



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

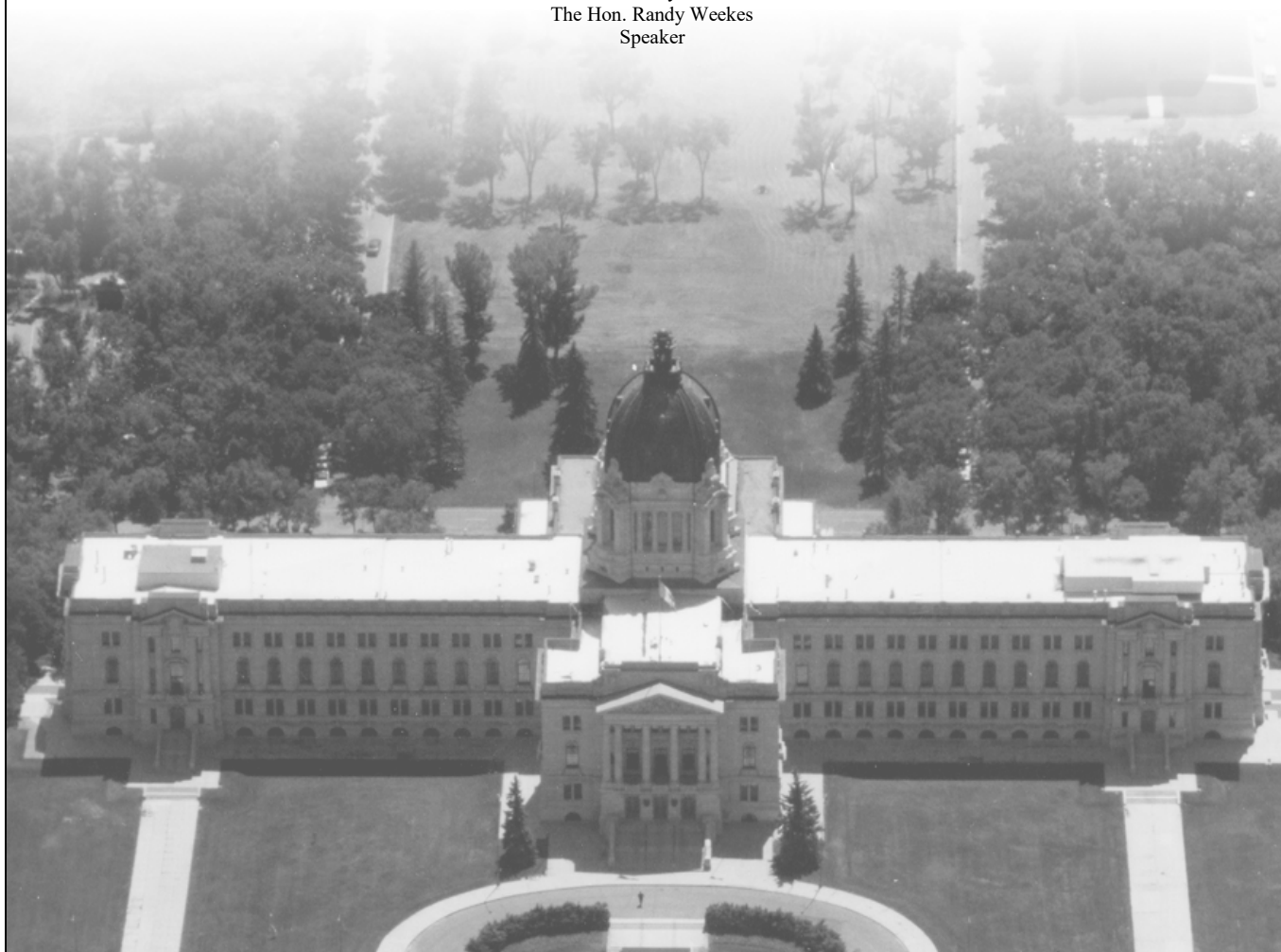
of the

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

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

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by citizens of Regina and Emerald Park. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to support mental health emergency units. We know that more people are struggling with their mental health during COVID-19. We've certainly heard from so many folks who are looking for those extra supports, especially when it comes to emergency situations. We know this needs to be a priority for government.

These citizens wish to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan's mental health funding has been among the lowest in Canada; despite funding from the federal government and a private donor, the Sask Party refused to add new funding to the mental health emergency unit in Saskatoon; that the Sask Party's own record on mental health recommended these types of facilities; and that the Sask Party's refusal to prioritize these units leaves patients without the care they desperately need and puts pressure on emergency rooms.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to support mental health emergency units across the province and commit to adding new funding for the mental health emergency unit in Saskatoon rather than taking it from other areas of mental health.

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

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition from the people of La Ronge for a new long-term care facility. Seniors in the North have worked hard to help build their province. There is a definite need of a new long-term care facility in the La Ronge area and the Croft report of 2009 showed the area is in code red category of long-term care.

There has been \$500,000 allocated to plan for such a facility that has been spent. Seniors from northern communities need immediate attention, as some elders are waiting 165 days on average for a bed, and they're being shipped hours away from their home, their families, friends, and communities in search of such bed. There are many seniors who don't have the financial resources for private care homes, and many are now waiting in pain.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Sask Party government treat northern Saskatchewan senior citizens with respect and dignity, and immediately invest in a new long-term care facility in La Ronge.

This petition is signed by people of La Ronge. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Rated Last on Energy Efficiency

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago, Efficiency Canada released their provincial energy efficiency scorecard. Surprising no one on this side of the House, Saskatchewan came dead last — 10th out of 10 provinces. Out of a possible 100 points, Saskatchewan received just 17 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that is a massively failing grade. Sadly the scorecard notes, as a percentage of utility revenues, SaskPower and SaskEnergy have the lowest per capita spending on energy efficiency programs.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, poor energy efficiency is a significant contributor to the very high rates of greenhouse gas emissions in Saskatchewan. What Saskatchewan people could really use is enabling policies and programs that would promote energy efficiency and lower utility bills while taking meaningful action on climate.

Yet as their recently announced 10 per cent SaskPower rebate clearly shows, this government is more concerned with buying people's votes than assisting them to achieve durable and long-term energy and cost savings. Instead they have recklessly wasted millions of dollars on expensive pet projects like carbon capture and storage, all while they have needlessly killed the solar industry. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

Pense Memorial Rink Meets Fundraising Goal

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

Kraft Hockeyville is an annual national competition where communities rally together for their hometown rink for the chance to host an NHL [National Hockey League] pre-season game as well as win \$250,000 to use toward facility renovations.

This year the Pense Memorial Rink was nominated as renovations and upgrades were badly needed. Despite best efforts, Mr. Speaker, the rink unfortunately was not successful in its bid for the Kraft Hockeyville title, coming in second to a small town on the East Coast. The Pense rink was awarded a consolation prize but would fall far short of their fundraising goal.

Mr. Speaker, immediately following the announcement of their unsuccessful bid, donations from across the Prairies began to pour into the community. It began with Saskatchewan-born philanthropist Brett Wilson who matched the consolation prize with a donation of \$25,000. Even the community who had won the Hockeyville grand prize showed their support and donated through the GoFundMe.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to announce that as of October the Pense Memorial Rink has now raised \$301,000 and will be able to move forward with the much-needed renovations and upgrades. Thanks to the power of community, the Pense Memorial Rink will be able to keep its doors open for many future hockey stars. I now ask all members to please join me in congratulating the Pense Memorial Rink and their fundraising efforts and to thank all those who contributed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This year's UN [United Nations] theme is "Building Back Better: toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world."

Mr. Speaker, many persons living with a disability are still not afforded equal participation in many facets of daily life. They face barriers in transportation, housing, education, and employment, as well as in social participation including in sports, arts, and culture. That is why it is so crucial that in our role as legislators we work diligently to ensure that those with disabilities are afforded equitable opportunities to live, work, and play in Saskatchewan.

In my short time as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], I've spoken with many organizations within the disability community, Mr. Speaker. Their strong advocacy for a fairer and more accessible Saskatchewan is inspiring. But too many people living with disabilities still face exclusion and barriers in our communities. Mr. Speaker, we remain one of the last jurisdictions in Canada without comprehensive disability-related legislation. The people of Saskatchewan deserve better. The people of Saskatchewan deserve an accessibility Act.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the core lesson of this year's COVID-related theme is not lost on us in this House. We are all connected. We

rely on one another. We cannot flourish if others do not as well. Let us work to improve the lives of persons with disabilities, and not by simply including them in those important decisions, but by ensuring they are leading them. Join me in recognizing International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Restaurant Wins Community Involvement Award

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year's Saskatchewan ABEX [Achievement in Business Excellence] awards shifted away from the traditional celebration of business success to recognizing businesses and individuals who have become everyday heroes. The Saskatchewan spirit of resilience is more evident than ever this year, and I am honoured and proud to tell you this year's Community Involvement Award went to Lloydminster's very own Spiro's Family Restaurant.

Spiro's was nominated based on its innovative, strong social media presence and desire to support local business during the early stages of the pandemic. They showcased local businesses and taught residents how to shop safely. Owners Spiro and Tina Kokonas, daughter Maria, and granddaughter Elenee created an online presence that not only promoted their business using creative pandemic words to popular tunes, dressing up in silly outfits, and adding their own comedy routine, but they did it on location in other businesses to promote and support local. Even now they continue to help other local businesses through their matched dollars in their twelve-ish days of Christmas episode.

From moving to Canada with only a few dollars in the pocket, humble beginnings, and having to rebuild their restaurant after it being completely burned down several years ago, the Kokonas family has truly persevered. Spiro Kokonas replied to the award: "For we aim to please the ones we serve."

I now ask all members in this Assembly to join me in congratulating the owners of Spiro's Family Restaurant on winning the ABEX award and thanking them for stepping up during this pandemic. They truly are heroes in my community.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Remembering Fred Sasakamoose

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hockey is a significant part of the lives of many families in this province, including my own and many in my constituency in Moose Jaw. In fact Saskatchewan is famous for producing some of the finest hockey players in history, although admittedly I am not one of those, Mr. Speaker.

However, on November 24th Saskatchewan sadly lost one of those fine homegrown hockey players to complications brought on by COVID-19. That player was Fred Sasakamoose. Unfortunately Mr. Sasakamoose lost his battle with COVID, but I think many would agree he lived a fulfilling life.

Mr. Speaker, the people of my constituency are proud that Fred Sasakamoose played for the Moose Jaw Canucks from 1950 to 1954. In those four years with the Canucks in Moose Jaw, Mr.

Sasakamoose emerged as one of the league's leading players. Putting up 31 goals and 57 points in his last season, he caught the attention of the NHL. He was then signed by the Chicago Blackhawks where he would go on to play as the first ever Indigenous player to reach the NHL.

Fred was also a residential school survivor and became a role model to many within the Indigenous community. He was inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame in 2007 and was named to the Order of Canada in 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members of this Assembly to join me in acknowledging Fred Sasakamoose and the inspiring life he lived. Thank you.

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

Regina Bypass Wins Award

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Regina bypass is the largest transportation infrastructure project in the province's history. Safety is a priority for this government, and the Regina bypass goes a long way in helping improve road safety.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships has announced the Regina bypass as one of the 2020 winners of National Awards for Innovation and Excellence in P3s [public-private partnership]. Each year the Canadian Council for P3s presents this award for vital transportation projects that are transforming safety and boosting economic growth in communities. The awards committee said improving traffic safety and mobility were the key drivers for the project when considering the project for this award. This is the third award won by the Regina bypass following the Premier's Award and the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering Award for Governmental Leadership in Sustainable Infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the bypass increases public safety, reduces congestion, improves efficiency, and provides better connections to the national highway system. Since the bypass was completed, the jaws of life have not been used once, and safety along Highway 1 has improved dramatically.

Mr. Speaker, I now invite all members to join me in congratulating the Regina bypass on your well-deserved recognition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Veteran Service Club Support Program

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 10th the Government of Saskatchewan began fulfilling its promise to veterans, their families, and the families of our fallen heroes by announcing it would be strengthening the veteran service club support program. This program was introduced two years ago to provide grants for repairs and upgrades for active veteran clubs in our home, knowing that the Legion and ANAVETS [Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada] branches are integral components of the infrastructure of many Saskatchewan

communities. This enhanced program aims to strengthen their long-term sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, our government will be increasing funding from 100,000 to 1.5 million for the program next year. The Saskatchewan veteran service club support program will continue to be administered by the Royal Canadian Legion's Saskatchewan command, which also sits on the adjudication committee with Saskatchewan Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans, the ANAVETS. The program in its first year supported facility improvements to 21 Legions, three ANAVETS locations, and one Lynx Wing. In 2020, 25 registered non-profit military service clubs, Legion branches, and ANAVETS units based in Saskatchewan received funding grants.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands how important these kinds of facilities are to communities throughout our home, and that is why we want to help them make more affordable to operate. Mr. Speaker, aware of the threat posed by COVID-19, we have found ways to honour our veterans and their fallen brothers and sisters once again on Remembrance Day. We feel that the veteran service club support program is another way in which we can honour our fallen and those who have returned home and their families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Layoffs at Evraz Regina

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday nearly 600 workers at the Evraz steel plant here in Regina received layoff notices. In the middle of a pandemic, right before Christmas holidays, this is devastating for their families and for the entire province. To the Premier: will he please update the House on the situation with these layoffs and what his government's plan is to support these workers and their families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've been made aware that there were a number of layoffs — I believe about 600 layoffs — out at the Evraz steel mill here in Regina. And my first comments would be to those workers, each of them. You know, most certainly we're concerned with respect to these layoffs and we'll be reaching out to work with them, to work with the company through our rapid response team that has been offered to the company as of this morning, Mr. Speaker, and be working very closely with each of those workers as well as with the company to ensure that we can find our way through this layoff, which ultimately is brought about by economic challenges that we have not just in Western Canada, but across the nation.

We have a company here that builds pipe, predominantly for the energy industry, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue to work to ensure that this Saskatchewan government continues to support the energy industry, ultimately continues to support to get our export goods to market, including our sustainable energy here in Saskatchewan, getting that to markets across Canada, across North America, and ultimately to export positions so the rest of the world can access that sustainable energy, Mr. Speaker.

But more immediately this is very concerning, these layoffs. Not only are they layoffs in our province, they're layoffs in our capital city, and at this time of year, during this pandemic, Mr. Speaker. And so the government is reaching out, has reached out and will continue to work with the individuals at Evraz.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer we joined steelworkers out at Evraz as they were raising the alarm. They were raising the alarm about the fact that Canadian steel was being bypassed in important pipeline projects right here in Canada, including the TC Energy line in northern Alberta. I called on the Premier then to get on the phone, to call Jason Kenney, to call the leadership at TC Energy, to call on them to insist that they use Canadian steel in building those lines, steel built here in Regina, steel that puts the folks that are laid off today . . . would have kept them at work.

Mr. Speaker, did he make those calls? Did he get on the phone to the Premier? Did he get on the phone to TC Energy? Did he push? And more specifically, right, then this is an important question for the Premier today: when it comes to SaskEnergy and the upcoming pipeline to be built by SaskEnergy, will he commit today to getting to work on that procurement, get it built right away, and use Canadian steel milled here at Evraz to build that line and get these folks back on the job?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to answer those questions in reverse. The fact of the matter is, is with respect to the energy lines that SaskEnergy procures, those are lines that aren't actually built here in Regina at Evraz steel. If they were, I'm sure they would be bidding on those projects, Mr. Speaker. So that product just simply isn't compatible with the SaskEnergy lines.

With respect to the calls made to other premiers, Mr. Speaker, this government, myself, other members of cabinet, and every member of the caucus has always been there to support our energy industry and the subsequent pipeline industry to get that sustainable energy to market.

Mr. Speaker, I have brought this up, not only with the Premier of Alberta, but with all of the premiers through our Council of Federation calls. Not only the fact that we have some of the most sustainably produced energy in the world produced right here in the province of Saskatchewan, but we also have the company in Evraz steel — employing 1,000 Canadian people, Saskatchewan people, right here in our capital city — that can build the pipes to ensure that that sustainable energy is accessible to all Canadians.

We advocated for Energy East. We advocated for TMX [Trans Mountain Expansion]. We advocated for KXL [Keystone XL]. We have advocated for every pipeline to find its way through an appropriate approval process and to ensure that the costs on that industry and those involved in that industry are not ineffective — like a federally imposed carbon tax — and the costs that are on those industries, Mr. Speaker, allow them to be competitive with their competitors around the world. This is a government that has always stood up for Saskatchewan workers, and that includes the ones at Evraz steel.

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

Mr. Meili: — First of all that 24-inch line that's needed for the SaskEnergy project can be milled right here in Evraz. And what I've heard from the Premier is he's not even willing to work with Evraz to try to make sure that those lines happen here, that he's already planning to bypass locally made steel for projects for our Crown corporations.

And the second question, Mr. Speaker, on the question of . . . Mr. Premier, we're right here if you'd listen to the question for a moment. To Mr. Speaker, he talks about standing up for Saskatchewan but that pipe is being built in northern Alberta with steel from outside of this country, not with steel that the workers who are out of work today could have built. He says he stood up for it. Why did he fail so badly when he called Kenney, when he called TC Energy? Why did he get nowhere for our workers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, in 2019 SaskEnergy purchased 87 000 metres of 20-inch pipe from Evraz steel here in Regina for the South Saskatoon pipeline project. In 2019 also an example, Evraz was awarded a large multi-year project with SaskEnergy. Mr. Speaker, we most certainly do support, not only Evraz steel, but support Saskatchewan businesses through our Crowns and in turn supporting Saskatchewan jobs.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we need to build more pipelines in this nation. We have always advocated for the construction of more pipelines in this nation. Each and every member of this caucus, Mr. Speaker, of the government caucus of the province of Saskatchewan will vocally, each and every time, advocate for the people that work in our energy industry and the people that work in building pipelines to ensure that that sustainable energy can get to other Canadians, can get to others in North America, and can get to other people around the world, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask the Leader of the Opposition if he can say the same.

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

Support for Energy Industry and Health Care Workers

Mr. Meili: — Every member on this side of the House supports those workers at Evraz and would work hard. Unlike this Premier, we'd actually stand up and get something done. But when it comes to supporting workers, let's talk about supporting workers here in Saskatchewan.

Documents from Finance Canada show that this government left . . . of the 160 million federal dollars provided for wage increases for essential workers during the pandemic, they left half of that money on the table. And this government's version of that top-up was a patchwork of supports that left out many of those front-line workers who are standing up for us during the COVID pandemic. End-of-life care, palliative care, people working in ICUs [intensive care unit] are ineligible for this support. These are folks who are struggling to make ends meet, and yet they're putting themselves on the line for us at a difficult time. So to the Premier: will he commit today to expanding that wage top-up and make sure that all of the essential front-line workers receive that support?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to address the first part of that member's question with regard to pipelines. As the Premier said, we have a great deal of concern about the announcement. We have very real and significant empathy for the employees and the families impacted. That's why we directed, early this morning, a rapid response team to reach out to Evraz, which they have done. They're going to be working with Evraz and with the employees impacted.

But make no mistake about what the challenge is here, Mr. Speaker. The challenge is that we can't get pipelines built in this country. Why can't we get pipelines built in this country, Mr. Speaker? Because of significant political opposition. Where does that opposition come from? It comes from them. It comes from their federal party. Jagmeet Singh, who has been very clear he will never support a pipeline project. Members opposite, in fact, who have positions that are similar.

And I'll read a quote still up today on her Facebook page, the new member for Regina Elphinstone. Let me read this: "Any political agenda that takes climate change seriously doesn't have space for the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Expansion."

Mr. Speaker, do you know where that pipeline would be built? Right at Evraz. There is a direct line between their positions and those people being back at work. We will stand with those workers. We will stand with the energy sector. And we will support pipelines.

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

Mr. Meili: — See the Premier sitting down over there. See the Premier sitting down over there again makes you wonder who's actually calling the shots.

And the question, the question was again about front-line health care workers. When we talk about supporting working people in this province, this is a government that lets working people down over and over again. And we talk about the current wage supplement program that this government actually paused for months on end and left half of the available money on the table, leaving so many front-line workers out — paramedics, folks in our emergency rooms, in critical care, in our ICUs, folks offering end-of-life care, people in in-patient, out-patient care, diagnostic services. Everyone out there putting . . . The folks this Premier likes to thank, likes to say thank you to, call heroes, but leaves out of the support they need.

The stress and strain on these health care workers as hundreds right now have been affected with COVID-19, hundreds more worried, worried about what it means in the days ahead as we see this spike in COVID-19. Harder months ahead thanks to inaction from this Premier on COVID-19. So again the question is very clear. Will this Premier expand the wage top-up to include all of our front-line health care workers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows that we are spending that money as we speak, that we have the second tranche of that particular program. He did however

use a number that was not accurate on the amount of money that's available. The amount that he quoted, I forget what it is, but it is not what the federal government gave to the province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . He just said 160 million. That's not true. In fact the amount that we could get, I believe, was 51 million and we said that we would top it up with some provincial money. But the number that he's using is inaccurate.

So that program is being offered for those that are caring for . . . residential care within our long-term care or for the most vulnerable, which is our seniors. And where their workload has definitely been increased because family members help a great deal in helping with the seniors and helping to keep them occupied, and they have been restricted for visits. And that's where we applied to the federal government for those workers to be included, and that's what was approved.

[10:30]

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

Funding for Education during COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, the inability of members opposite to answer simple questions about supporting front-line workers is alarming. So I'll continue with asking some questions related to several groups that are very near to my heart.

Teachers, school staff, and division leadership have stepped up and worked harder than they ever have to keep our kids safe and to keep our kids learning during this pandemic. They deserved more than the worst back-to-school plan in the country. Despite massive public outcry about this government's response to the challenges in our schools, this government was missing in action until the federal government came to their rescue in providing meaningful investments to address COVID-19 in our schools. But what the government gives with their left hand, teachers, parents fear the government will take away with their right.

School division funding is based on enrolment numbers and those will likely be lower in many divisions where more students are learning at home or online. Will the new Education minister please do what his predecessor would not and provide a direct commitment his ministry will not claw back enrolment funding from divisions in a pandemic?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question. And while I'm on my feet I want to thank teachers and students and parents and our school division staff and the former minister for the work that they did in putting in place the best back-to-school plan in the entire country, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note for the record that this government, along with school divisions and along with the federal government, are providing over \$150 million in supports to ensure that we have a safe return to school and a continuation of education, in-school education for as much as possible for as many students as possible, Mr. Speaker. That's on top of a two and a half per cent increase in the budget, the highest educational

budget in the province of Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the former minister . . . In terms of the commitment that that member asked for, that commitment had already been made by the former minister, Mr. Speaker. So we will continue to work with divisions and all of our partners to ensure that we continue to have a safe return to school.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a shame it'll be if we're the only jurisdiction in Canada that is not clearly supporting our schools by making these clear commitments during a pandemic. Perhaps the minister is hoping for more bake sales or bottle drives to fund our schools, but those are not possible of course right now as teachers across the province are getting sick with COVID-19 and having to self-isolate after coming into contact with infected students.

This has placed a demand on our sub list like we've never seen before. Many substitute teachers are semi-retired and making the very reasonable choice to stay away from the classroom in the midst of a global pandemic. Higher demand for subs and lower supply is pushing our schools to the breaking point. What is the minister's plan to make sure that Saskatchewan kids have a teacher at the front of the class when they get to school each day?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, to the member's question, I thank him for his question. We are not going to rely on bake sales to ensure that we have a continuation of a safe return to schools. We're going to rely on the \$2.6 billion that this government put in place in terms of the provincial budget this year under the former minister. We're going to rely on the over \$150 million in additional funding that we've made available. We've already identified the first tranche of those dollars and have allowed those dollars to go to the school divisions and we just took a second intake on December 1st. And we look forward to, in a very quick way, adjudicating the second tranche of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, as Dr. Shahab has indicated, the schools have done an excellent job, teachers have done an excellent job, students have done an excellent job of ensuring that students and teachers can remain in the classroom as much as possible. And the school divisions know they have the support of this government and they have the flexibility to ensure that education can continue in a safe way, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to support those school divisions. We'll continue to support our teachers. And we'll continue to support our students.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the minister's words for teachers and students as we know they've had to work exponentially harder to fill in the gaps left by this government's refusal to do the work. Now despite the Sask Party's spin, it's clear that COVID-19 is in our schools, and students and staff are bearing the brunt. We have nearly 100 cases of COVID-19 directly tied to our schools. There have been more than 1,200 cases among people under the age of 19.

Things are getting worse. We know this virus is spread through the air, and we've been raising the alarm about needed repairs to ventilation in our schools. So to the minister: how much has been invested in HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] upgrades since schools were closed in March? How many schools were made safer during the summer that this government seems to have taken off instead of working to protect our kids?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would note for the members that just in the last number of days Statistics Canada, Stats Canada has come out and indicated in a report that Saskatchewan spends the most per capita of any province on education in the entire country of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we provided that support before this year to ensure that school divisions have the dollars that they need to maintain their schools. We have built a record number of new schools in this province that obviously would be outfitted with the best in terms of HVAC and other types of equipment.

Mr. Speaker, specifically to the question, \$51 million was provided in the first tranche of COVID-19 funding. Mr. Speaker, 19.1 of that was spent in additional janitorial staff, cleaning supplies, and sanitation measures. In fact 440 staff were hired through those dollars. That's custodial staff, teachers, and other staff. Six million was provided for furniture and equipment; 13.2 million was provided for supports for immunocompromised students. And I'm expecting in this most recent tranche of December 1st that there will be additional requests for what the member is asking, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to discussing those with the ministry and making decisions shortly on how those dollars will be allocated.

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

Support for Indigenous Communities during COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week an official with Indigenous Canada said Indigenous communities have reached an intense phase in the fight against COVID. Saskatchewan First Nation communities have registered nearly 1,200 COVID cases including 17 active outbreaks, and data shows First Nation and Métis people living in urban centres will be severely impacted by the virus.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous people in Saskatchewan are at the highest risk of hospitalization or death from virus-related complications. Despite this, we haven't heard a peep from this government about its obligations and commitments to First Nation and Métis people across the province during the pandemic. So what's their plan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, throughout this spring and summer, now into the fall, COVID-19 has obviously reached into all corners of Saskatchewan — urban,

rural, and of course our far North and into our First Nations communities.

We have been consulting with our First Nations partners in leadership throughout this to make sure that we're providing as many supports as we can, Mr. Speaker. As an example, in response to the spike in northern community cases earlier this spring, the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority], along with the provincial government and also our federal counterparts, had collaborated with the northern community leaders to quickly mobilize resources and supports to the North. This included ensuring that the Northern Integrated Health Incident Command Centre worked closely with local leaders on response planning and emergency management services support.

And the SHA, Mr. Speaker, has deployed staff and enhanced ground and air ambulance supports to respond to surges in EMS [emergency medical services] calls in the North as well. And we'll continue to work with our First Nations communities to make sure we provide as much support as we can, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, in scrum after scrum and tweet after tweet, this government shows it doesn't understand the public health challenges in this province, never mind have a handle on them.

A constituent of mine, a single mother of three, was asked by public health to put her children in care while she recovered from COVID-19. This simply shouldn't be a decision anyone is faced with.

Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan are bearing the brunt of the HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] crisis, opioid crisis, and the COVID pandemic. Organizations like Prairie Harm Reduction and the food bank, who are the front lines, are struggling to do enough. Where is the leadership from this government? Why aren't we seeing more action to support Indigenous communities facing challenge after challenge?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government and myself as the minister and everybody on this side of the House recognizes the challenges, the unique challenges frankly, that are faced in northern and remote communities, Mr. Speaker. And I detailed some of the supports that were offered earlier this spring and earlier this year when there were some spikes and surges in First Nations communities, Mr. Speaker.

More recently here as an example, the GeneXpert testing machines have been deployed into the communities of La Loche, Meadow Lake, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Lloydminster, Stony Rapids, La Ronge, Pelican Narrows, Hatchet Lake, English River, and Onion Lake, Mr. Speaker. All of these point-of-care tests, Mr. Speaker, that are completed on these machines are assessed via the provincial testing appropriateness criteria.

And machines have also been deployed, Mr. Speaker, into the First Nations communities of Buffalo River and Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation, as well as Stanley Mission, Mistawasis, Southend, Cumberland House, and Deschambault, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to provide as much support as we can to our leaders and our friends and neighbours in northern Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Women and the Provincial Economy

Ms. Bowes: — This week the federal government announced the creation of a task force to create an action plan for women in the economy. This is encouraging, but we know the provincial government does not have a track record of allocating federal dollars where they were intended. They are using federal money to backfill their own failure instead of supporting women and families.

We know there was \$20 million earmarked for child care in the COVID-19 Safe Restart Agreement that did not flow to parents, workers, or operators in the child care sector. Will the minister commit to engaging with the federal government on this task force, and will they commit that any funding received will actually flow to where it is needed most?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question with regard to Saskatchewan's economy. And what I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, is that of all of the provinces in Canada . . . nearly 97 per cent of folks who lost their jobs during the initial component of COVID-19 are back at work, Mr. Speaker. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the entire country, and that is something that applies to workers across the board. We know there have been specific areas of challenge and that's why we've stepped up with support programs that are targeted.

And I look forward to, in just a couple of minutes, more good news for the House on the support programs that this government is offering to make sure that Saskatchewan residents have opportunity for employment and keeping the job that they're in, as opposed, Mr. Speaker, to their view opposite of shutting down the entire economy.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Renewal of Small-Business Emergency Payment Program

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I rise with that good news. I'm pleased to speak on our government's support for small- and medium-sized businesses in Saskatchewan. And specifically I am pleased to inform the House about the renewal of the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment program.

Protecting the public health of the people of Saskatchewan and stopping the spread of COVID-19 in our province is a priority for

everyone. The public health orders in place to stop the spread affect many of our small businesses as they do their part to protect public health.

Our vibrant business community includes the nearly 150,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises in Saskatchewan. These businesses pay a quarter of all wages in the province, contribute to nearly a quarter of our GDP [gross domestic product], and have been at the forefront of our economic growth in recent years, creating many new jobs in our communities across the province. And because our small-business community continues to be affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, we are renewing this program that will help provide some critical assistance to them.

[10:45]

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment program was initially launched back in April 13th, 2020 near the beginning of the global pandemic. Our government extended the program for May 2020 and, Mr. Speaker, the program provided 6,485 of our small businesses in Saskatchewan more than \$32 million in direct support.

Mr. Speaker, in renewing this critical support program, the new eligibility period for this phase of the program will be from December 1, 2020 to December the 31st, 2020 and is estimated to cost \$8 million. The application deadline for this eligibility period is January 31st, 2021. We will be working directly with our small businesses to make application.

Mr. Speaker, eligible small businesses will receive a payment of 15 per cent of their monthly sales revenue to a maximum of \$5,000 based on the greater of November 2019, December 2019, or February 2020 sales revenue. For seasonal businesses, the funding support will be 15 per cent of the average monthly sales revenue for full months that the business operated in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, this renewed program will assist those small- or medium-sized businesses that maintain a permanent establishment in Saskatchewan, that are subject to a public health order requiring them to temporarily suspend or substantially curtail their operations during the eligibility period, that have experienced a loss of sales revenue, and that will reopen when the public health restrictions are lifted.

Mr. Speaker, this program was created to be administratively simple, give businesses quick access to much-needed and direct financial support, and give them flexibility in how they use that support to address the unique cost pressures each business faces in this pandemic. This program does not address all the stresses businesses are facing, but it will provide some relief in this time as we work to curb the spread and ensure a quick and strong economic recovery in the months ahead.

Mr. Speaker, as we've done since the beginning of the pandemic back in March, we will continue working with our business community through this challenging period, through economic recovery, and ultimately back to economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our business community. Our government supports you. We stand with you through this unprecedented period. And I encourage everyone to support our

local Saskatchewan businesses now during this difficult time and always into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for his statement. This is not the support that small businesses have been asking for. Last week we called on the government to bring this program back, but we also called on them to fix it, which the minister still hasn't done.

This program still requires small businesses to be shut down or substantially curtailed by public health orders, but the government's public health orders aren't what is causing hardship for most small businesses right now. What's causing the hardship is that customers are staying home. What's causing the hardship is the lack of clarity from this government. And now what we're hearing is an ambiguous threat that more businesses may be curtailed or suspended during the busiest month of the year due to this government's lack of leadership on COVID-19.

We were critical of this program in the summer, saying that it offered no supports to businesses that haven't been ordered to close but have seen their revenues collapse. The Sask Party is repeating that same mistake again with today's announcement. The minister says that the goal for this program is to be administratively simple and to give businesses quick access, but we know from actually speaking to small- and independent-business owners that this program is anything but simple, and that a program that provides up to \$5,000 to businesses impacted or potentially closed over the holidays is simply too little, too late.

Small businesses that are in the worst of both worlds, told to stay open while their customers are told to stay home, will not get the support that they need from this program and the Sask Party needs to be doing much more to support small business.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1 — *The Income Tax (Strong Recovery Home Renovation Tax Credit) Amendment Act, 2020*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, *The Income Tax (Strong Recovery Home Renovation Tax Credit) Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 1, *The Income Tax (Strong Recovery Home Renovation Tax Credit) Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting of the House.

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 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 again today. This is part two. I would like to recap a little bit of yesterday's speech. I wish to thank the voters of Cannington again for their support and trust in my abilities to represent them in the provincial legislature.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is coming off a record harvest and is a very strong industry for Saskatchewan. It continues and it has the full support of our government.

Mr. Speaker, the energy sector has been hit hard by low commodity prices and low oil demand, first by 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 need more Saskatchewan oil and gas.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower customers will enjoy a 10 per cent decrease on their electrical charges for one year. These savings will be reinvested in our province and provide stimulus in our recovery. Mr. Speaker, the rink affordability plan will provide up to \$2,500 a year to help cover the costs of operating rinks in villages, towns, and cities. And they are much needed, sir, because they are the hub of any community.

Mr. Speaker, homeowners can claim 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 much-needed 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 many small businesses and their employees. These businesses support all kinds of organizations in their local communities and the communities next door.

Mr. Speaker, this government has appointed a minister focused on 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 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan. As part of the Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan, we are including a plan to train mental health first responders in each of the province's 744 schools.

Mr. Speaker, making life more affordable for seniors, increasing the seniors' income plan for low-income seniors to a maximum benefit of \$360 beginning in the 2021-22 budget and continuing over the next two budget years, as well as a reduction in inter-facility ambulatory transfers and reducing the maximum cost for other ambulance calls from \$275 to \$135 per call.

Mr. Speaker, veterans service clubs will get an increased funding from 100,000 to 1.5 million. This will support clubs across the province and it is administered by the veteran service club or . . . Sorry, this is a program, the veteran service club support program, and it is administered by the Royal Canadian Legion command. This will help many community veterans groups and veterans across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this government has increased funding to the Saskatchewan Health Authority by over \$140 million, a 3.9 per cent increase over last year for a total of 3.7 billion. This includes communities that have received funding in my constituency of Cannington, of Lampman, Carlyle, Oxbow, and Fillmore, Arcola, and other communities around the province.

Mr. Speaker, highways are a crucial link to getting our commodities and products to market, and we continue to maintain and build highways across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this government has increased the revenue sharing with municipalities. For example, the town of Carlyle in 2019-2020 received \$343,429, an increase of 165 per cent over the \$129,698 they received in 2007. The town of Oxbow in 2007 received \$117,713. In 2019-2020 they received \$302,678, an increase of 157 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we are investing in Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the 2021 stimulus package, communities will receive funding through the municipal economic enhancement program, otherwise known as MEEP. Communities like Arcola, \$94,420; Carlyle, \$216,742; Oxbow, \$190,871; and Gainsborough, \$36,500. Mr. Speaker, this money will be reinvested into the community, whether it's water and sewer main replacements, street maintenance, or capital equipment purchases. This will enhance the economic recovery and improve infrastructure within every community.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government has assisted the town of Arcola with a wastewater lagoon expansion, 1.1 million. A new water treatment lagoon in the town of Carnduff — \$2.85 million. A lagoon expansion in the town of Redvers — \$935,000. And an aeration upgrade on the lagoon in the town of Carlyle. Mr. Speaker, we are investing in Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, SaskTel has continued to add infrastructure across the province. 677,000 of upgrades in Cannington to the network

will allow the communities of Alameda, Fairlight, and Gainsborough to have access to the 4G LTE [long-term evolution], and LTE TDD [long-term evolution time division duplex] wireless networks. SaskTel has added small service towers to enhance the wireless service in the community of Glenavon. SaskTel built additional capacity in Arcola for new and existing neighbourhoods so customers have access to all the services SaskTel has to offer. Mr. Speaker, we are investing in Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, the government has invested in the park improvements for the enjoyment of guests. Moose Mountain Provincial Park has had investment in expanding the west boat launch, historical reconstruction of existing cabins, and road and parking lot improvements throughout the provincial park.

Mr. Speaker, globally governments have been financially challenged by COVID-19. Saskatchewan is no exception. We were the first provincial government to release a reopen plan, a plan to get our economy growing. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of any province. We have maintained our AAA credit rating, as was recently affirmed by Moody's services.

[11:00]

Mr. Speaker, a year ago our government released a new Saskatchewan growth plan. We remain focussed on meeting these ambitious targets. We are committed to increasing exports and taking a leading role in promoting Saskatchewan around the globe. Mr. Speaker, we are producers of food, fuel, and fertilizer, and the world wants and needs our products.

Mr. Speaker, we are a proud, strong province — a place my family and I have always called home. To strengthen our economy within our federation, our Premier has appointed a Legislative Secretary to explore options to strengthen our economy. Mr. Speaker, in September we challenged the unjust, unconstitutional, and ineffective federal carbon tax in the Supreme Court of Canada. This federal carbon tax is placing a financial burden on the people of Saskatchewan and making our industries less competitive to other industries from other countries competing for the same market share. Our built-in-Saskatchewan climate change plan, Prairie Resilience, will do far more for the environment than any additional tax can ever hope to do.

Mr. Speaker, traditionally the federal government has appointed our provincial Chief Firearms Officer. Mr. Speaker, this year that changed. Saskatchewan has appointed its own Chief Firearms Officer to manage firearms within the province and give Saskatchewan citizens a voice as decisions about firearms are made.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a great place — a great place to live, work, and raise a family. A place filled with hard-working, honest people, people you call friends. These friends will be there to lend a helping hand or perhaps need your help from time to time. Together we are stronger and together we build community.

I will be supporting the Throne Speech and not the amendment. God bless Canada. God bless Saskatchewan. God save the Queen.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With great humbleness, I stand here in this Assembly on behalf of people of my constituency, Regina Pasqua. Indeed this is a tremendous honour to represent them and I would like to say thanks to the people of Regina Pasqua for their trust in me and sending me back here in the twenty-ninth Legislative Assembly.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you as the Speaker of this Assembly, as well as our new Deputy Speaker. And congratulations to all newly elected and returning members from both sides. And thank you to all candidates who put their name forward in this electoral process to serve people of Saskatchewan.

Thank you to all the priceless work done by the volunteers behind all of us. Nothing could have happened without those volunteers. Madam Speaker, I would like to extend my special thanks to Dylan Topal, my campaign manager. He worked tirelessly along with his wife, Whitney Topal, our e-day [election day] coordinator. Dylan is hard-working, determined, and a very wise guy.

I would like to say thank you to Dylan for our successful campaign operation he ran. And thank you to his wife for working on my campaign, Madam Speaker. And that man, he found our great campaign office and equipped us with all the gadgets and tools for the successful campaign. He proved to be a great and hard-working business manager, keeping us well organized.

Sam Sassi was very busy coordinating with our door knockers, especially keeping me busy in the streets. Madam Speaker, any time I come back into my campaign office, he is having a pile of papers and sending me out. He's just letting me use the washroom or a bottle of water. It's out with Josh Head, and we knocked thousands and thousands and thousands of doors, Madam Speaker.

I would like to mention Debby Wintonyk, Bonnie Malakoff, Josh Fryklund, and Josh Head for knocking thousands of doors with me, Madam Speaker. Waqar Bukhari and Shahid Pervaiz, I would like their names to be in *Hansard* for their work in my campaign. Many other volunteers came for door knocking, for drop cards, and their hard work in my campaign.

Last but not least, Madam Speaker, I would like to say thank you to my wife, to my family. My wife, Attia, we have been married for 21 years now, having three boys. Ayaz is the first year in the University of Regina and who voted for the very first time this time, and he voted for me, Madam Speaker, on a merit basis. He asked many questions, and the last question he asked that, are you going to keep your promises after the election? Before my answer, my wife said, yes, yes, we believe him. Yes, he will keep a promise.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a middle son. He is in grade 10 in Campbell Collegiate. He's a very squash-loving guy and ski-loving and mountain biking. He helped me in the door knocking as well. Our youngest one is in grade 6 at Massey, École Massey, a French immersion. All those are French immersion students, by the way, Madam Speaker.

And my youngest one, he is 11 now and can speak three languages: French, English, and Urdu as well. He is a very good speaker actually, and he helps me write my speeches and at least gives a final look into my speech when I need to do corrections and spelling and stuff like that. And thank you for him for keeping me energetic throughout our campaign, Madam Speaker.

I don't want to forget my younger brother. He is two years younger than me. Muhammad Arshad helped me in this campaign. He is my buddy, hunting buddy, and friend and younger brother, of course.

Mr. Speaker, Regina Pasqua is a vibrant and the most diverse constituency. During the door knocking I had the chance to speak with people of various ethnicities from all across the world, happy to call Saskatchewan home. People from United States, Europe, east Europe, from Latin America, from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, from the Middle East to South Africa. It was quite an experience on the doorsteps.

People know of the difficult times we are in. Our local businesses are facing hardships due to the pandemic hitting our economy hard. Madam Speaker, our hard-working people's wisdom and good practices while following the guidelines of the SHA, they are not only protecting themselves but others as well. That, partnered with our leadership and dedication team from this side of the House, together we will get through this pandemic.

Madam Speaker, it took years to establish our strong Saskatchewan economy, and in this difficult time we need strong leadership and a strong recovery plan to build a stronger Saskatchewan. A stronger Saskatchewan includes building strong families and strong communities. A strong Saskatchewan means affordable living for our students, for our young families and for their children, for our seniors, for our new immigrants, for everyone, Madam Speaker. A strong Saskatchewan does not include switching off the circuit breaker to our economy. It does not include switching the circuit breaker off to the livelihoods of our many hard-working men and women across the province.

Madam Speaker, we understand the challenging time in the small businesses. Our government has reduced the small business tax rate from 2 per cent to zero until July 2023. That is \$189 million saved by our small businesses and will be invested back into our Saskatchewan economy.

Madam Speaker, our government is investing another \$6 million in marketing campaigns to encourage Saskatchewan residents to support local businesses, including \$1 million to the Together We Stand in Saskatchewan campaign sponsored by the local chamber of commerce and other business organizations.

During the election, our mandate was very clear and resonated with the people of Saskatchewan who sent us back in this House to work for them. People saw our work in the past and they have seen our commitment in the future to work in every sector, infrastructure in all — in education and health and in highways — for a strong Saskatchewan, for strong communities, for strong families. To recover from the pandemic, our \$7.5 billion infrastructure plan that includes \$2 billion in new stimulus funding.

Madam Speaker, Saskatchewan is the province having the lowest

unemployment rate in Canada. Saskatchewan is the best place in the world, providing fuel, fertilizer, and food. Madam Speaker, COVID-19 disrupted the worldwide economy, resulting in numerous effects on human activities. A panic wave through the globe shook the world economy and continues to affect our day-to-day lives. At its very beginning, world leaders understood 80 per cent of the population relies on agriculture for their life force. If there is any further disruption to the food production and related value chains — for example, in the form of reduction availability of critical imports or restriction access to the land or markets — it could be catastrophic for a vulnerable population.

Mr. Speaker, the agriculture sector plays an important role in influencing migratory patterns. Transhumant pastoral populations are likely to be hard hit by any border closures, as they rely on the seasonal movement of livestock for their food and income. The disruption of traditional investment patterns or the creation of new ones may lead to tension and even violent conflict between resident and pastoralist communities, resulting in local displacement and increase the level of poverty and food insecurity. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, it is crucial to maintain and support the continuous functioning of local food market value chains and agri-food systems in a food crisis, including through ongoing and scaled-up support for food processing, transportation, marketing, and so forth, strengthening our local producers. That group maintains the power and access to the markets, and advocating for the trade corridor to remain open as much as possible during COVID-19.

Our economic recovery plan is the best and working and will save lives. Yet it is slow recovery but it is clockwise and we are in the right direction.

Madam Speaker, understanding the economic upset very associated with COVID-19, there are significant drops in commodity prices. Therefore our government introduced a number of relief measures for our oil and gas industries. In May our government launched the accelerated site-closure program after the federal government announced it would provide \$400 million for the reclamation of inactive wells in Saskatchewan. This program has been successfully launched and the economic and environmental benefit will be significant. Today 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.

[11:15]

Saskatchewan is one of just two provinces to show positive growth in international goods, exports so far this year, owing to the surge in farm and intermediate food product shipments. Madam Speaker, in September, merchandise exports in Saskatchewan increased by 17.2 per cent compared to August 2020, placing the province second in the percentage change among the provinces. In the first nine months of 2020, merchandise export in Saskatchewan increased by 1.7 per cent compared to the same period in 2019, which was also second among the provinces. Nationally Canada saw the decrease of 6.2 per cent year over year. Strong export numbers was supported by growth in a number of sectors including farm and food products, metallic and non-metallic minerals, forestry products, as well as electronic equipment and the parts and the consumer goods.

Madam Speaker, international merchandise exports measure the value of the goods leaving the country. Governments, exports manufacturers, and transportation companies use these export statistics to monitor export profits, identify market opportunities, monitor commodity prices, and examine transportation and implementation of trade policies. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to increase our agri exports and the mineral exports.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little bit about my constituency, Regina Pasqua. In 2020 and 2021 the total of 121 million is being invested between five new schools in Regina that were announced by the Government of Saskatchewan, and for the construction of Argyle, École Pius elementary school in Regina, 1.3 million to fund a new elementary school for Regina Conseil des écoles fransaskoises school, \$2 million new joint facility in Harbour Landing School, Madam Speaker, and 250,000 assessment for scoping of a joint-use replacement school for the St. Peter community school and St. Michael Community School and Imperial School in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I will support the Speech from the Throne and will not support the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member of Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would first like to congratulate on your victory in becoming Speaker, and of course my friend Randy on him becoming . . . I'm sorry. Him Speaker and you Deputy Speaker. Congratulations and thank you. It's going to take a lot of effort.

Madam Speaker, it's once again a privilege to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I would first like to humbly thank the people of Batoche constituency for their support this fifth time, being elected MLA to represent our riding in the twenty-ninth sitting of the Saskatchewan legislature.

I would also like to think my CA, Mary Anne Telfer, and her husband, Don. They have been with me since day one. I thank them not only for their support, but most of all for their friendship.

Last but not least, the biggest thank you goes to the love of my life, Valerie. On November 1st we celebrated our 45th wedding anniversary. I know we don't look it, and my mind fogs over the years, but I think she was eight and I was 12. She has been at my side through some very tough times, and for that I thank her. And we're hoping for another 45 years.

Madam Speaker, as you know, these are some strange and difficult times we are now living in. I've seen the very best in people and the very worst in people. We are in a pandemic that encompasses the entire globe. We do not have an operator's manual. We're using the best science available, not just from Saskatchewan but from around the world. The only comparison we have is from the Spanish flu of 1918, and that's more than 100 years ago. I've seen some pictures from that era and guess what, Madam Speaker? They're wearing masks.

We hear and see people nowadays who are protesting the wearing of masks. They say we are infringing on their freedoms, freedoms granted by our democratic society. I would reply that a democratic society drafts certain rules that all members of this

society must adhere to. For example, if you decide you wanted to travel 250 clicks an hour down Highway 11, you know what would happen. You'd get busted. The same rule applies here. The large majority of society says, you must wear a mask. So stop all the complaining. Stop all the protesting and put on a mask. With all the rise of COVID-19, I challenge anyone to honestly look at yourself and say, a mask or a respirator? Which will it be? Put on the mask. Again I say, put on the mask.

We're getting this information from the top scientists who say, put on the mask. Some people are bringing out statistics that are against masks. I would ask, how accurate and how reputable are your sources? Please respect the experts that the government is using and wear a mask. Washing your hands with soap and water are equally important. Fortunately I haven't seen any anti-handwashing protests, but maybe I shouldn't open that can of worms.

On the other end of the spectrum, we see and hear from people that think we should shut down the entire economy, absolutely everything. I had a person tell me he didn't want to chance getting COVID. He wanted to survive; he wanted it all to be safe. So he said we should shut everything down — nail it down tight, nothing moves. I asked him, what happens to a couple with two children living in a three-storey walk-up and both of them are minimum wage jobs and could be very soon unemployed? What should they do? Madam Speaker, his sad reply — and he repeated it twice — was: to hell with them, to hell with them.

Some say our COVID numbers are low. But if you look at how many cases per 100,000, to put us on balance with the rest of the provinces, the results are Alberta is the worst, Manitoba's second, and we come in third in all of Canada. We have to do better. These are scary statistics, and the time has come to take COVID very seriously. Mr. Speaker, if we follow the basic rules of wearing a mask, proper handwashing, and social distancing, we will prevail. We will beat this COVID thing.

We also need to understand that we cannot recover from this pandemic without the economy. Mr. Speaker, we've had the press report that 400 doctors have signed a petition to further shut down the economy. However the press did not report that 2,700 doctors didn't sign the petition.

The economy is what everything hinges on. It is a starting point for everything. The couple I previously mentioned need a job. They need a paycheque. They need to provide food, clothing, and shelter for the family. With this in mind, our government is doing everything we can to keep the economy going.

Some people are questioning this. Well here are some facts. We have the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada. We have the fastest growing export rate in all of Canada. These things don't just happen by chance. Our government has implemented a strong plan to keep the economy going. We have to strike a balance between the economy and COVID. Madam Speaker, I want to repeat that. We have to strike a balance between the economy and COVID. Going to either extreme leads us to failure. We must work to keep our people safe while keeping the economy going.

It has been said many times in this House that Saskatchewan has what the world needs — fuel, fertilizer, and food. We have them

all in abundance. Saskatchewan has, depending on the crop year, up to 47 per cent of Canada's crop land. I would like each and every one here to repeat that to their friends and neighbours. Spread the word. You could say Saskatchewan has 50 per cent of all of Canada's crop land. That's huge. Agriculture is the backbone, the backbone of this province, and it always has been. Every job, if not directly, indirectly connects to agriculture. But too many people that don't know or don't care, so we have to educate them. Tell them the story. Tell people. And when you have the chance, say thank you to a farmer.

We also have oil and we are second only to Alberta. We have 30 per cent of all the world's uranium. We have roughly 50 per cent of all the world's potash, which is the key ingredient to fertilizer. And there's more. There's a company moving into Saskatchewan that will be setting up in two locations to collect helium. We will be watching them close, you might say, to see that they get off the ground.

We also have a company moving into our province that will be manufacturing lithium, which is a key ingredient in the manufacturing of lithium batteries. We are opening trade offices in Japan, India, and Singapore, and also will be maintaining our trade office in China. Mr. Speaker, that's not Canada. That's Saskatchewan. We are doing this. All of this being accomplished by a province that when I was first elected in '03, the then NDP [New Democratic Party] premier referred to us as the wee province. He said the wee province will always be in and out of equalization. The fine people of this province were tired of being put on the back burner, and in 2007 elected a forward-thinking government to lead this province. We have been moving forward and upward every since. Our population levels, all these factors, we are now well ahead.

Mr. Speaker, since the Saskatchewan Party became government, we have not received a penny, not a penny, of equalization. We are proudly standing on our own economy. I am proud to say that I am part of the government who has changed this province from a have-not province to a province with jobs, people, and a very bright future.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to thank and highly commend and proudly recognize all the men and women who are risking their own safety and that of their families. I cannot say enough about these people who are at the front line and do not back away from the dangers. Instead they risk it all for their fellow man. This is the most unselfish act of all. I am referring to health care workers, doctors, nurses, firefighters, ambulance operators, and on and on and right down to the little guy who helps out a neighbour who might be at risk. May God bless them all.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, I am also very proud of our Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health. Between them and their staff, we are safely working our way through this COVID. They are being frugal and spending our money very, very wisely. I would also like to thank our Premier. I am very proud and impressed with the job he is doing. Thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Premier.

I would now like to touch on federal government's carbon tax, which our government is now fighting in the Supreme Court of

Canada. The first point I want to make is Saskatchewan sequesters more carbon than it produces. Saskatchewan sequesters more carbon than it produces. The feds should be paying us, not the reverse.

I would like to share with you an example of how this unfair tax works. A constituent of mine, a farmer, heats his repair shop with coal. He pays \$42 a tonne for his coal and on top of that the federal government charges him \$56 a tonne carbon tax. How does this \$56 cut down the amount of carbon released on this planet? It doesn't. It just puts more money in the federal coffers to be spent in Eastern Canada. This is unjust, unfair, and needs to be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, I don't agree with the federal government, but I still take great pride, great pride in our country, Canada. It is near and dear to our hearts. We're hearing voices that say Western Canada should separate. I would like to give you some reasons why we should not never, ever separate. When I was a young man, many of my friends went to Europe and toured for an extended time, living cheaply in hostels and living life to the fullest. They met many kids and a lot of them were wearing Canadian flags sewn on their jackets and backpacks. They would ask what part of Canada that person was from, and many times that person would laugh and say, well we're actually from the United States but the world loves Canada. Do we really want to give that up? Our reputation is the finest in the world.

I have also just recently read a book called *The Tattooist of Auschwitz*. The best job in the entire camp, if you could get it, was going in this room where all the clothing was put that had been taken from the prisoners coming into the camp. And these girls would search through the clothing of these new arrivals and look for money that was sewn in, or jewellery. And it was the best job in the whole camp, and whether you're working there or not, they would ask each other whether you were lucky that day. And they finally decided, let's name that room. And they decided, let's name it after the most beautiful place in the world, the place we would all want to live, the place that we could go to. Mr. Speaker, that was 1943 Auschwitz, Poland, the most infamous death camp, and these female prisoners named that room the Canada room — the Canada room.

Canada's had this reputation for generations. I acknowledge that we Canadians have some big problems and many inequalities that need to be addressed. Destroying what our ancestors built is not the answer. Fixing Canada is the answer. And I know it will take time. Things move slow. But Canada is worth it.

Another point. What is the smallest populated country you can think of? What influence do they have on world affairs? Zero. Nothing. Nobody even asks. Yet look what Canada's influence is. Do we really want to give that all up, Canada's position and influence? Also, since we are landlocked, how would we get our products to port throughout the country?

In comparison, if your car has a flat tire, do you get rid of the car or do you fix the tire? Let's fix Canada's tire, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment, but I will wholeheartedly be supporting the Speech from the Throne. I thank you for this time. I would ask that we all pray for this beautiful province of Saskatchewan and for our country, Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I'd like to start with congratulating yourself and Madam Deputy Speaker on your new roles, and it just shows the confidence of the House in the ability for you two to do that job. Next I'd like to congratulate all the new and returning MLAs. For those of you that have never seen me speak before, I don't use speaking notes very often, but I've got a lot of thank yous to go through so I don't want to miss anybody.

So I want to congratulate all the new and returning MLAs to our legislature. Even though some of us have differing political views, just a little bit, we probably came here for the right reasons, which for me was to make this a better place for my family, my mom and dad, my kids, and my grandkids, which in turn makes our province a better place for all of us.

Okay, now we get into this long list of thank yous. So I want to start with my family. My son Dylan, he helped me throughout the campaign. And I even got my grandkids out, one at a time, door knocking. I had Jordison, Jaxton, and Attica. They were all out there. Attica, being only three and a half years old, she tired out after a couple of blocks. My son Ryan, he come out for the push over the top for the end of the campaign and he even brought his beautiful daughter, my newest granddaughter, Charlie, and his much better half, his beautiful wife Macey. My oldest, who now lives on the island that I heard some of my colleagues talk about, and it gives me a chance to go visit him — hopefully I can get out there sometime next year — he constantly texted me and called me and gave me moral support from out there.

Then there's a real special guy that comes down. He's been down every election that I've run. It's my brother from another mother. His name's Quinn Moerike. He's from Edmonton. He's been there since day one. And unfortunately he was only able to come the last five days as well because the COVID in Edmonton was so bad he had to self-isolate for two weeks before he got down. And I want to also thank his bride, Vanessa, for letting him come down. That's the first time she didn't come down without him. And you know, she's got two kids to take care of, her daughter and their brand new son.

Then there's my fantastic team and all the volunteers who helped door knock, and all those other little details that we all had in our campaign. And we know it takes a team to win in that campaign. It's not us always. It's our team and it's the leadership that our leader presents for us. So in no particular order, my campaign manager was David Cooper. I had Dax Koch come out; Robyn Lekien; Aaron; Lee Guse; his much better-looking, much taller, and probably younger sister, Erin Bradish. Lee's wife, Taryn, was out helping. We had Catherine, Darlene, Luke, David Chow, the member from Moose Jaw North, Jacqui, Trina and her daughter, Theresa, Fern Paulhus, Cathy and Wes Schumack, Brett and Brenda Schultz.

And I had a former colleague show up: Warren Steinley, our new MP [Member of Parliament], one of our new MPs here in Regina, who's a former colleague of us, and his crew he brought out of Scott Pettigrew, Kielle Schmidt, and Heather Kuntz. Then we

had John Saltasuk and his scat team that were out there numerous times and that helped knock thousands of doors.

Get back on order here.

An Hon. Member: — Take your time.

Mr. Lawrence: — Oh yes. Then there's Simone, who is not only my business manager, but she also recruited her family and friends. So amongst those was Nigel, Cathy who's her mom; Kelly who's her friend. And because she's got a two-year-old at home and she is putting in 10- and 12-hour days, I also want to thank her in-laws, Swanee and his wife, for taking care of their son when Nigel was out helping and she was out helping.

Then there's my board. Ryan Dionne, who's been my president, and I used to work with him at SaskTel. He's been my president almost as long as I've been a nominated member, so since back in 2011, early 2012 . . . No, that'd be 2010. Yes. And he's a really good friend. And he tells me as long as I'm running, he'll stay my president. So I also want to throw out a thanks to his wife, Amanda, for letting him come while she watches the twins at home.

Then Myrna, my treasurer and her husband, Greg. And Greg's almost like a second dad. And he is so full of political advice, I keep telling him he should've ran for mayor or run for my seat, but he doesn't like politicians.

Then I want to talk about Sherry Young. Sherry and I have been friends for years. And her husband, Tex Young, is one of our serving members in the Canadian Armed Forces. She's been my VP [vice-president] for quite a while. And he got posted down into the States someplace. And they had to leave the day before the polls opened. And because of the way the rules are, they couldn't vote because the early polls weren't open, and they couldn't get mailed the — what are those called when they mail out the ballots? — mail-out ballots, yes. Couldn't get the mail-out ballots sent out to them because they weren't physically in their new address. But she's like a sister.

Then my secretaries on my board. I've had a few. There was Trina, Marj, and now it's actually Lee Guse. So thanks, Lee. Very good guy.

[11:45]

And then I go on to my mom and dad. And I've spoke of this before. I remember being young and both mom and dad with at least two jobs because they both worked in the oil field. And we know who was in government back then. Well probably those guys. And their plan was, I believe, the term they used was "leave it in the ground."

Then probably some of the most important people I need to thank is the people of Moose Jaw Wakamow. The people of Moose Jaw Wakamow came out in droves, voted for me, and increased my plurality again in my third term. So obviously the people I work with in my office, my CA [constituency assistant], Simone, who does a fantastic job, and my former CA, Trina, who did a fantastic job over the last four years or six years, however long it was, make us all look good when we're here at the legislature. So I want to thank them for the fantastic job that they do.

Hopefully I haven't missed anyone. Oh, just a minute — I have. Certainly least and for sure last, the Leader of the Opposition. I want to thank him because every time he came out and helped Melissa Patterson, who did a fantastic job running a campaign . . . She was fantastic. I've never seen any NDP work as hard as she did, ever. But I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition because every time he'd come out to what was a former NDP stronghold, I had people phoning the office and contacting me on Facebook, asking, how do we keep this guy out of power and what have we got to do? So it's like, get out and vote. You know who you've got to vote for. And we had one of the largest voter turnouts in a long time. I think that's why. It increased my votes by another 2 or 300, so thank you to the Leader of the Opposition.

And then I would be remiss if I didn't thank our leader. Under the leadership of our Premier guiding us through this unprecedented, troubling time, it is absolutely amazing that we are doing as good as we are. We talk about the unemployment . . . or the employment. We talk about how our exports are doing okay. And this is all in the time of a worldwide pandemic, and you take it that the leadership of the Premier and the absolute fantastic job that he's done taking care of us as a province.

Is that it for my thank yous? That's not very long. That's only about 15 minutes. I usually do about 20 minutes. Well hopefully I haven't missed anybody.

And so now we'll get on to my reply for the Speech from the Throne. So I most of the time try and be really nice to the opposition because they need all the help they can get. Now I've listened to some of their speeches. I've suffered through them, and I'm wondering if they either didn't read the Speech from the Throne or they just didn't listen to it. I'm not sure which because there is definitely a contrast to the doom and gloom. You would think we were walking out into a wasteland when we go outside. The doom and gloom coming from that side and the positivity coming over here.

We as a province are moving ahead. Yes, this is a terrible time. We're all in here and we've got to wear masks. We've got to physically distance. We've got screens in front of us so when we're talking passionately we don't spray the people in front of us. But think about it. If we don't give the people of Saskatchewan hope, who's going to? Because it certainly isn't you folks over there. I don't even think you know what hope means. Hope beats fear every time.

One of the other things I'm astounded by, what I would say, would be almost arrogance coming from that side. If, you know, I had lost by over 30 per cent of the vote and got, you know, the same I started with, I probably wouldn't be telling the people of Saskatchewan they voted wrong like the member from Athabasca did the other evening. One thing I've learned with now being a politician is that the voter is never wrong. The voter is always right. Even with you folks that got elected over there. Your voters were right. But if you take a look around, I think you would realize that we actually listen to the people of the province. We actually listen to our unions. We actually listen to our business owners. We actually listen to people all the time. That's our job. That's what we do. And obviously, by the numbers in the House, we might do it a little bit better than you guys.

So our commitments, so we've talked about our commitments,

and the Saskatchewan Party government has always done one thing. They've made a promise; they've kept a promise. And I don't know if you guys are keeping track of how many we've kept so far. I think we've done three and we're going to be up to the fourth.

So we've reduced the power bills by 10 per cent. And that's one thing you guys never did. Even when I worked at Power, like you guys did a horrible job of funding SaskPower. Like when you talk about taking 200 per cent of what they take home, and then creating a savings account . . . So if you rob Peter and put it over there so they're broke, how does that make that a savings account? Like I've never figured that one out. Also, and I'll talk about, because at that point I was working at SaskTel and you guys would strip our budget every year so . . .

The Speaker: — I just want to remind the member to speak to and through the Chair.

Mr. Lawrence: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, when I was working at SaskTel, the NDP stripped the budget every year. We couldn't maintain our copper. There's a reason that we had to go to fibre, because the copper was rotting away because they wouldn't let us fix it.

So, you know, they're supposed to be the saviours of the Crowns, but when you take the entire profit times two and put it in a savings account and your Crowns are falling apart, your highways are falling apart, everything's falling apart, your schools are falling apart, and they put zero money into infrastructure, how the heck is that being a good job for the people of Saskatchewan? You know, they used to stand up when I worked at the Crown and they would pat themselves on the back that they created the Crowns. Well that was actually the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation]. So that wasn't, you know, it's kind of like saying your grandpa did it. So their grandpa did it.

The Sask Party makes a promise, keeps a promise. I remember the last time the NDP won an election, and it was their Finance minister, because as soon as they got in, they upped the PST [provincial sales tax] again as soon as they got in. And when they asked about that, that the press actually asked about that, the response was something like, why would we tell people we're going to raise taxes, especially before the election? We wouldn't win because people don't like raising taxes.

So we've announced that, you know. We're going to help business out by reducing the small-business tax to zero and slowly bringing it back up to 2 per cent. And that money will go back into the economy and it'll stimulate growth in our province.

I want to talk about one of the major projects that we've announced . . . Excuse me, I need another drink — a little thirsty, a little dry. I always find it dry in here. So we're going to talk about that canal project that we're going to build. We're going to start on the west side of the province and finish what the NDP started, but we're going to do it right this time. Well the NDP started it and then shut it down. And then we're going to build another canal from Diefenbaker to Buffalo Pound to supply water for irrigation projects and stuff like that, and the billions of dollars that it's going to bring into our province.

And you can compare that part of our province to the southern part of Alberta where they've got canals running everywhere and they've got all the cattle processing. They've got McCain out there. They've got all these large companies out there. The difference between out there and around where they are going to be able to do it now is we have some of the best topsoil in Canada, some of the best in the world. Now I'm not a farmer, never professed to be a farmer. My grandpa lived on a farm, but because he is Métis he couldn't own the land. But he always had cattle, horses, pigs, chickens. It's keeping the family going. So when you take a look at all that and . . . Oh, there's so much in here that's good, but when you take a look at that . . .

And then we're expanding the airport in Moose Jaw. So one of the things that . . . And we helped them out with that. It's actually all three levels of government. So I want to thank the federal government for finally stepping up and approving that project. That was good. And when McCain comes out to check out where they're going to build their next plant, or whoever it needs to be, one of the first things they check out is the length of the runway. And the fact that Moose Jaw had a shorter runway than Swift Current, Weyburn, Estevan, was kind of sad. But with the work of that board, led by Greg Simpson, it's coming to fruition. So actually the base should be able to land their aircraft there as well. Not the jets. Not yet; not until they go on to phase 2.

So you know, I think somebody on that side — I forget which one — made fun of it with, build it and they shall come. Well that's true because if it's not built, why would they come? If it's nothing there, why would they show up? So build it and they will come.

We're going to make life more affordable. You know, this is one of the things that I compare and contrast. We always do during an election time and occasionally I do when I'm speaking. You take a look at the population growth since we've been in power — 170,000. Now if you listen to the member from Athabasca in his speeches, that all started under the NDP. But the problem is, is the NDP took it under a million people. So you know, the joke when I was growing up was, last person here shut off the lights. You know, that's pretty sad. We couldn't keep a university graduate in the province. It's like get a degree, go to Alberta.

If you didn't work at a Crown corporation . . . I remember my grade 12, sitting there with a guidance counsellor. And I grew up in the oil field, oil field country with mining and power plants there. And my teacher told me, my guidance counsellor told me, you need to take algebra, geo-trig, and physics — the three easy ones because they're math — and an English. The reason you need to take those three classes is so you can get a good government job. I've worked for two different Crown corporations underneath both governments and we did a much better job, I would say, when I was still at SaskTel than the opposition ever did under both. And I've spoke about this before in other speeches.

[12:00]

So again I want to go back to, what do you guys see when you do this? Is it blank pages? Because you take a look at this. We have hope for the province of Saskatchewan. We also have the responsibility for keeping the people of our province safe. So we do that by, you know, what did your mom used to tell you? Wash

your hands. Maybe don't stick your finger up your nose or your eye or your mouth. Wash your hands. And now we ask people to put on a mask.

You know what? I'm not a doctor; not at all. I'm certainly not a scientist. I'm just a regular guy that's got a really cool job now working for the people of Moose Jaw Wakamow. And I look around at the rest of my colleagues here and it's absolutely amazing when I have them in the sidebar, even yourselves, even the member from Regina . . . the guy in the front row. I can't say his name but you know who you are. Even when we have our side conversations . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, Regina Rosemont.

He's not a bad guy. However he must be doing a pretty good job for his folks because I think this is his fourth or fifth time back. I know he used to . . . He's like me. He had a lot more hair when he started, same as me. So, Mr. Speaker, with that, making life more affordable.

And the last one I want to talk about because before COVID, I would go have coffee with all my seniors' towers at least twice a year, if not three times a year — not to politic — to get to know them because I didn't grow up in Moose Jaw; I grew up down in Estevan. And get to know them, listen to what they have to say. You know, it's the collective of the province that is smarter than the 61 of us put together. We just happen to be their voice.

So if you don't talk to those folks all the time, you don't know where they are, what they're thinking about, what they care about. So you go listen to them and you have coffee. Because it's not election time, I always take them baking from the Maple Leaf Bakery because it's the best bakery in Moose Jaw. And it just happens to be right around the corner from my office, so there's a reason for that.

And I'm still dumbfounded at the negativity, but I'm proud of the positivity coming from our side, from the people I work with, our new members, with the fantastic speeches that I've heard from their side. I don't know. I don't feel sorry for you guys, but I kind of feel sad that anybody living in that negative of a world just bothers me.

So we're going to introduce some regulations out there. The amendments to *The Residential Tenancies Act* for those that have been assaulted can get out. Interpersonal violence, yes, you need to be able to do that. Human trafficking is a scourge so we're going to introduce legislation for that, with the protection from human trafficking Act.

You know, this province has such a bright future. And when you read the historical books about the early politicians in our province, our first premier, he envisioned this province to be the second most populous province in Canada. And then we had a couple world wars. And then we had the CCF and it started there. And then the NDP got in and, Mr. Speaker, it took them a long time to, you know, grind our province down. However since we've been in power since '07 we've done a pretty good job of helping the people of Saskatchewan. We didn't do it as government. The people of Saskatchewan did it. They're the ones that have made this the best place to live, the best place to raise your family, the best place to raise your grandkids. You know, nobody gives luggage away anymore. And I see I've gone over

my time by a little bit. I tend to do that sometimes.

So I'll wrap it up with this: I want to extend an invitation to you folks on the other side, through the Speaker, to actually believe in the people of our province. It is our job to help them. It is our job to help them get to where they want to be, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Kindersley did a fantastic job moving the motion. The member from Riversdale did a fantastic job seconding it. So I will not be supporting the opposition amendment and I will be supporting the motion, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to enter into debate here this afternoon. I can't say much following the member opposite here, and I won't say much because the times that we're facing merit entries with greater duty and purpose than what we just saw. To see the sort of self-congratulatory approach, revisionist history, not letting the facts get in the way that we saw from the member opposite is awfully unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. And I think the good folks of Moose Jaw Wakamow deserve one heck of a lot better than that, Mr. Speaker. And I would urge the folks of Moose Jaw Wakamow to review the record to see what their MLA has offered into the debate at this time of historic challenge as a province.

It is my honour to take my place in this Assembly here today on Treaty 4 territory, on the homeland of the Métis, entrusted by the people of Regina Rosemont to take my place and offer my voice. We do so at a historic time in our province where we face unprecedented challenges, a period where uncertainty is real, where risks are real, and where we owe it to one another — certainly our constituents but all of us in our entire province — to go at this with a constructive approach, with all hands on deck to make sure that we're doing all we can to protect the people of Saskatchewan, to protect lives and livelihoods, Mr. Speaker.

I also would like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election as Speaker. I know you understand the importance of this Assembly and the importance of your role, and I thank you in advance for the service you'll provide the people of Saskatchewan through your role.

I thank Madam Deputy Speaker for taking on that role as well, and know that she also knows the importance of that seat in this Assembly for the people of Saskatchewan and for this Assembly to function and deliver for the people of the province.

I would like to recognize the former Speaker, the outgoing Speaker, the member for Coronation Park. I know the member for Coronation Park as a friend, setting aside the political debate and across the floor. We both played rugby for the same squad, Mr. Speaker. More than that, I also know that he took his role seriously. And there wasn't always agreement on the floor; that's how these things go. But I would like to thank him for a few things. It was under his leadership that we had the first prayer brought to this Assembly from an imam representing Islamic people within this province. It was under his leadership that we also had Rabbi Parnes come before us and offer prayer and words to this Assembly. It was under him that we had Elder Harry

Francis and certainly Elder Betty McKenna as well on this floor. And I thought those were really good things, and I thank the member for Coronation Park for his service as Speaker.

I want to thank the very good people that I represent, the people of Regina Rosemont and the communities within the constituency, for entrusting me to take on this role once again, for the faith that they've placed in me. The responsibility of this role, the duty of this role is never lost on me, Mr. Speaker. This is my fourth election, fourth time being elected by the good people of Regina Rosemont, and I thank them for that trust and I'll do all I can to live up to what they expect in their MLA. And I think it's important as well, we've come through an election and not everybody . . . People vote different ways. I'm very thankful for the support that I have earned, but it goes without saying that I serve every last constituent, whether they had a sign for the other party or whether they have other views. It's our duty to serve everyone, and that's something that I've always wanted to express and certainly something I'll always live up to.

I'd like to recognize the other candidates that stepped up as well in that important democratic process: Alex Nau with the Saskatchewan Party, James Park with the Greens, Chris McCulloch with the Conservatives. Anyone who steps up to run does so with the best of intentions, is my belief, and I want to thank each and every one of them for the effort they put into the constituency and into the democratic process.

I'd like to take a moment to just, I guess, recognize and welcome all of us that have earned that responsibility of serving as MLAs, all of those that are re-elected. The voters are never wrong and we've each been asked to take on these responsibilities. But I want to give a real special welcome to all the brand new members in this Assembly on both sides of the Assembly here. I've got friends that are across the floor representing the other party and new people that I'm meeting. And I want to welcome all of those new members, and I look forward to working with them — sometimes arguing with them — on the floor of this Assembly as we've been asked to do.

And I want to give a particular shout out and extension of love to the members that have been elected to the New Democratic Party as new MLAs. What an inspiring and impressive cadre of new MLAs that will offer their constituencies the leadership they deserve, but also the party that I represent the leadership that it needs in these times. And I've listened to the entries of each of these members — I think every one of the new MLAs has now been on the floor, whether that's for members' statements or maiden speeches or question periods, Mr. Speaker — and I've just thought they have all been remarkable. And I know they each know why they're here and who sent them here, and I know they're going to carry that with them each day to this Assembly. And I just am so pleased and heartened that they're here for this important time within our province's and certainly our party's history as well.

We don't get here alone at all, Mr. Speaker. It's clear when anyone listens to any one of us talk, or least in my case. We get here with a small but mighty army of people who believe in us and give up their time and their dollars and their care, and that believe in Saskatchewan, that believe in a better tomorrow.

[12:15]

And I want to say thank you to our incredible local team in Regina Rosemont that comes together to pound doors and put up signs and organize a campaign and to reach out. I am just so very thankful to work with such very good people, Mr. Speaker. And I know that's the case for all of us. This was my fourth campaign and I find it amazing watching many of those folks that come back time and time again, even though many of them at times might be getting up in age, at the same time as a renewal of brand new young, strong people that are taking on involvement in many cases for their very first time, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to recognize specifically just a few of the lead campaign folks. I won't go through the list of the whole hundred names or so, Mr. Speaker. But I will identify Trevor Morin, Sawyer Swan, Jennifer Morin, Alysia Johnson, Lyndon Swan, and Gloria Patrick for the leadership that they brought to the campaign. Of course you've got many, many, many others. You know, often you have a hundred or often a little bit more than a hundred people at least that come out for a campaign like ours. But those are the lead folks that were directing the traffic, but also out with me time and time again on the doorsteps.

And you know, these folks and the team we've put together, they get the reality that Saskatchewan people are facing. And it's those conversations I find on the doorstep that are so telling, but also the conversations you have when you have a team that gets what it's all about when you're out there walking down the street or working together. So thank you to them for inspiring me once again towards the goals we work to accomplish.

I'd also like to, as other members have done, I'd like to recognize my family. I'm just so lucky on this front, Mr. Speaker — and I recognize that's not the case for everyone, Mr. Speaker — so lucky to have, you know, Stephanie's parents and her family fully engaged and the support of course as a family, but also in the support in an election. I'm so very thankful for the support, guidance, and involvement of my mom and dad, Mr. Speaker, to this day, who of course are there as a family, and we're awfully lucky on that front, but also there to hit those doors and talk to people. And you know, our family and my parents are known to my constituents through their lives as well, because that's sort of how it works, Mr. Speaker. I represent many people I've known my whole life, Mr. Speaker, many people that, you know, knew my family or worked with my family or continue to as well. And I'm just so lucky to have their support and care.

And you know, at this time it's not lost on me as well when I think of the stress and challenge that Saskatchewan people are facing with respect to this pandemic, and the concerns over the health of our loved ones, Mr. Speaker. I'm the dad of a grade 1 in school. I'm the partner, the husband of a school teacher who's immunocompromised, Mr. Speaker. I'm the son of two parents, both sets of our parents that are in that risk group, Mr. Speaker. I'm the grandson of a senior that's in long-term care, Mr. Speaker, our last grandparent. And so when I see the stress and the challenge that Saskatchewan people are facing, thinking of their loved ones — because my story is not unique on this front; we're all worried about our loved ones — I just want to say I see you, I hear you, and we're going to get through this. But we're not there yet.

I want to show a bit of special love toward Stephanie, who's an awesome life partner, Mr. Speaker. She keeps me in check. She's

strong-minded, intelligent, and critical of the world around her. She's a schoolteacher, a teacher-librarian, Mr. Speaker. She's tough as nails when she believes in something, Mr. Speaker.

She's teaching here today in a classroom with lots of students and in lots of classrooms, Mr. Speaker, in very close quarters. She thinks that we have pretty precious treatment here of us as MLAs, Mr. Speaker. Plexiglas and distance and, you know, reduced numbers. Because the reality for those in our classrooms, as she knows full well and as others do as well, or the case for many that are out there working on the front lines, isn't to have all of this sort of precious treatment, Mr. Speaker.

And it's fair to say she was pretty outraged, Mr. Speaker, when she saw the design and the Plexiglas and the measures to protect the precious MLAs when her and her fellow teachers and the students and so many others in other aspects of our society are out there toiling every day with great risk to themselves and others, Mr. Speaker. But I thank her for her love and for her support. And she still gets out there as well and was pounding doors and dropping reminders and a full part of that election as well.

I also want to recognize our six-year-old, our son William. He's in grade 1. This kid's amazing, as any parent feels about their child. I think as the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy shared yesterday, he said it's a love that you couldn't even imagine that you can have, and that's a very fair description of it. This kid is curious. He's game for anything, Mr. Speaker, up for adventure and activity and outdoor pursuits, fishing and hunting and hiking and tobogganing and skating, Mr. Speaker.

And he's curious about the world around him. He's artistic. He loves to draw and he's learning to read and learning to write. And I just find it to be such an amazing thing. Often I watch, you know. He goes to bed and you flip through sort of his work for the day, or you think about some of the funny things that he said and you just sort of . . . You know, for me anyways I'm just overwhelmed by this whole parenting process.

In fact this morning I was signing his agenda and sending him off to school, and this sort of spoke to me this morning, entering into the Throne Speech. And I pulled out . . . It's an assignment from his grade 1 class, and it says, "What inspiring message would you create to say something?" And so he's put this together and he's drawn some pieces . . . I know I'm not allowed to show the prop, Mr. Speaker, so I'll just show you what I'm referencing here. It says, "no more hurt people." And then some big hearts and "peace" written out with each letter in a different colour.

And I thought that, you know, at a time that we face such stress, at a time where we're losing Saskatchewan people by way of actually losing them to the pandemic and many other challenges, mental health and addictions, that's a pretty powerful message.

And the thing is, we're connected to our families. Our service is there and often our little six-year-old has watched, on a nightly basis, the calls come in to me, Mr. Speaker. Because you know, it's not just during the office that we get those calls. And often as MLAs, you know, it's constituents reaching out to us into the evenings that are facing crisis, that are facing serious hardship, that are dealing with violence within their home, that are in need

of shelter, that are without food, that are facing suicidal ideation or looking to act upon these things, Mr. Speaker, dealing with being in the grips of addiction, Mr. Speaker, or loved ones that are looking out for someone else. And I find those are the calls that always remind me that, boy, there's a lot of challenge that people face, a lot of hardship that people face, and then we do our best to help get the supports that are needed.

But my little guy, he's kind of grown up watching that sort of conversation. And we do our best to make sure it's appropriate in the way we're sharing some of those realities, but we also don't want to hide him from the harsh realities of the world. And so he knows a little bit about some of the hurt that's present within our province. I know it bugs him to . . . It bothers him to no end that a couple of his classmates who are good friends, you know, are without food often, Mr. Speaker, and how they have to go about to get a bit of a ration of food from the principal's office, Mr. Speaker. And he has questions about why that's the case.

And I know this morning as he woke up, we were having the conversation as well that a couple of his good friends, Mr. Speaker, that their parents had lost their jobs here today. Thinking of the 600 workers that have worked so hard out at Evraz for so long, folks that have, you know, been employed in many cases for 20 or 30 years, Mr. Speaker. And as a community we feel these things.

I'd like to recognize your service, and certainly want to thank the Clerks' Table and the library and the cafeteria and everyone else that makes this place work, Mr. Speaker. But I want to recognize a couple of amazing folks that have served this Assembly in this case for 38 years, Mr. Speaker, and those are two good folks in the broadcast booth. Now one of them departed in October. So the last time we had them here was in the June sitting, the July sitting. So I want to say thank you to Ihor Sywanyk and I want to say thank you to Kerry Bond. Kerry will conclude his 38 years of service at the end of, I believe, next week. This is at least his last session in this Assembly.

They both started their work here at this building in 1982. They've worked for 38 years. They're salt of the earth. I know Ihor's probably out there trying to find walleye on Last Mountain Lake here today on early ice, an avid fisherman as well. But I want to offer our thanks, all of our thanks to these two members.

I'd also like to recognize those others that serve, Mr. Speaker, in our community. And I want to recognize our new councillor for the majority of our constituency, Mr. Speaker, Shanon Zachidniak. I want to recognize as well the exceptional candidates that also stepped up on that front, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to also recognize Jason Mancinelli, who covers a small portion of the constituency. A very fine councillor who's focused as well on the heavy-haul truck traffic on 9th Avenue North, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to welcome our new mayor, Sandra Masters, to her role on that new council and to thank them in advance for their service.

And in doing so I'd like to recognize councillor Mike O'Donnell who served with distinction, a long-serving councillor, a leader within the community, and a leader long before he ever became a councillor, Mr. Speaker. A leader in sport. A leader in education. A friend and somebody who, you know, is certainly always considered a community- and a province-builder, Mr.

Speaker.

I want to recognize the school board members that have been elected, both public and Catholic, Mr. Speaker, and to thank them for their service and leadership as well.

And of course, as I've identified, I want to thank the good people that have entrusted me with this responsibility, the good people that I serve and work with and learn from. It's an important duty. Our constituency is diverse, Mr. Speaker. It's made up of really hard-working people. It's made up of the communities of Prairie View and Normanview West and Dieppe, Mount Royal, and Rosemont, Mr. Speaker. And I'm lucky to represent many people that I've known my whole life, Mr. Speaker, through sport and family and school and church or that I taught or that my family did, Mr. Speaker. But I'm also very lucky to welcome and to meet many new people to the community, folks that have moved in more recently, Mr. Speaker, or those that have come from around the world to build their lives in Saskatchewan and, in so doing, building and shaping a bright future for all, Mr. Speaker.

We gather at a historic time in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, an important time where we need to do all we can to protect lives and livelihoods in this province in the face of this COVID-19 pandemic. We are at a very challenging spot as we speak, Mr. Speaker, with our health system feeling the pressures as we speak, with numbers of infections far higher than we would ever want, Mr. Speaker, with ICUs that are being overwhelmed. And with a very stark reality: field hospitals that have been established in communities across Saskatchewan — army cots, Mr. Speaker, in big, open places where normally kids are gathering and playing soccer or sport is occurring, Mr. Speaker. At a time where workers and local businesses face inordinate pressure on their bottom lines, Mr. Speaker.

[12:30]

And we owe it to everyone to do all we can to protect lives and livelihoods at this time. We owe it to everyone to do all we can to contain this virus. We owe it to our local businesses to be there in a steadfast way to make sure that their doors will remain open, as we get through this.

And that's important for us to remember here, Mr. Speaker, is that better days are ahead and that we're going to get through this. We've got vaccines that have responded to the challenge and that are readying themselves for deployment, Mr. Speaker. The light is there at the end of this tunnel, but we're not out of the woods right now. In fact if you look at the daily rates of infection right now, we're facing a crisis within this province and we need to do all that we can in these coming days to contain this virus, to save lives, and to support our local businesses in this province, and workers. Serious pressures that folks are facing.

And you know from this as well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's a polarizing time and rightfully so because these are hard, hard times with uncertainty for people. But within that we see so many that are rallying and coming to the aid of one another, that are rising up and stepping up to help out fellow neighbours and each other, organizations that are giving back, businesses that are giving back. It's the kind of heartening response that we know forms this province that we all love, Mr. Speaker.

And to all those people, to all those folks that are doing what they can for one another, for everyone that's doing their part to keep the distance and wear the mask, you know, keep the hands clean, keep their workplaces safe, I say thank you. To all those folks on the front lines during this time in health care, in our grocery stores, in our classrooms, in transportation and trucking and so much more, Mr. Speaker, this is an incredibly trying time and to them, all of them, I say thank you.

I think of loved ones. I have family that are involved in health care right now in a lead role, responding to this challenge. And I've watched my sister's life this last number of months, Mr. Speaker, and it's a remarkable thing that her and so many others are stepping up to provide.

And this is a challenge unlike we've faced before. You know, my grandfather went over to serve in the Second World War to battle that historic battle, as did so many across this province. But we have people on the front lines of a different battle here right now. The challenge though is that they're here and also balancing their lives and working crazy hours and with uncertainty and pressure. And it's hard on people.

And I want to say thanks to my sister. I want to say thank you through her to the thousands and thousands and thousands of health care workers and others that are doing all they can right now, at a great personal cost, for the people of the province.

You know, I wasn't going to touch on this but I'll just touch on it a little bit as well because this is a time where there's polarization, division, and we need to do all we can. And we each have a duty on this to tend to that, Mr. Speaker, to protect each other. And when I see things right now like folks characterizing themselves — this is a small group — but as so-called freedom fighters that are pushing, if you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, for the great right to not wear a mask. To put your friend or your neighbour, you know, at risk.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it kind of blows my mind when I think of what freedom fighters are all about. We have a lot of freedom fighters in Saskatchewan. You know we each play a role in making democracy work on that front.

I think of a good friend and his family that arrived from Central America decades ago. His dad arrived in a wheelchair, Mr. Speaker, who took a bullet, Mr. Speaker, to fight for freedom against a dictatorship, Mr. Speaker, to fight for democracy. His weapon, Mr. Speaker — a pen and his voice. His cost — his ability to walk. A bullet. Moved to Canada to raise his . . . These are freedom fighters. I think of the folks that have fought back against genocide, racism, and those on the civil rights side, Mr. Speaker, on the human rights side. These are freedom fighters, Mr. Speaker.

I think of my grandpa and the Regina Rifles and all those across this province, across political divides that took on that great battle, the Second World War, Mr. Speaker, and fought Adolf Hitler and the Nazis and beat them. I think of the many there that lost their life in that battle. I think of people like my grandpa who took a bullet, Mr. Speaker, coming back to Canada to live his life wounded and impacted. And whether you took a bullet or were physically hurt in that war, all of those that served paid a serious price.

Those are the folks I think of when I think of freedom fighters, Mr. Speaker. And I can't help but think that those folks would look at this current crew calling themselves freedom fighters as an awful soft and selfish lot, Mr. Speaker, an awful soft and selfish lot. And I also think those folks that have fought for our freedoms would expect us and their government to do all we can to make sure that we're clear on these fronts, that we condemn actions that are dangerous, that we respond to the crisis we face with the kind of response it's warranted. And I don't think that's the case right now, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess I'd say, you know, this is a time for folks to be clear. We have a new government that's been elected. They have a large majority. I would urge and implore them to utilize that relationship that they've earned with Saskatchewan people for the greater good right now. I would urge them not to pander to folks that are willing to put others at risk. I'd urge them not to go down a path of pandering to separatists, Mr. Speaker. I would urge them to have the resolve to serve Saskatchewan people at this historic time in the way we need them to do, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I'm being told by our House Leader that I'm sort of reaching my time. I'm aware the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow took, I think, an extra 10 minutes, over 10 minutes in his remarks. I will aim to be concise in closing down my remarks and respectful to the agreement that we have with the other side.

But we have lots at stake, Mr. Speaker. We've got to do so much better when it comes to mental health and addictions in this province. Far too often we're leaving people in darkness and despair without the supports and services they need at the time they need it most, Mr. Speaker. We had a crisis on this front long before the pandemic that we face, and this pandemic has only made things worse. Again we need to rally together to make sure that our response meets the challenge. And it doesn't right now. Time and time again I have constituents and friends who are facing mental health challenges or addiction and are dealing with treatment that's months off or services that are months off. It doesn't work. When people need help, they need help, Mr. Speaker.

We need to make sure we have the supports out there in our classrooms to address class size and to make sure we're doing all we can for the next generation, Mr. Speaker. Before this pandemic, our classrooms were at a critical place, at a breaking point, due to the underfunding and the treatment that they had been receiving. We need to make sure they receive the resources they need, Mr. Speaker. Education is the foundation of our future — our future economy, future society, future of this province. We need to do all that we can.

And when it comes to this economy, Mr. Speaker, at this critical time, we need to ensure economic security for workers and businesses with more uncertainty than they've ever faced, Mr. Speaker, the supports to get through this critical time, the actions to contain the virus to prevent catastrophic economic impacts, Mr. Speaker. And then we've got to get this economy back on its feet.

We have a government that by its choices took a weak economy and placed it into recession, and it's going to require actions now to get it back on its feet and people back to work. The imposition of the PST on construction labour caused serious damage to this

economy, drove thousands of hard-working tradespeople out of Saskatchewan, and we need to do all we can to get those people back to work. That's why I'm so adamant that we've got to get that PST off of construction labour.

When we're building Saskatchewan projects with Saskatchewan dollars — and dollars that are debt, public debt, Mr. Speaker, that generations ahead will be paying off — we better get the value out of those dollars, those precious dollars, those precious public dollars, Mr. Speaker, and do all we can to work with Saskatchewan companies and workers, ending the relentless outsourcing that we see with the Sask Party. We see it again with the power plant in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker.

At a time where we need workers getting back to work in a good and safe way, instead we have a government doling out hundreds of millions of dollars to an American company once again. We've seen this story with the bypass. We've seen it when they shut out the workers down in Swift Current and when they shut out Saskatchewan companies there, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan workers deserve better.

I want to touch briefly on those workers out at Evraz, many of whom are lifelong friends that I played hockey with, Mr. Speaker. Many of their parents, you know, were the coaches. And that steel mill is important to this province. It's critically important to north Regina and to Regina. And the news we've received today is devastating. Devastating to 600 households throughout our respective communities at a time where we're coming around to Christmas, Mr. Speaker, at a time where we're facing all the other pressures of this pandemic.

You know, folks that received layoff here today date back to those . . . well one that was first employed in 1971, many that took on employment in 1988 and forward. Folks that have toiled and worked for 20 and 30 years to put food on the plates of their families, to put their kids through school, and to build our communities, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we need to do all we can for these workers right now. It's why I've used my voice. It's why we've used our voice on things like the TC Energy project, Mr. Speaker. A northern Alberta pipeline, a good project, Mr. Speaker, an important project but that sadly, Mr. Speaker, has outsourced that steel out of Canada, shutting out the cleanest mill around. Evraz steel recycles metal to produce its product and builds the best steel in the world, ensuring the integrity of those pipelines. It's a shame that they've been shut out.

And it's disappointing that our leadership, and I'll say here on this front, collectively . . . I don't know what everyone's done on this front, but they've failed to make the case. But from our Premier through to our Prime Minister through to Premier Kenney of Alberta, where this Canadian project is moving forward, who have failed to ensure that we're able to ensure that steel is sourced in Canada. Very disappointing, Mr. Speaker.

I'm a strong supporter of pipelines, Mr. Speaker, with robust regulation that get our product to market. You know what? I'll say this. I hear some of the brand new members here chuckling and laughing. You've been listening to those nonsense attack ads from your side for far too long, and I'll give you a wake-up call around here. It's the kind of nonsense that we've seen like that

that have failed to get our products to market. If we want to get pipelines built, let's get over the petty nonsense and the goofiness over these things, and let's unite as an Assembly and make that case to Ottawa. Let's make that case with provinces and parties that we need to, and let's do so for the workers of this province.

You've been elected. The Sask Party's been elected for . . .

The Speaker: — Member, please speak to and through the Chair, please.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Sask Party's been elected for 13 years. They have failed to get the job done on this front. Getting our resource to tidewater in the most safe and efficient way and ensuring a fair price for our resource is incredibly important.

[12:45]

What I would urge of the new members is to do better than come in here and get caught up in games, Mr. Speaker. And I know sometimes there's different views that are expressed out of parties in Ottawa. So be it. We'll be clear as the Saskatchewan NDP — and I'll be clear as a member — where we stand. We stand for pipelines. We stand with the working people of this province and we stand with Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we face serious challenges as a province, but we have tremendous opportunity as well. We have tremendous opportunity in the people of this province, and we've been tasked to live up to that. Let's do all that we can to deliver that better tomorrow for all the people of Saskatchewan.

I'm way past my time for remarks, and I'm going to be in serious trouble from a very tough House Leader. So I will conclude my remarks. But let's all rise to the challenge that's in front of us. Let's work together and do our best. Let's overcome some of the differences that may exist. Let's get over the partisan nonsense. Let's do our duty for the people of Saskatchewan because they deserve nothing less. On that front, I'll be supporting the amendment.

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just listened to a rather long speech from the member opposite, and if his ability to measure dollars is the same as his ability to read time, I hope he never becomes the Finance minister.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some reference to some thank yous that would be appropriate. To you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you on your election as Speaker. And I know it's inappropriate to engage the Speaker in any kind of debate or discussion, but we will refer to you as the landslide Speaker. In any event, congratulations, all the best to you. To the Deputy Speaker, congratulations to her as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member for Coronation Park for the time that he served as Speaker. I know that he worked hard, tirelessly, and worked tirelessly in his constituency as well, and hope that he continues the great work that he's doing in the House as well as in his constituency.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the citizens of Saskatoon

Southeast. We had literally hundreds of donors, volunteers, door knockers, people that made phone calls, people that dropped flyers, and people that put up signs. It was overwhelming to see the number of people that worked, came out, and did this. It's been a long process, as all the members on both sides of the House will be aware, and I want to thank everybody that participated in it in my constituency.

And I'll just name a handful, but people like Neil Wylie, Patricia Carey, Brett Stadnyk, Gene Humenny, Clive Head, Tim Bergsma, Joni MacKay, Earl Priddle, Neil Doell. Many more came out, put up signs, knocked, walked, and did a variety of other tasks that needed to be done. Some were there all day, every day, and I want to thank them individually and collectively for the great work that they've done.

My campaign manager, Mr. Speaker, was Molly Waldman, who has served as a ministerial assistant in my office in this building. It was a reversal of roles because for the last number of years, I was her boss. During the campaign, she effectively was my boss. And she was a heartless taskmaster; I can say there was not much time for goofing off, drinking coffee, etc. It was always get out, I've got another poll for you. And frankly I think she enjoyed that role a little bit too much. But seriously, she worked very hard. She ran a great campaign, was hilariously funny.

And with her, Mr. Speaker, I also got the family pack. Her parents, Ron and Shannon Waldman, are also constituents. They worked in the election work as well as her grandparents, Jim and Darlene Chamberlain. It's Darlene's birthday today. So hello, Darlene, from somebody that's not quite in the same age range. You are aging far better than I am. So thank you to Molly and to your family, and I want to thank all the people that work there.

I have a few other thank yous that I would like to make. In my office in Saskatoon, I have Angela Knoss. She has been my constituency assistant for the last number of years. I want to thank her for her continuing work and her volunteer work during the election.

In my last role as Minister of Justice, I was well served by people in my office in this building: Cindy Chamberlin, Heather Filazek, Clint Fox, Alan Dedman, and of course, Molly.

Now with my role for Crown Investments, I have some superb staff as well: Jared Dunlop, is chief of staff; Mike Aman, ministerial assistant; admin person, Amy Spelliscy, and Kenneth Cotterill and Linda Holzer who are also doing constituency work. So I want to thank the people that work in the last two offices as well as all of the support staff that we have in this building. These are people that worked hard and have done great work for us.

The member opposite made reference to Ihor and Kerry. I want to thank those people, but as well, Mr. Speaker, it's appropriate to thank all the people that work in this building: the Legislative Assembly staff, the security staff, and the people that work in tech services and Steve and Jeff and Ralph that work looking after the building. These are people that work tirelessly, and when there's changes they've got to work often late at night to try and get everything done. So I want to thank all those people that have done work.

For Sandy and I, this is our fifth campaign. Sandy took the month

of the writ off from her work at Robertson Stromberg. She has worked there for over 33 years. They've been a great employer and have always been supportive and understood how the election cycle works. So Sandy's been great and has been wonderful to me. Last summer we celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary. It was a COVID celebration so we stayed home. And I didn't have to spend a bunch of money, so for me it was great. I love her and I couldn't do this job without her love and support.

Usually, Mr. Speaker, this time I bring a bit of an update on our moms. Sandy's mom is 97 and living in the Orange Memories Care Home in Rosetown. She is doing quite well and is a great mother-in-law. My mom is 99. She continues to spend my inheritance, and I guess I'm okay with that. She lives in the Luther Special Care Home in Saskatoon, which has had a significant outbreak. She's not in the wing that has had the outbreak, but obviously a concern for all of us.

I'd like to thank the front-line health care workers, not just at Luther Care but across the province, for their hard work, their caring, their commitment, and their love. We can't visit our moms, but I know that people like our moms are cared for and they're loved. And I thank those people for filling in and doing the role that we would like to have.

During the election, Sandy and I knocked on over 12,000 doors. We knocked on every single door in every single poll, all 53 of them. We also spent time working in some other constituencies: Moose Jaw Wakamow, Saskatoon Riversdale, Saskatoon Centre, University, Churchill-Wildwood, Saskatoon Meewasin, Saskatoon Eastview. We didn't win all of those seats, but we did hear a consistent theme from the voters. They want the province to move forward. They trust the Saskatchewan Party to work through the pandemic. People know the issues that we face as a province. They trust us to work through them, and we thank them for having placed their trust with us.

I'd also, Mr. Speaker, like to thank all of the candidates from all of the parties who ran across the province. Whether they won or lost, they should be commended and thanked for their willingness to participate in the electoral process. It's not easy and it's a lot of work. My NDP opponent was Pamela Beaudin. She worked hard. At the beginning I met her and I wished her a good campaign. I didn't wish her a successful campaign, but I wished her a good campaign.

She described herself as a pro-energy environmental engineer. She sounded to me like someone that the Leader of the Opposition should listen to instead of his party colleague, Jagmeet Singh, who is anti-pipeline and anti-energy. The member opposite can talk all he wants about being pro-pipeline and pro-energy. He is the same party that Jagmeet Singh belongs to. He is the same party that has posted things on their Facebook pages. Those things are there as of this morning.

To the member opposite, to the Leader of the Opposition, I would suggest that they clean up their Facebook pages, clean up where they're at on social media, and decide what they want to be when they grow up. Do they want to align themselves with some people like Jagmeet Singh and some others, or do they want to grow up and become part of Saskatchewan?

And part of Saskatchewan is being pro-energy, pro-pipeline, and wanting to move the province . . . [inaudible]. Mr. Speaker, they have to stand for something. They can't be walking both sides of the street. They've got to look at where they came from and they have to look at where they wanted to go.

We've got some interesting people that they could look back at. They can look back at people like Roy Romanow, Janice MacKinnon. They don't need to look at some of the far-left people that exist elsewhere in our country and in our province, Mr. Speaker. Those are things that they as a party have to decide. They've got to make some decisions about what they want to do, what they want to be. It's not enough to stand in this House and spout some rhetoric. They've got to sit down and do some serious soul-searching so that they don't repeat what happened in the last election. I don't think they're capable of doing that, Mr. Speaker, but I wish them every success in trying.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about some of the things that are in the Speech from the Throne. In case I run out of time, I will say now I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne. I will not be supporting the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talked about SaskPower. They talked about projects that are taking place in Moose Jaw, projects that are taking place in Swift Current. We'll continue to work with Saskatchewan businesses to try and do everything we can that's appropriate and proper to try and give them the best playing field to play on. Where they're not successful, they get a meaningful debrief on it afterwards. We will work with them. I have every confidence in the businesses and the workers in our province that they can compete not just in Saskatchewan but anywhere in Canada and around the world. Some of the Saskatchewan businesses that we have in our province are competing all the way across Canada and, I might add, very successfully.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite talked about the two electrical generating facilities. There was no Saskatchewan bidders because those are specialized, unique projects. But in every case, SaskPower reached out to Saskatchewan workers, Saskatchewan contractors, and in some cases made over 300 different contacts with Saskatchewan businesses to try and put those people in touch with the bidders and try and get those people working, and in fact were very successful. There was a lot of people working on those jobs from Saskatchewan and will continue to do so as we go through the Moose Jaw project.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a little bit about the SaskPower rebate. Every single SaskPower customer will be receiving a 10 per cent rebate. This will help Saskatchewan families and businesses recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic. The rebate will begin December 1st. It will run until the end of November 2021. This announcement fulfills one of the government's key commitments to make life more affordable for people in our province. It will put \$262 million directly back into the pockets of Saskatchewan families and businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just mention in closing a little bit about Saskatchewan procurement. Seventy-four per cent of all Crown procurements were awarded to Saskatchewan suppliers in the quarter ending September 30th, 2020. Of the 10 highest valued procurements for each Crown in Q2 [second quarter], 87 per cent

were awarded to Saskatchewan suppliers. The Crowns will continue to work with Saskatchewan businesses to ensure local suppliers are successful in procurement bids. That includes Saskatchewan workers, people that are members of the building trades council, people that are members of a number of union suppliers, union shops, and non-union shops across the province.

During COVID-19 our Crowns continue to support Saskatchewan through a \$100,000 donation to the food banks of Saskatchewan, approximately \$1.6 billion in capital spending creating good local jobs for Saskatchewan people, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] continuing to deliver the lowest auto insurance rates in Canada. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada right now, 6.4 per cent, well below the national average of 8.9 per cent. From 2007 to 2019 our government had the third-best job creation rate in Canada, with over 77,000 new jobs.

We've provided a number of small business supports. The Saskatchewan small business energy payment program is being renewed for the period of December 1 to December 31st. So far this support program has provided 6,485 businesses with more than \$32 million in support. The program is ensuring that small businesses will remain strong and continue to provide thousands of jobs across our province of Saskatchewan. We're also reducing the small business tax rate from 2 per cent to zero per cent, a temporary change that will be retroactive to October 1st, 2020. This tax means small businesses will be saving over \$189 million.

Our government is taking action to protect Saskatchewan workers. We've implemented an OHS [occupational health and safety] targeted intervention strategy. We have 65 . . .

The Speaker: — It now being 1 p.m., this Assembly stands adjourned until Monday, December 7th at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Government Relations
Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Paul Merriman
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation
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