stronger communities. Indeed our future is bright, and that's why I'm

supporting our government's Throne Speech moved by the member for Kindersley and seconded by my good friend from Saskatoon Riversdale. And I do not support the amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise in the Assembly in my place and speak on the Throne Speech that was delivered in the last couple of days by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Madam Deputy Speaker, before I do, I do want to extend congratulations to yourself on becoming the Deputy Speaker. I know that you will do an excellent job in that role.

I also want to pass on congratulations to the Speaker, to the new Speaker elected by the members, the member for Biggar. Madam Deputy Speaker, I've had an opportunity to — I think we're all going to have to get used to that — I've had an opportunity to work closely with the member for Biggar, the new Speaker, in some of our previous roles when he was the minister of Rural and Remote Health. And I can say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that he is a member that I think has the respect of all members of this House. He certainly is well respected in not only his community but I think in the entire province and is certainly a quick learner, was my experience. And I know that he will take on this new role with honour and integrity and I think serve all of us well in that role. So I want to congratulate him.

I also want to congratulate and thank the member from Regina Coronation Park for the role that he played in presiding over this House over the last couple of years, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I think he did so in a way that I think was reflected well on all of us. And I'll just say this, that it's nice to see from returning members opposite, the esteem that they're showing the member from Coronation Park now that he is not in the Chair. It's a shame they didn't show him that same esteem when he was in the Chair. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the member for Coronation Park.

An Hon. Member: — That's a bit chippy.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well I think it's accurate and I think the members of this House that are returning know that it's an accurate statement.

So I also want to thank . . . or I also want to welcome the members to the House, all the new members, all the returning members of the House on their re-election, and I want to welcome on all sides of the House, on both sides of the House, the new members. This really is, and I think the members know this, the new members will know this, will obviously feel this, but Madam Deputy Speaker, there is, I think, no greater honour to be able to serve your fellow citizens.

I always reflect on the fact, and I tell students when I get a chance to talk to students in my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you think about the fact that as of, I think, July, there are 1,778,681, so 1.7 million people living in this province. I think I got that right. And only 61 people at a time get the honour to serve in this Chamber. So I know that other members, and another member, I think yesterday, talked about over the entire history of this province, the small number of people. It's a

significant honour to be able to stand in this Chamber and say whatever you want and have that honour to represent. Just such a tremendous honour.

So I want to welcome all the new members. I want to say to our new members on both sides of the House, although specifically to our new members on both sides of the House, because I can't speak for the members opposite, but you will find that we are much like a family. And this is very different times. There are members on both sides of the House, and including on our side of the House, that I'm not sure I've met in person without a mask on. There's some people that I haven't actually seen in person without a mask on. And so you will forgive me that when the day comes when we're able to take the masks off, if I'm still looking at your forehead and your hairline to figure out who is who.

And these are strange days where we're meeting in different rooms because of the numbers. I miss the fact that we usually have a summer caucus meeting before the election where we bring in the new candidates and get to know the new candidates. And you know, I'm hopeful that a time will come when we'll be able to do that.

So to all the new members, welcome. Welcome to the family. You're going to find it's like a family. There's going to be times when we're going to get along and there's going to be times when we're going to disagree, and hopefully the odd fist fight doesn't break out. But it's going to be wonderful. But I do want to welcome you all.

And I especially want to welcome the member from Walsh Acres. Madam Deputy Speaker, members may not know this, but he and I grew up together. The member from Walsh Acres grew up on a farm north of Midale and I grew up about 10 miles away in the village of Halbrite.

And so I have known the member from Walsh Acres — well, he's a couple years older than me, so maybe he should say that he has known me — probably all of our entire lives. Spent a lot of time in Midale and in the area at boy's sports days and on the ball diamonds and in the Harry O. Memorial Arena. It's quite something to be looking at the member from Walsh Acres through Plexiglas because that's a lot of what our childhood was like at the hockey rink, looking at each other through Plexiglas while one of us was on the ice at any given time.

[16:00]

So I want to welcome the member from Walsh Acres, welcome him to the House. It's nice to have another person from the 458 here in the Chamber.

I do want to thank my campaign team. This was my fifth election, and that includes a by-election. And we have a great team in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. It was a little bit of a family affair, this election. My aunt Danette was my campaign manager, and so I want to thank her and Murray and Pat for being our sign team, and Davin and Josh who helped them out as well.

And it was a little bit of a different campaign for us, in part because our main sign person, Ross Bobier, who has been just a wonderful friend and a mentor, Ross passed away this summer. He was our sign chairman. He and his son Adam would go out at

the beginning of every campaign, first day of the campaign, and they would go out for a couple of weeks and cover the entire constituency. And so you know, we certainly miss Ross. I can't say enough about what Ross has meant to me. But I want to thank the entire campaign team.

I want to thank my constituency assistant, Marcie, who has worked for the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy before I became the MLA. She worked for my predecessor, and I think Marcie is into her 21st — 20th or 21st — year as being the constituency assistant for the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. And I'm sure she's watching this and she's going to text me with the right date of how long she has worked for the constituents. She does a terrific job. And, Mr. Speaker, it's 14 years now that I've had the honour of serving in this role, and I can say it is certainly not a role that I would want to have done without her, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to thank Marcie.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to thank my staff here in this building. I'm just getting to know a new staff since the shuffle. I do want to mention, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Paul Hamnett, my chief of staff in Environment, and everybody that works in that office, Mr. Speaker. It is an adjustment when you're moving offices and getting to know new staff, but I do want to thank Paul and the entire team that worked with me in Environment. And I want to thank the ministry folks as well. We are well-served in this province in the Ministry of Environment. They go above and beyond to support the minister, support, I think, the direction that the people of the province want to go when it comes to environmental policy and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do want to express my thanks to everybody at Environment.

And I want to thank my new staff as well in the Education minister's office. And I'm enjoying working with all of them and getting to know them and them getting to know me. And so I want to extend my thanks to them as well.

Mister . . . Madam Deputy — there we go again — Madam Deputy Speaker, I do want to, I want to thank my family. These are fun times in the Duncan household, in my household. Pardon me, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I think as members may know we have three, three young ones at home. Our oldest, Jack, is six. And boy, he's keeping his mom and dad busy. He's a wonderful, wonderful boy. He's in grade 1. He's doing well in school. We just had parent-teacher interviews last week and we got a very good report from his teacher. And he is a very caring boy. If you want to know about animals or if you want to know about the planets or anything like that, boy, he is whip-smart when it comes to things like that.

His younger brother Ephram is three and he's at home. And what can I say about Ephram? Boy, he's developing his own little personality. It's fun to see the two of them though. They're the same difference in age as my brother and I, and boy, they remind us a lot of what it must have been like for my parents. So that's been visited upon us in a pretty interesting way. Ephram, he's precocious in his own way. He's got his own sense of humour, and we're starting to see that. And it's interesting now that his brother is at school full time and I think we're seeing a little bit of that personality, his own personality when he's maybe not with his brother all the time. But they're fast friends, but the odd time we have to separate them after a little while and move them to different things.

I think with everything, with everybody, you know, we're adjusting to life under a pandemic as best we can. I think we're doing okay in trying to get Ephram as a three-year-old at the appropriate places to wear a mask. Now if we can just keep his clothes on at all the right appropriate times, that's sometimes been a bit of a struggle, Mr. Speaker.

And my little girl Penelope is about 20 months old, or Pippy as we call her. And boy, I'll put this on the record, and some day she can look at this on the record, I'm not afraid to admit she's got her dad wrapped around her little finger already. But I love all three more than I ever thought I could love. And it's been the most amazing experience.

It's interesting and it's amazing to look four years ago, and Jack was our only child at the time. And now to see pictures from election night, there's two more children in the picture. Although I have to say Ephram wasn't listening all that well and he was running around a lot on the night of election, so the local newspaper managed to only get a picture of Amanda and I with Jack and Penelope. And when Ephram saw the picture, he was upset. About a week later, he saw the picture in the weekly newspaper and he was upset he wasn't in the picture. And he was insistent that they take the picture again so he could be in the picture, but we weren't able to do that.

And I would be remiss if I didn't thank Amanda. Amanda and I have been married for 21 years, Madam Deputy Speaker. She is, for anybody who knows her, she is spirited and she is spirit-filled, and she is the most amazing woman that I could ever imagine meeting. And she has sacrificed more than I have time to even talk about. And whenever the day comes, and I hope I have an opportunity to give a final speech here in the House, provided the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy don't make that decision before I do, there's a lot of things I'd like to say about her. But I'll save it for then.

And I do want to finally thank the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy. They have supported me overwhelmingly, been generous with their support and with their time and their patience and their encouragement. I just feel so fortunate to represent the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy, and so I do want to put on the record my thanks and my appreciation for their ongoing support.

And I do want to encourage my constituents. They encourage me and I want to encourage them. We are, you know, obviously we're in the midst of a pandemic, and I think everybody is adjusting and struggling and dealing with it as best they can. And I know that it's just difficult for everybody. But I want to say I want to give credit to my constituents who have done, I think, quite well in . . . You know for the most part, we have in the subzone that gets reported by the SHA, the part of the province that is southeast 3, which would incorporate much of my constituency, our numbers have been pretty low for some time now and continue to be low.

And I just urge my constituents, now is not the time to let our guard down. In some ways we kind of feel like we're in a bit of a bubble. And I'm just talking in the area that incorporates much of my constituency. I think right now we have 11 active cases in the entire area that incorporates my constituency.

And you know, so there's been some difficult phone calls about hockey and after-school activities and what's going to happen with our schools and some of the other restrictions. And you know, I would just continue to urge my constituents, let's be vigilant. We just want to make sure that we can manage through this difficult time the best we can.

One of the other things that I've said to my constituents, and I know the member from Walsh Acres will attest to this, we have as much in common in southeast Saskatchewan, if not more in common — I know growing up in Halbrite, he growing up in Midale — we probably spent more time in Williston, North Dakota than we ever did in Regina or Saskatoon. I can tell you I had been to Minot, North Dakota probably 10 times before I'd ever set foot in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. That's just the way of life in southeast Saskatchewan. Crosby, North Dakota was in our hockey league. And so lots of our family go to school in Williston or in Minot, not in Regina or not in Saskatoon.

And so I just keep encouraging my constituents, yes let's pay attention to what's taking place in Regina and Saskatoon and the pressures that we're feeling in our health care system, but let's take a look at what our friends are experiencing in Williston because that's a whole different ball game. And that's something that we don't want to go through. That's something we don't want to experience.

If you look at the areas of Estevan and Weyburn and the subzones of those two regions as identified by the Saskatchewan Health Authority, that's essentially the equivalent of Williams County. And the seat of government of Williams County is Williston, North Dakota. And I won't put on the record the numbers in Williston, North Dakota or in Williams County, but I would just encourage my constituents that are maybe questioning why we're doing some of the things because that's what we don't want to end up as. And so I just wanted to make a note of that.

And while I'm speaking about my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the Weyburn Chamber of Commerce, who have done a terrific job of reaching out to our business community in Weyburn and area, helping businesses through the different support programs, whether federal or provincial. Again you know, we're a little bit, and I hesitate to use the term "bubble" because, you know, we're not immune to what's happening in this province and other areas of this province, or to the east of us or to the west of us or to the south of us. But you know, I think people have worked hard in our constituency to keep our numbers low.

There's a lot of optimism in the business community. We're seeing new businesses actually start up, which you'd think is pretty unusual in the midst of a pandemic, for people to feel optimistic about Saskatchewan's future. Our unemployment rate in southeast Saskatchewan is about 5 per cent. That's actually down a whole percentage point from just last month. And in fact that's almost where it was in October of 2019. So I just want to thank the chamber and the entire business community that have really banded together. There's optimism in terms of some of the . . . just the projects that we are seeing in our constituency and on the private sector side, but as well as the work that the government's doing.

[16:15]

And I want to thank my colleagues for . . . And I just want to make mention of a couple of projects: the replacement of the hospital in Weyburn that is going forward that's obviously brought a lot of optimism to the community; the ongoing work on the twinning and passing lane program, the passing lanes that are right now under construction; as well as Legacy Park Elementary School that is going to be opening in the spring. And this is going to be consolidating three elementary schools in the city of Weyburn into a new elementary school in partnership with the city of Weyburn. And we've seen some really good partnerships with the city of Weyburn and our school division. This is the second major partnership. The previous one is the Cugnet Centre that was built attached to the renovated high school in Weyburn.

And that really speaks to what the member from Walsh Acres was talking about, is the local community, people like his grandfather. And he jogged my memory when he mentioned Midale Petroleums, his grandfather's business. The first hockey team I played for was Midale Petroleums. And so people like that and the Cugnets and others that have enabled our community to really move forward with some worthwhile projects that I know that everybody are really excited about.

Just briefly, I want to mention initiatives in the Throne Speech. I'm pleased to see the ministers of Health have moved forward with their campaign commitments around supports for people with diabetes. Mr. Speaker, I've a nephew who's in his late teens who was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when he was a year and a half of age. And you can imagine the pressure and the stress of a family that is trying to navigate that world, Mr. Speaker. And so I want to thank the Health ministers for their initiatives in expanding supports to diabetes.

I want to just briefly speak — and I'll wrap up my comments here right away — on my new portfolio, the Education ministry. I want to thank all the teachers and the parents and students, guardians, and caregivers, the caretakers of our schools, the bus drivers, everybody that works in divisions all across the province for an untold amount of work that has taken place to ensure that our students and our teachers are as safe as possible in the midst of a global pandemic, while ensuring that our students have the supports that they need and the ability to continue with their education.

I want to thank the work that's been done by the Ministry of Education. I want to thank the former minister of Education, who I think did a very good job of working with stakeholders in the sector and putting forward the plan this summer on a safe restart of our schools. We have set aside 150 million, in excess of \$150 million, and a new intake of that program ended yesterday. And so we are looking forward to quickly adjudicating the applications that came through that process.

And that's going to be over \$150 million available to the education sector in a year that has already seen a two and a half per cent increase in the education budget, which is the largest education budget in the history of Saskatchewan education. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will continue to be there for students across this province, particularly in this year.

And just finally I do want to just make note of the announcement that was made this morning that, as a part of this Throne Speech,

we've made a commitment that by the end of 2021, every single school in this province will have at least one person trained to provide mental health first aid. I think it is appropriate and it's timely and it's needed at a time when, particularly this year, parents and students should be able to rely on the fact that if a child needs physical first aid, that we have somebody that is prepared to provide that assistance. And we hope that that's not needed, but that's the case. And parents and teachers and students should also have the assurance that there's going to be at least one person in that school that will be able to provide the same type of assistance when it comes to mental health.

And so on top of all the other initiatives that the government is working on . . . And I want to congratulate the member from Swift Current on being appointed the Minister for Mental Health and Addictions. I'm pleased to see the Premier has made that appointment and created that position. But I think this is just one more support that I think is going to be well received by students and parents all across the province.

So with that I am happy to stand in my place and will be happy to stand in my place and support the amendment that was put forward by the member from Kindersley and seconded by Saskatoon Riversdale and I will be supporting the amendment . . . supporting the main motion, supporting the main motion, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and congratulations on your new role. It is a privilege and honour to rise in the House today and respond to my first Throne Speech as a member of Saskatchewan's Legislative Assembly. I've been told that where maiden speeches are concerned, the tradition is to hold back a bit and be spared heckling. Though I'm also told that my predecessor, Warren McCall, was heckled during his maiden speech, so he has set the bar very high, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It's a particular honour to be among only 62 women ever elected to this House. It's now been 115 years since *The Saskatchewan Act* was passed, and if we gathered every woman elected to this House, this is the first time ever that we could fill every seat.

What's more, for the first time ever in this House, we have a caucus made up of more women than men. Make no mistake — we can give as good as we get. But the issues coming before us are serious matters that deserve honest, responsible, transparent debate, not childish jeers and taunts, deflection. It is my hope that our presence will not only improve the tenor of this House, it will change the priorities reflected in our policies.

I am proud to stand alongside my caucus colleagues, 23 per cent of whom identify as Indigenous. It's long past time, Madam Deputy Speaker, that elected officials reflect the makeup of the people. This caucus is made up of teachers, of small business owners. We're doctors. We're public interest lawyers, union members, social workers, health care workers, environmental engineers. This opposition is strong and it represents renewal. It is full of bright, capable minds ready to get this province back on track.

But first, I am mindful that we gather on Treaty 4 territory. Today

I stand in one of the great halls of power in this beautiful and this complex country. I consider it my responsibility not just to acknowledge the land I stand on but to name the particular role our national and provincial policies and legislation played in displacing Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories to make way for the settlement of the Prairies.

These included, Madam Deputy Speaker, policies that amounted to forced starvation. And I name this historical reality because we, as modern-day lawmakers, cannot address present-day disparities, be they in education, be they in health, be they in the justice system, without first acknowledging the historical roots of those disparities.

If these statements provoke a feeling of defensiveness in any member of this House, I beg you to take a deep breath, because in my experience, Indigenous communities are not seeking to blame or shame. They are seeking what we're all seeking: healing, a good life, a future for their children, autonomy over their lives, and a sense of community and well-being — things we are all seeking that have for too long been denied to so many across this province. It is in that spirit, Mr. Speaker, that I make this land acknowledgment today.

I understand the tradition for new members to say something about themselves and then speak to the history and the legacy of their constituency. It is truly the honour of my life to stand before you and represent the people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre. Despite the plummeting popularity of politicians in general, I firmly believe this can be an honourable calling and an opportunity to contribute in some small way to the community that has given me so much.

It would not be hard to understand why I feel so honoured in this new role if you knew much about Regina Elphinstone-Centre. This constituency straddles my home neighbourhood, the Cathedral area, a beating heart and soul of Regina, one of its original neighbourhoods known for its rich artistic community, its local shops and 13th Avenue stroll, and its engaging civil society, as well as that of North Central, where despite facing unique issues that continue unaddressed, the bonds of community and of solidarity extend deeper than anywhere I have ever seen.

Mr. Speaker, I am but the fourth MLA to represent the great state of Regina Elphinstone-Centre, Allan Blakeney being the first. Allan Blakeney served the people of Regina and Saskatchewan for nearly 30 years, winning his seat in eight consecutive elections. During his time as premier, Saskatchewan flourished. He was truly the last true social democratic premier who extended universal benefits to all while not being afraid to use the government to intervene in the economy to ensure that Saskatchewan people were taken care of.

Through the efforts of his government, which included an approach that favoured constructive leadership in his dealing with Ottawa more than partisan whining, he increased the wealth flowing to the public treasury, particularly from our resources — our potash, oil, and uranium. Under Blakeney Saskatchewan resources were owned by Saskatchewan people for the benefit of Saskatchewan people. Sadly the many achievements of that era in our province's history were undone by a callous and incompetent Conservative government. And the rest, as they say, is history.

I would be remiss not to pay humble tribute to my predecessor and mentor, Warren McCall. Warren was a friend to many in this House. He served his constituents with fire, with compassion, and with love, and for many years. After all, I was only 16 when he was first elected. With the loss of Warren I have big shoes to fill. He calls me this year's model, Mr. Speaker, but I'm not so sure. His exit is a loss to this party and to this institution.

Congratulations to all the new members of the House, Mr. Speaker. We all know it takes hard work to get here, and none of us made this journey alone. I would like to thank the small but mighty village that carried me to the place where I stand before you today. Thank you especially to my team, Mason, Donna, Deanna. I grew to love and respect all three of you. None of us had served in our respective roles going into this election, but we managed to run a strong and successful campaign during a pandemic and with countless other challenges.

I want to also thank those who donated and contributed in big and small ways to this campaign. Thank you also to Elaine Torrie, our business manager, who has been political godmother to so many over the years and has been actively involved in campaigns for over 45 years.

I must also acknowledge the competition, of course: Mr. Caesar Khan; and the leader of the Green Party, Naomi Hunter — a venerable opponent, Mr. Speaker, and a strong voice for climate action, a woman I admire very much.

Before looking to the future I wish to pay tribute to the past, so thank you for bearing with me. It is my family, Mr. Speaker, that has shaped me more than anything. I hail from a family of fighters and I hope to build, above all, on that legacy. My maternal grandparents, Margaret and Ed Mahood, fought on many front lines including the battle for medicare. Both grew up in rural Saskatchewan, my grandfather on a farm near Grenfell, and my grandmother, the daughter of the postman in Alameda, Saskatchewan. My grandpa was bright and developed a love of teaching early in life. He taught in many rural schools and then went on to educate many generations of rural and urban teachers in his role as professor of education at the University of Saskatchewan.

But it was much earlier during a spell as principal at Rockglen School that he met fellow teacher — and my grandmother — Dr. Margaret Mahood. They fell quite in love. An early feminist, my grandmother quickly disposed of her fiancé, who didn't think much of her working outside the home, and jumped with both feet into a new life with my grandfather. And together they embarked on adventures that took them from solidarity work with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa to refugee camps in the Middle East where they formed a lasting empathy for the Palestinian people and to the forefront of the fight for medicare.

[16:30]

As it happened, my grandmother returned to university later in life and was one of a handful of women to graduate from medical school in 1955. She went on to refuse to join the reactionary campaign against public health care in . . . Sorry, she refused to join the reactionary campaign in 1962. Instead she joined a small group of committed doctors from around the world who believed

that medical care should be available to all, based on need and not the ability to pay. Together my grandparents became founding members of the community clinic in Saskatoon which pioneered interdisciplinary community medicine in this province. The struggle for medicare was bitter and would not have been successful without the committed grassroots activism of people like my grandparents and so many others.

While all manner of party and politician like to claim credit for medicare, Mr. Speaker, it was possible because of the courage and conviction of this party, but more importantly because of the dreams of people who saw their family members dying in poverty and bankrupted by disease. There was vicious opposition to the establishment of medicare from powerful interests, including the medical profession itself and conservatives of the day. Despite this opposition, medicare is now one of the proudest accomplishments of Saskatchewan people.

I reference medicare today, Mr. Speaker, not to beat a tired, old trope but because its history shows that progress is never freely given. It has to be fought for and won. Medicare was actually unpopular initially. Too often politicians engage in half measures and retail politics, but medicare is an example of what we can accomplish when we identify unfairness and hardship, when we imagine bold alternatives, and when we then organize around those ideas.

To me, this was my grandparents' legacy. It looms large in my life and the lives of my family. I often think of what experiences drove a farm boy from Grenfell and a teacher from Alameda to commit themselves to a lifetime of non-conformity and activism and service of democracy, solidarity, environmentalism, peace, and equality for all. Theirs are beautiful examples of lives well lived in service of people, and their life's work is imprinted on me.

While I knew them less, Mr. Speaker, my father's parents, Mary and Fred Conway, have shaped me equally. Mary worked a lunch counter in a drugstore in Moose Jaw, and Fred was a manual labourer. They had six kids and their lives were not free of trial. Fred was delivered to this country a Barnardo boy, an immigration scheme which saw destitute children shipped off to Canada from Britain. Most ended up indentured servants on remote farms. Their meagre pay was sent to the agency that placed them for safekeeping. Some of these boys slept in barns, some were beaten, and most didn't talk about what they endured when they grew up, my grandfather being no exception. But he persevered. He drank far too much, but he persevered. He worked hard and was self-educated, a voracious reader and lover of opera. He was a proud and highly informed member of the working class.

At one point my paternal grandfather, Fred, came to work as a janitor at the normal school where my maternal grandfather, Ed, taught education. Fred not only admired Ed's taste in music, he admired his principles and commitment to the people. The feeling was mutual. They saw in each other companions in the fight for equality. Theirs is an example of solidarity I hold up high.

I want to also thank my father, John, now retired, an author and academic, former and long-serving public school board trustee, often an outspoken critic of the party whose flag I now proudly

wave. I want to thank my mother, Sally, a family doctor who has made countless contributions to the community, medicine, and women's health and reproductive rights across this province and country.

My siblings and their partners are each an inspiration in their own right and I would not be here today without their support. The tender and tough love of my three older brothers — Liam, Aidan, and Kieran — no doubt has prepared me for the indignities that the Westminster system has been known to dole out.

I began seeking a nomination, Mr. Speaker, when I was pregnant with my son who is now eighteen months old. Needless to say, I could not have done this without the superhuman support of my love and my partner, Nick, a father to our son Llewelyn — Lew for short — a schoolteacher, a devoted father, and a true partner in all things. He is as inclined to disagree with my politics as he is to cook and wash dishes, to change a diaper, and fold the laundry. It was my father who taught me to seek out such attributes in a partner.

My family has inspired me in all things I do, and I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart for all the support they have demonstrated to me over the years. It is my abiding hope that I can be to my child, and perhaps children, what my family has been to me.

That is who I am, Mr. Speaker, and where I come from. Now I'd like to address where we all are and where we're heading. A strong Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's the slogan that was plastered across billboard after billboard, even before this last election, no expense spared. A slogan parroted again and again on the campaign trail and repeated in this week's Throne Speech, as the member for Saskatoon Eastview pointed out, a whopping 19 times. It would seem we're looking at a never-ending campaign thanks to the Sask Party's deep pockets and friends in high places.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. While on the doorsteps in one of the core neighbourhoods of our great province's capital, hearing the stories of families losing the battle to stay afloat, of single moms working two, three jobs still unable to feed their kids and pay the rent, steelworkers getting indefinite layoff notices, seniors unable to afford their prescription drugs — more than once I asked myself, well, for whom is Saskatchewan strong?

And now, Mr. Speaker, as we're flirting with disaster on a one-way train headed towards a public health emergency the likes of which Saskatchewan has never seen, when we're considering enlisting military help, activating field hospitals, where our ICUs are full and people are dying, the Sask Party continues to preach this stale gospel of strength. The truth is, it's not all fantastic in Regina Elphinstone-Centre and it's not all fantastic across this great province.

Prior to these pandemic times, Mr. Speaker, one in four children were living in poverty. One in four little ones. And that number is far higher in my constituency and many communities across this province, in this beautiful, bountiful province. This is a disgrace.

So the image of the Premier with the sun at his back, standing in

a field of golden wheat, the image of strength, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't jive. It's a fiction. It's a fairy tale paid for by the best comms agency money can buy. Because the people of this province are hurting. They are hurting now more than ever. And the buck stops with the Premier, and the buck stops with all of us in this House. And truthfully, Mr. Speaker, I heard nothing in this Throne Speech that will fundamentally relieve the daily struggle of Saskatchewan people.

Missing from this speech, the nearly 180,000 Indigenous residents of Saskatchewan. Not a word, Mr. Speaker, on reconciliation. In 2020, how can this be?

Missing from this speech is a poverty reduction strategy, or anything at all for the more than 72,000 Saskatchewan children living in poverty.

Missing from this speech is anything for the 96,000 workers making less than \$15 an hour without sick days, risking their health during a pandemic, many making this country's lowest wage to boot.

Missing from this speech, Mr. Speaker, are meaningful supports for women who have felt the brunt of this recession worst of all, because in this strong, resilient province of ours, a minimum-wage job is no guarantee that poverty won't still be knocking at your door.

We are currently facing down an opioid crisis that has taken far more lives, far more quickly, than COVID-19. It has cut like a scythe through our communities, and we have yet to open a safe injection site in our province's capital. Instead we rely on community volunteers to roam the streets so little kids don't prick themselves with contaminated needles. The political will to address these unspeakable hardships remains absent.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, this government failed to fix the roof while the sun was shining. So someone needs to brief this government that we're heading into an enduring period of economic uncertainty, we're in the middle of a global climate emergency, and we're navigating a pandemic. The time for self-congratulatory half measures has passed, Mr. Speaker. And I've seen first-hand the many crises brewing in this province — poverty, the cuts to public services, the attack on workers, and no plan for a future, a new world order in fact that must respond to the economic and climate crisis staring us in the face.

And that is why I'm here. And I'm truly honoured to begin my tenure in this House as opposition critic for housing, social services, human rights, and community-based organizations, because I became intimately familiar with these areas as a legal aid lawyer where I mainly served the people of the constituency I now represent. I dealt daily with the cycle of crime in action, courts imposing conditions that can't possibly be followed because you can't reside in an address if you don't have one. You can't make it to a court date if you can't catch a bus into Regina. You can't report to probation when your mom is a user and you don't know where you're going to get your next meal, and a breach means a new charge, means a new set of conditions, a record, barriers to employment, stigma, stiffer sentences, more conditions, and a cycle begun that is nearly impossible to break.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen Indigenous children at times be made

permanent wards on Tuesday morning in family services court as casually as speeding tickets are enforced in traffic court. Instead of investing in children and in families long before there are child protection concerns by addressing poverty, providing in-home supports, and by prioritizing single-mother-led households, I have watched a child welfare system that is more willing to give strangers resources to look after other people's children than to invest in undoing the trauma of colonialism, of residential schools, and of displacement.

I have dealt daily with the bureaucratic violence of a social assistance system whose main function appears to wear people down through endless and humiliating hoop jumping until they give up. It has no ideas for getting people back on their feet and developing the self-sufficiency they so crave. I have witnessed working people and families struggle more and more to make ends meet and face impossible choices.

I've watched as our young people graduate debt-ridden and unable to find the job they were promised. And I've seen front-line workers, many of whom work for community-based organizations, working hard to stem the tide of suffering at the best of times. Now they're at a breaking point, unable to cope, with no additional support from this government. Many have closed their doors. The human cost of our inaction is high and it's burning people out on the front lines.

And working every day in those systems with these folks, try as I might, I lack the tools to offer meaningful systemic solutions. And I can assure you that great efforts were made by myself, by my colleagues, but the reality is that we were just bailing water out of a sinking ship, and it didn't matter how hard I tried or how fast I worked, the forces working against my clients were just so much bigger than anything I could do for them and, frankly, bigger than anything they could do for themselves.

And to top it off, while representing my clients during their toughest moments, instead of being supported by this Sask Party government, I worked to endlessly protect and justify Legal Aid against cuts and threats of privatization. This struggle that I knew too well at Legal Aid, it's happening right now across the education sector, the health care sector, across Crowns, where people who do essential work for our province aren't getting the supports they need.

[16:45]

And it gets tiresome constantly having to defend the worth of basics, Mr. Speaker, investing in our kids and protecting our Crowns and valuing our seniors. Our justice system, our entire society, in fact, tells itself fictions about individual agency. It's the basis for how we justify why some have so much and others have so little. It's how we justify mass incarceration, food bank lines, and yes, even child poverty.

So that is why I got into politics, Mr. Speaker. I am here because we can and must do better. As difficult as things are, I stand here filled with tremendous hope for the future of this province and its diverse people. The people of Saskatchewan are progressive and innovative, and maybe it's the spirit of the season seeping in, but I even hope that this government will change its ways, that the members opposite and beside will, as Scrooge's nephew hopes for his uncle, come by one to open their shut-up hearts freely, and

to think of people below them as if they were fellow passengers. A lot to hope for, I admit.

Saskatchewan people know that deep down, our strength comes from many people. That is our motto, after all: *Multis e gentibus vires*. From many peoples, strength. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will support the amendment put forward by the member for Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Regina University. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to stand and provide my reply to the Speech from the Throne today. Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your election. I'd like to acknowledge the 29 years of service Dan D'Autremont has provided to the Cannington constituency.

I would like to begin by thanking my wife, Cheryl, and my entire family for their support. Their support was unwavering from the beginning. Cheryl, without your extra work taking care of the day-to-day operations, my standing here in the House would not have been possible. Thank you.

As family is not allowed in the House today to witness our maiden speeches, I'd like to acknowledge them. My son Thomas; my daughter Sarah and husband, Jeremy; daughter Claire and common-law husband, Christian; daughter Jill and fiancé, Chris; their kids, Madison and Blake; daughter Carla and husband, Mark; their kids, James and Ava; son Miles and his wife Kayla; my brother Dale and his wife Lorraine. To my mother, Eleanor, and late father, Elgin, thanks for being there and supporting all my life's adventures. I am forever grateful. Thank you.

To my campaign manager, Elaine Morgan, your knowledge of election process and campaigning is much appreciated and I will always remember all the hard work and dedication. Thank you.

Thanks to my campaign team for all their support, encouragement, and dedication. A candidate does not campaign alone. It takes a team. Thanks to each and every one that helped. I am forever grateful.

I would also like to thank my constituency assistant, Trisha Schulhauser, for her hard work setting up the constituency office and taking calls and questions from constituents. You keep everything running smoothly. Thank you to my two casual CAs, Lynette and April. Lynette, you already know the ropes; April, I know you will be a quick study.

Thank you to the voters of Cannington for their support and trust in my abilities to represent them in the provincial legislature. I am truly humbled. It is a privilege and an honour to be the MLA from Cannington.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture continues to be a strong economic driver in Saskatchewan's economy. After an extended wet harvest a year ago, farmers harvested one of the largest crops on record in 2020. Agriculture will continue to be supported with investments in research and innovation through farm support programs and by continuing to seek new markets for our products abroad.

Mr. Speaker, the energy sector has been hit hard by low

commodity prices and low oil demand caused by first, two major oil-producing countries flooding the world market, and secondly, by low demand due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

In May the government launched the accelerated site-closure program after the federal government announced it would provide 400 million for the reclamation of inactive wells. To date the program has engaged 250 Saskatchewan-based service companies. Up to 8,000 inactive wells and facilities will be cleaned up and 2,100 full-time jobs will be created.

Your Saskatchewan government will continue to support initiatives to get our energy resources to tidewater to allow producers to fetch world prices. We have already left too much money on the table selling oil at discounted prices. Canada and the world can use more Saskatchewan oil and gas.

Mr. Speaker, starting on December 1st for one year, SaskPower customers will have a 10 per cent decrease on their electrical charges, saving the people of Saskatchewan \$260 million. These savings can be reinvested in our provincial economy and help drive our economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, beginning in December we are restarting the community rink affordability program. The program will provide \$2,500 a year to help cover the costs of operating rinks in villages, towns, and cities. It is expected that 635 ice surfaces in 373 communities will be eligible to receive support under this program.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan homeowners can claim a ten and a half per cent tax credit on up to \$20,000 of eligible home renovation expenses incurred between October 1st, 2020 and December 31st, 2022. This will save homeowners 124 million and provide a boost to the construction sector.

Mr. Speaker, effective October 1st, the small-business tax rate, currently at 2 per cent, will be reduced to zero. This will assist small businesses and their employees through these challenging times. Small business employs hundreds of thousands of people and they sponsor youth, sport, and community events. The government will invest \$6 million in marketing campaigns to encourage people to shop local and support local businesses.

Mr. Speaker, this government has appointed a minister focused on issues related to seniors and rural and mental health. This minister will oversee mental health and addictions programming across the province. We have invested a record 435 million in mental health and addictions. A new specialized crystal meth treatment centre is operating in St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan. Detox beds are available in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, and North Battleford. As part of our Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan, we are including a plan to train mental health first responders in each of the 744 schools.

Mr. Speaker, 14 long-term care facilities have been built with a 15th currently under construction. Since 2007, more than 700 front-line employees have been hired. With concern over staffing levels, another 300 continuing care aids are being hired. Of these new hires, 180 will work in long-term care facilities, 63 will work in home care, and 57 will support expanded home care services in rural and remote areas.

Mr. Speaker, making life more life affordable for seniors. Increasing the seniors' income plan for low-income seniors to a maximum benefit of \$360 beginning in the 2021-2022 budget and continuing over the next two budget years, eliminating charges on inter-facility ambulatory transfers, and reducing the maximum costs for other ambulance calls from \$275 to \$135 per call.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is home to 160 Royal Canadian Legion branches and Saskatchewan Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans chapters. The Saskatchewan veteran service club support program was introduced two years ago, and it is administered by the Royal Canadian Legion command. Funding for this support program will be increased from \$100,000 to 1.5 million, supporting veterans and service club members for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to adding 750 new child care spaces over the next four years. We are restarting the active family benefits to support families with an annual income under \$60,000 to help cover costs of participating in sports, arts, and cultural activities. Families will receive \$150 per child and 200 for a child with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the government has been working with the CNIB Foundation and Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services to hire professionals to help Deaf-blind people navigate the world. Over the next three years we will hire three additional Deaf-blind interveners, three new American Sign Language interpreters, another sign support professional, and one additional case manager.

Mr. Speaker, our government has increased funding for service for people with autism spectrum disorder to \$12 million per year. This has increased by 24 times since 2007. Today about 500 children are receiving individualized funding. Starting in 2021, children under the age of 12 who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder will receive \$6,000 a year to cover the cost of individualized supports.

Mr. Speaker, this government is supporting people with diabetes. We will expand eligibility under the Saskatchewan insulin pump program to include all provincial residents. The cost of an insulin pump will be covered for everyone in Saskatchewan that needs one.

Mr. Speaker, continuous glucose-monitoring technology has improved and when this technology is utilized, it is reassuring for parents of children and youth to know they have a constant measurement of glucose levels, even while they sleep. Children and youth under the age of 18 will have the costs of continuous glucose monitoring covered. About 600 children in Saskatchewan will benefit from this program, improving their lives as they become young adults.

Mr. Speaker, we will introduce a protection from human trafficking Act. This will allow victims the ability to receive expedited protection orders and allow for tough enforcement of those orders. It will also provide civil remedies including the seizure of property, bank accounts, and the suspension of driver's licences.

Mr. Speaker, this government has increased funding to the

Saskatchewan Health Authority by over \$140 million, a 3.9 increase over last year, for a total of 3.7 billion. This includes such items in my constituency as a roof replacement in Lampman's health centre, flooring replacement in Moose Mountain Lodge in Carlyle, and the Galloway Health Centre in Oxbow added an AED [automated external defibrillator] defibrillator and also a side entry spa. Fillmore Union Health Centre completed phase 2 of a boiler replacement. The Arcola Health Centre completed a boiler replacement and also added a new replacement for the nurse call system. Mr. Speaker, we are investing in rural health care.

Mr. Speaker, highways are a crucial link to get our commodities to market. The Ministry of Highways are building and maintaining highways across this province. In Cannington we have resurfaced portions of highways 8, 13, 18, and 48, and improved intersection safety with turning lanes and additional lighting. As part of the provincial stimulus package, the RM [rural municipality] of Argyle will be able to conduct repairs on a grid road bridge. Aging bridges across Southeast highways have been replaced and additional bridges will be prioritized going forward.

We have also partnered with local municipalities, including the RM of Reciprocity, building 10 miles of Highway 361 from Alida to Highway 8. In addition, the RM of Reciprocity partnered with Highways to rebuild and pave over four miles of Highway 318 with ownership of this reconstruction being transferred to the municipality.

Mr. Speaker, this government has increased the revenue sharing with municipalities. For example, the town of Carlyle in . . .

The Speaker: — It now being 5 p.m., this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Scott Moe
Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Education

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Energy and Resources

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

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

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

Hon. Everett Hindley
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Environment

Hon. Gene Makowsky
Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. David Marit
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Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation

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Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Paul Merriman
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Hon. Don Morgan
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Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
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Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General