



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

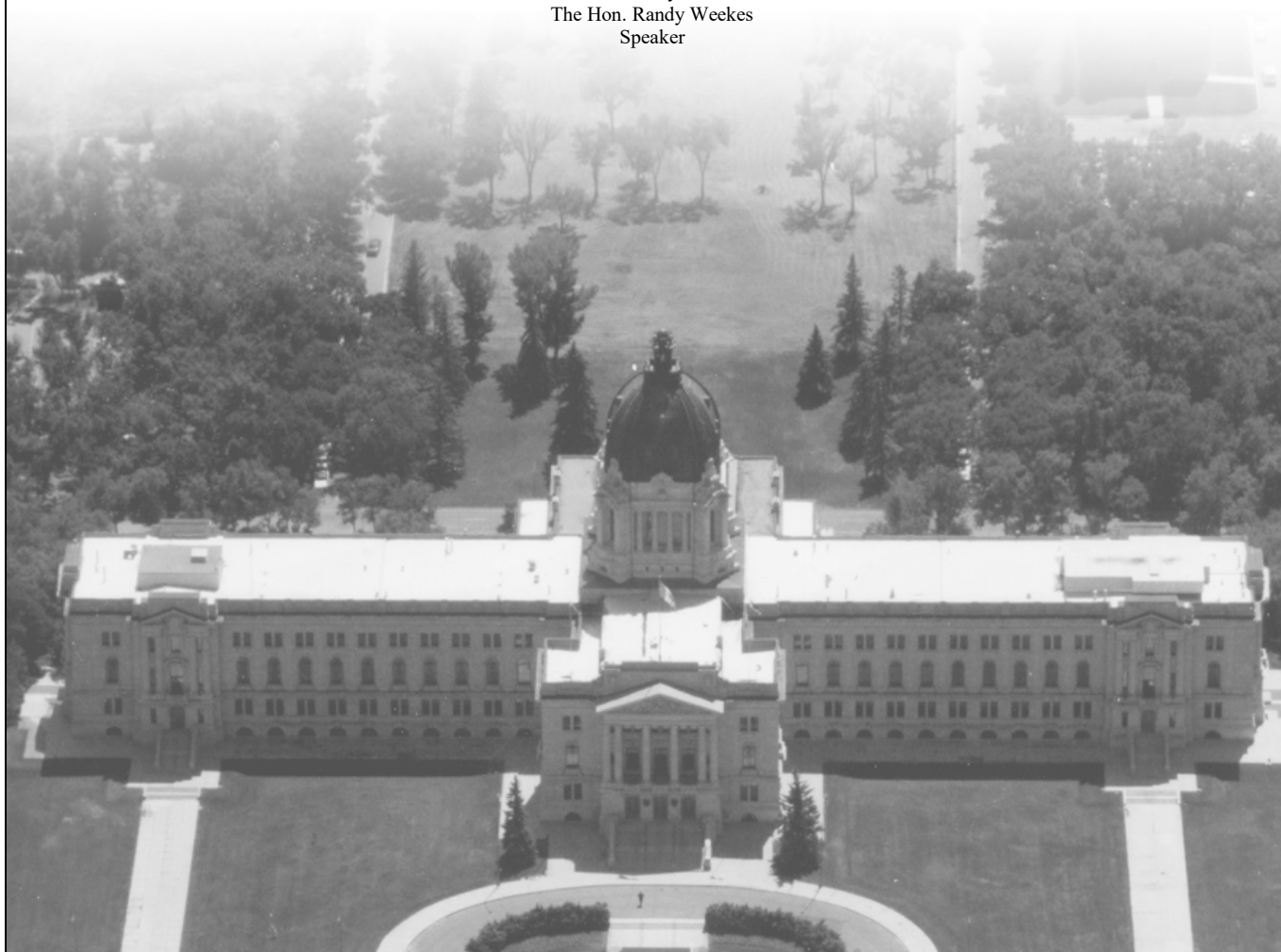
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)
Belanger, Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)
Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)
Bradshaw, Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)
Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)
Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan (SP)
Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)
Cockrill, Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)
Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)
Docherty, Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)
Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)
Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)
Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)
Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)
Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)
Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)
Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)
Hargrave, Hon. Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)
Harbauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)
Harrison, Daryl — Cannington (SP)
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)
Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)
Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)
Kaeding, Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)
Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)
Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)
Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)
Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)

Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
McLeod, Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
McMorris, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
Meili, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
Meyers, Derek — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Skoropad, Dana — Arm River (SP)
Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Stewart, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
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

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

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

Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Buriannyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

Hansard on the internet

Hansard and other documents of the
Legislative Assembly are available
within hours after each sitting.

<https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/Calendar>

CONTENTS

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Tell	153
Bowes	155
Cockrill	158
Carr	161
Ottenbreit	164
Mowat	170
Bradshaw	173

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00]

EVENING SITTING

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand here today and provide a response to the Speech from the Throne. And of course I'm very thrilled about being in here tonight with all my fabulous colleagues. First, I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member for Kindersley and seconded by the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

I would like to say thank you, of course, and starting out to my family, friends, and election team who helped us win the election for MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Regina Wascana Plains. It is indeed a humbling experience and privilege to be elected to serve as their representative and to earn their votes for a fourth term. I would also like to extend a thank you to my constituency assistant, Jackie Burchi, and to my ministerial office staff, Brayden Fox, Shelley Reinhardt, and Aaron Hill. I also would like to thank Kara Slobodzian, who has just recently left my office, for her work, thank her for her work over the year.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech spoke about a number of topics which I believe are important to the citizens of our province. This includes our continued efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic, but also our government's commitment to building a strong Saskatchewan by supporting the economic recovery now under way while ensuring life remains affordable for everyone in our province. This recent election highlighted the choice that Saskatchewan residents have made, which is to continue on the path that our government has laid out. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Elections Saskatchewan and the thousands of election workers who allowed us to vote safely in a fair and impartial election.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to combatting the spread of COVID-19, and we have introduced a number of health orders when necessary and have been clear that more will be added if required. We have invested in more PPE [personal protective equipment] for front-line workers, expanded testing capacity, and added staff to carry out the contact tracing.

We have invested an additional \$85 million to ensure that our children can study safely. Fifteen million dollars has been invested to enhance distant learning capacity and upgrade technology to allow our children to learn remotely when necessary.

We understand the impact this pandemic has had on small business. That is why we have introduced programs such as the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment, which has provided \$32 million to small and medium-sized businesses affected by the pandemic.

Front-line health care workers are working tirelessly caring for our seniors. We have introduced the temporary wage supplement program that will provide \$400 a month for two months to workers in long-term care facilities, personal care homes, integrated health facilities, and to home care workers providing this very valuable care to seniors in their own homes.

All of Saskatchewan has come together to fight the pandemic and to support each other. As we look ahead, our government will continue to address the health and economic impact of COVID-19 while also preparing for the distribution of a safe and effective vaccine.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to divert a bit from my written words and . . .

An Hon. Member: — I can't wait.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I can't wait. I have to tell a bit of a story and that is back, way back in 2004. I was at a dinner for . . . and it was a political dinner, but I, as president of the police association, I went to all political dinners. And quite frankly at that point in time I was not political at all.

So I went to this dinner. It was after a long, long day. I was very, very tired. I've had enough. I want to go home. And the guest speaker of the night came to the podium and began what would turn out to be somewhat pivotal in my life. And . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . What's up? It's not you, Dustin. It's not you, Dustin.

And it was our former Premier Brad Wall, leader of the opposition at the time.

And I'm sitting there and I'm kind of slouched over. I just want this to be over with. And he was talking, and I started sitting up taller, moved around in my chair, turned my chair around so I could actually look at him and began to listen intently.

What happened that particular night? Now I was one, I was one that was going to leave this province when I was able to retire. I'd had enough. I felt that the best days that Saskatchewan had seen were far behind it and there was no opportunity, never be an opportunity, to be anything more than we were at that particular point in time.

So anyway, I sat up taller, started paying attention to what this young man had to say. And you see this with budget presentations or, you know, Throne Speeches, growth plans. What Brad Wall provided to me and many others in that room was a sense of hope. And it was that we can be . . . This young man thinks we can be more than what we are. And quite frankly, there were a lot of people in that room that began to believe.

The premise of a Throne Speech or growth plans — and we just released another 10-year growth plan — is to lay out for the

people of the province what it is we believe can happen, can be done in the province of Saskatchewan. Sometimes for some, it may seem as though it is a bit inspirational or aspirational, sorry, and maybe a little bit far-reaching but, quite frankly, the Throne Speech and our growth plan lay it out for the people of the province that we on this side of the House believe in the people of the province. And I think that is woven throughout the Throne Speech and it's woven throughout our growth plan. The pivotal word that I used here was hope, and to have hope is to want an outcome that makes life better in some way. Hope can help make a tough situation more bearable; envisioning a better future motivates one to take the steps to make it happen.

Now not only have I had to deal with this aspect in my life as a politician, but I often had to deal with hope or lack of hope for people I dealt with as a police officer. The one thing that I found interesting with hope is that the very, very people you would think would never have hope, actually do. And it is truly amazing when you are holding a child in your arm — very, very, very sad situation — and you say, you're going to be okay, and he says, yes, I know.

When you go to someone's house to tell them that a loved one has died, in those situations you do not anticipate hope. What you anticipate is that you're going to be providing something to them that will enable them to find hope. There is still more, even though the situation is tragic. And that is what . . . And as I'm thinking about, you know, just a Throne Speech, a Throne Speech, growth plan — they are so much more.

And in these times especially, I think that inspiration of a growth plan, of what the government is going to do laid out in the Throne Speech, gives people, those who are looking and paying attention to it to say, okay, let's go. Let's get this done.

Because there is little doubt that we will get through what we're dealing with now. And we have got to continue, even though we may not feel like it, we may not want to, that we want to get wrapped up in this, what's going on. We must look to the future. We will have a life. We will and we'll continue to have an economy in the province of Saskatchewan if we continue on the pathway that we have prescribed.

I also want to make sure I take the opportunity to thank some amazing people. Everyone here has talked about all of the initiatives in our Throne Speech, and they're all important, every one of them. They all serve a purpose. They all provide for what is going to happen today, tomorrow, and so forth.

And they all come together to help the people of the province have a life, and have a good life. Not everything we say in any speech or growth plan is made to agree with everybody. It isn't; we can't. It can't go that way. But we believe — and with the mandate of the election that we have just come through — we believe that what we've put forward will indeed be for the betterment of every person in this province.

I want to say that during the course . . . well since March, the corrections officers and youth workers at all of our facilities have done an amazing job. And the pandemic and the virus was kept out of our facilities way longer than they were in other facilities across the country.

And they were provided . . . They were on it early and took amazing action — they really did — to keep the virus out of our facilities. As community spread occurred here in the fall, of course it's going to end up in our facilities through some mechanism. But they're coming to work day in and day out realizing they're in a really vulnerable, very vulnerable place. They kept doing what they did, and I couldn't be more proud of what they had to do and they were prepared to do it. And that includes the officials also, but the people on the ground are the ones that carried it out.

As we look ahead, our government will continue to address the health and economic impact of COVID. Oh, I think I said that already. Saskatchewan . . . Oh, geez, I'm going the wrong way. I'm going to go backwards now.

[19:15]

Mr. Speaker, today Saskatchewan has the lowest employment rate in Canada. Our economy is poised to make a strong recovery from this pandemic. We will assist in those efforts with our election commitments, including reducing electricity charges by 10 per cent for one year which will benefit resident and business customers; allowing homeowners to claim a 10.5 per cent tax credit on up to \$20,000 of eligible home renovation expenses incurred between October 1, 2020, and December 31st of 2022; and temporarily reducing the small-business tax rate from 2 per cent. These initiatives will help small and medium businesses, the backbone of Saskatchewan's economy, with their economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech also outlines our government's commitment to investing in health care for Saskatchewan residents. Our government will expand eligibility under the Saskatchewan insulin pump program to include all provincial residents. And I take this one rather personally, because it was Dustin Halvorson, who is a constituent of mine and a friend. He was the one that we made contact with when we knew that this was what we were going to announce. His little girl Hartley does require the insulin pump and he was more than thrilled and came out, you know, during the election to help us make the announcement. Our government will also cover costs of continuous glucose monitoring for children and youth under the age of 18. I think that's where he comes in. This new technology will allow for the constant monitoring and measure of glucose levels and will benefit about 600 children in the province of Saskatchewan.

Beginning in 2021, children under the age of 12 who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder will receive \$6,000 a year to cover the cost of individualized therapeutic supports. When we first formed government in 2007, the province was spending just \$500,000 total on services for people living with autism spectrum disorder. Since then, our government has increased funding by 24 times that number to \$12 million per year.

Our government has also made a commitment to assisting our seniors. We will be hiring an additional 300 continuing care aids to work in long-term care: 180 of these will work in care homes themselves; 63 will strengthen existing home care services; and 57 will support expanded home care services in rural and remote areas.

We'll also reduce the cost of ambulance calls for seniors by limiting charges for inter-facility transfers and reducing the maximum cost of other calls by over 50 per cent. So that equates to \$275 to \$135 per call.

We will increase the maximum benefit paid under the seniors' income plan to low-income seniors over the course of the next three years to a maximum benefit of \$360 a month, four times what it was in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about our government's steps to improve mental health and addictions care in our province. Again, this area is very important to me, not only as an elected representative but also because of my own family. And the importance for strategic investments in mental health and addictions is paramount. We've seen the increases of deaths over the last while. I mean, whether it's pandemic related or not, I don't know. I'm for sure certain that it hasn't helped.

We do what we can with respect to the enforcement component, the investigative component, to try and stop these drugs from coming into our communities. It is a very, very big issue, and usually the police probably only catch maybe a quarter of what is actually going on out there. And that's just real.

I do understand the issues of mental health. A large majority of the calls for service that I went to as a police officer were, of course, related to mental health and addictions. And you see first-hand the devastating impact . . . number one, lack of supports and the care that's required, but also the devastating impacts to family members and loved ones.

Our government recently added a minister specifically devoted to the issue of mental health and addictions programming. This appointment helps illustrate our government's commitment to support those struggling with mental health and addictions challenges. And of course we don't just rely on one person to push, encourage more supports. More mental health and addictions beds, detox beds, rehabilitation spaces are all required.

Our most recent budget invested a record 435 million in mental health and addictions. That's approximately 7.5 per cent of our entire health budget. And I believe that we were somewhat slow coming out of the gate with respect to mental health and addictions, and not everything that we're doing today is a step in the right direction. And of course we all know that we are not finished and there is definitely more that's needed.

We've had a crystal methamphetamine treatment centre in Estevan. Right, Lori?

An Hon. Member: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes. And as well as new detox beds in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, and North Battleford. This is the direction we need to go, we need to continue. We are also committed to the innovative initiatives that align with our Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan, including a program to train a mental health first responder in every one of our province's 744 schools.

Mr. Speaker, our government is also committed to standing up for Saskatchewan and asserting our operation as a province. This

includes moving to appoint our own Chief Firearms Officer who will be able to provide a common sense approach to firearm regulation in our province. Earlier this year, our government hired Mr. Robert Freberg as our provincial firearms officer designate. He, along with the hard-working officials in the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, have been working tirelessly to transition this program from the federal government. While the transition has indeed taken a little longer than we would have liked, we are confident that we are moving in the right direction and we will be able to officially appoint Mr. Freberg in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the tremendous work — and again, I'm going to say it again because it did have a significant impact — being done by our front-line correctional officers staff. I also forgot to mention the work done by our front-line police officers, and we can't forget about them either, across the province, as well as officials with the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. They have been on the front line since March.

There have been significant challenges, but all have done their duty remarkably. Especially in our correctional centres we're dealing with a number of outbreaks, including the most significant at Saskatoon Correctional Centre. The measures we put in place spared us those outbreaks, as I said earlier, early on, when others had experienced it within their correctional facilities over the last few months.

Corrections officials are working to combat these outbreaks, stop them from spreading within the facilities, and make sure that both staff and offenders are cared for.

I am just about done, Mr. Speaker, and actually I'm going to finish off. Mr. Speaker, I once again will be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley, and I will not be supporting the motion put forward by the members opposite. Thank you.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your election. And I would like to congratulate the Deputy Speaker on her election as well, although she is not here with us tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express my gratitude to the constituents of Saskatoon University for allowing me the great honour of serving them. I'm humbled to be standing here today, and particularly so to be standing here as a part of the first female-majority caucus in Saskatchewan's history.

Mr. Speaker, I ran for the first time in Saskatoon University in the 2016 election after winning a contested nomination as someone very green to politics. The race in Saskatoon University was a close one for us, and it was important to me to keep at it and run again in 2020. I spent the past five and a half years, the first half of my 30s, working towards standing here today in these chambers on behalf of the people of Saskatoon University. Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't take a minute of that time back.

My immense thanks go out to my incredible campaign team. My

campaign manager, Skip Kutz, is like family to me. When I decided to seek the nomination for the first time in 2015, I was encouraged to seek advice from Skip, and I'm so glad I did. He has been with me since the beginning and I am so grateful to my dear friend for sticking with me until we made it here.

My voter contact organizer, Vita Andersone, is one of the smartest, fiercest, hardest working people I know. She was integral to the success of our campaign. I'm excited to say that she will soon be joining me on the next leg of this adventure as my constituency assistant.

My get-out-the-vote coordinators, Janna Wong and Landon Squires, both did a remarkable job in ensuring we were able to assemble a small army of people to motivate our supporters to get out and vote — many of whom did so by mail and in the advance polls.

Tony and Donna Linner served as our sign crew. These two were incredibly organized, responsive, and an absolute joy to work with. Dianne Woloschuk was our business agent and also serves as our local constituency executive president. She is remarkably competent and ensured that everything was properly accounted for.

I also want to thank the remaining members of our local constituency executive for their continuous efforts between 2016 and the recent election to make sure we were set up to win in this campaign. Our executive is made up of highly progressive, strong-minded, and passionate people who I am so fortunate to be able to work alongside.

Many people volunteered their time and made donations to our campaign, and I can't stress enough how we could not have won this seat without their generosity, their passion, and their determination. There were hundreds of people who came together to support our efforts, some of whom were old friends, and others who were brand new to our movement. It was a true pleasure to work with them all.

I expect the members opposite will have something to say about this — we all know how much the Sask Party government loves unions, after all — so I'll make a distinct point of expressing my thanks to the labour movement for their tremendous support of my campaign. Particularly my own union, USW [United Steelworkers], was exceptional in making sure I had all the support I needed. I want to personally thank my union representative, Darrin Kruger, for his overwhelming kindness and efforts.

Since this session started, the Legislative Assembly staff and our NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus staff have all been remarkably patient and helpful to me as a rookie here, and I want to thank them as well. There's a steep learning curve to this role, and the wealth of knowledge and expertise afforded to us, especially as new members here, is so greatly appreciated.

One of the people I owe the most thanks to is my mom. She raised me and my two brothers through very difficult circumstances as a single mother, and she is the person who taught me the importance of never giving up. The odds were stacked up against our family in many ways, but she made sure I learned the most important things. As an educational assistant for over 20 years at

Waldheim School where I grew up, my mom demonstrated kindness, patience, and care for the kids who struggled the most. She loved those kids and they loved her.

[19:30]

This impressed upon me the value of service to others, especially those who are less fortunate in our society. She also taught me to always consider other people's perspectives, which showed me the value in listening to others and striving to hear them and understand their needs. I hope these lessons will serve me well in public office.

The person I want to thank most of all, Mr. Speaker, is my partner, Brian. When Brian and I first started dating back in the spring of 2018, I made sure he knew from the outset that I intended to run for office again. I explained what that would mean, what life was going to look like, and that I would understand if he wasn't up for it. Despite my forewarnings, Mr. Speaker, he stayed with me, and I hope he hasn't lived to regret that decision.

Mr. Speaker, later this month we will celebrate our one year wedding anniversary. Last December we eloped in Montreal and spent our honeymoon in the Eastern Townships and Quebec City, unknowingly beating the pandemic by just a few short months. The first year of our marriage has had its joy and its challenges. As I'm sure everyone in these chambers well knows, campaigns can be gruelling. It has at times been a very tiring and stressful road to get here, but Brian has always been there by my side. He has been unfailingly supportive, always willing to listen and commiserate, and committed to providing a warm home and loving refuge. I cherish him and I am so grateful for the many sacrifices he has made.

Mr. Speaker, along with the support of many people, my professional experiences and community involvement have also led me here. After university I began working in the Ministry of Corrections at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. I felt it was important to see for myself how things worked on the inside. The things I saw in my two years at SCC [Saskatoon Correctional Centre] in many ways were unspeakable. We are warehousing people in our jails, Mr. Speaker. They are stacked in cells and dorms and placed into solitary confinement in what are unsafe, unsanitary, and often inhumane conditions. We are now seeing one of the many dangers of this warehousing playing out in real time with the COVID-19 outbreak at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous peoples are vastly overrepresented in our jails, one of the most stark effects of colonialism and systemic racism in our province. This is something that should be of great shame to us. Our government must do everything within its power to address this and the many other injustices inflicted upon Indigenous peoples in our province.

After two years, I moved from Corrections to the ministry of income assistance where I again witnessed systemic injustices in our society.

As someone who was raised on social assistance for the majority of my childhood, I thought maybe I can make a difference here. It didn't take long for me to realize that this would not be possible

due to how our government treats those who require assistance. The caseloads were enormous, and there was only enough time to offer the most cursory of assistance in my role, Mr. Speaker. The majority of my job as an income assistance worker was to assess and process meagre and insufficient benefits to my clients, not to offer them any meaningful assistance in getting ahead. The process was demeaning for those forced to undergo it and did very little to assist clients in bettering their circumstances in any long term sense.

We need a government that will throw out this broken framework and work to build a system that is more dignified and more effective. We need a government that will proactively address issues of poverty. How can we possibly accept that one in four Saskatchewan children are living in poverty, Mr. Speaker?

After three years of working on the front lines in these two ministries, I had the opportunity to take on quite a different line of work. I started as a union representative within the labour movement here in Saskatchewan, representing some of the lowest paid workers in our province. Mr. Speaker, it was here that I discovered my passion for advocating on behalf of others. Since then I have devoted the past seven years of my career towards advocating for working people in our province. I had been representing health care workers for the past six of these years prior to being elected.

Mr. Speaker, what I have witnessed over these past seven years in the labour movement is a government that holds a disdain for working people unlike anything our province has seen before. This government has eroded and trampled on workers' rights as a matter of course. They preside over the lowest minimum wage in the country, \$11.45 an hour, a poverty wage which has been the cause of tens of thousands of Saskatchewan people being denied the means to provide for a decent standard of living. What workers in this province need is a living wage, Mr. Speaker, and I intend to fight for that.

What workers also need is paid sick leave. Far too many workers in our province have no access to paid sick leave. And guess what happens then, Mr. Speaker? Workers show up sick at their jobs because they simply can't afford not to go into work. Mr. Speaker, surely no one here is naive enough to think a pandemic will stop this from happening. People need to eat, and they need a roof over their heads. There could not be a more obvious time for this government to enact paid sick leave provisions for Saskatchewan workers than today. As associate critic for Labour, I will do everything I can to hold this government to account on behalf of all Saskatchewan workers.

In the community, Mr. Speaker, I served on the board of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Saskatchewan for several years as well as overseas as a gender advisor in Burma with CUSO International. I look forward to continuing to advocate for women in my role as critic for the Status of Women, as we can see that women still face numerous barriers to equality in this province.

Mr. Speaker, here are just a few examples. As I brought forth here last week, Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault in Canada, with 600 women and families being turned away from shelters in our province each month. We are one of only two provinces that does not

provide funding for second-stage shelters.

Mr. Speaker, the rate of suicide for First Nations girls is 29 times higher than the rest of the province. Mr. Speaker, still in 2020 women are left waiting for pay-equity legislation in this province and make just 85 cents for every dollar earned by men. In 2020, how is it that only 28 per cent of the members in this Assembly are women when we make up over half of the population? When will this government start equally valuing women in our province, Mr. Speaker?

Prior to my election I was also a board member with Quint Development Corporation. One of the aims of Quint is to provide affordable housing to people in the core neighbourhoods in Saskatoon. There are far too many people who are homeless and underhoused in this province, Mr. Speaker. Many are left wondering, when will this government start caring about the poor and implement a Housing First strategy?

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak to a number of issues that are of particular relevance to my riding. The University of Saskatchewan is situated within the riding and there are normally many students who live in the dorms or in the neighbourhoods nearby, although there are far fewer this year due to the pandemic and due to the fact that most post-secondary education has moved online. There are also a good number of professors and university staff who live in the riding. The adjustment this year for students and faculty alike has been stressful for many, and I would like to recognize this.

Another stressor which has long predated the pandemic is unaffordable and inaccessible tuition. Mr. Speaker, our province has the second-highest tuition rates in Canada, which is causing a post-secondary education to be out of reach for so many people across Saskatchewan. As the critic for Advanced Education, I will be advocating strongly for affordable and accessible tuition and for this government to properly fund our post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] is also home to VIDO-InterVac [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-international vaccine centre]. VIDO has been working towards the development of a vaccine for COVID-19 since January. They hope to begin human clinical trials later this month or early in the new year. I thank them for their important work.

Innovation Place is also located in the riding on the university grounds. It is one of two Crown-operated research parks in Saskatchewan and as the critic for Innovation I look forward to spending a good deal of my time in collaboration with the people there.

Saskatoon University is also home to a good number of health care workers, many of whom work at Royal University Hospital and Jim Pattison Children's Hospital both located in our constituency. Prior to my election, I represented hundreds of health care workers at both RUH [Royal University Hospital] and JPCH [Jim Pattison Children's Hospital] along with members at numerous other facilities across the province. What I heard all too often from the members I represented was that understaffing in our health care system is at a critical breaking point. Understaffing is having an incredibly detrimental effect on both

patient care and the health and safety of our health care workers.

Our government is responsible for the sad state of affairs our public health care system finds itself in. I commend the thousands of health care workers who, in the face of rampant understaffing, are giving everything they've got to prop up our crumbling health care system in Saskatchewan particularly during this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, Merlis Belsher Place, which is also situated in Saskatoon University has been designated a COVID-19 field hospital. Its intended function is as an arena but based on the trend we've been seeing in cases, it will surely begin serving its alternate function before too long as our hospitals begin to overflow. Sadly this will be the inevitable result of this government's failure to treat the second wave with the seriousness it deserves.

Mr. Speaker, climate action was one of the top issues constituents spoke with me about during the election campaign. There has been a pitiful lack of action on this front by the current government. Saskatchewan has the highest per capita greenhouse gas emissions across Canada, which is simply unacceptable. This government has failed to act in order to diversify our energy sector by making necessary and crucial investments in renewable energy. Governments must act before it is too late.

This government is obsessed, Mr. Speaker, with taking credit for building a strong Saskatchewan but the facts tell a different story. To this day I have spent my entire career witnessing and fighting against a government that has shown time and time again that they simply do not care about the most vulnerable and marginalized in our province nor do they care about working-class people. The Speech from the Throne has given me no reason to believe any differently.

Furthermore, this government has repeatedly shown that they do not place any meaningful value on protecting our environment and addressing the climate emergency we face. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened our awareness of the serious inequalities that exist in our society.

Mr. Speaker, we have a historic opportunity in the midst of this great struggle to rethink what kind of society we want to live in and to get to work rebuilding that society. Unfortunately, this Throne Speech has failed to deliver on this opportunity.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Speech from the Throne. I will instead be supporting the amendment put forward by the member for Regina Douglas Park and seconded by the member for Regina University. Thank you.

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be standing here this evening to address this Assembly for the first time. I will add to the many congratulations already expressed in regards to your election. I just want to say I personally know you to be a fair and honourable gentleman, and I'm grateful that you're residing over these proceedings.

See, my own interest in political affairs began at a young age. An early memory I have is that for a local municipal election, I had

carefully cut out all the newspaper advertisements from candidates and glued them into a special notebook. I was keeping track of all the candidates, the number of ads they had run, and what they were committing to do for our community.

In following elections I was recruited to put up signs or scrutineer, but shortly thereafter I found my true campaign calling — door knocking. Mr. Speaker, as most members in this Assembly can attest to, there is nothing quite like meeting folks on their doorsteps. But I'll come back to that later on in my comments.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I don't originally hail from this province. Although my maternal grandmother's family first settled in Mayfair when they arrived in Canada from the Ukraine, I grew up further west from here, out in British Columbia.

And I chose to come to this province because I believe that it provides incredible economic opportunity, an affordable cost of living, and a high quality of life. And, Mr. Speaker, 55 consecutive quarters of population growth in this province goes to show that I'm not the only one.

And when the opportunity emerged to put my name forward for the Saskatchewan Party nomination in my constituency, I knew this was a great opportunity to serve the people of The Battlefords and this province. And I'd like to thank the people of the Battlefords for giving me that opportunity.

[19:45]

As has been emphasized by other members, it takes a whole group of people to run a successful campaign. I would like to thank Colleen and Susan and Karen for holding down the fort at our campaign office. My predecessor in this role, Mr. Herb Cox, and Gregg Sheppard led our sign operations and had help from a number of others, including Bart and Al and Adam. Our door-knocking crew did fantastic work identifying voters while following the strict protocols for social distancing. Bart, Tom, James, Alvin, Mitch, Lee, Ron, and many more, I'd like to thank them.

We had many more volunteers during the week of advance polls and on election day — too many to name. And whether they hung door hangers or entered bingo sheets or scrutineered the counting process, I'd like to thank them for giving me their time and energy. I would like to pay a special thank you to Warren and Orville and Theresa, who also helped me during my nomination period back in February. They were so helpful at that time as well as during the election, making sure I spoke to the right people and helping to sell party memberships.

I would like to thank my campaign manager, Stacey, for returning home to the Battlefords for the month of October and keeping our campaign organized and disciplined. And I would be remiss if I did not thank my good friend Colin for his work on the campaign. He brought insights and experience from years of campaigning, which were invaluable in both my nomination and the election. He's a talented political campaigner but, more importantly, he's a trusted friend.

And as we have already heard from other members, a supportive family is a cornerstone as one wades into these political waters.

The many lessons I have learned from my grandparents and aunts and uncles are the ones that have informed my journey here. I'm grateful for my parents, Randy and Alyson, and my brothers Micah and Josiah. I was reflecting the other day and I remember my parents placing a lot of value on not what we were to become but rather on who we were to become. And whatever we did growing up, there was always an emphasis not only on the content of what we did but more importantly how we did it — with hard work and enthusiasm, with a team-first attitude, and with kindness and grace towards others.

I'm also incredibly grateful to my wife's parents, Kevin and Liz, and her three siblings, Jillian and Braden and Cailyn, who reintroduced me to Saskatchewan and played a key role in bringing me to this province.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Meagan Cockrill. As a chartered accountant, she was invaluable as our business manager. But not only that, she also knocked on around 3,600 doors. She is often praised for her many capabilities, capacities, and accomplishments, but it is her heart for people and building stronger communities that drives everything she does. It's why I love her. It's why we make a great team. And I'm so grateful for her support, especially this year. And I hope that I can make her proud through my work in this position.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few remarks regarding the challenges our province has faced around COVID-19. To this point, I am grateful that neither myself nor anyone in my immediate family has tested positive or been required to self-isolate related to an exposure. It was valuable to hear the experience that the member from Athabasca shared the other evening about his family testing positive and self-isolating. And I'm glad that the member recovered and is joining us once again here in this Assembly.

I know that many other families in our province have not been this fortunate and have lost family members during this pandemic. I would like to extend my condolences to those families, especially as they approach the first Christmas season without their loved ones.

During this pandemic, I have thought regularly about the young men that I have had the privilege of coaching for the last couple of years as part of the North Battleford Comprehensive senior boys' basketball team. Last year's season was ended abruptly, and now school sports are not happening during this school year.

Mr. Speaker, for many young people in this province, sports are a major part of their formation and their community as they grow up. I'm very sad for these young athletes that we cannot participate as normal during this school year. This last weekend we would have been competing in an annual tournament at Centennial Collegiate in Saskatoon, one of the best tournaments in the province, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to the day when the NBCHS [North Battleford Comprehensive High School] Vikings and other young athletes in this province can return to their respective fields, courts, and rinks of play.

As we continue to deal with COVID-19 and how it has affected our lives and our livelihoods, I would encourage the good people of Saskatchewan to keep kindness at the forefront of their minds. Be kind to the retail, restaurant, and front-line workers who are

working hard — and often in different ways than they're used to — to provide you with the goods and services that we need. Be kind to those working in health care and their family members because they're continuing to care for our communities through challenging circumstances. And be kind to your neighbours who may be alone and fighting mental health battles that you don't even know about.

Now I believe this posture of kindness is so natural, and second nature really, for the people of Saskatchewan but we will need even more of it to get through these challenging times. My colleague from Melfort said in this Assembly recently that hope is contagious, and I believe that kindness is as well.

Mr. Speaker, it is humbling to walk into this building every day and participate in discussions and debate in the name of making our province a better place for this generation and future generations. Although this is my first session in this legislature, I am very proud to be part of a government that has changed the destiny of this province. Mr. Speaker, it was not so long ago that young people grew up and left this province. There was seemingly no hope and no opportunity for them to make a life for themselves here in Saskatchewan. While other provinces certainly benefited from the Saskatchewan diaspora, something here in this province had to change.

This government has returned hope to the people of this province and has created an environment where major sectors have become leaders in fuelling and feeding our world. It is a place where our young people can grow up and stay in the communities and province where they grew up. And as our economy has flourished, Mr. Speaker, we have been able to invest in the public services that the people of this province expect and deserve.

Let me say now that I will be supporting the original motion made by the member from Kindersley, and I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. But to illustrate why, Mr. Speaker, I would like to return to the topic of door knocking. Because as I sat here a week ago and listened to the Lieutenant Governor deliver the Throne Speech, I couldn't help but think of many of the people that I met on the doorsteps in The Battlefords.

Mr. Speaker, I thought of the elderly gentleman whose wife had been taken to the hospital multiple times in the previous three months. He specifically mentioned the ambulance fees and the financial toll that was taking on their fixed-income situation. It was a pleasure to return to that door a few weeks later and tell him about the commitment that our government had made. By eliminating charges for inter-facility transfers and reducing the maximum costs of other calls from \$275 to \$135, Mr. Speaker, that will make a real difference for that couple and many other families in my constituency.

I think of the single mother whose house was in disrepair, how our home renovation tax credit is going to give her that little boost to make the necessary renovations so her and her children can be comfortable and safe in their home. On that note, Mr. Speaker, I also think of the tens of thousands of workers in this province in construction and in the trades. Many of these people are self-employed or have just a handful of employees. And they're going to see an uptick in business because of the home renovation tax credit. That's part of this government's plan for a strong economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I think of those same young athletes that I just referenced. And the reality is that competitive sports can be costly, given the extra training and travel required to compete at higher levels. And that can put participation out of financial reach for some families. But by reinstating the active families benefit, it will make it more affordable for families in our province to have their children involved in sports or arts or cultural activities. That's the kind of policy that makes for stronger families and stronger communities, Mr. Speaker.

And I think of the woman I met whose child had recently tried to commit suicide and was looking for more mental health support for her children. And I am proud to stand behind our Pillars for Life suicide prevention strategy and the initiatives that our government has already undertaken to address the challenges around mental health and suicide in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this isn't just a Cumberland issue or a Cypress Hills issue or a Regina issue. This is an issue that faces each one of our constituencies in this Assembly. And for some, like my colleague from Walsh Acres, that has hit a little too close to home. Our government's promise to put a trained mental health first responder into every school in this province — 744 in total — will help to address these issues that face young people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I think of the family that I met that had recently immigrated to the Battlefords from India. They had recently bought a business and they were excited to discuss with me the ups and downs of running a business. And our government has been a leader in attracting new immigrants to this province through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. Since 2007 we have seen over 130,000 new immigrants move to this province. And even better, Mr. Speaker, 70 per cent of those immigrants are employed, compared to the national average of 64 per cent.

I can speak for my constituency, and I imagine all other members would agree, that our communities have benefited immensely from immigration to this province. Our province and our strong economic position offers great opportunity for new Canadians, and those new Canadians bring their talents and their skills and their desire to contribute to our communities and our province.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's get back to small-business owners in Saskatchewan. Our commitment to cut the small-business tax rate over the next couple of years will provide much needed relief for small-business owners across this province. These are people who work beyond nine to five, who use portions of their profits to support community organizations. And most importantly, they hire people in their community. By temporarily moving the small-business tax rate from 2 per cent to zero, this will allow business owners to reinvest in their businesses and ready their operations for growth as our economy pulls out of COVID-19.

As I have talked to small-business owners in The Battlefords, I have been inspired, encouraged at how they have battled through the challenges of this pandemic. They have adjusted or pivoted their businesses, and this has ensured that local workers have kept their jobs and more so in our province than anywhere else in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, our government is focused on

making life better for the people of Saskatchewan. We have kept a strong fiscal base with one of the lowest debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratios in Canada. We have made concerted and unrelenting efforts to build new export markets for the food, fuel, and fertilizer that we produce right here in this province. And we are seeing the fruits of that labour by leading Canada in merchandise export growth.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency I now represent contains two distinct communities: the city of North Battleford and the town of Battleford. And I will remind all members that if history had taken a different turn, we could be sitting tonight in the great town of Battleford, my hometown. We have a rich agricultural heritage in our area, and have in recent years benefited from increased development in the oil and gas sectors. We also benefit from being surrounded by a number of First Nations communities. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that as we work on these relationships, they will be a key part of the economic potential in our area.

I would encourage all members of this House to visit the Battlefords when they have an opportunity. I would be glad to show you some of the things happening in our community, and share a pint with you at the Armoury afterwards. Likewise, Mr. Speaker, there are still eight or nine constituencies in this province that I have not had the pleasure of visiting, and I'm going to make it a priority to do so in the next year. We have an incredibly diverse province in geographic, economic, and human terms, a province that I'm proud to call home.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, I had an interesting phone call a couple of weeks ago. I felt in my gut that it was the right thing to do to call the NDP candidate in our constituency. We hadn't spoken since the debate during the writ period.

And I called her to thank her for a cordial campaign, and I wanted to reiterate that I'm focused on representing all people in The Battlefords, not just those who supported me. We talked for a little while about the challenges that our community faces, and we had pleasant conversation. And you know, Mr. Speaker, the amazing thing about that phone call is that the words Sask Party or NDP weren't uttered at all. We just talked about The Battlefords.

As I enter this Assembly every day, I want to stay focused on making our province and my community a better place to work, live, and to play. That's why I put my name forward and that's why I worked so hard to get here. And as I enter this Assembly every day, I hope I can remember that the motivations of the members opposite are rooted in the same sentiment. We will have passionate debate here, no doubt. And I can assure you that I'm going to fight hard for what I believe is right. But as I do that, Mr. Speaker, it is my goal to maintain a high level of decorum and respect for this Assembly and the other members here.

Mr. Speaker, in closing let me repeat that I will be supporting the original motion brought forward by the member from Kindersley and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight. God bless

Saskatchewan.

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start out by saying that I will be supporting the Throne Speech that has been moved by the member from Kindersley, and I will not supporting the amendment brought forward by the opposition.

The speech as presented is exactly what the people of Saskatchewan need at this point in time, at this point in history — 2020, the year that none of us in this House will ever forget. Really a year that nobody in this province or this world will ever forget. And depending on who you are, the reasons may be wide ranging.

Mr. Speaker, as we can see from the Throne Speech that has been presented, our government, this Saskatchewan Party government, has had some very challenging days. And no doubt there will be more challenging days ahead. So first and foremost, I think it is appropriate that this speech starts by taking the time to thank the people of Saskatchewan for working together to help contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, leadership is not always easy. In fact, it rarely is. I'm so proud to see that in one way, shape, or form the majority of people in this province have become leaders in their own way by doing their part, whether that be wearing a mask even if they'd rather not, or visiting with their loved ones virtually even though they would prefer to see them in person, going to work day in and day out regardless of your profession knowing there's always a chance of exposure. And lastly, for those that have had to self-isolate due to contracting COVID-19 or being in close contact to someone that has tested positive or just because you have the sniffles or a cough, leadership comes in all different forms. So I say thank you to all who have shown leadership in their own individual way.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the details of the speech I need to take some time to thank those who made it possible for me to be able to have the opportunities to sit in this House. To the residents of the constituency of Estevan: thank you for putting your faith in me. I am truly humbled that you have given me this opportunity for a second term. To my campaign team: we were small, but mighty.

To Rosalie Story, my campaign manager: words cannot express how thankful I am that you have been a part of my journey. For those of you who don't know Rosalie, she is one of my constituency assistants. But she was also the constituency assistant to Doreen Eagles before me. We had the opportunity to work together on Doreen's constituency association, so I got to know her there. She worked with me on my 2016 campaign and in this campaign she was there for me at every turn. And now I get to work with her on a daily basis again. Her knowledge and intuition have been invaluable to me. Thank you to Rosalie.

And to Susan Colbow, who is my other constituency assistant. Last campaign she was pretty shy. She didn't want to leave the campaign office. But this time around we put her a little bit out of her comfort zone and she graduated to door knocking. Once she did a few hours of doors she realized it was not so bad. Susan is very passionate about everything she does, and I'm lucky to

have her on my team. Thank you, Susan. These two ladies door knocked with me every day until we were done the entire constituency. We were in it together. They are the other two legs of my three-legged stool.

I also want to thank my other door knockers, Angel, Kristen, and Craig, as well as Gail and Patty for manning the campaign office, and Clark and Dirty for helping Bart put up signs. And speaking of Bart, I need to extend a special thank you to him for putting up with me while this job takes so much time away from him, although I'm pretty sure he enjoys it when I'm in Regina because I'm not suggesting things he should be doing. I truly do thank him for his ongoing support. And lastly, to my mom and dad for giving me the foundation to be the person I am today. Your support has been the most valuable gift you have given me.

Now to the Throne Speech. There are so many things I would like to touch on but I only have time to speak to a few of the highlights. Mr. Speaker, as you are aware I come from the constituency of Estevan. So on top of COVID, which the entire province is dealing with, Estevan and area has also been dealt some pretty big blows over the past few years. Our industries are under attack by the federal Liberal government through the policies and regulations that they have brought down. Mr. Speaker, they're crippling the industries in my constituency. And sadly, at a time when we should all be working together to try and keep Saskatchewan strong, we have an NDP opposition that actually agrees with the policies and legislation of our federal government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm thankful every day that I am a part of a government that supports a strong Saskatchewan and more importantly, a strong recovery, as it is through the sacrifice and hard work of the people of Saskatchewan that our province is poised to make a strong recovery from this pandemic. And that recovery is already under way.

As we are aware, we just went through a provincial election, and our Saskatchewan Party government has received a strong mandate from the people of this province to lead this amazing province. So we are going to start this term by keeping our campaign commitments. I always enjoy it when I'm here and able to hear promise made, promise kept — one more reason I'm proud to be a member of this Saskatchewan Party government. When we say we are going to do something, we do it.

The first promise we have kept is bringing in the rebate that will help reduce electricity charges by 10 per cent for one year. I like this promise for a couple of different reasons. First of all this will help pretty much every person across this province by putting more money back in their pockets. Those people will be able to prioritize what they do with those savings. And I am pretty sure in these interesting times they will make the best use of it as possible, and it will be well needed.

Mr. Speaker, the second reason I like this is because SaskPower is a very integral part of my constituency. It employs hundreds of people. For those of you that don't know, we have two coal-fired power plants in the constituency of Estevan. These coal-fired power plants have been the backbone of my constituency for years and years. A few years ago we had the opportunity to put carbon capture and sequestration on one of our 300-megawatt units. And it was an amazing invention right here

in Saskatchewan and now it's housed right in my constituency. And that unit actually takes 90 per cent of emissions out of the air before the stacks let it go.

So to have that CO₂ sequestered, and then what we do is we pump it into the ground and we used it for enhanced oil field recovery. And so it's a win-win in both situations. It helps take CO₂ emissions out of the air, as well as helping our economy by getting more oil out of the ground so that we can have the blessed things that we have right here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So in a way I feel like SaskPower and the employees that work in my constituency are actually helping us fulfill our campaign promise by ensuring we actually have the power available to be able to give this rebate. And not only that. All the power production in Estevan is coal based, as I just mentioned, so it does bring that reliable, baseload power to our province. Mr. Speaker, this rebate will put approximately \$260 million back into the pockets of Saskatchewan people. And no doubt they will reinvest this money back into our economy to help drive the recovery. And to be clear, it is the government of Saskatchewan, not SaskPower, that will bear the cost of this program.

It would seem that during this time when everybody is staying a lot closer to home, people have decided to do home renovation projects that they've been putting off for years. Remember those suggestions that I have for Bart when I'm around the house? Well this is exactly what I'm talking about. So the next campaign commitment we have kept is the Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit. Homeowners will be able to claim 10.5 per cent tax credit on up to \$20,000 of eligible home renovation expenses incurred between October 1st, 2020 and December 31st, 2022.

Mr. Speaker, this tax credit once again will put money back into the pockets of the great people who live in our province. Homeowners will save up to \$2,100 on the cost of their improvements. Not only that, this tax credit will be beneficial for our construction sector. Not everybody is as lucky as me as to have a guy like Bart who can manage to take on the home renovations himself. People will need to hire contractors to do the work they want done, once again stimulating our economy and helping with Saskatchewan's economic recovery.

This home renovation tax credit will add to a positive impact of our government's two-year \$7.5 billion infrastructure plan that includes \$2 billion in new stimulus funding. And that funding is so important for our municipalities and our contractors within the province of Saskatchewan. Through SaskBuilds we're actually going to focus on ensuring that as much work as possible goes to Saskatchewan contractors and that that money can be reinvested back into our province.

I know that through the MEEP [municipal economic enhancement program] program that happened under Government Relations, the \$150 million that we were able to give across the province to all municipalities got a piece of that. They were able to reinvest back into their individual communities and put local contractors to work.

So it's this government that is going to stimulate our economy to ensure that when we come to the other side of this COVID-19 that we have a strong recovery and we have a strong economy to come back to, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the work I'm talking about will be provided by small business, and it is these small businesses that will play such a crucial role in helping drive the economic recovery. But it's not enough to have the status quo. We want to encourage small business to invest in their own operations, retain workers, and hire new ones.

So that brings me to our next campaign commitment. Our government will temporarily reduce the small-business tax from 2 per cent to zero. This will take effect retroactively to October 1st, 2020. Two per cent is already one of the lowest small-business tax rates in the country, and we are going to take it to zero.

[20:15]

Now we will be restoring it to 2 per cent by July of 2023, but in the meantime this reduction in small-business tax will cost approximately \$189 million. But more importantly, the small businesses will invest back into the Saskatchewan economy to further drive that strong recovery. And I believe Saskatchewan is the best place in Canada to start and grow a business. So by providing this tax credit during these challenging times, we are reinforcing Saskatchewan's reputation for that. New small businesses have a choice where they are deciding to set up shop. This will help make that decision easier for those businesses, easier to invest in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, my constituency has been hit hard by external factors, one being the federal government. The second is by the effects of an internal price war that took place affecting our oil and gas industry. So even though we may see that the price of oil has come back a bit, the lingering effect of that price war is still clear and present and I feel it in my constituency every day. And even worse, we have the people right in this House that are openly and actively opposed to our oil and gas industry. It's actually unconscionable.

But this Saskatchewan Party cares deeply about our oil and gas sector. That is why earlier this year we introduced a number of relief measures for the industry. Mineral rights that were scheduled to expire in 2020 were extended by one year. The industry portion of the oil and gas administration levy was reduced by 50 per cent for this fiscal year. And, Mr. Speaker, I can't leave out talking about the accelerated site-closure program. This program has successfully launched. The economic and environmental benefits will be significant. To date the program has engaged 250 — that's 250 — Saskatchewan-based service companies.

When the program was being put together, I had the opportunity to sit in on the Committee of the Economy and I advocated strongly that we needed to ensure that all the work was not concentrated in one area. So the way the program was rolled out, they thoughtfully made sure the projects were spread out across the province to ensure the employment was spread out across the province. And selfishly, I saw first-hand how some of that work went to companies in my constituency. So I thank the Minister of Energy and Resources for listening to that feedback and taking it to heart.

Mr. Speaker, with this program, by the time it finishes there will be approximately 8,000 inactive wells and facilities that will be

cleaned up and 2,100 full-time jobs will have been created.

My constituency is also blessed to have a very strong agriculture base, so it was very encouraging that in the midst of this challenging year our farmers produced one of the largest crops on record. And my government will continue to support our growing agriculture industry through investments in research and innovation, through strong farm support programs, and by continuing to seek markets for our products abroad.

Mr. Speaker, a part of having a strong Saskatchewan is ensuring that you have a government that will stand up for Saskatchewan. As I said earlier in my speech, this is a time for us to be working together. That is why our government believes in a strong, united Canada where every province and territory can contribute to our nation's prosperity and progress. Having said that, it is important to note that we will always defend Saskatchewan within the Canadian confederation and we will take our own road when federal policies work against the interests of our province.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency believes very strongly that we need to be a strong voice for our province and for the resources that we have. When the big rally was held at Evraz, the Leader of the Opposition referred to it as anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic. There were a large number of people there from my constituency, Mr. Speaker, good, hard-working people that have helped build this province. They were there because they know that we cannot rely on the federal government or the members opposite to stand up for us. In fact the Leader of the Opposition was given an opportunity to attend and support the industries like oil and gas and agriculture, and he chose not to. Then he doubled down by badmouthing them.

Mr. Speaker, the members on this side of the House support the people in this province and we want to ensure that we have a strong, independent voice for them. So I was extremely pleased when our Premier appointed a Legislative Secretary with the job of examining how Saskatchewan can exercise and strengthen its autonomy within our federation.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to fight the carbon tax, in September we took our case of the federal carbon tax to the Supreme Court of Canada. Our government believes the federal carbon tax is not only unconstitutional, but we believe it is ineffective, unlike the Leader of the Opposition who supports a carbon tax. Sometimes I'm not even sure he understands what province he lives in.

Mr. Speaker, I can see my time is quickly coming to an end, so I likely only have time to touch on one or two more topics from the Throne Speech. And I will have to leave the other topics to my colleagues.

One of the best ways to ensure our population is growing is not only by having people move to our province but by keeping our high school and university graduates at home. I know this has been said on several occasions but it's probably worth repeating. There was a time when graduation gifts for students was luggage. And as fast as they got the luggage, they packed up and moved to another province. This was what happened under the leadership of the NDP.

But do you know what happened when I graduated, Mr. Speaker? My mom and dad bought me a hope chest. And I heard in some

of the speeches that we've already heard in this House today that they have hope for this province. The Minister of Corrections and Policing has hope for this province. The member from The Battlefords has hope for this province. I have hope for this province. And we have seen some of that come to fruition. And, Mr. Speaker, we are only getting stronger. So gone are the days of buying luggage for our children. Let's buy them something so they can stay in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our government will be increasing the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship by 50 per cent. This increase will increase the total amount offered under scholarship over four years from 2,000 to 3,000. And we expect that approximately 8,000 students in Saskatchewan will benefit each year.

And lastly on the Throne Speech, the graduate retention tax program. This provides up to \$20,000 in income tax credits to post-secondary graduates who stay in Saskatchewan. Since it was introduced in 2008, more than 74,000 graduates have benefited from the program. Whoever thought of this program really did a great job with it. The tax credits take place over seven years, so by the time they use them all up, they will most likely have established a career, maybe found a significant other, and put down roots right here in Saskatchewan. And it works. Both of my daughters are proof of this.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my speech I said that people were going to remember 2020 for several different reasons, but that it would be a year no one will ever forget. I'm going to choose to remember this year for all of the good things in my life. I have so many things to be thankful for, but right now I'm just going to focus on my three children.

First off, my oldest daughter Miranda, who teaches grade 1 at Fairhaven School in Saskatoon, and her husband, Jon, who teaches all the shop classes and whatever else is thrown on his plate in any given semester out at Blaine Lake. So as you can well imagine, this has been an exceptionally unique year for them as well, as they are not about to forget any time soon. They have a son named Bowen. This year we were able to celebrate his first birthday. And even though I could not be there to celebrate with him in person because of COVID, I truly do feel blessed, and FaceTime is a wonderful thing. I'm not sure what we did before it.

Secondly, my middle child Mercedes and her fiancé, Jay. But not a fiancé for long as they will be married on New Year's Eve this year. That's right. In the middle of these challenging days we're going to have a wedding. When we were originally planning the wedding, Mercedes had always said she wanted to keep it fairly small. I'm not sure she had intended to keep it quite this small, but it's easy on the pocketbook.

Mercedes is a schoolteacher at Pleasantdale school in Estevan. She teaches grade 7, and she is currently on maternity leave. Her fiancé, Jay, runs an oil field-related company. They have blessed me with two beautiful granddaughters: Jordan, who just turned two last week and another birthday I missed in person — did I mention how wonderful FaceTime is? — and Holly, who was born in April of this year. She's seven months now, and it truly is something beautiful to have these people in my life.

And lastly my youngest child, my son Wyatt. Still single. Still farming with his dad and grandpa at Outram. And I'm proud to report that he has officially moved out of his dad's basement and has now bought a house in the city of Estevan. His first home. I am so proud of him.

So while I could dwell on the negatives, I choose to focus on the positives that have come my way this year. God has truly been good to me. 2020 — the year that no one will ever forget. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a great place to be able to live, work, and raise your family. And in these very uncertain times I believe that we need to have a stable, strong leader. And I'm convinced that we have that leadership in Premier Scott Moe. He truly is the right leader at the right time for this province.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition, and I will be supporting the Throne Speech as moved by the member from Kindersley. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to join in the Throne Speech debate tonight in this fine evening in Regina. As is customary, and especially after an election, it's very, very needed, I believe, to recognize those that do bring us here, that put us here, and also those that work so hard to support us when we're gone, Mr. Speaker.

And of course, first and foremost is our families. And of course the glue that holds our family together is my wife, Leone. And just does an amazing job, whether it's raising our kids, helping to raise our grandkids, or supporting what I do here, Mr. Speaker, or looking after her 95-year-old mother in home, who does still live independently and does very well but of course needs a caregiver, especially in these COVID times where Leone is her main caregiver and her main contact to the outside world. So very, very blessed to have her in my life.

In fact, you know, we've been married for 34 years, together almost 40 now, Mr. Speaker, and just an amazing, amazing woman. And again I couldn't be here without her. She's just the love of my life and, of course, also one of my main campaign workers. Although this year, again with COVID, she had to maybe stay a little bit safer and make sure that she kept her mom safe and not have any cross-contact. Did a lot of work remotely, but amazing, Mr. Speaker, how much work she could do remotely from home and still, of course, be such an integral part of our campaign.

My two daughters, Katelin and Rayanne. Katelin is actually . . . When I was going through cancer treatment and surgery, she was one of my surgical nurses, almost like our own built-in doctor in a lot of ways, Mr. Speaker. But also she's taken on a new role at public health, and now with these COVID challenges she's actually testing and tracing, and one of those front-line workers who we are asking people to be kind to.

Mr. Speaker, you know, many stories she'll share with us, the challenges that she has in her job and how hard she works and how she takes it so seriously. And honestly, some of the abuse she has to put up with, Mr. Speaker. So as many said here, our front-line workers, we just need to be kind to them, Mr. Speaker.

And with her, of course, Katelin's married to Mark, our son-in-law. And together they have two daughters, stepdaughters. Raya, who is now 18 years old and away in school, also a very accomplished athlete, canoe and kayak coach, and competitor, Mr. Speaker. Don't get to see her as much as we had, but we still stay in close touch. And it's just great to see her doing so well as a young lady, Mr. Speaker.

And also Malaya, now 11 years old, going to school in Yorkton and just an amazing, amazing young lady, huge heart, just a really loving young lady. Very talented, taking after Katelin, my daughter, when it comes to artistic things like crocheting and art projects and things. And just again, an amazing young lady and amazing young babysitter, and just so proud to have her in our lives as well, Mr. Speaker.

[20:30]

In fact, Mark, he's an interesting fellow, a very hard-working man. Works a lot of construction and contract work and project management. And actually the former member of Walsh Acres, Warren Steinley, once was asking me about . . . He knew Mark from his hockey days and he called him Killer Cuthill. And it kind of surprised me because he's quite a mild-mannered guy that I know, but on the ice apparently he's a bit of an enforcer. So you know, I'm glad that I've got that protector looking after my daughter. But he also treats her like a young queen as well. So really, really happy to have Mark and the girls in our family, in our lives, Mr. Speaker.

And then my younger daughter Rayanne actually trained as a hairstylist, but now working in the financial industry. And her husband, Austin, is an oil field geologist, also working a short-term contract at Grain Millers in Yorkton, a huge oat processor in Yorkton. And they're building their dream house just outside of town. So it's just amazing to watch the blood, sweat, and tears they're putting into that, the hard work, and just an amazing dream home they're building for themselves and their kids.

Of course, Wynnslet, our actually first-born granddaughter, just an amazing young lady, growing up way too quick. She's coming close to being six years old, actually going to school with her cousin Malaya in the same school. So it's great to see them interacting and getting along so well as cousins, Mr. Speaker.

And then of course I've talked about him before, he's sort of my namesake, Otto Gregory. He'll be turning three in April and just growing up to be just an amazing young guy with a huge personality. Kind of takes after some other members in our family, I suppose.

And then the youngest one, Crew . . . Don't start assuming things and heckling. You know, members are heckling me. Crew is the newest member of our family, Mr. Speaker. He just turned a year in October and really growing up to be an amazing little fellow with an attitude as well and a real, real personality. So without them there's no way I could be here doing what I'm able to do, Mr. Speaker.

And of course my constituency assistants, who also were a big part of our campaign team, Lauretta Ritchie-McInnes, so I know she's watching, as well as Rachelle Sawatsky, Mr. Speaker. They

just do an amazing job running the office. Their skills complement each other and they just do an amazing job and make me look very good in the constituency, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's why we came back with such a strong showing this last election.

In 2007 when I first ran, former Deputy Premier Clay Serby was the NDP deputy premier at that time. I think he saw the writing on the wall. He saw the numbers weren't maybe in his favour. And I now still get along really well with Clay. We talk every now and then. But after 16 years and his own health challenges, he had decided it was time to retire. And we took the seat from the NDP with 60 per cent and then in 2011 we went to 72 per cent and '16 we went to 73 per cent and then this last time around, Mr. Speaker, 74.1 per cent.

So really, really humbled by the support we've gotten locally — the Sask Party and my family as well, Mr. Speaker — in the last number of elections, and a real honour to be here and representing them. And of course again, I couldn't do that without the hard work of Laurretta and Rachelle in the constituency office and, again, all the family members who support us here.

Some other key members of our campaign team, Mr. Speaker: Ty Klewchuk has been with me since I was first nominated in, like, late '04-05 I think. He's been, you know, no pun intended, kicking my butt, getting me motivated and through many elections and just a real knowledgeable guy. He's open to technology, but he's really old school at some times, Mr. Speaker, which really played very well through the number of elections we've had. And of course that's, I think, a testament to Ty's hard work to the numbers that we've been able to enjoy time and time again in elections for Yorkton and sending a member of the Legislative Assembly here to Regina in government for the Sask Party.

A lot of different people in the campaign team. It's pretty hard to touch on every one of them. We had a lot of great helpers. Everything from dropping door knockers to putting up signs and all the rest of it, Mr. Speaker. But this time it was pretty great to see an old friend of mine Joe Milburn, who's actually our former staff sergeant in Yorkton, who became my main sign guy. And between him and I we did the big signs, and Joe did the majority of the small signs pretty much all on his own with very little help, because we had limited help because a lot of our team was getting older and some of them, with COVID, didn't really want to get too much out in the public.

So Joe did the brunt of the work when it comes to signs, and his wife Anna, just a great, a great lady who did yeoman's work in the campaign office, administrative work day in and day out. And I just couldn't have done it without her. So you know, so many key people that have helped us through the election and to have the result we did.

I also want to join in many members congratulating our returning colleagues. We have a lot of bench strength over here and I know there's a lot of, you know, fairly senior members over on the opposition side as well. So congratulations to all those colleagues as well as the many new. We've got a lot of new people over here and over there. We've got a lot of them over there because of COVID spacing. And I've never been in a place where you had

half NDP and half Sask Party on one side of the House. But it's very interesting, and I think they're having a bit of fun over there, Mr. Speaker, seeing how the other half lives.

And you know, I'm so impressed with some of our new colleagues, you know, opposition as well. A little bit different philosophy I can tell, so it's going to be interesting to see how that all plays out, and the more we hear them speak and air their views and share their views in the public domain and on the floor of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

As I think the member for North Battleford touched on, there's no doubt that everybody comes here with the same intention. Different philosophical views, different way of maybe getting to those outcomes, but I have no doubt the members of the NDP over the years I've gotten to know that they definitely have the best of intentions, although different philosophy and a different, probably, plan to get there, Mr. Speaker.

Some really great speeches we've heard. It's kind of intimidating actually to hear the member from Arm River and the member from North Battleford and the member for Walsh Acres. And even the member for Martensville wasn't that bad. But some really impressive speeches and some really impressive stories that we've heard over here, Mr. Speaker. But again, many thanks to those that have retired on their own or, you know, those that haven't returned, Mr. Speaker.

The two I want to point out on our side of the floor in particular, Tina Beaudry-Mellor from Regina University. And I know the new member for Regina University was just over there speaking. And you know, again, you can tell she's got a real passion, a real heart, her own thought process when it comes to politics and what she wants to attain and maybe her own version of history and what this government is trying to do, Mr. Speaker.

But I can tell that member and the new member for Saskatoon University that took Eric Olauson's seat, Mr. Speaker, that these are two of the most passionate, hard-working constituency people I've ever met. There isn't an event they wouldn't be at. There isn't a job they would turn down. Just passionate and hard-working people. It was very, very saddening to see them not make it back here.

So, Mr. Speaker, again congratulations to those members across that took those seats, but I can tell them without trying to be smart at all, they have huge shoes to fill, Mr. Speaker. They have huge expectations in those constituencies to attend those events, to talk to those people, to forward their concerns. And that's a huge job that they're going to have. So of course best of luck to them.

And, Mr. Speaker, as well, congratulations on your election to the Chair. I would have loved to have been up there myself, but I know you've been in this place a lot longer than I do. You have a huge wealth of knowledge and respect for this Assembly. And you know, we couldn't have picked a better Speaker and I'm so glad to serve in this Assembly with you and with your wisdom and your work ethic and all of your experience, Mr. Speaker.

And Madam Speaker, Deputy Speaker, she's my friend from the North, the Prince Albert area. She's going to be an amazing Deputy Speaker as well, and of course our friend from Regina as well that is our Deputy Chair of Committees that is going to be

helping out. So congratulations to all of them. And again, thank you to the member from Coronation Park that served so dutifully as our Speaker for a number of years, Mr. Speaker. And we're just so thankful for the service that he did for all of us here as well.

Mr. Speaker, again I touch on the speeches so far have been just really, really good. Some of them very humorous. The new member from Riversdale talking about . . . him and I are car guys. He likes Fords. I like Chevys. So we kind of butt heads a little bit but his story about his Volkswagen and all that, very humorous. And I can tell he does have quite the sense of humour.

In fact I think it was yesterday, I got this random text on my phone from a number I didn't recognize and it was a constituent and he's asking me, you know, when's this going to be over and he's, you know, talking about some issues. And I'm trying to understand who it is and I said, I'm sorry, I don't recognize your number. But I'm trying, you know, give him some insight and some information. And he keeps going and I say, well I'm sorry, I don't recognize your number. I just got a new phone and I'm not sure who this is. He says, it's Jack. So I said, okay, Jack. So we're kind of going back and forth and he's starting to be a little bit obnoxious. And so I was being as diplomatic as I possibly can and I'm on the phone with my constituency assistant saying, do you know this name? Like he gave me his last name now and I don't understand who this is. And the member sticks his head in my door and he's laughing. I'm like be serious I'm on the phone here. I'm doing some work. And it just happens that he was the Jack on the phone testing my patience. So I know he's going to fit in around here really well. It's a lot of hard work, a lot of serious work, Mr. Speaker, but I think somebody touched on, we're a huge family over here and the member from Riversdale is going to be quite the handful in the family I think.

And, of course, you know I can't go on without talking about the fashion of the member from Arm River Watrous. I've never seen some of the nicest suits. They look great on him, tall and handsome and on a short fat guy like me, it wouldn't look so good. But he's got some great suits. I'm really looking forward to seeing what he's coming in here with next. He's been pretty business-like the last couple days. It's a disappointment now.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've just got one other member . . . The new members have all done such great jobs. And one other member I want to talk, the new member from Walsh Acres. Mr. Speaker, his opening speech, his main speech was so touching and you know, not to get into much of my own history, but you know that's one club you never want to belong to is the club of a bereaved parent, Mr. Speaker, and that touches anybody that's lost a child so deeply. And I can tell you from what I know, that takes a huge amount of courage and so close after such a tragic event. And, Mr. Speaker, my wife and I always talked about, you know, be better, not bitter. Choose the vowel. And I can tell the member from Walsh Acres and his family they're going through a terrible, trying time right now so closely after the loss of such a lovely young teenager. But they're going to make things better, not be bitter, I believe. And they're going to really come through this, and they're really going to help people with their experience and what they've learned, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm just so honoured to serve with, you know, the long-term members that have been here. But members like our new

colleagues here, some of the new members, new members across the floor, Mr. Speaker . . . It's just such a huge honour, so I'm just so blessed to be over here.

Again, the opposition members, congratulations to the new members that have come. Again, passionate, you know. And I'm not meaning to poke at them at all, Mr. Speaker. I know they're all here for the right reasons.

But it brought to . . . Listening to some of the speeches brought me back to about, I think, 10, 11, 12 years ago. I was speaking at an event with the member from Rosemont. And we flipped a coin and he went first. And the first thing that he said to this group we were talking to was social New Democrats by nature are critical and negative by nature, and believe the end is always justified by the means.

And that just . . . It burned into my mind, like from that many years ago. I thought, wow. That was kind of a . . . you know. I didn't know where that was coming from. But over the years I've kind of seen, you know . . . Not to be vindictive, but that is kind of the mentality, that is kind of the philosophy of a lot of the New Democrat members I run into. You know, it's kind of the doom and gloom. And I don't know what it is.

And maybe we're too positive sometimes. I've half joked before that my blood type is B positive. I can't help but be positive. But I just, you know, I'd hope and I would just pray that they'd be open-minded. They would listen, not trying to be too negative, trying to be open-minded.

Listen to some of the speeches like the member from North Battleford. Just I think he hit it on the head. He did such a great job of kind of communicating that. So I just encourage them to be open-minded and see us for people. We see them for people, and sometimes in this game it gets very divisive, and we have very different politics. And we start dehumanizing, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm speaking of myself. You got to look at people. It's so much easier when you look them in the eye and speak to them face-to-face instead of the social media stuff or, you know, yelling across the floor where you can hardly see somebody, Mr. Speaker. Just try and understand where somebody's coming from, from their experience. And that's what I've realized in this place.

You know, a number of years ago we went on a trip to . . . a CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] trip, Canadian parliamentary association trip. And I spent a lot of time with Kim Trew, former NDP member, very left-leaning. And I got to understand him quite a bit during his experience growing up on a co-operative farm and very much, you know, the socialist, very Marxist almost upbringing.

So after spending a lot of time, I could really understand where he was coming from. And I shared this story with him. He was trying to understand like where I was coming from as more of a conservative, I would say a free enterprise thinker with a very strong social conscience. I was always taught do well, but do well with what you have. Help another person out.

[20:45]

And I've always found that like members here, are we perfect? Far from it. Nobody over there is perfect. We're all human beings. But what I see, Mr. Speaker, is whether it's either side of the floor, is a bunch of human beings do the best they can with the information, the knowledge, and the tools at hand. And I can say that for both sides of the floor. Are we responding to everything perfectly? No. But I think we've got a pretty good record and I think the people of the province realize that and respect that. It's pretty indicative of the return to the Assembly and some of the numbers that I was talking about that I got locally, Mr. Speaker.

So it's about finding that balance and living in more reality, like instead of all ideology. And ideals are great. I mean, you have big views and I've got some big ideas sometimes too. And I may never get to that ideal, but I can attain a lot of good stuff on the way. And maybe you'll get to that big idea, but the amazing things you can get along the way if you don't lose sight of that vision, but still ground yourself in reality, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important.

So kind of coming back to that story I was telling Kim Trew, and it's kind of a long story. I'll try and keep it as tight as I can, Mr. Speaker. But basically I'd have been maybe eight years old and we had been living in Yorkton a short time, would have been 1970-71. So those are pretty different times. I mean, the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] was still in full swing, the full-communist USSR. And there was a fellow that was a veterinarian and his wife, they were both living in Czechoslovakia, part of the USSR at the time. And they defected. They had to go out different borders, different border crossings, rolled all their money they could put into cameras and they left the country separately. They were never allowed to take a holiday together. And they escaped and came to Canada. They ended up living in half of our duplex and becoming friends of ours.

So it just so happened we were out on a . . . He was a veterinarian. He was out on a road trip south of Melville in my dad's family's area, my home area. And my uncle was just a very strong NDP supporter. And you know, I never talked much politics. I love my uncle; he's a great guy. Different philosophy. But I really didn't at seven, eight years old, nine years old, I didn't have much of a political philosophy. And we're at the farm visiting and this gentleman went in to visit in the living room with my uncle. And I'm out in the kitchen with my dad and all my cousins and, you know, a really nice little visit.

And probably about a half an hour in there's yelling, screaming, and swearing and my uncle threw my dad's friend and he threw my dad and me out of the house. And we jump in the veterinarian's little Volkswagen and we're going down Highway 22, everybody in shock, everybody quiet. And my dad finally looked over and said, like, what in the heck happened? He says, I don't know. We were talking about family and where we're from and life experience and it was all really great. And then we started talking about politics. And dad says, what the heck did you talk about? He says, well he was telling me about his NDP here. And I say, that's exactly what I came from. That's why I escaped.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, not trying to be vindictive, and it might be extremes, but as a young boy, eight years old, what I knew this man risked his life to escape, and the stories he told.

He could come here and he could draw a direct correlation to the Saskatchewan NDP of the '70s and early '70s. That told me, just like the quote that my friend across the floor burned into my mind, that told me: I don't know what this NDP is, but it can't be that good if Milos could draw that direct correlation to that.

And, Mr. Speaker, that stuck with me. And then you know, growing up in the business world and being in business and running a business in the NDP years of the early '90s and on, it was a struggle. I couldn't understand why my friends were having the same type of business in Alberta and maybe even Manitoba and they were doing great. And we were struggling here all the time. And then as I got older and I started understanding the business policies and the practices and policies of the NDP, they were holding us back. And we've heard many stories about, you know, kids leaving the province and businesses struggling, Mr. Speaker, so I won't get too much into depth in those. But yes, it struck a chord with me. And, you know, I've been a very solid, conservative-minded person, but again with a strong social conscience, I believe, helping those who need help when I can, for many years.

So I touched a little bit on the idealistic and the reality, Mr. Speaker. And that's something I've even shared as a minister in some of our FPTs, federal-provincial-territorial meetings, calling on colleagues from across the country, whether Conservative, Liberal, NDP, or even Green, all the way in between. It's great to have those ideals, but we've got to also operate in reality when it comes to environmental, energy, all the rest of it.

I'm quite proud of the direction we're taking in this province when it comes to renewables and clean coal and even geothermal and bridging over towards small reactor technology. You know, Mr. Speaker, I think that's where we've got to go if we want to have a clean system. But we can't cripple our people. We can't cripple our economy. We can't cripple our province trying to attain a goal that's going to take some time to get to. So we've got to have a bit of a realistic rollout of those plans, Mr. Speaker.

You know, when I look at Prairie Resilience, I know my friend, the minister that represents Weyburn, he was instrumental in rolling that out I believe, you know, some of our emission targets in there, some of the plans at Prairie Resilience. I know I've talked to colleagues around, even in other countries, but around our country, and they recognize that Prairie Resilience is a real plan. I know the NDP don't like it and they'll shoot it down at whatever chance they can, but it is a real plan that has real targets. And it's achievable, Mr. Speaker, and we're well on the goal to rolling that plan out.

You know, I talked about energy. There's all kinds of balanced ways to sustain energy. It's unfortunate that the federal government came down so hard on our gas generation. We've got a couple of projects that'll be completed, but that is one great stopgap and baseload energy type of a support that can help with wind and solar and whatever else. But because we can't do that, we're going to have to find some other ways to achieve some of that baseload.

And even the net metering program, we still have it. I know many have criticized it but it's as good as any, I believe, in the country. So we still do have those net metering programs that are there to support those that want to get into those supports, Mr. Speaker.

You know, that's just touching on environmental energy a little bit.

But when I look at some of these other areas that, you know, I hear the members across criticize, you know, Sask Party doesn't care and all this sort of stuff, Mr. Speaker, I just shake my head. Like you know, I get it. It's politics and all the rest of it. But what I think sometimes when I hear some of that . . .

And it happened during our election. I had a great young candidate, Carter Antoine, I think his name was. Him and I had some really good conversations. But I could tell that he had drank the Kool-Aid quite a bit in some of the debates and conversations we had. And you know, he'd be talking about cuts. I'd say, what cuts? I'd throw him off because he really didn't know what cuts to talk about, just the cuts he was told about.

But as the member from Riversdale talked about cutting ribbons — pretty good line but, Mr. Speaker, it's true. In my time in Health, you know, not only did we work towards increasing the doctors . . . And the member from Indian Head was our first Health minister and got a lot of this stuff on the go. And we've had great Health ministers since — the member from Weyburn; the member from Rosetown; yourself, Mr. Speaker, you were Rural and Remote Health.

I was Rural and Remote Health for five years, and in my time alone we saw an increase in this province to 900 more doctors than under the NDP in '07. And that was due to recruitment and training. We had our physician practice assessment program for international doctors. We increased the training again under the member from Indian Head-Milestone, I believe it would have been, doubling the training seats at the University of Saskatchewan, but also distributing those training seats throughout the province to expose some of those professionals to rural areas that they might be more apt to go and serve there instead of only serving in the bigger centres. Residency positions were doubled, so we had them doing their residency in rural areas, Mr. Speaker. A lot of great stuff, and because of that we've got 900 more doctors here than we did then.

Well over 4,000 nurses. My daughter I talked about, a product of that. We increased the nurse training seats by 400 training seats, also distributed the learning around the province — 12 seats in Yorkton, Ile-a-la-Crosse. I've been everywhere, man, looking at some of these training centres and teaching these nurses, and then they're exposed to these areas and they get more apt to go and serve there.

You know we had, I think the number was 800 more CCAs [continuing care aid], and we made a commitment to 300 more continuing care assistants for long-term care and home care. That's going to also help, Mr. Speaker. So I'm telling you, for a party that doesn't care about people, we're not doing a very good job about not caring for people with all of the investments we're doing in health.

And when you start looking at infrastructure, my time in Rural and Remote Health, I cut the ribbon on the Moose Jaw Hospital, brand new, beautiful hospital in Moose Jaw. I was at the sod-turning for the Pattison children hospital, which it was just a heart-warming thing for me, Mr. Speaker, because as we're turning sod on the Pattison children hospital, I got to look up to

peds 3000. And that's the place my wife and I spent with our son for the better part of three years as he did his cancer journey, Mr. Speaker. And he would look down where that Pattison children hospital hole was that we were digging in, and that was a parkade, Mr. Speaker. He'd look out there and call that his car collection, because he'd look out and it looked like a Matchbox set opened up with all the cars in there. It was a car collection.

When my wife sent me the message that it's great that you're building a hospital in Brayden's car collection, it broke my heart. But it warmed me at the same time, Mr. Speaker, to think about the kids that we dealt with and that we got to meet on peds 3000, the ones that would come after, and the facility they have now. If anybody tours that place, you look at the professionals, you look at the services, it's amazing, Mr. Speaker. One of the only provinces not with a children's hospital, now we have a state-of-the-art one attracting some great physicians and health professionals to serve our kids for many, many decades to come. And I was able to, just as I transitioned over into Highways, I was able to go to the children's hospital and help with that opening, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford . . . And that's had some challenges but the NDP talked about it, never got anything done. We build it. I turned the sod; I was there for the opening. I've toured it. But once the issues are dealt with, which I'm trusting will be soon, it's going to be an amazing facility that will serve this province for many years.

Shock Trauma Air Rescue society, Mr. Speaker, I mean nobody can debate how great STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] has been to this province. And I know the NDP years back I remember, before we brought it in, they had heard about it. They didn't want to go down that road. They just didn't think this province deserved Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service. Mr. Speaker, fast forward, we've got it running. We have two helicopters in Regina, one as a backup, one in Saskatoon. And in my time in Rural Health, it was actually two years ago yesterday we announced the extension of the contract to 2030 and the renewal of the helicopter fleet, Mr. Speaker. They're going to have three new helicopters in short order and they've got a contract to 2030 to continue serving the people of this province. And that's something this party did, Mr. Speaker.

And again, we hear about the back-patting and all the rest of it. You know, you can't win because if you keep your mouth shut all you do is get criticized. But if you don't remind people what's happened, sometimes they forget, Mr. Speaker. And this isn't something . . . Yes, we're darn proud of that. We're darn proud of all of the stuff I talked about, but this is an investment on behalf of the people of this province. So by the opposition, you know, criticizing us for patting ourselves on the back, you better be criticizing every person in this province because it's their investment. We're doing that on their behalf. It's their investment. It's their service. It's not the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker. It's the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, and I even think about the investments in cancer care. I know where it was, you know, 10, 15, 20 years ago, and I know where it is today. In fact, I talked about my time in Rural and Remote Health, and a credit to Premier Brad Wall at the time. When I got diagnosed with colorectal cancer, he was going to pull me out of cabinet. And I said, you know what? I think I can

do this. And I think I could actually go through treatment and I can still hold down my duties.

So I was able to. I was actually in treatment. I was doing chemotherapy and radiation for six weeks before they figured out who the heck I was. I'd leave my office, I'd drive down, I'd run in with my tie and my jacket off, and almost like an episode of *Undercover Boss*, so to speak. But just amazing, amazing service, and it never changed once they figured out who I was. But boy we had some pointed conversations, I'll tell you. But just an amazing bunch of people working through the Allan Blair and through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, and now the Cancer Foundation of Saskatchewan, their fundraising arm that is doing a lot of the non-profit work and helping with some of the supports there, Mr. Speaker. So just a great group of people we were able to work with.

So then, you know, I just want to talk a bit about my time in Highways, Mr. Speaker, and the record of this government when it comes to highways. Record spending — almost \$10 billion we've spent so far on Highways and Infrastructure to date. In fact, last fall before I moved into the Whip position, we had the largest fall tender schedule in this province's history. And then you couple that with a stimulus package coming out, 300 million next year, it's record spending in Highways in this province, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at the twinning that's happened; when you look at the passing lanes that have happened; when you look at the thin membrane goals that are going to be happening over the next little while; when you look at some of the park improvements we're going to see over the next year — access roads to parks, five different provincial parks getting a major paving, some of the bathrooms and water systems and stuff that had been invested in parks, Mr. Speaker. Are we proud? Darn rights we are. But it's on behalf of the people that are using those parks, Mr. Speaker. They're very happy with what we've done with them.

And, Mr. Speaker, another thing I was really encouraged by when I was . . . Just a couple of months back I did a northern airport tour, touring airports to see the infrastructure and also meet with the leaders as we were out on that tour. And, Mr. Speaker, what I heard was, one was you know . . . Although they'd quite often admit, you know, we kind of vote NDP up here but boy, I'm sure glad you guys have fixed this road and that road and this airport and that airport. They're just over the moon with how much we've paid attention. The Wollaston Lake road now is under way, which eventually when that is a four-season road we'll do away with the ice road and then we can possibly do away with the barge, you know, when it needs replacing, Mr. Speaker, once that's a four-season road.

Or the other investments we're making in northern airports, Mr. Speaker, it's very well appreciated. And we have a lot of good support up there.

[21:00]

I was with the Water Security Agency for a little bit of time and I was really encouraged to be there in the time we got the irrigation project up and running, Mr. Speaker. So the first section of the west side and up the . . . Now it's going to be 80,000 acres. The next section, when we start pushing up towards

the South Saskatchewan River, 260,000 more acres irrigable land. Then once we finally get to the Qu'Appelle south, another 120,000 acres plus water supply for Moose Jaw, Regina, and a lot of different towns, Mr. Speaker. That is going to be a game changer in this province when it comes to not only irrigation and agriculture production and value-added, but also long-term sustainability, you know, when it comes to climate challenges and all that with some of these communities needing water supply. And agriculture, Mr. Speaker. I've just had such a great experience in my time here that I've been able to take part in so many of these different initiatives.

I just want to talk briefly, as I can, on some of the local investments and what some of the great investments we've seen in my home community of Yorkton and area, Mr. Speaker. Roads and highways, urban highway connector program, passing lanes, 9 and 10. We've got, you know, in the short next little while we've got an urban connector improvement done to the one of the roughest roads going through Yorkton connecting 16 and 9, York Road, Mr. Speaker. That's all in the plans.

We've got, you know, great projects. We've partnered with the city when it comes to drainage projects and bridges, education facilities. We've got a brand new Parkland College that's, you know, a number of years old now — five years or so — greatly serving the community for post-secondary. And now the minister of Education, now Minister of Justice, approved a \$19 million renovation to our Yorkton Regional High School there. It's going to serve our community for many years.

The community airport partnership has really benefited our home community of Yorkton, Mr. Speaker. In fact the last intake we had was a year ago where we had the full rehab of our main runway done. Yorkton's been one of the biggest recipients of that. And then now Moosomin is a really big recipient. They're moving to really improve the airport there and they're benefiting as well.

But I think the last year there was one or two maybe projects that weren't approved through the CAP [community airport partnership] program because of the investment of this government virtually doubling that, but also being able to approve all those projects.

And I have to also mention our hospital in Yorkton. It's definitely going to need improving and replacing in the next number of years. We've had \$500,000 in planning money allocated last budget, a commitment through this election, and we'll see the planning and scoping coming and then the eventual replacement of that facility. That's something I'll focus on as well, Mr. Speaker.

I better just get to the Throne Speech here. So I mean so many people have talked about these different initiatives. I'll just touch on some of the main ones that I know are going to benefit our community so well. I mean a lot of these benefit everybody in the province, Mr. Speaker, but the 10 per cent reduction in SaskPower rates is something that I hear from everybody. It's just a great initiative and very appreciated through public, through business, and through private, Mr. Speaker. The reno tax credit we know is going to be a boon to those out there that are staying at home more. They're already doing some renovating, but now they can get a little bit of a benefit through that

renovation home tax credit.

The new Ministry of SaskBuilds, I think, is going to be really, really good. You know, we hear the members opposite quite often criticizing about keeping these jobs in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Some of the last days that I had in Highways, some of the last contracts we had go out, well over 90 per cent, around 90 per cent of those contracts were to Saskatchewan businesses. In fact, if I can recall some of the last ones that went out, the only ones that never went to Saskatchewan companies were because we never had Saskatchewan bidders on most of those, Mr. Speaker.

And even with SaskBuilds, building capacity — helping businesses in the province build capacity — I did an announcement just shortly, a short time ago before the election. A Saskatoon company is partnering with First Nations, and they're doing a lot of the signs now for the Ministry of Highways. So a lot of great initiatives, and a lot of it driven through SaskBuilds, of course with a Sask focus and a Saskatchewan business focus, Mr. Speaker.

A reduction to zero per cent of our business tax rate is going to help our small business, there's no doubt, slowly stepping it back up to the 2 per cent over the next number of years. Something again very appreciated.

Oil and gas incentives, I know other members have talked about those in detail, Mr. Speaker, as well as the supports for people. The insulin pump program expansion, expansion of funding for autism, and I can't remember which one of my colleagues talked about that. But in the last days of the NDP, \$500,000 was kind of just handed out to the autism world, Mr. Speaker. I know we had increased that prior to some of these last increases in the individualized funding, like well over 1,000 per cent and I'm not even sure what the percentage is now. It's unheard of support. You know, if we don't care about people, again, we're not doing a very good job, because we're supporting some of the most vulnerable in this province.

The supports for the Deaf-blind community, Mr. Speaker, I think some of my colleagues have talked about that. More care assistance for long-term care home care, we talked about that as well, Mr. Speaker. As well as I know, I think the member from University was talking about the high cost of tuition.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the tax rates in this province for those paying taxes, we've taken 112,000 of the lowest income earners off the tax rolls, mainly seniors, some students off the tax rolls. They're not paying taxes. When you look at the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, when you look at the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker, if those students stay and work in this province in the years following, they get a huge chunk of that back.

And you know, is there still some families that are challenged and having struggles? Absolutely. And this government's always looking at ways to help those. But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the level of education available with the supports for students and families in this province, Mr. Speaker, those are initiatives that were not here under the members opposite.

Increases for seniors' ambulance, and I'll admit in my time in

Health it was something we heard of quite regularly, the cost of ambulance. And you know, I'm sure we're going to get criticized. There's more you can do and there is always more you can do, Mr. Speaker, but it's a balance. I mean with this I am not sure what the numbers are, but I know when you look at air ambulance and STARS, it's around an 80, 90 per cent subsidy for those services. When you look at your ground ambulance, it's about a 71 per cent, maybe slightly more with this new program, Mr. Speaker, but ambulance is highly subsidized. Other provinces do cover more but when you look at it, it's a balance. What don't you cover in this province? I mean you look at, again, going back to our cancer care in this province and the state-of-the-art cancer care and the level of coverage for our cancer patients in this province, you know, there's a give and take.

The members opposite sometimes think there's a money tree and there's all kinds of promises and you should fund this, you should fund that, you should fund that, but then they might even talk about balancing. Like, it's not . . . You can't have it both ways. You have to run that balance. You have to make your priorities, Mr. Speaker, and I'll say more often than not, I'm pretty happy with the priorities that this government puts on the programs and the people.

Supporting communities, Mr. Speaker. We talked about the rink program, child care spaces, the active family benefit, and more. And I know some of the members did talk at length about our financial situation and where we're going, the AAA credit rating and all the rest, Mr. Speaker. Someday maybe I'll have more time to talk about the growth plan and of course how we stand up for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess that's the last comment I'll make before I take my seat is, as I heard members opposite talking about — I can't remember who it was — but they talked about not playing nice with the feds, Mr. Speaker. And I've heard it said on our side of the floor before, they want to wave the white flag. Mr. Speaker, we're here to stand up for Saskatchewan residents. We're here to stand up for the Saskatchewan people. And if we're not being treated fairly by the Ottawa, we're not going to bend over and, you know, not stand up for our fellows here in this province. We're going to not wave the white flag. We're going to stand up to those in Ottawa for the betterment of our province, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, with that I'm just going to say thank you for the time, Mr. Speaker. I know I've gone quite long. The members opposite, I think they have another speaker tonight. So you know, God bless this province, and I'm happy to be here. I'm happy to be supporting my government in this Throne Speech. I'm proud to be running and working under this government, under the Premier, the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

I will be supporting this Speech from the Throne. I will not be supporting the members opposite amendment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your new role as well. I don't think I've had an opportunity to thank you on the record yet and congratulate you.

We just came out of an election campaign so I think it's fitting to speak about that a little bit. I wouldn't be here today without the dedicated work of my campaign team. We worked so hard to demonstrate our values and to put forward a different vision for Saskatchewan that puts people first. We had so many conversations on doorsteps, although they looked a little bit different this time. I'm sure everyone can relate to this, you know, keeping our distance, being very COVID conscious throughout those interactions. But we also had a lot of conversations over the phone, over text, online, on social media with people who remain committed to these same values. And ultimately I was honoured when the people of Saskatoon Fairview decisively threw their support behind these ideals as well.

I can't thank everyone, but I do want to put a special word of thanks on the record for my core campaign team. Darcy Thiessen was our guiding light as campaign manager. He provided strategy, critical thinking, and flexibility while keeping all of us happy. I also want to thank Twyla and Avery who made sure that we broke records in the number of voters we ended up contacting, and Nadia for organizing our efforts to remind people to vote. And to our office managers, our full-time canvassers, our sign crew, of course I can't name everyone, but I do want to thank you for all of the sacrifices you made in time and energy throughout the campaign.

And my family showed up in an amazing way during this election taking on so many roles when campaigning isn't always people's first choice in their comfort zone, so I want to thank them for that. I also want to thank my volunteers. These people were motivated by the vision we put forward and were able to see their thoughts and concerns in what we had on offer. These folks were tirelessly out on the doorsteps, making sandwiches, dropping leaflets, making phone calls, and putting up signs. We know that campaigns are certainly a team effort and this campaign was no different. And I really was overwhelmed by their support. I'm in that stage now where I'm starting to draft thank you cards and I'm overwhelmed by the amount of cards that require drafting this time around.

I offer my sincere congratulations to Manny Sadhra, Tobi-Dawne Smith, and Tony Ollenberger on their campaigns. I am no stranger to elections. Even though I've only been at this since 2014 when I started running, this was my third election and I'm happy to not have to do it again any time soon.

I especially want to thank my partner, Grayson Beaudin, who's been along for every one of these election rides, or maybe roller coasters. He is my number one support person. He has the patience to deal with me when work pulls me away or causes me stress. He follows the issues closely and actively engages with them, so he's always willing to have a political debate or provide advice. And he is so selfless during campaigns.

During this election, that meant teaching for a full day at school during COVID when everything's new, looking after our fur babies at home, and running to the campaign office after that to do whatever needed to be done. Most of the time that meant door knocking until 8 p.m. He would apologize when he needed to take a day to work on his master's degree, and he didn't take a moment for himself. And I know that I am incredibly lucky to have him by my side, propping me up, and telling me that I can

do this every day.

And I also want to provide a special word of thanks to Twyla Harris Naciri, who holds down the fort as my CA [constituency assistant], and she's been with me since the beginning. She works so hard to listen to the concerns of constituents, and she's been flexible and thoughtful in managing the challenges of COVID-19 in the office. We've been through highs and lows together in the constituency office but also in the years prior in my work with her as fellow Canadian Forces members. I'm so grateful that Twyla has agreed to keep spending time with me in the campaign office, and I'm really excited that she and her husband are expecting their first child this spring. I want to congratulate them and wish them all the best as they build their family.

I also want to say a special word of thanks to the caucus staff in our office here. We know we have a small but mighty team here, and that's true also in our caucus office. There's a lot of folks that work to make us look like we know what we're doing every day and, in particular, I do want to thank Kat Norton. You know, Kat is an issues management officer and she spends so much time poring over all the details, knowing the institutional knowledge. She's got Health totally figured out and she is my rock at the caucus office and helps me so much to be able to do my job.

[21:15]

It is strange to be back here after an election without some of our members. I grew accustomed to listening to the wisdom of Warren McCall in caucus. I admired the commitment to research of Cathy Sproule and the passion of Danielle Chartier. And David Forbes has also retired. I met David far before I knew I would end up in this role, back when I was the commanding officer of 2293 army cadets. And he has always been such a strong mentor. He encouraged me to run, gave me guidance, and then also helped me out whenever I needed someone to confide in once I was elected. It feels strange to be in this space without these folks.

And it's strange to have an election week instead of an election day this year, as we waited for results for the mail-in ballots. I was sad to see Yens Pedersen and Nicole Rancourt go, but very happy to welcome back our leader and the member from Regina University as well. It's also a joy to welcome new members to this place. I see so much bright optimism from our team despite the challenging work ahead as a small opposition with limited resources.

And I'm incredibly encouraged that over 50 per cent of our caucus is women. Politics has a long way to go to be representative of our population, but I think this is an amazing direction. Our team is the first caucus in Saskatchewan history to have more women than men in the legislature. I've always been an advocate for women belonging in all places where decisions are being made, and it seems appropriate to paraphrase Ruth Bader Ginsburg this year. We still have work to do, but I'm so proud of our party and leader for seeking out these amazing women — strong, fierce, community leaders — and I'm really excited to see what they can do, which brings us to the work at hand.

We're currently battling a brutal pandemic. And as much as I think the government was hoping it would pass us by,

Saskatchewan has not been spared. As I stand here wearing a mask and thinking about the privileges we've been afforded — spacing between co-workers, Plexiglas shields, a reduced number of members in the Chamber — I can't help but think about those who are on the front lines of this pandemic. I want to thank all of those on the front lines, our doctors, nurses, staff, the whole health care team who have struggled to keep themselves and patients safe for the past eight months and who are really struggling right now.

And I want to thank all of the other essential workers who have been putting themselves at risk to allow so many of us to stay home and to stay safe. We've had groups of doctors writing unprecedented letters, along with pharmacists and nurses and public health experts, all calling on the government to take action before it's too late. And sadly our modelling shows that we are on track to a more dire situation. We had the third-highest infection rates in Canada this week. We have not beaten COVID; it's beating us. And if we rewind back to eight months ago when our first case of COVID-19 came in, this government was laughing at us in question period for raising concerns in this Assembly, for doing our jobs, for fighting for the people of this province. It's completely shameful.

So they were wrong about the risks of this virus and it was something we needed to be concerned about. I've been wrong a time or two before. I know what it feels like. And when I'm wrong I feel ashamed for a minute or two, but then I pick up and I try and learn from those mistakes so that I can grow stronger and be a better version of myself for the next day, because that's what you're supposed to do. So I think any reasonable person would expect the government would have spent the last eight months figuring out how to tackle this virus. But in the past month it's become painfully obvious that this wasn't the case.

This Throne Speech could have been presented back in July. I can't believe there are no new plans in Health. I actually can't believe it. As Health critic, I've become acutely aware of some of the challenges faced by health care workers, but also concerns about the quality of care that patients receive. It's a great deal of the concerns that come our way in my constituency office and also in the caucus office.

And I heard about these concerns on doorsteps as well. They reach me from every direction. People are talking to me on email. They come on Facebook. There's Instagram direct message. There's Twitter direct message. From every possible direction I hear about concerns with the response to COVID and concerns about the quality of care. And I hear from so many health care workers in my riding, and I heard from them as I was going door to door.

This Throne Speech is a missed opportunity for what's happening in the province today. It's a missed opportunity to take urgent action that's needed to fight the second wave of COVID-19. We have significant challenges in contact tracing in a timely fashion, which makes it very challenging to catch the virus before it spreads. We are only now sorting out using rapid testing, well after it was available. And testing has been inaccessible with long lineups at drive-through testing, waiting too long to get tested, and waiting far too long to hear your results.

Now we're hearing in Saskatoon people are calling 811 for a test like they're supposed to, and they're being told to go to the drive-through lineup. What happens if you don't have a car? What happens if you don't have four hours to spend in a drive-through, if you don't have the luxury of being able to leave your job for four hours for that test? We've heard countless examples of these challenges, as people take to social media or the media to express their frustrations.

So many experts say that the way to get a handle on this virus is to aggressively test, trace, and isolate. COVID is beating us. There are significant outbreaks in long-term care with Parkside Extendicare reporting 90 patients, multiple deaths that are on the rise, people dying alone in their rooms because staff can't sit with them. We've raised these concerns today. We've been raising these concerns for years though about the staffing levels in long-term care. Last year I stood in this Assembly and asked questions about Parkside Extendicare, what are they doing to improve the quality of care? We were assured everything's fine. When people are four to a room, don't have any privacy, the conditions are ripe for a virus to spread.

And we asked the government today, what are you going to do to make sure that this doesn't happen in other seniors' facilities? We did not get an answer. This is not good enough. COVID is beating us. We've called attention to the quality of care issues and the need for minimum care standards for years. And it is so disheartening to see the virus spreading at such an alarming rate in our seniors' facilities. We know that before COVID the health care system was already strained, but COVID-19 has served to exacerbate these problems.

We know during the pandemic everyone has had to make sacrifices, and most people have been compliant on public health orders even though it's been a challenge. You know, several of us stayed home throughout the summer, made sure that we were only meeting with people outside, are really following the updates . . . So many people are following the updates to see, you know, are they in compliance? Is there anything we need to adjust in their own lives? I think for the most part people have been following the rules, and I think that it's unfair to say that the problem is only with compliance.

The problem has been the fact that there have been so many mixed messages in terms of what the public health orders are. And that's where the confusion has arisen, is that the public health orders have changed under this government every five minutes. So people call our office trying to figure out what is going on today; what's the news today? And when we have government being resistant to the public health advice of experts and just throwing a press conference for the sake of throwing a press conference, it serves to add confusion. And we have a government that will not be straight about a mask mandate and was waffling on this for months while people were getting infected. These mixed messages have not helped with the spread.

Now there are a few other issues I want to address that are outside of Health, despite the fact that I'm the Health critic. I'm sure we've all engaged in conversations with business owners in our communities. Some of us are business owners, have family members who are business owners. We know they were struggling before the second wave of the pandemic hit and that this government's inaction has made the future bleak. Instead of

taking meaningful action that would get COVID under control, there will be prolonged suffering in the health care field and for businesses and jobs.

And my partner is a teacher, and they've been working so diligently to try to do their job safely. But we know that schools were already under so much pressure before the pandemic, with ballooning class sizes, complex classes. There's not the space to physically distance in classrooms. They don't have the luxury of Plexiglas shields. Kids are sitting at tables together. Sure, they're wearing masks throughout parts of the day, but when lunch hour hits and the classroom turns into a lunch room, they're sitting right beside each other sharing that air.

So I want to thank teachers who are doing the best that they can in a very stretched environment where there were cuts to education. And they felt these very significantly in the school. You know, they don't have a full-time teacher-librarian anymore. It's like a half day or something a week. They have a rotating cast of support individuals that come in. I know the staff very well at my partner's school, and I didn't even know the name of the school counsellor because of how infrequently that individual is assigned to the school.

Schools today aren't like they were when we were growing up. You don't get an EA [educational assistant] dedicated to a classroom or a specific child unless there are very specific needs there. So I want to thank teachers for all they're doing right now, and really identify that the province has not been stepping up to provide the supports, and simply just waiting until the federal government steps in to provide supports.

But I want to assure people that we won't give up, despite these challenges. As the official opposition, we will keep doing our jobs to fight for yours. We're determined to fight for people, for small businesses, for schools, for health care during this session. We're determined to keep up that fight. And for these reasons and many more, I will not be supporting the main motion. I'll be supporting the amendment. Thank you for your time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a little difficult to speak with the mask on and I'm, as everybody knows, kind of a quiet person so I hope you can hear me. Mr. Speaker, first off I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Speaker, and also the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. I also want to thank our member from Coronation Park, who did a fantastic job over the last few years. I greatly appreciate what he does. I don't think people realize. I've been around long enough to realize that the Speaker's job is not an easy job and it's not just in the House. There's all the other things that come along with it. It is a very big commitment. So I want to thank the member from Coronation Park for doing that job as well as he did.

You know, there are so many people to thank. This election was like none I've ever been around before with the COVID and everything. You know, we're used to having our campaign office. Rural is done way differently than in the cities. And you know, our campaign office, we always had doughnuts and brownies and butter tarts. People would stop in and we'd have the coffee. People would stop in all the time and we'd shoot the

breeze. Like I said, it's way different than in the city where you go out and knock on doors all the time and whatnot. Yes, we go out but it's not the same.

[21:30]

I want to really thank the people of Carrot River Valley for putting their trust in me again. This is my fourth kick at the cat. Sorry for all the cat lovers out there, which I happen to be one. I was actually a bit surprised to be returning. I think it was more done on the party's end with our Premier and whatnot than myself because, you know, I'm a little different; I'll admit that. And I was actually surprised to be going back in there. And I had great opposition this time, a fellow by the name of Rod McCorriston who was originally from Tisdale. He worked for the union here in Regina, and he came up and ran, and I give him credit. We both had a very clean campaign. He seemed like a nice person, just a bit misguided obviously.

But you know, as everybody does, we always want to talk about our constituencies. And for those of you people who haven't been up to the wonderful Carrot River Valley constituency, I definitely would invite you to come up there. I always say it's the best constituency in all of Saskatchewan. I know that the other members kind of think theirs is the best, but heck, they haven't seen the lakes and the trees and the golf courses and all the stuff that we have up there. Yes, and a wonderful MLA too, I'd have to say.

But it is a very vibrant constituency, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have lumber mills. We've got two huge lumber mills operating there. We have Dunkley Lumber running out of Carrot River. It's a very large stud mill. And then we have Weyerhaeuser operating out of Hudson Bay in their strand board plant. And of course, lumber has actually come along pretty good right now. The lumber prices have really increased so it's definitely helping out the bottom line for the government. Of course those plants were shut down when the NDP was in power but we won't get into that. Well yes, we will.

An Hon. Member: — You just did.

Mr. Bradshaw: — Yes, just a little bit. They were shut down while the NDP was in power and they started back up when they saw that the Saskatchewan Party made a better business case.

We also have, and this is a very little-known fact: Ag Vision Seeds, which is right in Carrot River, is the largest grass seed cleaning plant in North America. And this is not a very well-known fact but it's an absolutely huge plant. It started out by a fellow from Hong Kong who found out what communism was like over there, and came over here and definitely liked the way that things were over here rather than under the socialist system.

Then we have the peat moss plant in Carrot River, Premier Peat Moss, which also is a very large plant and ships 24 hours a day. Peat moss goes all over the world from . . . I shouldn't say all over the world, goes all over North America. Trucks go in and out of there seven days a week. They haul right down to California, Texas. I was actually out to a mushroom-growing operation out in British Columbia and was touring the plant. And when I went out back, I looked at the bags. I was touring it with

the owner, and I said, that peat moss came from our plant right in Carrot River. And that's what they were using out in Vancouver.

The other thing we have up there is wonderful snow toboggan trails, Mr. Speaker. This is a real big thing for our tourism industry. There's about 1000 kilometres of snowmobile trails between Hudson Bay and Carrot River. There's 15 warm-up shacks. These warm-up shacks were all built by volunteers on there. We have probably, between the Carrot River snow goers and the Hudson Bay Trail Riders, we probably have close to a million dollars in grooming equipment to keep all those trails operating. These are all operated by volunteers from our different clubs. And I'll tell you what, trying to get a hotel room up there in the wintertime is just about impossible because of all the sledgers that we have coming from all over the province. And it's a great, great thing.

And for those of you who don't like sledding and whatnot, oh, I forgot to mention about the fishing. Tobin Lake. Tobin Lake is the walleye capital of the world. Mr. Speaker, anybody can go out and catch a fish in Tobin Lake. Even our member from Weyburn, who doesn't know what a lake is, can actually go up there and catch a fish in Tobin Lake. And the world record ice fishing walleye was caught by Father Walleye — and he's called Father Walleye because he is a Catholic priest — and he caught the world record ice fishing walleye out of Tobin Lake. It's known all over North America.

This year was the exception, but most of the years they have tournaments up there and pull people from all over North America to come up there and fish. And these aren't little tournaments. Like I mean they've got . . . There's huge prizes there, like I mean a hundred thousand dollar-type prizes. I have not gone in it.

And then of course we have golfing, and quite a few people come up there. They come up there for the fishing and the golfing. And they can actually do a tour around of the Nipawin golf course, then there's Rolling Pines up by Tobin Lake, and the Pasquia golf course. And what they do is they go around and make that as a tour.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a few more things that . . . Wow, I'd be remiss, Mr. Speaker, when I'm actually from Carrot River, and I haven't mentioned it for quite some time about our provincial football team who won the provincial championship four times — the Carrot River Wildcats. They probably would've won this year but unfortunately COVID shut that down. But, Mr. Speaker, we have a great football team. A lot of times we've had up to 500 people out to a game. Actually I've seen 1,000 people out to a game when we're in the playoffs. So this is pretty good for a town of 1,200.

But when I go into education, I want to talk about another thing. The NDP keep on saying we're not putting any money into education. I know it's hard to believe, but that's what they're saying. Well, Mr. Speaker, since we've been in government there's been a new school in Porcupine Plain, which isn't in my constituency but it's awfully close. A brand new school built in Porcupine Plain. A brand new school built in Hudson Bay. And just this year, just this year we have a brand new school announced for Carrot River. Mr. Speaker, that's putting your

money where your mouth is.

Now it took a little bit of work getting that school in Carrot River, I have to admit. The Minister of Education said ever since he announced the school, the butter tarts and brownies quit coming to his office. But I told him I had more ministries to work with; I was done with his.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is some of the things we are doing. Cumberland Community College, that's another one on the education end. What we have now is we have Cumberland Community College is now doing university classes. So people can actually stay at home and take their first couple of years in our community colleges. We built a brand new Cumberland Community College — I think, what was it, 2008 or 2009; I can't remember — in Nipawin. Put up a brand new facility. That facility is already full. I'm suggesting to the Minister of Advanced Education, while we're building this new school in Carrot River, maybe we should think about putting another classroom in there for Cumberland Community College also. Hope that works out.

You know, Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the things that we're doing for education. One of the other things that we've done is putting in — and I've got it here somewhere — in education, is putting in the PMR [preventative maintenance and renewal] allocations for the different school districts. I talked to one of the directors on our school board, and he said that was one of the best things that's ever happened. Because originally under the NDP, if they had some kind of a problem within the school, they had to go back and ask for a grant and have all the bureaucracy go through and get it done.

With that money sitting there, they can instantly go and fix that problem. And he explained that they had a real boiler problem in one of the schools in Melfort. They didn't have to worry about going back to the government, trying to get a grant, until it was down that they would have to replace the whole thing. They got that fixed and up and running in a hurry. Mr. Speaker, these are things that this government has done to help get rid of some of that red tape that's going along in there.

Another thing to talk about, the seniors. We're letting down the seniors. Well first off we've got, we've built — what is it? — 15, or is it 14 and we've got one more on the go right now for building new seniors' homes, one of them again in the Carrot River Valley constituency, right in Tisdale. Plus with the COVID end of it, we're going to get 300 more people working in these seniors' homes to help out with the COVID end of it. Plus we're also, on the lower income seniors, raising that seniors' rate all the way up. By the time we're done, it'll be up to \$360, where it was only \$90 for 16 years under the NDP. Now who's looking after the seniors, this government or the NDP?

We can also talk about Habitat for Humanity. You know, Mr. Speaker, the first home built for Habitat for Humanity outside of the larger centres was done right in Nipawin, right in the Carrot River Valley constituency. And there has been many homes put up there in both Nipawin, Tisdale, and these are working out very well.

We actually had a couple of debates during our election campaign, and I've heard it in the House here too, how we keep

on hiring outside work to work on our highways. Like they sit there while your vehicles are from Alberta or they're from Manitoba or they're from Ontario. I had to mention to Rod McCorriston when we were doing that, when we were having this debate, well we just built a new highway, 255 running up to Tobin Lake — brand new highway that the NDP had neglected forever. It was full of holes.

Tobin Lake. You have to realize the resort village of Tobin Lake is a huge tourist draw and the people didn't even want to go up there with their \$100,000 motor homes or big trailers or big boats and pull them on the highway because it was so bad. Built a brand new highway going up there. Just got completed actually this fall. Guess who it was done by: Potzus construction out of Yorkton and Bryden Construction out of Arborfield. Those people aren't from Alberta, they're not from Manitoba, and they're not from Ontario. These are Saskatchewan people, local contractors.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that was brought up, another thing that actually is tendered — the tender closes today; it's the 7th — Highway 55, Highway 55 going through to The Pas. It's your northern route, runs across . . . It's an east-west route running across Saskatchewan that we desperately need because, Mr. Speaker, in our growth plan that we've come up for our . . . up to 2030, we want to support the port of Churchill. I have been an advocate for the port of Churchill for a long time. I belonged to the Hudson Bay Route Association pretty well forever.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is way cheaper to ship our product, it's a third of the price to ship our grain through the port of Churchill than it is rather than shipping it through Thunder Bay or Vancouver, plus we always seem to have problems out on the left coast. I don't know what it is, but it always is a problem out there. We can't seem to get a pipeline out there. We can't seem to move grain properly through there.

So, Mr. Speaker, rather than going through the left coast, I think what we should be doing, not only looking at shipping grain and our other products in and out of there, we should also be looking at shipping oil through Churchill. That requires a pipeline. I know that doesn't sit well with the other side because "pipeline" is kind of a swear word to them, but it's one of the best ways to move product. We could ship oil. We could ship natural gas along that same route.

[21:45]

Mr. Speaker, while we were having our debate, and this is kind of one of the funny things about doing debates, and it was brought up . . . one of the questions brought in there was would we restart . . . Well I actually went to this Rod McCorriston. Would we restart the STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company]? And he said, oh yes we would restart the STC. But then the question was, well how would you do it and what would it cost? Well he said, we haven't decided exactly on how we would do it but we plan on doing it. And so, you know, I guess then that being the case, then consequently we can't exactly say what the cost is. Well, Mr. Speaker, having a plan to make a plan is no plan. It's really quite simple.

Another one was brought up was, when would you balance the budget? Well we plan to balance the budget sometime. Mr. Speaker, it goes on again. Having a plan to make a plan is

no plan.

And the thing is, is I guess I can get into this part of it now. Well no, actually I wanted to give a little bit of credit here first because I wanted to talk about our Finance minister who's done a masterful job of putting together how we are going to balance the budget by 2024. What a wonderful young Finance minister, much younger than some of the other ministers, like from Saskatoon. We won't mention any names there.

But okay, Mr. Speaker, the thing is, you know, some of the problems we have within this province . . . And I'm surprised that this actually hasn't come up today. Like it was big news about Evraz yesterday and I certainly feel sorry for those workers that are going to be losing their jobs out there. Somehow the NDP members from Regina now sit back. Oh, this is terrible. What a terrible thing to have happen, you know, and we're going to lose all these workers. Well maybe they should think about supporting pipelines. That's what's made out at Evraz, Mr. Speaker. They sit there . . . I'll guarantee you that they were campaigning for Jagmeet Singh, who has said no more pipelines should ever be built.

Mr. Speaker, the only one I've heard on that side that stood up for pipelines is the member from Rosemont. That's the only one I heard over there that actually stood up for pipelines. Guess he kind of gets it. These are Saskatchewan jobs. These are things that we need in Saskatchewan. What better way to transport oil. What better way to transport natural gas. And contrary to what they're saying over there, oil and natural gas are going to be around for a long time. And if you want to kill Saskatchewan's economy, wow, you're going to be sitting over there for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things that are coming up and have come up through this whole thing is, the other thing we did is . . . and it's very important with Saskatchewan. And it's been brought up by some of the other members, but I'm going to bring it up again, mainly because I'm a firearms owner. And our federal government has been . . . to say a disaster on firearms is an understatement.

They want to come and confiscate quite a few of the guns I have that I paid for, bought legally. I'm licensed. I also have a restricted licence. And they want to come and confiscate some of the guns I have just because they look, they look like they should be confiscated, I guess. They haven't really come out with any idea of how they should do it. So what we did was we are hiring our own Firearms Officer here in Saskatchewan so we can have some reasonable say. We can't do everything on it but at least we'll have some say on how this is going to operate within our own province, and rightfully so.

Mr. Speaker, going back to our plans, and I guess this actually wasn't kind of in the Throne Speech — well sort of was and not — but, Mr. Speaker, last year when we could get together, we had probably one of the best caucus summer retreats I've ever seen. And we came up with our growth plan for 2030. Mr. Speaker, the things that we want to see happen in Saskatchewan by 2030 are absolutely amazing. This province is going to be booming, Mr. Speaker. I know times . . . That was before COVID hit. Times is tough, let's face it. COVID isn't helping at all. It's hard on the people, it's hard on business, it's hard on everybody.

But, Mr. Speaker, we get through this, Saskatchewan is posed to come out of this better than any other province in the nation.

We have the people to be able to do it. We have the mentality of the people in this province that want to move that forward. You can tell by how many people got elected on this side compared to that side. We have the wherewithal to move this province forward and we will move this province forward. We're going to be one of the strongest provinces in all of Canada, and I am very proud to be a small little cog in that wheel to help move this province forward.

Mr. Speaker, I could . . . I guess I haven't talked hardly anything on the Throne Speech actually. But you know, there have been so many people that have talked about the Throne Speech and how it is doing so well, how our province is going . . . We're going to be out there. We're helping the vulnerable. We're going to be helping everybody as it goes. We're helping businesses. We're helping the education end of it.

I can go back to the NDP again and the education. They keep on harping on the education. The minister just said the other day, according to Statistics Canada we are paying the highest per capita of any student in all of Canada. How much more do they want? More. Go figure. More.

Oh, I just got a message from . . . Mr. Speaker, I guess I forgot about one thing right at the beginning. Right at the beginning of this I forgot to thank my wife. Those things happen every now and then, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'll finish off with a little bit of a story here because . . . and especially for the new members. Like you know, I want to congratulate, like I said, all of the new members. I can still remember, and the people who've been around here for awhile, they've heard this story before. But when I first went to run, Mr. Speaker, of course it's quite a big commitment and so I had to ask my wife. I said, you know, I was planning on thinking about doing this. And she said, oh well that's something a little different. Why would you want to do this? She said, you have a good business, which I did. And I said well, I said because I believe that this province could be moved forward, and I think that I believe that what we should be doing is moving the province forward.

I'm sitting there, I'm thinking of our kids. And we keep on seeing our kids go after they graduate, they always leave, you know. They go to, well at that time, mainly Alberta. But I said, you know, if I can be one small cog in that wheel to move it forward. But our kids, our son was already in university at that time; our daughter was in grade 11 I think it was. I said if I can be there and if we can move this province forward, our kids will be able to work in this province. And she said to me, well okay, that's a good enough reason. She said what's the remuneration? I said I have absolutely no idea. And I didn't have any idea. And she said, so you're going to quit a good business that you have and go into something where you have no idea of what you're going to get monetary wise. I said yes. And she said, why would you do that? And I said, it's the right thing to do. I am proud both of our kids are living and working in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I could speak a lot more on a whole bunch of stuff but I'm kind of running out of time here. So you know, there's

some of the things that we brought up. The 10 per cent on the power bills is going to be huge. I just actually just had the power bill out for just our farm, which I only have the shop and I run some aeration bins, the carbon tax on it was \$70 for this power bill, thanks to our friends down East, of which I know that the NDP supports a carbon tax, but we'll just kind of . . . So that's going to be one of the good things that's coming up, Mr. Speaker. Also the business tax, which is going to help out our small businesses. There's numerous other things, but I think pretty well everybody has talked about most of the things going through here.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne and I will not be supporting the amendment. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm done my speech and now ask leave to adjourn the House . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, sorry. Leave to adjourn the debate . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I can adjourn the debate, right?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — I move to adjourn the debate.

The Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate. All in favour to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Bradshaw: — I move to adjourn the House.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:00.]

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