



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
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Lieutenant Governor — His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, S.O.M., M.S.M.

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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition regarding Botox injections for pelvic pain. We continue to hear from patients that this treatment provided some relief for what is otherwise debilitating pain that impacts quality of life, ability to function in one's job, and just ability to function.

These citizens wish to bring to our attention that even though the Saskatchewan formulary covers Botox injections for the treatment of severe spastic muscles, the Ministry of Health decided to discontinue coverage for trigger-point Botox injections into the pelvic floor; that trigger-point Botox injections have a significant impact on people's lives and allowed them to be contributing members of society.

This decision has left hundreds of Saskatchewan women with complex pelvic floor dysfunction without access to this effective treatment, leaving few options beyond emergency room care for pain relief; and that despite the Sask Party government's stated concerns about the opioid crisis, this decision leaves a vulnerable community living with a complex chronic pain with limited options for pain management, and risks causing dependency and addiction.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to review the decision to discontinue coverage for this effective chronic pain treatment.

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

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

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

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by citizens of Biggar, Radisson, and Saskatoon. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Saskatchewan Moving in the Right Direction

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Even in the hardest of economic times, Saskatchewan is moving in the right direction. According to Statistics Canada, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate sits at 6.9 per cent, making it the lowest in Western Canada and the second lowest in the nation.

Our latest merchandise export report, also released by StatsCan, shows Saskatchewan having the highest year-over-year growth among the provinces at twenty-two and a half per cent in October. Saskatchewan has also ranked first in Canada through the first 10 months of 2020, with our merchandise exports increasing by 3.6 per cent compared to the same period in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, this growth is more than just numbers. It's about business, it's about workers, and it's about families. We know there are challenges and that we haven't fully recovered yet, but what these numbers do show is that we're on the right track. Our strong numbers would not be possible without the hard work and efforts of multiple sectors in the province and shows our government support programs are working.

Saskatchewan has the food, fuel, and fertilizer the world needs, and we'll continue to deliver those needs. As we adapt to the new world and economic climate around us, our government will keep working to support those businesses and workers through this recovery and in the days and weeks ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked 31 years since 14 women were brutally murdered at Montreal's l'École Polytechnique. We remember this massacre annually on December 6th, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

It is a day of special significance for me because, as an engineering student of 21 years of age at the time, these young women were my peers — women who were shot down in the prime of their life and who represented the hopes and aspirations of the women in my generation; women who would have become future engineers, many who likely would have also become mothers and perhaps grandmothers by now, and certainly contributing members of Canadian society.

Today women in Saskatchewan continue to be victims of misogyny, under-represented in many sectors of Canadian society, and experience the highest rates of violence in Canada. We know we must do more, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when so many women have been isolated at home and face economic uncertainty and decreased access to supports.

We wear a white ribbon today not just to remember, but as a call to action as well. As I read their names, I ask all members to pause for a moment of reflection and remembrance: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte, and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz.

Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Lampman Resident Influential in Hockey World

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past month a southeast Saskatchewan resident, Mary Anne Veroba, was elected to Hockey Canada's board of directors. Mr. Speaker, this board is one of the most influential in the sport of hockey.

Mary Anne Veroba hails from Lampman and spent over 30 years around hockey. More than 20 of those years she spent on the Saskatchewan Hockey Association's board of directors. Mr. Speaker, the last seven years Mary Anne served as president and chairperson. She was also Saskatchewan Hockey Association's first female president. On a personal level, Mrs. Veroba served her community as a registered nurse for over 38 years, and now as a retiree has a new career writing children's books and creating a pottery studio.

The Hockey Canada website states the Hockey Canada board of directors is comprised of volunteers who graciously devote their time and energy to the betterment of the game of hockey from coast to coast. This statement, Mr. Speaker, certainly rings true of Mary Anne Veroba. Mary Anne has been elected alongside five other new directors and will serve a two-year term on this board.

I would like to thank Mary Anne Veroba for her passion and devotion to the game of hockey locally, within our province, and nationally. Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members of this Assembly to please join me in congratulating Mrs. Veroba on this accomplishment. Thank you.

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

COVID-19 in Indigenous Communities

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since March COVID-19 has spread throughout Saskatchewan. Unfortunately as so often the case, Indigenous people have been impacted disproportionately by this public health crisis. Mr. Speaker, this government has failed Indigenous people for well over a decade, and these COVID-19 numbers are just another example of a tired, old government that is continuing to let down the people of the province.

In October the Premier touted the government's strong relations with Big River First Nation. A month later that same community experienced an alarming outbreak of COVID-19 confirmed cases. Mr. Speaker, it's not just First Nations people on reserve that are experiencing hardships due to COVID. This is just one

sign that the government has failed to fulfill its obligations to the Indigenous peoples of Saskatchewan.

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

Saskatoon Small Business Gives to Community Initiatives

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prairie Proud is a local company in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. This company's focus is on investing in the prairies by selling prairie-themed merchandise, which of course includes bunny hugs. Mr. Speaker, this company was started by Spy Hill native Cole Thorpe. Over the last five years he has seen it flourish from a small business out of his spare bedroom to a highly recognized brand.

Mr. Speaker, Cole has a passion for his community, and it shows in the hard work that he put into his company and what Prairie Proud has been able to contribute over the years throughout the provinces. Since its inception, Prairie Proud has been able to provide over \$56,000 to various prairie initiatives. To name a few, Cole and Prairie Proud have contributed to the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, Telemiracle, Saskatoon and Regina Pride. The Christmas season is upon us, and this is a perfect time to be supporting local businesses like Prairie Proud that give back to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to now ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating and thanking Cole and his staff at Prairie Proud for all their support over the last five years to local initiatives. Thank you.

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

Successful Fundraiser for Victoria Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 20th the Saskatchewan Health Authority announced that construction would be moving ahead for the expansion of the neonatal intensive care unit in Prince Albert's Victoria Hospital. Mr. Speaker, the Victoria Hospital currently supports about 1,500 births per year, making it the third-largest high-risk maternal care site in the province. This project was made possible by the support of the Saskatchewan government and the Victoria Hospital Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, through their highly successful 15th annual Give a Little Life Day radiothon and a large private donation, the foundation reached its \$2.2 million goal in just six months. This \$800,000 donation from the Malhotra family was made in memory of the late Dr. Tilak Malhotra, Prince Albert's first and only pediatrician for almost 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the generous efforts of all who supported this project, this expanded unit will provide space for up to 11 medically fragile babies and their families, keeping more infants closer to home. As our government continues to support the people of this province, we are happy to announce that the contract was awarded to Saskatoon's Quorex Construction with an expected completion date in summer of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me in acknowledging this incredible NICU [neonatal intensive care unit] expansion and all those who have helped make this happen. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Longest Serving Female Cabinet Minister

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In September of 1992 Pat Atkinson was appointed to the provincial cabinet. She went on to serve just over 13 years as minister, making her the longest serving woman cabinet minister in Saskatchewan history. That is, until now. This past weekend our Deputy Premier, the member for Humboldt-Watrous, surpassed that record to become the new longest serving woman cabinet minister in Saskatchewan history.

Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier was first appointed to cabinet on the day the Saskatchewan Party government was sworn into office on November the 21st, 2007, and she has served in cabinet every day since then. That also makes her the longest serving current minister in any province in Canada, tied for that distinction only with the member for Saskatoon Southeast, which is even more remarkable when you consider that she is several decades younger than him.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Humboldt-Watrous is a strong and steady voice in our cabinet, in our caucus. Each and every day I rely on her wise guidance and counsel as our Deputy Premier and as our Minister of Finance. She was also the Co-Chair of our recent election campaign, and that worked out quite well. Mostly importantly though, Mr. Speaker, she is a trusted friend to myself and to everyone in our government. I would ask all members to join me in saying thank you and congratulations to the longest serving female cabinet minister in the history of the province of Saskatchewan: the member for Humboldt-Watrous.

[13:45]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 600 new cases of COVID-19 this past weekend, uncontrolled community transmission across Saskatchewan — it's clear the half measures of November aren't working. The strategy of the Premier to cross his fingers and just hope things get better, that's definitely not working.

So today will the Premier be straight with the people of Saskatchewan? What's his threshold? How many cases does it take, how many infected health care workers, how many deaths will it take till we see a new plan? And what is that next step?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are 10 days into the new measures that Dr. Shahab and the Government of Saskatchewan had introduced on November the 27th, I believe, Mr. Speaker. Ten days until December 17th, at

which time those measures will either be continued, they'll be increased, or they could potentially be decreased.

Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing is a slight increase in our seven-day rolling average. We're up about 10 or 12 cases on the seven-day rolling average since the beginning of the month, Mr. Speaker. So a beginning to stabilize of the numbers, Mr. Speaker, but you know, admittedly they're stabilizing far too high, and we need to see through the next number of days to ensure that we are able to identify that the measures that were put in place 10 days ago, Mr. Speaker, will continue to have an impact, as they appear to be having the very beginnings of an impact.

And I once again would thank the people of the province as the vast majority are adhering to the public health orders that are there. The vast majority do not want a shutdown of our Saskatchewan economy, a shutdown of our Saskatchewan communities, Mr. Speaker. And so for that I appreciate the effort that they are making.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Growing slowly is not good enough. We need to see these numbers drop. Instead, this weekend we saw this province surpass 10,000 total cases of COVID-19.

And on the same weekend, we saw people taking to the streets, marching in defiance of public health orders, marching in ways that are unsafe and unhelpful, spreading misinformation. Will this Premier today finally stand, condemn those protests, enforce the public health orders? Will he make it clear that this is unacceptable? And does he regret the way that his weakness on this file has emboldened and encouraged these actions through these last months?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, all along throughout this pandemic and the Government of Saskatchewan's response to this pandemic, we have worked very closely with our chief medical health officer, Dr. Shahab, and we have followed the advice that he has provided. And I would say that we have fared fairly well throughout this pandemic, Mr. Speaker, with our response to the pandemic. Admittedly our numbers have increased over the course of the last couple of months. They seem to be what we would hope is stabilizing and starting to level with the measured responses that we have put in place.

With respect to the protests that occurred, not just this weekend but throughout our response to the pandemic, there has been multiple protests, Mr. Speaker, that we have seen where there have been in many cases a flagrant disregard with respect to the public health orders that are in place. And we would ask again, everyone, whether you're involved in protesting something that you believe in very strongly and that many of us do, Mr. Speaker, that you are adhering to the public health orders that are in place.

Mr. Speaker, we would also more specifically speak to those protests that are occurring, flagrantly spreading misinformation, flagrantly asking people to not follow public health advice in this province, that you do not continue with that, Mr. Speaker.

We have numbers that are increasing. We all need to follow the public health advice to ensure that we can keep our community transmission low, keep our economy open, and keep our families safe.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At those same protests that this Premier has been so slow to condemn, we also saw people speaking not just against masks, but also against the COVID-19 vaccine. Saskatchewan doctors, on the other hand, have been calling on this government to start a public information campaign to address misinformation about COVID-19 and to promote the use of the vaccine. The Minister of Health seems to believe that's not the government's job, which is a bizarre position.

The Premier on the other hand has pinned his hopes on this vaccine because he so clearly failed to control the spread of the virus. But a vaccine the people refuse to take, Mr. Speaker, it's not much use. So will the Premier commit today to a robust public health education campaign to make sure that when that vaccine is ready that Saskatchewan people are ready to get vaccinated?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, despite a number of inaccuracies in the question that was asked, to the question of will the government participate in a very public campaign advocating for people in the province to take the opportunity, have the consideration to take the vaccine to, yes, keep themselves safe but to keep their family and their community safe — yes we will, and have been working very closely with advocating to dispel the spread of misinformation, to ensure that people realize the benefits of being vaccinated here in this province. And I would put forward that the people Saskatchewan do realize the benefits by the vast majority of being vaccinated, Mr. Speaker.

We had a very robust vaccination program when H1N1 vaccination program went on about 10 years ago. Very involved in that program of the day was our chief medical health officer today, Dr. Shahab. We're going to announce a very robust vaccination program, the details of that program, here tomorrow. That is going to include, Mr. Speaker, a very robust communication plan to the people of this province.

And I think the people will be receptive as we have higher-than-average vaccination rates already when it comes to the flu vaccine and other vaccines, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to ensuring that every dose of that vaccine that we receive from the federal government, when we receive it, we will have it dispersed to the people as soon as possible.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The vaccine is extremely important. It will save lives. But it won't bring back those people that we've lost or those we stand to lose in the weeks and months ahead as a result of this government's inaction.

Now Parkside Extendicare in Regina alone, there are over 90

cases of COVID-19 among the residents. Staff are working 12-hour days, seven days a week, but there's still not enough staff to attend to the needs of residents. Residents are dying alone in their rooms, Mr. Speaker, and yet this government still doesn't have a plan to protect them or the staff who care for them. Will the Premier admit today we have a problem in long-term care? And will he inform the House what his plan is to keep seniors safe?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the minister responsible and on behalf of the government, we are very concerned by what's transpiring at Parkside Extendicare here in Regina. And we're committed to ensuring the safety of the residents in that particular facility and as well the staff.

We know that as of December 6th, Mr. Speaker, that 94 residents and 53 staff have tested positive in this facility, and an additional 30 staff are on isolation as close contacts. Twenty-five Parkside residents, Mr. Speaker, have been temporarily moved to Regina Pioneer Village, Mr. Speaker, and all of the transferred residents have been placed on isolation precautions upon arrival at Pioneer Village.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that we'll be watching very closely, but in addition to that, also acting on. We've been in consultation not only through the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] but with the partners at Extendicare to make sure that we're taking care of those most vulnerable that reside at this facility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Regina Public Schools announced they would be going online until after the Christmas holidays. This is another example of schools having to make decisions without the guidance, without the support of this government, causing further chaos in people's family lives as they scramble to find child care, causing more chaos in our education system, which has been the pattern with this government.

To the Premier: what support, what guidance is he giving to our schools today to make sure that parents, families, and teachers know what the plan is for the weeks ahead, especially as we see these case numbers rising with this government's mismanagement of COVID-19?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Mr. Speaker, I think there's several inaccuracies with the premise of his question, Mr. Speaker. This is a part of a plan, the best safe return to schools plan in Canada that allowed flexibility for school divisions, based on local circumstances for school divisions, to work with their teachers and work with their parents and their student population to determine what is the best path forward for them to continue with education.

Mr. Speaker, in fact I will quote from Regina Public Schools'

news release that they put out this morning. And I quote from Adam Hicks, the chairperson: “Your board of education appreciates the ability we have to make local decisions based on the needs of our communities.”

Mr. Speaker, so what the school division has done here in Regina is proactively communicated with families to indicate to them that they will move to level 4 for one week prior to Christmas and one week following the Christmas break. Now that’s a decision that the local board has made and that they feel it’s in the best interests of their teachers and of their students. Thank you.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rapidly rising case numbers, outbreaks in hospitals, outbreaks in long-term care, more chaos in our education system, businesses failing because there’s inadequate support, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 is not going well under this Premier. Things are out of control in this province, and he keeps talking about a balanced approach. He keeps talking about a balanced approach, but the only balance I see is a Premier who’s failing us equally across the board.

So to the Premier today: given how badly things are going with COVID-19 on his watch, what does he regret most about the way he’s handled the pandemic so far?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And the member opposite referred to a number of parts of the question about the economy. Their only economic policy, Mr. Speaker, opposite is to shut down the entirety of Saskatchewan’s economy.

Mr. Speaker, we have come forward with very real and significant supports for our economy. We announced just last week the second phase of the small-business support program. We’ve come forward with the tourism support program, Mr. Speaker. And just today, we’re going to be announcing a brand new program to support the adaptation for Saskatchewan small businesses.

Members opposite don’t like this. They’re heckling from their seats. The Leader of the Opposition has been heckling from his seat the entire response to this question, Mr. Speaker. We know what their policy is on small business, which is shut it all down. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we’re working with small business. We want them to succeed. We know that they can operate reliably and safely as they have been doing for eight months.

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

Mr. Meili: — This Premier failed to act. The case numbers are rising. The death numbers are rising. He talks about balance. To the Premier: how many deaths is an acceptable number to you?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I mean the commitment of this government to address the COVID-19 issue

has not been in doubt, and the public had the chance to pass judgment on that response just a short time ago, Mr. Speaker. And I think the makeup of this House shows what that judgment was.

We’re going to continue to support our health care providers. We’re going to continue to support our businesses, our small businesses who are the engine of our economy, Mr. Speaker. We’ve come forward with another support program just today. I look forward to rising in my place in about 11 minutes, Mr. Speaker, to inform the House of the details of that program, the small-business strong recovery adaptation program.

And, Mr. Speaker, the results are speaking for themselves — the second lowest unemployment rate in the entire country. Remarkably, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year, an increase in merchandise exports from Saskatchewan around the world. And that really is a testament to our job creators, to our wealth creators who have done so during a very difficult time and continue to create wealth and create jobs in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[14:00]

Provision of Long-Term Care

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, these deadly outbreaks in long-term care really should not be a surprise to any of us, certainly not to this government. Our care homes are underfunded and dangerously short-staffed. And this has been the norm for years. The evidence is found in this government’s own CEO [chief executive officer] tour reports. And yet, despite the evidence, this government didn’t roll out any targeted funding to protect our seniors. The deadly situation at Parkside Extendicare could have been avoided, but instead this government decided to roll the dice with the status quo.

Last week I asked the minister about contingency funds for long-term care and he said, and I quote, “Yes; we will take a look at using those contingency funds . . .” Mr. Speaker, it’s been seven days. What is he waiting for? In the last seven days, what has his government done? Have they taken a look? And will they actually commit to doing something, to rolling out that funding today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the member opposite, as he’s new to the Chamber, should understand that we’ve been working on this with our long-term care centres for a very long time, Mr. Speaker. We’ve had great success. We’ve had some challenges in the last little while, but nothing that we haven’t seen across the province, Mr. Speaker.

We are working with our long-term care facilities, especially Parkside, Mr. Speaker. This is one where there is obviously a high infection rate within the population of the people that live there, but also in the staff. That’s why the SHA is working with the management to be able to backfill those positions. This is exactly why, Mr. Speaker, last week the SHA has talked about

moving 588 positions to be able to backfill for COVID. This is the exact scenario that we were working with last week, that we announced last week, that we've been planning for and training for throughout the summer, Mr. Speaker, so we'd be able to help out in situations specifically like this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll recognize that the Minister of Health is equally new to his role. And so I'd like to point out that this government points to CEO tour reports as an accountability tool. But if you don't do anything to follow up on those reports, then they don't mean a thing. You have to act on them.

So this is from the government's own report on Parkside Extendicare from just last year, and again I will quote directly:

The facility is old and in need of replacement due to pending infrastructure and large system (HVAC) failures. The current design with a large number of 4-bed rooms does not meet current standards of care . . .

Since this report landed on the minister's desk, can he tell us what exact measures were taken to bring Parkside Extendicare up to current care standards?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And just to update the House, since 2009 we've invested over \$247 million in 13 long-term care facilities in Meadow Lake, Watrous, Shellbrook, Rosetown, Prince Albert, Radville, Tisdale, Kipling, Biggar, Kerrobert, Maple Creek, and Kelvington, just to start, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested in our long-term care facilities not just in capital, Mr. Speaker, but also operating. We have made sure that the staffing complement is exactly what they are looking for, Mr. Speaker. Again there are some aging facilities out there, Mr. Speaker, but we're continuing to prioritize those facilities and putting them on our capital plan to be able to make sure that we can provide the best service for those clients. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, as of Friday, 90 out of 199 residents at Parkside had contracted COVID-19. That's almost half. And we've already heard these numbers from the minister opposite: 45 staff members are infected; three residents have died. In this home, 136 residents were living four to a room. Staff are reporting that there are not enough of them to sit with patients during their last hours of life and that people are dying alone. Frankly, it's an absolute nightmare.

Will this government commit today to using the \$260 million cushion that they're sitting on and finally show leadership by immediately injecting funding to the front lines of long-term care to ensure this deadly situation doesn't repeat itself in care homes across this province?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again this is a situation that is extremely concerning for us as a government, and we want to make sure that we are on top of this issue and working very closely with the SHA and with the officials at Parkside Extendicare.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to what's happening right now, Mr. Speaker, the SHA is providing extensive support to Parkside including a review of PPE [personal protective equipment] and infection control protocols. An occupational health specialist is supporting in these measures, Mr. Speaker. There are two managers from the SHA, Mr. Speaker, that are supporting daily rounds with the residents and regular physician support as well. And daily staff testing and re-testing of the residents is under way.

Mr. Speaker, supports were provided to third-party operated facilities earlier this year including Parkside Extendicare and will continue to be provided throughout the pandemic, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we're taking care of those residents in these facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Contact Tracing and Testing during COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, that minister did not answer how this is going to be prevented from happening in other facilities.

Mr. Speaker, people are going weeks before getting their COVID-19 test results or being informed that they're close contacts. Even the Premier appears to have waited a week to get his results. It's unacceptable, and the delays in reaching people are making these efforts nearly useless in curbing the spread.

Surge planning documents from April recognize the risks of a second wave and the pressures it would put on public health resources who are also relied on to administer the seasonal flu program. Projections suggested that we would need at least 174 additional contact tracing staff for current caseloads alone.

To the minister: did the government hire additional contact tracers that we needed over the summer? Why or why not?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and first of all I want to commend the SHA for being able to adjust very quickly on contact tracing. This is something that we weren't doing a year ago today, Mr. Speaker, and now we're in full force. We've moved from 60 contact tracers to just under 400, Mr. Speaker.

As far as our testing, Mr. Speaker, we have opened up drive-through testing which has been well utilized by lots of people in Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, and now Prince Albert as well, Mr. Speaker. We have also distributed rapid testing within our long-term care facilities and our hospitals, Mr. Speaker, that will provide a very quick test result for an individual that is

seeking that. And we've been working with our federal government to increase that capacity.

But what is going to help out everybody in every situation here, Mr. Speaker, is adhering to the public health guidelines. That is our best weapon that we have to be able to battle this pandemic, Mr. Speaker, and I would encourage everybody to please adhere to those public health guidelines, especially now because our numbers are very challenging. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, we know public health officials, experts across the globe have been talking about testing and contact tracing also being very effective tools that we have at our disposal. It's their responsibility to get these under control. Everyone knew the second wave was coming, but this government basically decided to take the summer off, and we're seeing the impacts of that inaction today.

In May the federal government announced they would be rolling out millions in funding to help the provinces with contact tracing efforts. When exactly did this government start formal discussions with our federal counterparts to get contact tracing help for Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and there were so many inaccuracies in that, Mr. Speaker. I know for myself, I was here every week this summer, Mr. Speaker. I know my predecessor, the member from Rosetown, was here every week in this building, working with the SHA, working with his ministry, Mr. Speaker, and working with the people on the front line to be able to provide the best possible care we can. And for them to say that, Mr. Speaker, is just frankly insulting.

Mr. Speaker, we have had our test results, our testing, at 52 places, 52 locations throughout Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We are working with this. This is a very challenging time, and I want to thank all the people that are able to be on the front line, Mr. Speaker, that have moved from one job to another, sometimes moving from one town to another, to be able to provide the contact tracing that we need, Mr. Speaker. This government didn't take a minute off in this pandemic, Mr. Speaker, and for the opposition, who certainly haven't been in this building over the last six months, Mr. Speaker, is frankly insulting.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, if they were here, then they need to get better at doing their jobs. It just doesn't add up. The SHA knew in April that contact tracers would be underwater by the fall if they didn't ramp up staffing, but this government failed to act. In early October, other provinces across the country had signed up for federal contact tracing help, with hundreds of federal employees already on board. Meanwhile, Saskatchewan was one of only two provinces who had not even begun to have these conversations.

Why on earth did this government wait until our public health

resources and contact tracing system were completely overwhelmed to ask for help? And why don't they hire more contact tracers right now, when there are plenty of people in Saskatchewan who are looking for work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and we have reached out to Statistics Canada and they have provided people for us, Mr. Speaker. And then we've reached out to them again and we're asking them for some more help, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank those individuals from Stats Canada that have been able to work in the contact tracing, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very important point. As soon as we can get that test result, we contact that positive case, try to get it within 48 hours, Mr. Speaker, so we can start doing any contact tracing at that point. Mr. Speaker, the negative call-backs have taken a little bit longer, Mr. Speaker, to be able to get our focus on those individuals. Mr. Speaker, we're performing in excess of 3,400 tests a day here in Saskatchewan. And the volume of tests and our test positivity rate and the contacts, Mr. Speaker — it's a very challenging exercise.

But what I can report to the House, Mr. Speaker, is since we have implemented the restrictions and the regulations in the last little while, Mr. Speaker, the contacts are starting to go down. The people of Saskatchewan are understanding and they're shrinking their bubbles, Mr. Speaker, which is extremely helpful for contact tracing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Strong Recovery Adaptation Grant

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, small businesses are the heartbeat of our economy and employ nearly 150,000 Saskatchewan people. These small businesses and their employees have been adversely impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic while playing their part in protecting public health and reducing the spread of the pandemic. Our government acknowledges their critical effort and is committed to helping them remain strong, during and after the pandemic, through programs that provide the essential assistance they need to survive these challenging times.

One such program is the new strong recovery adaptation grant, the first of its kind in Canada, which our government will launch in the coming weeks. The rebate will help small businesses adapt their business models to address the unprecedented challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these adjustments businesses have made or will make include changing the use of square footage, installing physical infrastructure to comply with COVID-19 mitigation guidelines, upgrading technology such as websites to enhance their business.

This program is for Saskatchewan businesses that employ less than 100 people; have or will incur expenses to adapt their business model between April 1st, 2020 — so retroactive — and February 28th, 2021; plan to continue operating; and have experienced at least a 30 per cent revenue decline compared to

2019.

Eligible applicants will receive a rebate of 50 per cent, up to a maximum of \$5,000 for a \$10,000 expenditure. The rebate amounts will be determined based on those expenditures for changing business models. Further, rebates will be based on the business expenditures incurred between April 1, 2020 and February 28, 2021. The program will be launched and applications will be available in the coming days.

Our economy will weather the impact of the fall surge of COVID-19 and our government will continue to support small businesses throughout the economic recovery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the minister. 'Twas three weeks before Christmas and look what they've done. The Sask Party finally realized that for business, COVID's no fun. For gyms and for cafes, accountants, and brewers, the Sask Party support for small business has been down in the sewers. So please listen, do better, and support mom and pop shops for Saskatchewan's economy because this is where the buck stops.

[14:15]

So thank you to the government for finally acknowledging that their piecemeal and puzzling approach has been inefficient and insufficient for small business. However we are glad to see the government adopt a program that we called for on November 18th.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to say if I've lured the minister into listening — but I believe he has left — with my charming couplets . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh sorry.

I'll remind the minister that business can't survive or thrive if COVID is raging out of control. The measures announced will do nothing to help businesses for whom adaptations are unavailable and their small-business support program hasn't been fixed or made accessible to businesses who haven't been closed by public health orders but have seen their revenues collapse. These remain problems, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, I'd like to thank small businesses for their leadership in advocating, adapting, and investing to keep themselves afloat and to keep Saskatchewan safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Thank you, Member. I do want to remind you not to refer to a member's attendance or absence. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 2 — *The Income Tax (Strong Recovery Small Business Tax Reduction) Amendment Act, 2020*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I move that Bill No. 2, *The Income Tax (Strong Recovery Small Business Tax Reduction) Amendment*

Act, 2020 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 2 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 3 — *The Massage Therapy Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, *The Massage Therapy Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 3 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 4 — *The Construction Codes Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 4, *The Construction Codes Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 4 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

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

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today humbled and I have an opportunity to represent the constituents of Regina Northeast. I would like to start by joining my colleagues on both sides of the House and congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, and Madam Deputy Speaker on your elections to this seat. I would also like to congratulate all members who have been elected to this Legislative Assembly. As a new member, I sincerely thank my colleagues for their warm welcome into this distinguished body.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a great thank you to all of those that helped me to get here. Thank you to my remarkable campaign team led by my campaign manager, Paul Hamnett, my GOTV [get out the vote] manager, Cheryl Spencer, and my business manager, Aaron Metcalf.

I had an amazing group of volunteers, including my campaign office manager, Naren and his wife Rajula Pandya; door knockers that were there no matter the weather, including Judy Simpson, Rupel Pandya, Donna Rosin, Nigel Sharp, Rupinder and Sonia Sehmee, Kevin Kay, newly elected city councillor Terina Shaw, Geeta and Ashwin Brahmania, Heather Kuntz, Todd Robbins; and my constituency president, Trent Fraser, to name a few as the list is extensive.

I was especially honoured to have the help of my new colleagues, the members of the Legislative Assembly, Minister of Education, Minister of Agriculture, the member from Melfort; and the esteemed members of Parliament from Regina-Lewvan, Warren Steinley; Regina-Qu'Appelle, Andrew Scheer; and Regina-Wascana, Michael Kram for coming out and door knocking with me.

For all his guidance throughout these last two years, I would like to thank Patrick Bundrock and his staff at the Sask Party office.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my family. I am extremely fortunate to have the love and support of my wonderful wife of 37 years, Seema. Seema has advocated, encouraged, and helped me in so many ways to get me here today. I am also grateful for the immense support given from all my three children, Simran, Indu, and TJ, who gave up weeks of their time away from their own lives and careers to help me on my campaign.

Finally, it is crucial that I thank the people of Regina Northeast for entrusting me as their elected representative.

Mr. Speaker, my parents are no longer with us, but they instilled me with great values. I could talk to my dad about anything. He was my best friend and always gave me the best advice. Upon moving to Canada, he advised me to make my home in one place and not continually move around. So I came to Regina, planted my roots, and grew my family and my community around me.

Mr. Speaker, Simran, my oldest daughter, got her business degree from the University of Regina, and after getting married, was working as an account manager at the Bank of Montreal. One Christmas as we were gathered around my brother-in-law's kitchen island for supper, we had a debate about current affairs. Simran led the debate and I stated, Simran, you are in the wrong profession; you should have been a lawyer. We left the conversation there.

The next morning she calls me and said, Dad, do you remember what you said last night to me? I replied, I said way too many things; which one are you talking about? Her answer was, me becoming a lawyer. I replied, yes. To which she said, okay, I will do it on one condition. Not knowing what she would say next, I asked, what is your condition? To which she replied, only if you will pay for my tuition fees. I agreed to this condition and we both kept our promises. Mr. Speaker, she is now a very busy and successful lawyer. She is married to my son-in-law Jag, who is a petroleum engineer, and has two beautiful children.

My first grandchild, Mila, is four years old. She often says her best friend is her grandpa, although this may have something to do with the candy I give her. A couple of months ago I called her and said, Mila, I miss you; I want to come see you. She said, you can't come now because so many people are sick out there; if you come, you can't stay with us. I was surprised that even at the age of four, she understood the health crisis we are going through. I guess these little ones pay more attention to the adults around them than we think. Niam, my grandson, is two years old and he's my best buddy. He often makes me smile when he runs and jumps in and out of my lap.

Mr. Speaker, Indu, my younger daughter, was always serious about her studies and was an A student. She knew what she wanted out of life at an early age. She worked hard and got two degrees, first in psychology and then in social services, specializing in youth and child care work. She is very passionate and is now putting those degrees to work as a resource social worker.

Mr. Speaker, TJ, my son, on the other hand, was not as serious about his studies. One day as TJ and I were driving back from Moose Jaw, I asked him, TJ, what do you want to study at university after you graduate from high school? He responded on a very serious note: Dad, I don't have to go to university; I will just manage your business. I stated, either you can enjoy life now and struggle the rest of your life, or spend four years studying now and enjoy rest of your life later. To this he responded, well if I go to university I will lose all my friends. I told him, you will never lose your true friends.

He took my advice, got his engineering degree from the University of Regina, and now he's a professional engineer

working as a project manager with PCL and married to a beautiful girl, Railin Knaus, who is like my third daughter now.

Mr. Speaker, I came to Canada in 1983. Nobody had even heard of Saskatchewan in India, but I flew into Regina as an excited young man in my early 20s. The mid-'80s in Saskatchewan were a tough time. The economy was bad and there were no jobs. I started out doing various small odd jobs to support my family. When my children were small, my wife worked evenings so I was mom and dad both in the evenings. Every Saturday and Sunday morning, I would make breakfast for my children. I would wait until 10 a.m. to wake the kids up by calling, sunny side up, coming right up. They would grudgingly come down but loved my full breakfast of bacon, sausage, eggs, and homemade hash browns.

Mr. Speaker, when I got into the hospitality business, the first business we owned was the Shayne Inn and steak house located 40 minutes east of Regina in Indian Head. From there we expanded further into the hospitality industry, having owned several hotels, motels, and restaurants such as Best Western, Thriftlodge, Travelodge, Howard Johnson, and Quiznos restaurants.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that anything is achievable in our beautiful province of Saskatchewan if you work hard and work smart. In business I always believed in balancing the books, and I'm looking forward to working with a government who also believes in doing the same.

Mr. Speaker, my political story started in April of 2018. I was retired and content with my life. My friend said, you have worked so hard all your life volunteering. Why stop now? I had volunteered in civic, provincial, and federal elections. I had held a position of president of the India Canada Association of Saskatchewan, chairman and ambassador of the India pavilion during Regina's annual Mosaic festivities, president of Saskatchewan Cricket Association, played for Saskatchewan in interprovincial cricket tournaments, director of the Canadian Cricket Association, and president of the Sikh Society of Regina. And in 2016 I was honoured to serve as the chairman of the organizing committee for the first-ever annual Sikh Day parade organized in Saskatchewan. Thousands of people attended that parade, Mr. Speaker. The Regina community has given me a lot and I felt now is the time to give it back to the community.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, my good friends, Sharat Pandit, Bob Dhindsa, Happy Sandhu, Bill Singh, Kulbir Bugtana, and my brother Nirmal had a big hand in getting me nominated for the very first time. On September 12th, 2018 after the Regina Northeast by-election, the Sask Party had gathered at the Ramada hotel to watch the results. In my concession speech upon losing my first by-election, I promised to all present there that this is not the end of my story, but was just the beginning. I promised to bring this seat back to the Saskatchewan Party that day. Then this October 26th, I found myself standing in the same hotel, in the same room, on the same very spot, and my promise to get there came true. Mr. Speaker, promise made and promise kept.

Thanks to the love and support of the people of Regina Northeast, I have been able to do that. Now here I am today, 100 per cent

committed to the good people of Regina Northeast. I have a sentimental attachment with my riding of Regina Northeast because my very first home I bought was on Turner Crescent in Glencairn.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Regina Northeast is like a beautiful garden full of multicoloured flowers and fragrances. Just like our nation, it is full of multiculturalism and diversity and also of love for neighbours and the community. It has many small businesses, restaurants, convenience stores, gyms, bowling alley, and trucking companies. Also we have a big Co-op Refinery, factories like the Coca-Cola bottling plant and Minhas distillery. So, Mr. Speaker, nobody goes thirsty from my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, in the last couple of years during the 2018 by-election, my 2019 nomination, and the 2020 election, I have had the exceptional opportunity to meet thousands of residents in my constituency. I was elated to find that the citizens of Regina Northeast were extremely engaged in this recent election as they took time to share with me their ideas and concerns for both their community and the province as a whole. They also do not hide their political affiliations. While out gaining support for this year's election, my wife, Seema, knocked on a home with two barking dogs. The owner answered the door, saw the Sask Party pamphlets in her hand, and informed the dogs that hey, it was the good guys so they could be quiet now.

On these same doorsteps in the past several months, whether I was in Glencairn or Glen Elm, Eastview or Parkridge, Uplands or Creekside, the distress of COVID-19 was persistent. As COVID-19 transmission rates in Saskatchewan rose, resulting in serious illnesses and deaths, it placed our province under increasing strain. Constituents who range in age and income and work in different industries and areas of service are all struggling to maintain a sense of normalcy during this pandemic. They are not able to visit with their friends and loved ones like they used to do. They cannot celebrate in large groups for significant celebrations such as graduations, weddings, births, or milestone birthdays. How they do their job is changing and in some cases is being lost. The ever-changing nature of COVID has created so many hardships and uncertainties for everyone, including small-business owners. Many have had to decrease their services and even close their doors, taking a great financial loss to help keep the public safe.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment was introduced to assist with this loss to small and medium-sized business affected by the pandemic. The small-business tax reduction to zero per cent and the 10 per cent savings on SaskPower announced in the Throne Speech will also be a huge help in this extremely challenging time for the business owners who employ hundreds of thousands of people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I need to also recognize the heroes who worked tirelessly during this time, who helped strengthen our resolve. They are the front-line workers, those who worked in hospitals, our schools, child care, grocery stores, food delivery, truck drivers, and all others who continue to deliver essential services. To all of them I say, thank you. I know that I can speak on behalf of all of my constituents when I say a heartfelt thank you to all of those that have sacrificed, that have had to put their lives on hold whether it's to support a loved one, to home-school their

children, or who have helped provide child care for a family member or a friend, and to all of those that really stepped up and made sure that the services that we all rely on were there. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today knowing that the people of Saskatchewan are looking to us to guide them through this. I look forward to working with my colleagues here today to come up with solutions for solving this public health crisis and inevitable economic challenges we will face when we are finally over it.

Thanks to the sacrifice and vigilance of the people of Saskatchewan, our province has continued to fight together to reduce the spread COVID-19. As both elected officials and members of our community, we must work together to lay the groundwork for a strong, inclusive, and sustainable economic recovery that ensures no one is left behind.

Thanks to the diligence already shown by our Sask Party-led government, Saskatchewan has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada and merchandise exports are growing faster in our province than any other province in the nation. The mid-year update released by the Minister of Finance also shows that Saskatchewan's finances are already improving, with the deficit declining by nearly 400 million since the budget was tabled in June.

Under *Saskatchewan's Growth Plan*, I know this decline in debt will continue by taking greater control of our trade relationships with the addition of three more international trade offices in Japan, India, and Singapore. The 50 per cent increase in exports, the creation of 100,000 jobs, and the increase of the provincial population to 1.4 million by 2030 will also aid in this reduction of debt.

Mr. Speaker, while door knocking I had many conversations with families that have had issues with mental health. Now the appointment of the minister to oversee mental health and addictions programming in our province, and the record 435 million investment in these services from the Throne Speech will provide great support to those struggling with the challenges of mental health and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, a further demonstration of our government's commitment to support those who are most vulnerable is the 24 times increase of funding since 2007 to 12 million a year for families of children with autism spectrum disorder. In conjunction with this will be an additional 6,000 a year to cover the cost of individualized therapeutic supports beginning in the new year, as was outlined in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, I was so proud to hear of the recent funding provided by our Sask Party government to improve services for Deaf-blind people. Working with the CNIB Foundation and Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services will allow the hiring of professionals who help Deaf-blind people navigate the world with one-on-one support from sign language interpreters and intervenors. Intervenors are professionals who act as a Deaf-blind client's eyes and ears and help to alleviate the isolation that person may be facing. This funding will also allow Saskatchewanians who are Deaf-blind to access a 24-hour interpreter and intervenor line of emergency support.

This landmark decision to provide funding makes Saskatchewan the first province outside of Ontario to provide funding for CNIB

Deafblind Community Services, representing a monumental step for Canada's Deaf-blind community, which many believe to be isolated and underserved. This government has also committed in the Throne Speech to build on this progress over the next three years with the hiring of three additional Deaf-blind intervenors, three new American Sign Language interpreters, another sign support professional, and one additional case manager.

Mr. Speaker, an expansion to the support for people living with diabetes was also stated. The Saskatchewan insulin pump program was broadened to include all individuals under the age of 25 with type 1 diabetes. The program will now expand eligibility and will cover the cost of an insulin pump for everyone in Saskatchewan who needs one under the age of 25.

Mr. Speaker, a related issue that was prevalent in my riding is the need to see real investments in our seniors. The suggestion of our government investing in the bedside care of seniors in long-term care homes was heard repeatedly. The Sask Party government has already shown that seniors are a priority to this government by opening 15 new long-term care home facilities and have tripled the seniors' income benefit plan from \$90 to 270, which will soon be quadrupled to 360 a month. The significant reduction to the cost of ambulance calls for seniors by eliminating charges for inter-facility transfers and reducing the maximum cost of other calls by over 50 per cent from 275 to 135 per call will be a great savings for our seniors living on fixed incomes. The additional 300 new continuing care aids being hired to work in long-term care, as announced in the Throne Speech, is a great investment into bedside care, as was the temporary wage top-up given to existing care workers. By these actions, I know that we can and will support our seniors. The people who helped build this province into the successful communities we share today are deserving of this consideration moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, on the other end of the spectrum, I am proud of the investment being put into our youth that was outlined in the Throne Speech. As I have mentioned earlier in speaking about my children, I am very passionate about educating our youth. I realize that they are going to be our future leaders and it is them that will be running our beautiful nation. The 85 million education investment will ensure our children can study safely, help relieve some of the anxiety parents and teachers faced as kids returned to the school.

The social disruption caused by the pandemic has created especially difficult times for our next generation. The active families benefit that will cover the cost of participation in schools, arts, and cultural activities will be a great help to getting them back into doing the things they love. The community rink affordability program will also help the whole family in this aspect, as the local rinks in my constituency are always a hub of social and physical activity. The graduate retention program and the 50 per cent increase to the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship will help relieve some of the financial burden on our young adults. The Saskatchewan homeowners' tax credit will not only help families by providing a rebate on eligible renovation expenses but will also help boost the construction sector.

Mr. Speaker, on a related note, the new Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement announced in the Throne Speech will go a long way to help manage the infrastructure projects and assets of our

province more effectively. With this new ministry overseeing the development and implementation of standardized government procurement processes and information technology infrastructure, I believe we are becoming more efficient, which will save our province not only time but also money. With all this new stimulus funding announced in the Throne Speech, I believe that we are primed to have a strong economic recovery.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to represent the constituents of Regina Northeast as they move forward in these unprecedented times to make it through this pandemic and rebuild our province to be even stronger than before. I look forward to participating in the session of the legislature and to have the opportunity to take part in debate and to advocate for my constituents. In order to do that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne and will not be supporting the amendment from the opposition. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege and honour to stand here before you today, and I will begin by stating that I will be supporting the motion put forth by the member from Kindersley, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, and I will not be supporting the amendment.

Like many of my colleagues, I too want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your duties and role in this Assembly. I know you will fulfill this role honourably. I also want to congratulate my colleague from Sask Rivers on becoming Deputy Speaker and a special thank you to the member from Regina Coronation Park for serving this Assembly and all of us very well over the past couple of years.

I have a number of folks I would like to take this opportunity publicly to thank for putting me in this place once again and giving me the honour to be their voice, to advocate on their behalf, and to fully represent them in all my daily tasks. This begins with my constituents. I want to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to them for their resounding support. Thank you. I am humbled and honoured by the faith and trust you have put in me to represent you.

As my friend and colleague from Regina Rochdale so emotionally shared, the support of family and friends is crucial when entering and running in a political race. Thank you to my husband Kim; daughter Nevada; our sons Casey, Chester, Riley, Fraser, Percy, Duke, and Ace; and my daughter-in-laws Jessica and Chantal; and our future daughter-in-laws, as we've had a postponed wedding and two engagements during this pandemic, Lesia, Ashley, and Shelby, who all gave their support and encouragement to a very different and challenging campaign. Thank you to my five beautiful grandchildren, Pearl, Belle, Ruby, Hazel, and Beck, who bring me many smiles, laughter, joy, and fun each day.

[14:45]

This pandemic has been a challenge for my children whose professions, businesses, and educations were affected and put on hold early in the spring. My daughter, being a high school teacher, was saddened and frustrated when schools were closed in March and she could no longer physically work with her

students. She was hopeful when the safe schools plan was put in place for September and she could resume getting back into the classroom. She is still stressed with the current restrictions and is fearful for the quality of education this year's students are receiving. She feels inadequate in how she is unable to give her students the best of herself, and she's hopeful for someday soon once again seeing excitement in the classroom learning environment for all students.

My oldest son, Casey, is a radiologist and had to reduce staff and diagnostic imaging services in his clinics, but is thankful they have been able to ramp up again and give patients the much needed diagnostics for their health. My sons Chester and Riley were just about to open their second new dental clinic when everything was put on hold due to the pandemic — frustrating, and it took lots of patience on their part, but they were able to get going again in early summer and are very busy.

Percy is a dentist and his fiancée, Lesia, also a dentist, were also on hold in Lloydminster until they were able to resume services when our government became the first province to put in place a reopen plan that allowed patients the confidence to go back to their dentist.

The pandemic was considerably challenging for our son Fraser, who was attending Western University in London, Ontario, and in his final leg of a three-year orthodontics program. He had already purchased a clinic back home in Lloydminster and was all set to graduate at the end of March and return home to begin his career. Well, he did move back home with his wife and one-and-a-half-year-old son, but could not begin practising till August, a struggle for a young family with huge debt. But happy to say he is now very busy and well onto what I'm sure will be a very successful career.

Our son Duke was also waiting for his graduation from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] College of Dentistry in the spring, and anxious to join his older brothers in their practice. Well the pandemic also had him coming home early and not seeing work right away, or being able to even write his board exams until later in the spring. Happy to say, he's been able to get to work practicing dentistry with his older brothers, and is extremely busy.

Our son Ace was in his third year of U of S dentistry and had to finish classes online when the pandemic shut down school. Returning home as well for the summer, our household began to fill up again. With some of them back on the household payroll for a while, I began to wonder what went wrong. He resumed online classes in the fall, and with some COVID restrictions, is back in the health sciences labs at the U of S, hopeful he'll finish off his final year and graduate and begin his career in 2021. His fiancée is an RN [registered nurse] in Saskatoon, and very busy working long hours to support and keep patients safe during these difficult and trying times.

The pandemic had created many challenges for all of us, but I truly feel for our seniors whose anxiety and stress has been elevated due to loss of family contact and visits. My mom is 96 and was living on her own until she ended up the hospital in April. She is now under the safe, compassionate, and caring watch of a care home in Saskatoon. I was able to have an outside, very cold, visit with her on the Thanksgiving weekend. But it's

been a very difficult and hard time for all of us as we know we want to protect her, the other elderly in her care home, and those health care workers looking after her. Phone calls, virtual hugs, and telling her we love her happen, but we can only hope that someday soon we'll be able to kiss, hug, and tell her we love her once again in person.

I know for many of us standing here in this Assembly, family is the reason and motivation as to why we are here. We all want to make Saskatchewan a better place for our children and grandchildren, so that their futures are full of hope and happiness as they live, work, and raise their families in this great province.

Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, as we've all heard, a successful campaign is run by committed, caring, and dedicated volunteers. I could not have had such a successful, well-run, well-organized campaign without my incredible campaign manager, Tracy Patterson. From finding volunteers to managing my door-knocking schedule to taking calls, putting together brochures, entering data, providing tech support, putting up signs, she was the glue and sparkle that did it all. She put in countless volunteer hours during the campaign. Thank you, Tracy. I owe you a debt of gratitude.

There were a number of other volunteers who helped in a number of ways that I say a very grateful thank you to for helping during the campaign, but I do want to point out a few in particular: Deanah Patterson and Crystal Mackay who helped daily with data entry and making phone calls; Zuhy Sayeed and Rae Douglas who did phoning from home; Rob and Brodie Patterson; Kya Patterson, her high school friends Alison, Savannah, Aila, and Harmony; Edna Manglal, Malik Ahmad, Sabi Sayeed, Samir, and other members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community for all their help in stuffing brochures, putting up signs, and dropping GOTV cards.

I had a few one-time door knockers, too, and I hope they weren't scared off by the number of doors and miles I covered. But I would like to say a special thank you to my real door-knocking troopers, Kathy Bloch-Hansen, Kiran Naqvi, and Malik Ahmad, who covered a lot of ground and doors with me on both the nice days and some very, very windy and cold days. Thank you all so much.

Mr. Speaker, we are all here to serve the people and make a difference, and I heard a number of issues on the doorsteps as I travelled throughout the constituency. My constituents told me their thoughts on the direction of our government, struggles from the heart, and what they needed in order to do well. They said for the economy to do well, people need to do well. Mr. Speaker, the promises this government has made in this Throne Speech have been well planned out to ensure that we will come out of this pandemic with a stronger economy, while at the same time making life more affordable for families.

Mr. Speaker, when the Sask Party formed government in 2007, our former premier and caucus colleagues of the day believed it was important to put a growth plan in place and created the 2020 growth plan. The goals and promises in that 2020 growth plan were kept and met. We strengthened Saskatchewan's economy; grew our population; rebuilt highways, hospitals, schools, long-term care homes; and created opportunities for investors and job creation. A couple of years ago as we began approaching

2020 under the leadership of Premier Moe, we knew it was time to renew our growth plan and look towards the next 10 years of opportunity and growth. Once again the goals and promises in our 2030 growth plan, which is what our Throne Speech mirrors, will give the people of Saskatchewan the hope, resilience, and strength to keep our province strong and moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I listened and spoke with constituents on a number of topics during the recent election campaign, but the one that I heard the most was, we need jobs, jobs, jobs, and more jobs. Our two-year 7.5 billion in infrastructure funding will be the key to more job creation and strengthening our economy as we come out of this pandemic. This is good news for my constituency as jobs are already being created with 9 kilometres of the new Frenchman Butte access road in progress, as well as the start of the rebuild of the 39.4 kilometres of Highway 21 from Highway 3 North — a \$10 million investment by this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, jobs will be created with a \$10.3 million classroom addition and renovations to Holy Rosary High School, and 25 million in added classrooms and renovations to the Lloydminster Comprehensive High School. Jobs will be created as the Lloydminster hospital is getting just over 2 million in upgrades, both in technology needs and in its outer facade.

Our government's stimulus package, the municipal economic enhancement program, will also stimulate economic recovery and encourage local job creation, allowing communities to purchase and begin much needed infrastructure. Jobs will be created as the city of Lloydminster begins its \$1.6 million road improvement project, and the surrounding RMs [rural municipality] will see another 600,000 for shovel-ready infrastructure projects. As part of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, jobs will be created as the RM of Britannia in my constituency will also see another 600,000 for the Greenstreet lagoon expansion.

The introduction of our home renovation tax credit will add to the positive impact as local and small renovation businesses in my constituency will benefit from the work and job creation. Homeowners will benefit too, claiming up to 10.5 per cent tax credit on up to \$20,000 of eligible home renovations, a new tax credit that will save Saskatchewan homeowners about 124 million and provide a significant boost to the province's construction and small-business sector.

Our introduction of the small-business tax credit is another way we are helping and supporting small and local businesses in our province. Locally owned and operated businesses account for hundreds of thousands of jobs in our province, and we know they will play a crucial role in driving our economy. We must support them now as we go through these very challenging times, and that's why we reduced the small-business tax rate from two to zero. It was reduced October 1st and will not be restored till July 2023, almost three years later.

Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, oil and gas has been a huge economic driver for our province and in my constituency. Not only have they been hit hard over the last five years with low oil prices, international price wars, investors pulling out due to the lack of pipelines, and the unwillingness of our federal government to support getting our product to tidewater, but a pandemic created the loss of hundreds of jobs in an already

struggling industry.

Thank you to our Minister of Energy and Resources for reducing the industry's portion of the oil and gas administrative levy by 50 per cent for this fiscal year and for effectively launching the accelerated site-closure program. I was able to organize a round-table conference call between the minister, producers in my area, and 22 service companies to offer ideas and feedback on the rollout of the program. Within a short while the program was successfully launched, with 9.8 million initially coming to the Lloydminster area, creating jobs, and engaging local companies. To date the program has engaged 250 Saskatchewan-based service companies.

I know one oil service company in my area was immediately able to hire back 40 people, and with the second tranche of dollars already in play, more jobs have been created. This is all great news but, I know, temporary. For a full recovery we need more of our oil in pipelines getting to tidewater and into global markets and sold at a price that reflects the jobs, investments, and hard work of a very valuable industry.

This pandemic has caused much concern but also some division amongst the people of our communities. I also heard on the doorstep how this pandemic has elevated mental health issues. I was glad to see that a new responsibility to oversee mental health and addiction programming in the province was added to our Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, this appointment demonstrates our government's ongoing commitment to strengthen and support those struggling with mental health and addiction challenges. 7.5 per cent of the entire Health budget, a record 435 million, will be invested in mental health and addiction services in this province. And we have already seen the commitment with treatment capacity of a new specialized crystal meth treatment centre in Estevan, new detox beds in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, and North Battleford.

In addition, we are introducing initiatives that align with our Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan by including a program to train a mental health first responder in every one of the province's 744 schools.

I also heard on the doorsteps how important it was to look after our seniors. And as was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, our government has always understood that we stand on the shoulders of our seniors as we work to make this province a better place. Our seniors' income plan benefit for low-income seniors was frozen for 16 years under the NDP [New Democratic Party] at a mere \$90 a month. And since 2007 our government has tripled it to \$270 a month and we are increasing it again. Over the next three years we will further increase the maximum benefit to \$360 a month.

We are also keeping our promise to help seniors by significantly reducing the cost of ambulance calls by eliminating charges for inter-facility transfers and reducing the maximum cost of other calls by over 50 per cent from \$275 to \$135 per call.

Our government has invested in our seniors by building 14 new long-term care homes and we are building more in this province. The health care workers who work in these facilities are angels,

especially now during this pandemic. We have hired more than 700 front-line health care workers since 2007, but more are needed to care for our aging loved ones. That is why we have responded by committing to hiring 300 new continuing care aids to work in long-term care.

[15:00]

Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, many of my colleagues have touched on the services that will be helping to make life more affordable for families, such as the coverage for those living with diabetes and providing individualized funding for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. But I want to comment on the commitment that's hit closer to home for me. I have an older sister and brother who were both born deaf. In the 1950s the only services for these children was the Saskatchewan Rehabilitation Services located in an older building up near the Saskatoon airport. We lived on a farm 25 miles east of Saskatoon and my parents drove them both there weekly to help them learn coping and developmental skills.

I remember they had large, gold-coloured hearing aids in a pouch on a harness they wore, with cords going up to the buds in their ears. They are five and six years older than I and I remember them sitting in my grade 6 class with me. Teachers did not understand how to work with students like this at the time and they were often referred to as stupid and dumb. Some of you may remember teachers slapping rulers on your desk or throwing chalk or chalk brushes when you didn't answer. I recall a day when he slapped the ruler on my sister's desk and called her stupid. She got scared and started to cry. I stood up and replied, they are not stupid or dumb. They are deaf, and can't hear and understand you. I told my parents and they pulled them from school.

Brunskill School in Saskatoon had just brought in some new technology — sound-enhanced headphones — and was introducing American Sign Language. My parents were able to enrol them there and my older sister, who was going to university at the time, was able to accommodate them to live with her.

After a couple of years there, they were able to live in residence and attend the Saskatoon School for the Deaf, where they were taught by some very special and exceptional teachers, making many lifelong friends and getting job placements upon graduating. My parents drove into the city every weekend to bring them home and take them back on Sunday evenings.

About six years ago, my sister was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to have surgery. And even though the family had learned some sign language, my brother and sister had become extremely proficient at lip-reading. But when it came time to helping her understand all the medical terms and what the process would be for treatment, we needed an interpreter. Hard to find and even more valuable was keeping the same one each time so as to build a relationship of trust. And as we've seen in our daily and now weekly federal and provincial COVID-19 updates, a deaf interpreter is right there in the background providing a very valuable and important service to keep these citizens informed and safe too.

Our government is committed to providing funding to hire three additional Deaf-blind intervenors, three new American Sign

Language interpreters, another sign language support professional, and one additional case manager to make sure those people who are deaf and blind can live and work in our communities with dignity and a sense of purpose. Close to 150 people will benefit from these enhanced services.

Mr. Speaker, since we have been back in this Assembly, I have consistently heard from the opposition leader, the member from Regina Rosemont, and a couple of other NDP members that we should stop patting ourselves on the back. Well, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, I would say this to them: when their son, daughter, friend, colleague, or any other person does a really, really good job at something, we generally tend to give them a pat on the back, tell them what a great job they did or are doing, and tell them to keep up the good work. I would say it is not us who are patting ourselves on the back, but it is very clear from the numbers in this Assembly and from the results since 2007 and particularly from this last election, that this government has been patted on the back by the people of this province for a job well done and have been asked to keep up the great work.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is what is in this Speech from the Throne: a job well done and a plan to keep up the good work for the people of Saskatchewan; a growth plan that will provide optimism, boldness, resilience, and strengthen our economy, build upon the infrastructure needs in our province, create job opportunities for future generations; enhance services for individuals, families, and communities; and continue to make Saskatchewan the best place to live, work, play, dream, and raise a family in strong communities. We truly care for each other, and I know Saskatchewan people are resilient, always determined to get what they want, yet compassionate, generous, and above all, kind to others.

Let's keep that in mind as we work for and serve the people of this province in this wonderful and democratic place of honour and privilege. And once again, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the motion and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Bonk: — I'll begin as I should, and by what has become a convention to Throne Speech replies, by thanking those who have helped us take our seats in this Chamber. Firstly, my gratitude is extended to the citizens of the Moosomin constituency, arguably the most free-market-oriented constituency in the province. It has only elected centre-right representatives to this Chamber. I want to thank them for the strong endorsement, and as a result in this election we received the largest percentage of the vote in the history of that constituency. I will continue to endeavour to work diligently to validate that endorsement. I'm truly humbled.

I must say thank you to the many volunteers who helped on the campaign. Your efforts are deeply appreciated. Everyone who takes their place in this Chamber knows it takes a team to run a campaign. And we have an outstanding team. I know that everyone who helped had better things to do than help this unemployed guy get a job. So thank you.

Someone who I feel is very much responsible for our election

success is Tim Hovdestad. Tim works as a constituency assistant in our office. Tim is steady and calm, and no matter how much emotion is on the other end of the call, he stays that way. He is someone who has and continues to provide admirable service to our constituency.

To the other candidates, I know what's involved in putting your name forward for elected office. I know that you share in my desire to help build a better Saskatchewan. I want to thank you for your honourable campaigns.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank family. They have been unwavering in their support and is that deep, foundational support that allows us to do what we do. To my parents, Lorne and Diane Bonk, thank you could never be enough. To my daughter Emma, and wife Candace, your love and guidance means more than you'll ever know. Emma, who is 16 and an aspiring veterinarian, is clever and witty. She's a serial entrepreneur and is always coming up with new and unique ideas.

She's becoming quite involved in public service as well. She's the past president of her school. She is the 4H club president, southeast district 4H president, provincial public speaking champion, and secretary of the Sask Party youth organization. She has a habit of exceeding expectations and I'm very proud of the young lady that she's becoming.

My wife, Candace, demonstrated daily the meaning of unconditional support. We've had the opportunity to share many incredible experiences together. We have grown together. Candace is extremely proud of her Hungarian heritage and has worked to promote closer ties between our province and Hungary. She has recently become the Honorary Consul of Hungary to Saskatchewan and will continue in these efforts. Her dignified approach and effortless charm will ensure this, like every other task she performs, will be extremely successful.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to the task at hand. I rise today to put my full support behind the ideas and principles outlined in our government's Throne Speech. It is a Throne Speech that accentuates the optimism and potential of Saskatchewan. It highlights the strengths of our province, the resiliency of its people, and our determination to come out the other side of our present situation even stronger.

Strangely, I heard a phrase the other day from the opposite side of this Chamber, a phrase that baffled me. Mr. Speaker, someone labelled our province "a sinking ship." That's right. Our province, Saskatchewan, a sinking ship. A sinking ship, I think not. The province of Saskatchewan resembles nothing of the sort.

A sinking ship would be a province where individual initiative and innovation would not be supported or encouraged. A sinking ship would be a province whose population, especially its young, would leave by the thousands seeking opportunities elsewhere. A sinking ship would be a province whose citizens and businesses would be burdened by high taxes and whose infrastructure is becoming so outdated it wouldn't serve the needs of its taxpayers. A sinking ship would be a province where new markets were seldom sought out, where new jobs were always scarce, and where businesses were always finding friendlier environments to expand elsewhere. A sinking ship would be a not-have province, forever playing catch-up in all

areas — economically, socially, and on and on.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, a sinking ship would be a spot-on description for the province of Saskatchewan 13 years ago, before the Saskatchewan Party took over the reins of the government and helped turn the fortune of this province around.

Do we have to go over the numbers again and again to show the growth in this province in the last 13 years? More doctors, more nurses, more teachers, more classrooms, more and larger markets, robust manufacturing, the lowest unemployment in Canada, and the fastest growing merchandise exports. Mr. Speaker, the ship has been righted and the ship is Saskatchewan, a have province that has been growing and will continue to grow.

But enough of the metaphors because, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is a clear statement by our Sask Party government that will fully recognize the reality of our present situation and that we are willing to deal with in a forthright and clear-headed fashion.

Society has been destabilized by this pandemic, and every day we see how people in our province have been mobilized to take measures to combat it. Isolation has been regulated. A great deal of our businesses and education is being done at a distance. Gatherings such as meetings, reunions, conventions, and the like, are increasingly carried out online. Medical visits and therapies are being accomplished remotely. And while we're asking our citizens to radically change their lifestyle and choices, our government must be at the vanguard of those choices.

There are lessons we can learn from history to help us in doing this, Mr. Speaker. In fact, out of the darkest days of the two world wars of the last century came innovations that changed the course of history. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that the beginning of the First World War that the airplane was considered a novelty, a lumbering toy that men and women flew at fairs and exhibitions to entertain the crowds? But by the end of that conflict that aircraft had acquired a reasonable degree of sophistication. It had taken the horrors of the trenches and jump-start the age of flight.

Further, Mr. Speaker, during the Second World War when reconstructive surgery was in its infancy, surgeons who were presented with horrifically burned pilots felt inadequate to help their patients until the day, Mr. Speaker, a doctor noticed that burn victims who had been parachuted into the English Channel were responding to a treatment and actually showed signs of healing. The advent of saline treatment for burns had begun.

I use these examples, Mr. Speaker, to show that from the darkest times can come rays of light that will change the world for better. We can't respond to our troubles with trepidation, Mr. Speaker. We have to have faith, we have to have courage, and above all we have to have optimism.

Optimism seems to be an outdated notion in some circles, but this Throne Speech that I support wholeheartedly, is bursting with a spirit of optimism that is Saskatchewan through and through. It is the kind of optimism that causes our citizens to plant their crops, the kind of optimism that makes them establish, implement manufacturing plants and food-processing companies. It is the optimism of people who have an idea and know that their government will do its level best to support

innovations by its citizens. It is the optimism of a province that is alive with opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, it is the optimism of our youth who have benefited from our Saskatchewan advantage scholarship, which our government has increased yet again, increasing the total amount offered over four years from 2,000 to \$3,000. About 8,000 students will be helped by this scholarship program.

We will also continue to offer the graduate retention program, the only one of its kind in Canada, which will offer up to \$20,000 in income tax credits to post-secondary graduates who stay in Canada to build a productive life in their home province. Since it was introduced in 2008, over 70,000 graduates have benefited from this program. It is the kind of optimism that doesn't have our government in competition with some around us who are indiscriminately throwing money at their problems hoping it will eventually make them go away no matter how black the hole of debt that is left for our future generations to deal with.

Abraham Lincoln once said, if you want to predict your future, create it. And, Mr. Speaker, that is what this Throne Speech is doing. Creating and enhancing the building blocks that are already established by our government for a future that will reward optimism of anyone who wants to be part of Saskatchewan's potential. The world grows and will continue to grow, and after this present crisis is over, it will be a world that will need to be supplied with food, fuel, and fertilizer, and with the kinds of innovations that Saskatchewan can provide.

[15:15]

The Saskatchewan growth plan introduced last year by our government has ambitious targets that are being met as we sit in this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, our population continues to grow, new jobs are being created daily. Growth and retail sales, wholesale trade and exports indicate that we're on the right track. Add to this the three major rating agencies that have affirmed our AAA credit rating, the second highest among Canada's provinces.

Our government continues to reach out to the world with new trade relationships that will be foraged with three trade offices that will be opened in Japan, India, and Singapore within the next year to be added to the already established trade office in Shanghai, China.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan work hard for their lives that they have chosen to lead, and with the challenges now facing them, they want practical help from their government. They don't want handouts; they don't want advice or instruction; they don't want ideology. They want concrete programs of assistance like our Saskatchewan Party Government has initiated in the past and in this Throne Speech. These programs are meant to stimulate our economy so it will emerge from the present situation as strong and vital as before.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a fiscal conservative. I believe in incentivization rather than regulation. I believe that people flourish with economic encouragement, not indiscriminate handouts. I believe in making hard choices to ensure stability, not bargain-basement giveaways for short-term political advantage. I believe that this Throne Speech aligns with those beliefs.

The Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment provided 32 million to small- and medium-sized businesses affected by this pandemic. The Saskatchewan temporary wage supplement has been reactivated to top up the wages of home care employees and vital workers in long-term care facilities, personal care homes, and integrated health centres. Mr. Speaker, these indispensable caregivers are more than just employees. They are the people who are putting their own health on the line in order that the most vulnerable of our citizens will receive proper care and support during these unprecedented times.

Further incentives outlined in the Throne Speech will reduce SaskPower electricity charges by 10 per cent for one year, putting about 260 million back in the hands of our people — money that will help revitalize our economy.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens of Saskatchewan have a pride-of-place that rivals any across the nation. At the very core of this pride, of course, is our families and our homes. And this will be abundantly stimulated by the rollout of our Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit, which will provide a ten and a half per cent tax credit on up to \$20,000 of eligible home renovation expenses. The savings we'll provide to homeowners could be put over 100 million, and that will put money back into our economy and further enhance our provincial recovery.

Also significant beyond measure will be the shot in the arm it will give to Saskatchewan's construction workers and building suppliers. These are among the small-business men and women which this government has always recognized as the most substantial sector of our province's economy. The great majority of Saskatchewan businesses, Mr. Speaker, are classified as small businesses. That is, they have fewer than 50 employees.

Our province actually has the highest rate of small businesses in all of Canada. Over 30 per cent of Saskatchewan workers are employed by these small businesses. And these workers will be employed by our government's investment in construction of new schools, hospitals, care homes, highways, utility projects, and municipal infrastructure.

In Moosomin constituency we are pleased to hear the announcement of the construction of a 33-bed long-term care facility in Grenfell. They had lost their facility a few years ago. It is a testament to the hard work of Grenfell's mayor, Rod Wolfe; then councillor, Tyler Tomlinson; and a number of energetic Grenfell and district citizens who have worked closely with the Saskatchewan Health Authority to bring this project to fruition. It will be added to the 14 long-term facilities that this government has already built, with one more under construction and an additional facility being planned.

The Saskatchewan Party government already has a variety of initiatives, services, and programs that support our small businesses. The aforementioned small-business emergency payment, the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive, the Product 2 Market incentive, and the Canada-Saskatchewan Job Grant are ways this government has put the stimulus for small businesses at the top of their priority list.

And because the Saskatchewan Party realizes the detrimental effect this pandemic has had on Saskatchewan small-business owners, further measures will be undertaken to help them

reinvest in their operations, retain workers, and hire new ones. Our government will therefore reduce the small-business rate, already one of the lowest in Canada, from 2 per cent to 1 per cent. The cost will be 189 million, but we are confident that this will be reinvested to further drive the recovery of Saskatchewan's economy. Add to this, Mr. Speaker, our highly competitive tax structure, which includes tax credits for research and development, equipment expenditures, and the removal of red-tape barriers to growth.

Further to this, Mr. Speaker, our Saskatchewan Party government has invested 6 million in marketing campaigns to encourage Saskatchewan residents to shop locally, eat locally, and support local initiatives. More small businesses will be stimulated by our launch last May of the accelerated site-closure program, supported by the federal government, which will see 250 service companies, all Saskatchewan-based, that will clean up nearly 8,000 inactive oil wells and facilities, and in the process create over 2,000 full-time jobs. All of these measures make Saskatchewan one of the best places in Canada to start and grow a business.

Mr. Speaker, these measures address the very basic needs of the citizens of our province. Of course, putting food on the table and having a roof over our heads are the most indispensable of those needs, and as I've shown, this Throne Speech addresses those needs. But beyond food and shelter, Mr. Speaker, people need three other fundamental things, and they are: first of all, safety; second, the need to have a sense that they matter; and third, that they feel that they belong. Safety, Mr. Speaker, is a feeling that we live in an environment where we not only feel safe but we're free to stretch and grow. It is an environment our government attempts to create when it continues to invest in more personal protective equipment for front-line workers, when it creates the ability for expanded testing capacity, and when provisions are made to hire additional staff to carry out contact tracing.

Safety and peace of mind are also necessary in our present situation, and nowhere is it more vital than in our schools. And this is why our government, Mr. Speaker, will not only make a record budget investment in education, but will be adding 85 million to ensure that our children will learn in a safe environment. Hundreds of new staff, teachers, support staff, and custodial workers will enable the system to enhance distance learning and procure the latest technologies to achieve this.

And consider the effects that this pandemic is having on our mental health of our youth, Mr. Speaker. Our Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan already deals with this but now will be augmented by the new initiative to ensure that a mental health first safety responder will now be present in each of Saskatchewan's over 700 schools to immediately deal with any crisis as soon as it arises.

Safety is what our parents of nearly 600 children under the age of 18 with diabetes must feel when our government pays for the cost of continuous glucose monitoring, a way of immediately recognizing problems. Add to this the expansion of the Saskatchewan insulin pump program, which will now ensure that anyone in the province who needs an insulin pump will now have one at no expense to them. In addition, the coverage for the medications and supplies of diabetics will be increased.

Safety is what the Deaf and Blind and their caregivers in our communities must feel when they benefit from the improved services and personnel to which our Saskatchewan Party government will provide for them over the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, as this Throne Speech was presented, there were nearly 500 children with autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, in Saskatchewan receiving individualized funding. And in the next six months that number will double. Beginning in 2021, Mr. Speaker, the parents of each child under the age of 12 who has been diagnosed with ASD will receive \$6,000 a year to cover therapeutic support. When the Saskatchewan Party took office in 2007, half a million dollars was being spent every year on those services for those with ASD. Now that total is 12 million.

Mr. Speaker, we want those Saskatchewan people suffering with mental health and addiction problems to feel a sense of safety and security as they face their challenges. And this year, fully seven and a half per cent of our entire health budget has been dedicated to mental health and addictions services.

The protection from human trafficking Act, which will be introduced this session, will provide safety and strategy for victims of human trafficking and their families, whose lives have been horribly disrupted. Likewise *The Residential Tenancies Act* will allow victims of sexual assault in a rental accommodation to distance themselves from environments in which they feel unsafe and vulnerable.

And how will our government give its citizens a sense that their lives matter in the larger scheme of things? Take agriculture for instance, Mr. Speaker. Our Saskatchewan Party government will continue to support our continually developing agriculture sector through investments in research and innovation, through the opening of three new trade offices, and through our continuing support programs. Mr. Speaker, those in Saskatchewan agriculture know that they matter to our government. And as you've heard me say in this Chamber in the past, the world wants what Saskatchewan has to offer. And much of that is our agriculture products. Our government will continue to find ways to get those products to those who need them.

Our veterans matter. Of course there's no debate about why all of us in this Chamber feel this way. It makes no difference what we may believe the role of the military is, whether in conflict, in peacekeeping, or in humanitarian efforts. It's the men and women who have put their feet on the ground and put themselves in harm's way whom we honour for their courage and sacrifice. And this is doubtless why more than 160 branches of organizations like the Canadian Legion, the Saskatchewan Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans take such an active role in the hometowns that they served to protect.

And this is why two years ago our government introduced Saskatchewan veteran club support program as our way of supporting the many initiatives these clubs are engaged in for the betterment of their communities. The program provides grants of up to \$5,000 to registered service clubs to improve facilities and to support community access to their programs, meetings, and events. The program has met with such success, Mr. Speaker, it has prompted our government to increase its budget from 100,000 to 1.5 million so their programming can be expanded, ensuring that the contributions to the well-being of their

communities will continue to flourish.

Our seniors matter. And so during this session, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to show our gratitude to our seniors by making life more affordable for them, the people who built this province. One of the ways we will do this is by making ambulance calls not such a costly burden to seniors and their families. And this is why we will cut the cost of ambulance calls by more than half. In addition, low-income seniors will now have the allotment under the seniors' income plan increased over the next three years from \$270 to 360. We want our seniors to know that they matter, Mr. Speaker.

And how do we ensure that the citizens of Saskatchewan are afforded the feeling of belonging in our province? It is a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, that young people benefit considerably when they participate in sports, the arts, cultural events as it helps them grow in their understanding of teamwork, giving, and generosity. And because these activities can be costly, our active families benefit will provide families with under \$60,000 annual income grants of up to \$150 per child, or \$200 per child with a disability.

And because we all know the epicentre of Saskatchewan activities in the winter months is the local rink, our government is happy to announce the revival of the community rinks affordability program, granting \$2,500 a year to local rinks in Saskatchewan, helping nearly 400 communities in our province help to recover their operating costs. It isn't just another way we can guarantee our figure skaters, hockey players, and recreational skaters will have the facilities to keep them busy throughout the long, cold winter months. And I want to note and I know how teams like the Grenfell Spitfires, the Wolseley Mustangs, the Moosomin Rangers, and Rocanville Tigers, among others, are so vital to the identities of communities in the Moosomin constituency.

Mr. Speaker, any Throne Speech is inevitably accompanied by many numbers, mostly numbers of dollars and how they add up. But if you look deeply in this Throne Speech, you will see it's much more than just arithmetic. It's about making sure the people of Saskatchewan are secure in their homes that they've worked hard to obtain and maintain. It's about making them feel that there is safety as they go out about their daily activities. It's about giving them a feeling that they matter to the government that they put their trust in. And it is also about making them understand that they each belong so they can participate in the good things our province has to offer.

There's an old saying, Mr. Speaker, that I think is appropriate as we consider our work in the months ahead. It goes, if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together. Mr. Speaker, in these trying times the spirit of the people of Saskatchewan will be strong and resilient. They know how to look after themselves and they know how to look after one another.

[15:30]

This Throne Speech is our response to that spirit. And I wholeheartedly throw my support behind the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley, and I do not support the amendment.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's my honour to rise this afternoon and enter into this debate on the Throne Speech motion and the amendment. Before I begin in earnest, Mr. Speaker, let me extend my congratulations to you on your role, the election to the role of Speaker, and let me also say congratulations to the Deputy Speaker on her election. And I'd also like to add my thanks and gratitude to the outgoing Speaker, the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Speaker, what happens in this Assembly matters. The debate and the decisions that are made or not made on the floor of this Assembly have a profound impact on the lives of Saskatchewan families and often impact the future course of this province. The position of Speaker has a special significance and plays an important role in keeping traditions and the integrity and the fairness of this Assembly on track. It's important that the people that we serve have trust in the members who occupy these chairs and in the processes that we engage in to enact laws and to make decisions. It's a matter of integrity, and we all have a role to play in keeping public trust. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, you have an extra role there, and I trust that you will take that responsibility seriously.

And I would like to take a moment to say sincere congratulations to all members elected here to this, the twenty-ninth Legislative Assembly, all those who are returning and to all those elected for the first time. We occupy desks and positions that relatively few people in the 115-year history of this province have occupied. My hope for new members and for all of us, Mr. Speaker, is that we never lose sight of the sense of responsibility and the sense of duty that first brought us to seek public office.

I know that the first speech in this Assembly is a big deal. We have the podium. We have people prepping long hours for their maiden speeches. And I remember being kept up at night editing and reworking that speech and being very, very nervous, Mr. Speaker. And many of us who've been here for a while might find that over the years and over the speeches and the times on your feet, you find yourself becoming a little less nervous, perhaps putting a little less preparation into those speeches, Mr. Speaker.

But I find myself standing here today almost feeling like that first time. And part of the reason for that is, I've been listening to the speeches of the new members, and I've been listening and taking them into account. And, Mr. Speaker, they've been extraordinary. They have been thoughtful and heartfelt, and a lot of preparation has gone into them. And many of the things that have been said here have caused me to think, have honestly kept me up at night, and have reminded me . . . renewed that sense of what it is we intend to do here, the importance of it and the task that's before us.

To all of those new members: you've set the bar very high. You've reminded some of us — I don't know after four years if you get to be an old-timer; sometimes it feels like it — of the honour that it is to stand in this Assembly. And I want to sincerely thank each of you, members on both sides, all sides of the Assembly for that.

Mr. Speaker, and perhaps it's that and also just the gravity of the situation that's in front of us, or the fact that there've been so many hours recently spent on the doorstep connecting with people and hearing and understanding the challenges that people are facing in this province, their hopes, their concerns. It really is a privilege. I felt this during my 20-year career as a social worker, that sense of honour that people would trust you with their hopes, with their concerns. I mean, that is something, Mr. Speaker, to be pulled in in a position of trust to have people share, you know, their strongest desires, those dark secrets that keep them up at night. And I know that many of us, or most of us have had that experience recently. And that really is a position of trust that we occupy.

But I want to say a special thank you to this team — I would say on this side of the Assembly, but sort of carved out of this side of the Assembly — to the new members to the official opposition. I think there's a line in a cheesy film about, you make me want to be a better person. You make me want to be a better MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and I thank you. I thank you all for the thoughtfulness and the way that you've just taken the task that's in front of you.

Of course we had . . . It might be a secret — I don't think so — that we had hoped to occupy a few more seats over here. I remember that feeling very well in 2016 of being elected and not quite getting the result that we had hoped for. But nonetheless you've taken up the challenge. You've hit the floor running, and I think the people of Saskatchewan will be well served by the seriousness and the thoughtfulness that you bring to your duties. So I want to thank each of you.

And it's been said many times, Mr. Speaker, but I think that's because it does bear repeating that none of us gets here alone, and none of us stands here to serve our own self-interest. Our role in what we've been elected to do is to serve our constituents and to serve the people of this province. I want to thank my campaign team, my EPC [election planning committee] and my executive, our volunteers, and the people who allowed us to put up all those orange signs, Mr. Speaker, and generally to the people of Regina Lakeview who placed their trust in me again. This was not a usual election, to say the least. To all of those who are new, I promise it's not usually like that, but I'm very proud of the work that our team did to handle the challenges.

There are too many people to thank, and I'm a bit reluctant to name names because you inevitably leave someone out, but I'm going to read through the list. I want to say thank you to Cory Oxelgren, our campaign manager and constituency assistant; Heather Padfield, our business manager; to Colette Martin and Jillian Warawa. We had a great team of canvassers, Mr. Speaker, and volunteers who spent countless hours out on the doorstep. Sometimes it was, you know, plus 35. Sometimes towards the end of the campaign the pens were freezing. But they were out there nonetheless.

To Kiden, the Sarahs, Mikayla, Preet, Wayne, Lacey, Mohammed, and in the office Christine, Lesley, Doug, RayAnne, Jane, Joy. And as I've said, I'm afraid I'm going to miss someone. If you were there, I just want to say thank you. And I'm sending out the save the dates very soon. When we're able to all get together, we plan on having a very big celebration as I'm sure, when we're able, many people in this province plan to be

giving lots of hugs and having lots of parties. And I really can't wait for that.

And I also want to say thank you to those who put their name and efforts forward in Regina Lakeview, to Megan Patterson, to Bruno Sahut, and Michael Wright. Democracy works when people put their name forward and they work hard for what they believe in. And I want to thank each of them for the campaign that they ran.

I also must, as is customary and I think for a very good reason, thank my family, Mr. Speaker. My sign guy is also my husband, Guy. We've been together for over 25 years and we celebrated . . . Actually celebrating might be overstating it, but we had our 23rd wedding anniversary the day before the campaign. It takes a special partner, as many here will know, to walk alongside us and support us in politics. And I want to thank my husband for all of his help and his support, sometimes for his input although not always. But he's interested and he's supportive and I'm very grateful for that.

And I wouldn't be doing my job as a proud mom if I didn't mention and brag up my kiddos just a little bit, Mr. Speaker. One of the silver linings of this pandemic was having our daughter Hannah home from Edmonton for a short while. She is one of my best canvassers and she was a big help on the campaign before she had to return to Edmonton. She's almost done her third year co-op term in civil engineering through the University of Alberta and will be coming home at Christmas to stay for a few months while she finishes up the next term online. We're incredibly proud of her and can't wait for her to get home.

Our son Nolan was a 2020 COVID grad, and my empathy and congratulations to all those COVID grads out there. He joined the sign crew this year and decided . . . well he decided a long time ago that canvassing wasn't quite his thing but he puts up a mean sign and I'm thankful for that.

He'd also worked very hard to earn his golden ticket from the Regina Thunder this year, something that he did get in the mail. But unfortunately that season, like so many others, didn't quite pan out. But it has been . . . You know, I don't know, those of us who have teenage sons, sometimes you just can't wait for them to pick up something and anything and run with it. He really put in a lot of work to earning that ticket and that spot on the team, so I'm very proud that he stuck through that. He's currently enrolled in online courses at the U of R [University of Regina] and seems to be managing that okay — incredibly proud of him as well, Mr. Speaker.

And our youngest was also a COVID grad, but grade 8 COVID grad this year, who finished out her elementary school at École Connaught online, a school that was at the centre of our universe for over 16 years. It was a strange way to end it, Mr. Speaker, but such are the times. Thankful for all of those folks there. She's now in grade 9 at Campbell and she continues to dance and she unfortunately is also not very much for canvassing. It's really hard to get those kids out there canvassing sometimes. But she did become very interested in the campaign. In fact she could almost recite from memory all of the constituencies in the province and who was running, especially for the NDP and the Sask Party. She knew what the poll predictions were. She knew what the outcomes were. They didn't always match, Mr. Speaker,

unfortunately, but she could carry on a pretty good conversation about the fine details of the election. And as moms are, incredibly proud of her as well. And I think it's her at-home day from school so she might even be listening.

And yes, it's a good job to be a mom. I'm incredibly proud of these kids and I want them to grow up in a healthy and strong and forward-thinking province, and that's a strong motivator for the work that I do, Mr. Speaker.

Oh, time goes fast. I also want to acknowledge and thank my parents, and I'm going to run through some of this pretty quickly. Their world, like everyone's, was turned upside down this year. They normally guide American hunters. Of course there were no American hunters this year, so their life looks a little bit different this year. But yesterday they celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. And I know it wasn't quite the celebration they were looking for, but again that's another one of those parties that we're just going to have to have when this pandemic is over.

And one more, I promise. My grandmother, Olive, turned 85 this year on Halloween, October 31st. She's seen a few birthdays. I'm not sure it's okay that I'm saying how old she is, but there it is. And I'm sure she hasn't seen one like that — another one of those celebrations we'll have afterwards.

And finally I just want to thank the people who brought me here, the people who put me here, and that is the people of Regina Lakeview, for their continued support and their willingness to bring forward their hopes and dreams. Ours, Mr. Speaker, is a diverse, warm, civic-minded constituency. People pay attention to what's going on at home and around the world. They're informed, they're passionate, and they care about their neighbours. They don't just say the words, Mr. Speaker; they show it in so many tangible ways.

One of the things over the pandemic that maybe will give you a glimpse into Regina Lakeview and the folks that are there and kind of those hopeful moments and silver linings of the pandemic, we have a little boulevard out in front of our house. And like many of you, I'm sure I spent a lot of time on Zoom calls in the office, and watched this amazing little impromptu community garden spring up. And around that garden community, people would come by on their way to the park, talk with their neighbours, meet neighbours that they hadn't met in many years of living there, and really strengthen that community. And that was what initially drew me to this neighbourhood when I moved off the farm, Mr. Speaker, and it's certainly what keeps me very happy and proud to represent that neighbourhood.

[15:45]

And now they're decorating that same boulevard for Christmas, so the community spirit lives on and I know that's the case in many communities here. We've had to find ways to seize opportunities and to make communities where it's safe and where we're able.

I also watched our neighbours and movements online to embrace buy-local messages and to support those businesses that are struggling, certainly through the pandemic and now of course as we get closer to Christmas. And so many small, especially small retailers, this is when they do the majority of their business for

the year. So watching people encouraging people to ensure that those businesses are there when we come out of this pandemic has been heartening.

And I don't want to give the impression this has all been joyful or easy. Of course it hasn't been. This pandemic has hit our communities hard and it's hit those who have already been struggling the hardest. We are challenged as community members. We're challenged as leaders globally and certainly provincially. Lives and livelihoods depend on the decisions that we make here, and it's time for leadership. This will be a defining moment for our province and all of us who gather here.

We sit with responsibility but also with a great deal of privilege, Mr. Speaker, and I think we'd all do well to remember that. We all sit with — maybe it's crass to talk about — but we have a regular paycheque coming in and that's not something that many people in this province have. We stand here socially distanced, with protective gear, all the PPE we need, strong and stringent measures in place to protect our health, as it should be, but that's not a luxury that many people in this province have right now, Mr. Speaker. And those folks need our words, but they also need material support. They need the PPE, they need support to be able to take days off when they're sick. And they need us to take every measure, at least equal measures that we're taking for ourselves, for them in order to show that we really do value them and the work that they do.

It was J.S. Woodsworth, who I know has been quoted here many times, but I'm going to quote it again because I like it so much, Mr. Speaker:

We are thankful for these and all the good things of life. We recognize that they are part of our common heritage and come to us through the efforts of our brothers and sisters the world over. What we desire for ourselves, we wish for all. To this end, may we take our share in the world's work and in the world's struggles.

Mr. Speaker, what we desire for ourself here, the protections, the support that we have, I think it's incumbent upon us to desire that for all people in this province.

I'm going to have to speed through, is also a tradition when I'm giving speeches, Mr. Speaker. Some of my last thoughts here, but there are a few things that I want to say. No one expects anyone to have all of the answers in a pandemic, but I think people do reasonably expect us to be honest brokers for the people of this province, to take responsibility, to put aside petty or self-serving grievances, and work to keep people safe, to keep transmission low — or lower transmission in this case, Mr. Speaker — to ensure that workers and businesses alike have a fighting chance to stay afloat as we all work to get that vaccine out the door as fast as possible.

It has been said, and it's been said in speeches prior too, that the voter always gets it right. When you're sitting with 13 members, that's a humbling thing to hear. We'll take up that challenge. We have a job to do as the official opposition. We will continue to listen to the people of Saskatchewan. We will continue to work to get it right. And in the meantime, our role is to hold this government to account and something, Mr. Speaker, we are up to the task to do.

I'm going to quote Theodore Bikel, and hope that I haven't butchered his last name, who says this:

All too often arrogance accompanies strength, and we must never assume that justice is on the side of the strong. The use of power must always be accompanied by moral choice.

Mr. Speaker, to speak directly to the Throne Speech, I always think that I set the bar — you know, I've been here for four years — set the bar at a reasonable place. Sometimes what happens here sneaks under my expectations, and I think for many people in the province.

This is a critical time in the history of our province. What we see in this Throne Speech is frankly, I'm sure it's beneficial piecemeal, but it's half measures. And it certainly doesn't provide a vision. It doesn't provide the leadership that is needed in this province right now. This is not a time for half measures. This is a time for courage. It's a time to, sure, be proud of the results, but don't be arrogant.

Don't forget that this is a province that is seeing very high rates of transmission. This is a province that has an AIDS [acquired immune deficiency syndrome] crisis that pre-existed the pandemic. This is a province that has an opioid and a mental health crisis that is killing our neighbours. It is killing Indigenous girls in the North at 30 times the rate of non-Indigenous girls in this province, and that is not something that any of us should be proud of.

But moreover it's incumbent on all of us if we agree, and I think we do, that that is not defensible, then it's incumbent upon us here to do something about it. It's incumbent upon us to ensure that those businesses that we all speak about and care about, that they're here to tell the tale at the end of this pandemic.

And you know, it's nice to provide money to veterans' clubs, to the Legions. That's important. But let's protect those veterans who are dying in nursing homes right now. Let's not get too over the top with self-congratulations, Mr. Speaker, when we lead the country by doubling of the national average in terms of the number of women who experience violence in their homes. That was before the pandemic. I'm afraid to see what the numbers are now.

Mr. Speaker, all this and more. I say be proud of being elected here. It is a big deal. But don't be arrogant. Work to actually address the issues that are in front of us. The people of this province require leadership. They require the hard decisions to be made, and to fail to do that, Mr. Speaker, no less than will ensure that more people than are necessary . . . We never want to think of anyone necessary but the fatalities will happen at a rate, Mr. Speaker, that was preventable.

With that I will signal that I will not be voting in favour of the government's motion and will be voting in favour of the amendment. Thank you.

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

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity and the privilege to be able to

reply to the Throne Speech. But before that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few thank yous, actually maybe more than a few.

I want to start by saying thank you to you, Mr. Speaker, for putting your name forward to be Speaker of the legislature, and to the other five people that put their names forward. And I want to congratulate you on earning the trust of your fellow elected members. I know you will serve this legislature well and I do wish you all the best.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the member for Saskatchewan Rivers for being elected to the position of Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I really want to say thank you to the member for Regina Coronation Park for his time as our Speaker. I know while he was the Speaker, he did truly enjoy it.

Mr. Speaker, when I was the mayor, he was my MLA in the village of Borden. And I had the pleasure of getting to know Mr. Speaker over the years at many different events that he would attend. I consider Mr. Speaker a very good friend and I want to congratulate him on his role. I know the good people of Biggar-Sask Valley constituency could not be more proud. Mr. Speaker, you have definitely earned the respect of your constituents over the last couple of decades.

I also want to congratulate all of the new members and the returning members for earning the right to represent your respective constituencies. The path here is not always easy and I respect what you have accomplished.

I think it's also important that we say thank you to the election workers that provided a safe environment for us to vote in, in the recent election. Thousands of election workers worked hard to make sure that we had a safe election, and for that we do owe them a sincere thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Westview for electing me to be their representative at this legislature. I am honoured to have the opportunity to represent you. Over the last four and a half years I've knocked thousands of doors, staying connected with the constituents of Saskatoon Westview. This fall alone, my team and I knocked over 20,000 doors and, even with that, Mr. Speaker, we still did not connect with everyone on the doorstep. Saskatoon Westview is a hard-working constituency with almost every demographic represented and it's hard to catch everyone at home.

I also personally called 500 people this spring during the pandemic when regulations said that we were not able to be on the doorstep. Mr. Speaker, you know what I found? Whether I knocked their doors or called them on the phone, the response was overwhelmingly in favour of the decisions and the leadership of our Premier. And I've phoned people from both sides, whether they were supporters or whether they weren't supporters, because I thought it was truly important that we asked everyone what we should be doing differently, how we could try and get through this better together.

I am proud to be a member of this government, a government that truly cares about the people of Saskatchewan. And I think it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP did not do more to

support the Premier during this pandemic. So many times when they had the opportunity to be supportive, they found a way to politicize it. And that's really unfortunate because we were following good leadership in the Saskatchewan Health Authority and Dr. Shahab. And you know what? I think the voters had something to say about that at our last election.

Mr. Speaker, our members on this side of the House, the government side of the House, Mr. Speaker, will continue to listen to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, not long ago I asked someone the difference on how they were treated by a Sask Party and an NDP door knocker. They said the difference was the NDP door knocker talked most of the time while they were there and the Sask Party door knocker listened while they were there at the door — think two very different philosophies. But I think it's obvious to us here today which one that people gravitated to. And myself personally, Mr. Speaker, I hope I never forget that because I think it's important that we always have a listening ear.

And, Mr. Speaker, our Premier is a listener. He always takes time to hear what people have to say. And I know with over a million people in our province, he can't speak to everyone. But he does reach out to groups wherever he can to hear what their concerns are. And I am proud to be a part of a government that is like that.

I also want to say thank you to my wife for helping me to have the opportunity to serve in my constituency of Saskatoon Westview. We don't serve in this legislature alone. We do it with the support of our families. And Karen is always there, always there to help wherever she can, whether it is attending events or by simply having to be at home alone while we go about our constituency work as MLAs.

[16:00]

I also want to say a few things about my family, Mr. Speaker, of which Karen and I raised three young adults. Deanna is our oldest, and she has special needs and lives in a group home in Saskatoon. She works normally at Cosmopolitan Industries, but since March she hasn't been able to go there. And you know, she still has that loving heart that she had when she was a toddler, and that's refreshing. She's never changed, ever. And you know, our daughter Deanna truly looks forward to when the pandemic is behind us so she can get back to seeing her fellow co-workers and her family the way she used to.

Corey and his wife, Jade, have two children, Bentley and Hayden, which are nine and seven, two sweet little girls that, you know, because of the pandemic this year, we haven't had the opportunity to see near as much, and that's truly sad. Kayla, our daughter, is married to Lyndon Block and they also have two children, Ava and Madden, and they're five and three. I tell you, my wife and I, Karen, are so proud of our children, couldn't be more proud. And having grandchildren is actually the best gift in life, it really is.

And you know, before all of this, I was very fortunate to have great parents that taught me a hard-work ethic and honesty and integrity. But the funny thing is, Mr. Speaker, they actually never ever said it. They showed it in how they did things, in their work ethic and in their values. And growing up on the farm with three older brothers, when I look back, could not have been more

exciting. I won't say that I didn't end up with a bloody nose a few times, but it was a lot of fun. And I was fortunate in my life to have worked with all three of my brothers and, you know, all three of them helped me to be here. And that's pretty special when your family is there to help you.

I want to thank my campaign team for their help working to get me re-elected. I am proud of how hard they worked to meet the thousands of people on the doorstep and help me earn their trust and votes.

I had a lot of volunteers in my campaign and I want to thank them for all of the help they have provided over the last year. I know I undoubtedly have missed some and I do apologize for that. It is a bit of a long list, Mr. Speaker, but every single person that helped me deserves a thank you because they all helped me to be here, and I want to say thank you to them from the bottom of my heart.

My brother, Rod Buckingham, who twice has helped me in my campaigns in 2016 and in this year's election. In 2016 he actually could have been in Arizona spending the winter, but he spent the winter back here freezing and helping me to be re-elected. How do you say thank you to somebody like that? And his wife was in Arizona enjoying the sunshine. So I don't take that for granted, Mr. Speaker, and I'm so thankful for him for doing that.

So Sasha Peters, Regan Buckingham, Erin Watts, Chelsea Pederson, Michael Warnes, Cameron Scott, Dirk Genkens, Ryan Amundrud, Rich Jeanneau, Eric Carey, Orwa Dawood, Ibrahim Gill, Osama Usman, Musa Gill, Dawood Siddique, Morgan Schultz, Mahmood Shafqat, Azhar Randhawa, Hasan Pervej, John Hildebrand, Jon Kroker, Mitchell Pollard, Wassen Kamran, Justin Bisson, Ashley Stacey, Devyn Ethier, Abdul Ahad Gill, Ron Morris, Tom Redhead, Lorraine Scott, Kristen Wall, Sonia Aguilar, Megan Myer, Dalan Kautzman, Sunny Kals, Ajit Pal, Sunny Bajwa, Kaitlynn Heale, Nathan Heale, Kayla and Lyndon Block, Howard and Laurel Waldner, Eric and Darlene Pearce, Andrea and Tanner Leger, Kandis and Jamie Brandrick, who actually took off two weeks and took holidays just to door knock for me.

Doris and Cornelius Unger, Colleen and Micheal Sellar, Julia Burke, Osker Burke, Kathy and Jim Buckingham, Gerald and Rhonda Tornato, Chris and Kandis Georget, Julia and Lucas Besth, Silas and Bobbi Dain, Edwin and MaryAnn Peters, Karissa and Jordan Buckingham, David and Joyce Pierce, Joel and Kaylee Buckingham, Larry and Mariette Duncan, Kulwinder Dhillon, Gurmeet Ghuman, Gurpreet Ghuman, Haylie Peters, Kaidyn Turgeon, Cohen Burke, Pearse Burke, Jaspreet Kooner, Janet Hanson, Maqsood Ahmed, Balpreet Singh, Harvinder Bindahl, Braden Flavel, Phil Miller, Jashandeep Singh, Bill Ghotra, Narinder Singh, Baljinder Sohi, Mike Slattry, Randy Klein, Richard Douglas, Azhar Mahood, Linda Ebach, Rod Hiltz, Yadwinder Singh, John Williams, Trevor Monks, Adam Watt, Harvinder Pannu, Mike Stenrud, and Wager Younus.

Also some private members helped me. The member for Melfort, the member for Melville-Saltcoats, the member for Saskatoon Willowgrove, and the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Speaker, 114 people that came out and helped me. Each and every one of them I owe a debt of gratitude. It takes a lot of

people and so many things need to be done during an election. And I am truly thankful and humbled that they came out and helped.

Mr. Speaker, the front-line health care workers have done an incredible job in keeping the residents of Saskatchewan as healthy as possible as we deal with the effects of COVID-19. It is important that the rest of us follow the health guidelines, regulations, and that keeps them safe, Mr. Speaker. So please, Saskatchewan, follow the guidelines and we will all come through this together. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to live in Saskatchewan, a province where people come together in a time of need. And this, my friends, this is our time of need. This is our time to shine as well, Mr. Speaker, a time to set aside our personal needs and be there for our neighbours by following the safety guidelines provided by the SHA.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a few comments on the Throne Speech and point out a few of our highlights. Of course our government's top priority during this session is to continue to work to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, we are cognizant of the fact that the best defence so far has been the selflessness and vigilance of the Saskatchewan people in following the guidelines that will keep us safe; and they have kept us safe by and large.

Our government has made historic investments to protect people in Saskatchewan, whether that is by investing in more personal protective equipment or for front-line workers or by expanding our testing capacity and contact tracing. We know we have more work to do, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do that work.

Mr. Speaker, our government has allocated 85 million on top of a record budget investment to ensure our children have a safe place to study, and hundreds of new teachers and custodial staff have been hired, and nearly 15 million has been invested to enhance distance-learning capacity.

Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced programs to help small businesses, such as the small-business emergency payment, which has provided 32 million to small and medium-sized businesses affected by the pandemic. In the weeks and months ahead, our government will continue to take actions to address both the health and the economic impact of COVID-19 while we continue to prepare for the distribution of a safe and effective vaccine.

Our government was re-elected with a strong mandate based on a clear commitment, a commitment to build a strong Saskatchewan by supporting the economic recovery now under way while ensuring life in our province remains affordable for everyone. Our government commits to a growing, affordable Saskatchewan for families, seniors, and young people; a strong recovery, strong economy, strong communities, and strong families; and a fiscally responsible government with a plan to balance the budget by 2024. Thanks to the sacrifice and hard work of the people of Saskatchewan, our province is poised to make a strong recovery from this pandemic. Today Saskatchewan has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, and merchandise exports are growing faster in Saskatchewan than in any other place.

SaskPower will reduce electricity charges by 10 per cent for one

year. Everyone will benefit, including residential customers, farms, industry, and businesses and institutions such as schools, hospitals, and universities. This rebate will save the people of Saskatchewan 260 million, money that can be reinvested into our economy and help drive the recovery. Government will bear the cost of the program, not SaskPower.

And homeowners will be able to claim a 10.5 per cent tax credit up to 20,000 of eligible home renovation expenses incurred between October 1st, 2020 and December 31st, 2020. This tax credit will save Saskatchewan homeowners across the province about 124 million and provide a significant boost to the province's construction sector. It will save an individual homeowner up to \$2,100 on the cost of their home improvements. The home renovation tax credit will add to the positive economic impact of our government's two-year, seven-and-a-half-billion-dollar infrastructure plan that includes 2 billion into stimulus funding.

The Ministry of SaskBuilds will manage infrastructure projects and assets more effectively. The Ministry of SaskBuilds and Procurement has been created. This new ministry will oversee the development and implementation of standardized government procurement processes and information technology infrastructure.

And help for small business: our government will temporarily reduce the small-business tax rate from 2 per cent to zero. This change will be retroactive to October 1st, 2020, and the tax rate will be restored on July 2023 back to 2 per cent. The reduction in small business tax will cost 189 million, money that small businesses will invest back into the Saskatchewan economy to further drive a strong recovery.

We recognize that this has been and continues to be an extremely challenging time for Saskatchewan businesses and their employees. Small businesses employ hundreds of thousands in our province as well as create opportunities. They sponsor sporting events, youth activities, and other community initiatives. And that is why this government is investing 6 million in marketing campaigns to encourage Saskatchewan residents to support local businesses, including 1 million to the Together We Stand Saskatchewan campaign, sponsored by the local chambers of commerce and other business organizations.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I could not be more proud of our Premier and our government for moving our province forward in such difficult times. And, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the Throne Speech and not the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[16:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by congratulating yourself on your recent election to Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. It is an honour and a privilege to enter into the Speech from the Throne debate on behalf of the people of Cypress Hills and the Cypress Hills constituency. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to thank the great people of Cypress Hills for again giving me the opportunity to represent them in this historic building.

Mr. Speaker, this would not be possible without the support and sacrifice of many people. I'd like to start by thanking my wife, Phyllis; my children, Nicole, Burton, and Brittany for supporting me over the years and during this past election. Mr. Speaker, the support of a family is so very important. And I am blessed, like many of us in this House, to have a great support system. And for that I am forever grateful.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, we can't get here on our own. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to thank my campaign team as well as my constituency executive. I was truly honoured and humbled to be surrounded by this great group of people. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the time as well to thank my campaign manager, Sean Checkley. Sean and I travelled approximately 8 000 kilometres together, listening to the concerns of our constituents from across the entire constituency of Cypress Hills. We heard the confidence of the people that our government was clearly a choice to lead us to further growth in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say after the amount of time together, Sean has agreed to stay as part of my team and continue in the role of my constituency assistant in the Cypress Hills office. Sean moved into this role in April after my former constituency assistant, Twila Wedrick, pursued her dream of owning and operating her own bakery in the town of Gull Lake. This took place right at the start of COVID-19 and Sean had a tremendous big job transitioning into this new role of the office during a very busy and important time.

I would also like to acknowledge my campaign business manager, Crystal Hellman, for the help and her hours of dedicated work towards a successful campaign. We had many volunteers in our campaign office and in our communities across the constituency. These volunteers worked extremely hard reaching out to every constituent either by phone, email, or local conversations to make sure that our team knew what the priorities were of the constituents of the Cypress Hills during the campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also acknowledge individuals, starting with my wife, Phyllis, Karen Stephens, Gerry Sells, Casey Ziegler, Brady Berg, Troy Heggstad, Shawn Kramer, Clay Moorhead, Riley Feiffer, Dave Cunningham, John Wagner, Michelle McKenzie, Christine Hoffman, Brent Michelson, Tara Fritz, Randy Johnson, Todd and Roseanne Farnsworth, Ty Farnsworth, and also John Wall. Mr. Speaker, I truly believe I had the strongest, most caring team across this great province, and the work and the hours put into this was greatly appreciated. Thank you to my team for their support and efforts during the last provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Cypress Hills gave the government a strong mandate for the next four years for a reason, and that reason being, they see a plan. Mr. Speaker, they see a government with a plan to help navigate us through the COVID-19 pandemic. They see the government with a fiscal plan to keep Saskatchewan strong and create a stronger Saskatchewan in the years to come. Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Cypress Hills see a government with a plan to return to a balanced budget by 2024. They see the communities trust that this government has, in the people of Saskatchewan, a vision for a strong Saskatchewan as we continue to recover and build a stronger

economy.

Mr. Speaker, while on the campaign trail we met with many people. We heard many of the same issues being brought forward. The people of this province wanted a reduction in their power bills. Communities needed support with their community rinks during this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, every corner of this province has been affected by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 virus.

These times have been difficult for everyone in the province, including constituents of Cypress Hills. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank every constituent of Cypress Hills for their efforts in flattening the curve of COVID-19 by following the public orders and guidelines and for supporting each other as we work to continue building strong communities across our province. Mr. Speaker, we know there will be some difficult days ahead, but also we know, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan are strong, compassionate, and courageous people who will work hard to continue a life we all enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we hear stories of how communities come together to support one another. Mr. Speaker, in July the southwest corner of the province faced its COVID-19 cluster outbreak. The rural municipality of Maple Creek, the town of Maple Creek, the Nekanee First Nation, and the surrounding Hutterian communities demonstrated the will and support for one's neighbours during these times of need. Mr. Speaker, community leaders from the affected communities came together to support each other with whatever they needed during these trying times. The community worked closely with the health authority, ministry officials, and our constituency office as we all worked together for a positive outcome. The efforts were successful in many ways. The curve was flattened in a short order. The community has remained strong while working together in the fight to limit the spread of this virus.

Mr. Speaker, this is what can happen when you have people and communities working together with a common goal of keeping this great province strong. This is the vision and the spirit of the people in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this courageous and resilient type of people live all across this province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the economic impact of COVID-19 has been challenging for all the residents of this province. Our government continues and will always support our small-business owners, our agriculture sector, our energy and resource sector, and all the front-line health care officials who have provided the essential care that we require in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the resilience of many of our business owners during these challenging times. We have seen our small businesses think of new, creative ways to keep their employees and customers safe while providing people with products they require, Mr. Speaker. This is all possible, Mr. Speaker, because our government believes in our small businesses and our small businesses believe and trust in the government supporting and creating a strong, growing province moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share a few success stories of small-business owners in my constituency of Cypress Hills during the current pandemic. When our government encouraged

the shop-local initiative and invested \$6 million into a marketing campaign to support your local business, it brought out the best in many people. Mr. Speaker, it brought forward new and creative ways for business owners to show their local, surrounding communities what they had to offer. It provided new business avenues for many, Mr. Speaker, and created outside-the-box thinking.

I look towards Cowtown toys of Maple Creek for an example, a small business that is a must-see for anyone in the province. Some of the members of this House can attest to this. Mr. Speaker, owner Bob Siemens saw traffic in his local shop increase. Cowtown toys was attracting orders from across the province, with many making it clear they were supporting small businesses rather than avenues such as Amazon and other large online purchasers. This increased traffic, Mr. Speaker, allowed the owners to explore a new, exciting avenue. They purchased adjacent space to their already impressive inventory and launched a truly unique Saskatchewan brand. In partnership with a local Saskatchewan entrepreneur, Mr. Speaker, Cowtown toys launched a new puzzle chain which showcased Saskatchewan landmarks. The landmarks were such as old homesteads, old grain elevators that once stood in communities across our province.

This type of forward thinking in small-business owners has helped tell the story for many of our people and showcase what Saskatchewan small businesses are capable of. Mr. Speaker, Cowtown toys is one of our businesses that government can be proud to be supporting by promoting shop-local mindset.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Megan Gill, another small-business owner in the community of Shaunavon, is a story of growth and vision. Megan is the owner and operator of Overtime Restaurant in the community of Shaunavon. Megan has been very supportive of the community of Shaunavon over the years, donating to many local charities looking to raise money within the community. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Gill has showed more trust and faith in the community of Shaunavon. She has just recently opened Shaunavon Liquor store, her second business within the community.

Mr. Speaker, small-business owners like Ms. Gill with a vision and determination is what is exciting and what drives the growth of our communities across the province. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Gill believes in the community of Shaunavon. Our government believes in small-business owners like Ms. Gill.

Our government from the start of the pandemic has stepped up and supported our businesses, our business community. Mr. Speaker, our government implemented the small-business emergency payment program which was put in place to support all small and medium-sized businesses within our communities. These measures are so very important to make sure that our communities have the services they need and require for the local business in the future.

Mr. Speaker, whether it's the business owners like Ms. Gill or owners like Hill Country Clothing in Maple Creek, Garth and Renee Horton, or Cattle Boss Butchers's owners Don and Robin Wilk from Fox Valley, our government understands the importance to the communities that they serve, and this is why our government is supporting businesses with the small-business

tax reduction that was announced in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, our business owners are the heartbeat of our communities. The Throne Speech clearly has a message, Mr. Speaker. The message that our government is laying out is one of support. Our government clearly supports all citizens of this province as well as the industries and the employees . . . so many across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this message is attracting people and industry back to the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, during some of these very trying times, industry . . . our government attracted new investment to the province. With the hard work of our government and from the member of Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota, North American Helium announced Canada's largest helium purification facility in the Battle Creek area which, Mr. Speaker, is in my constituency of Cypress Hills. Mr. Speaker, this will provide revenue to rural areas of southwest Saskatchewan and create employment to the local economy. When many of the resource sectors are struggling, we have companies looking to invest in our province.

Mr. Speaker, industry also believes in the vision of the growth plan set out by our government for our province. Our government has worked closely with our stakeholders to help them during some tough economic times. Mr. Speaker, this is a prime example of being open for business in the province. When we work with our stakeholders, we are working to get towards a stronger province.

Mr. Speaker, not only has industry shown commitment to invest in Saskatchewan's people, our government has done so also. Whether it has the role of administration of accelerating the site-closure program, which was put in place to help local contractors return to work while focusing on the reclamation efforts of inactive wells across the province, this program, Mr. Speaker, created employment in our local communities as well as looking after environmental benefits of industry.

[16:30]

In the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, our government has made it clear we are investing in our people. Our government has announced initiatives that will help restart our economy while keeping more dollars in the pockets of Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, whether it's in the small-business tax reduction, the new homeowner renovation credit, or the reductions in every Saskatchewan resident's power bill, our government is committed to help build a strong Saskatchewan we all desire in the province.

Our communities, Mr. Speaker, will benefit from our government's announcement in supporting our local rinks by introducing the rink affordability grant. Mr. Speaker, we helped every community across the province and allowed them to provide recreation activities their communities so desire. As we know, Mr. Speaker, local rinks are so very important to each and every community across this province. Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to continuing investing in highways, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and schools when we announced our \$7.5 billion infrastructure plan, which will add its stimulus boost to our economy.

Our government is committed to the families across this province, Mr. Speaker. As announced in the Speech from the Throne, the Government of Saskatchewan will support everyone under the age 25 with type 1 diabetes to expand the coverage on medication and supplies. The insulin pump program has been expanded to cover all residents of Saskatchewan. Children under the age of 18 will receive coverage for the cost and assistance with their continuous glucose monitoring. Our government has announced support for children who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Each child under the age of 12 years of age, Mr. Speaker, will be eligible to receive 6,000 in support for therapeutic treatment.

We as government, Mr. Speaker, have also announced a funding partnership program with the CNIB Foundation of Saskatchewan, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services that will help Saskatchewan residents continue their way of life.

All these supports for families, Mr. Speaker, is what people see in the government that cares and supports the people calling Saskatchewan home, and why the people continue to call this province their home. The vision of families and growth is not lost on my constituents of the Cypress Hills or people from across the province. This is because, Mr. Speaker, they believe in our vision and our plan to grow Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a vision for the people of our province as outlined in our 2030 growth plan. It supports new investment of businesses to this province of Saskatchewan. Our government has grown the population of the province by 170,000 residents since 2007 and the 2030 growth plan supports our population growth to be 1.4 million people that call Saskatchewan home. It supports, Mr. Speaker, increasing our exports by 50 per cent and creating 100,000 new jobs through the province. This vision, Mr. Speaker, that my constituents of Cypress Hills will support and will help foster as we move towards the building of a stronger Saskatchewan. They support the government commitment to invest \$30 billion in the infrastructure spending over the next decade, which will create a quality of life and growth in this province that everyone can be proud of together, Mr. Speaker.

They support, Mr. Speaker, our defence of our agriculture sector as our government has taken our case against the federal government-proposed carbon tax to the Supreme Court. This comes, Mr. Speaker, after our farmers were blessed with the largest crop on record. Our commitment to the agriculture sector continues, Mr. Speaker, as our government looks towards adding markets and opening new offices in Japan, India, and Singapore to expand our exports across the world.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes in a strong, united Canada, and they support the leadership of our government standing up for the best interests of our people. Our government has shown their support of Saskatchewan's residents on many different issues.

Mr. Speaker, our government has announced and appointed our very own Chief Firearms Officer, which will allow residents of Saskatchewan a choice on firearm use in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our front-line essential workers. Mr. Speaker, whether

you're a truck driver, a firefighter, a police officer, a municipal utilities worker, our government gratefully . . . for the hours of efforts put forward during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to thank all the teachers and school staff. Mr. Speaker, they have worked hard to provide a safe and productive environment for our kids to go back into the classrooms. Our government, Mr. Speaker, will continue to invest in the youth of this province as we work toward moulding the next generation of Saskatchewan residents.

The efforts of our health care professionals have not gone unnoticed by the government during these trying times. As a father of an RN, I know families have been worried about their loved ones as these individuals, Mr. Speaker, have provided their services to protect the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude with assuring the people of this great province along with my constituents that our government will always stand up for what is best for the families and what is best for our province. Our government will always have the voice of the Saskatchewan people at heart, and will continue working towards a strong economy and even a stronger Saskatchewan.

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

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

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was John Barrymore who said, and I quote, "A man is not old until his regrets take the place of dreams." His words from nearly a century ago still ring true today. Long have I dreamed of standing right here, being a member of this Assembly, of being given the privilege of serving the people of Saskatchewan.

But before I embark upon this, my maiden speech, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker, as well as to congratulate the member from Saskatchewan Rivers on her election as Deputy Speaker. Further, I'd like to extend my congratulations to all returning and, like myself, newly elected members that make up this Assembly.

While sometimes it's easy to highlight the differences that lay between us, I would propose that we do share a common sense of what it means to sit in this House and be a part of this Assembly. While I suppose the finer details of the day we first strode up the steps of this legislature have faded somewhat, I am confident that the magnitude and the spirit of our purpose here is vivid in all.

Another common ground we share, Mr. Speaker, relates to the journeys we have travelled to arrive here. Mr. Speaker, the fact is we have all no doubt faced setbacks, challenges, exhaustion, and the like while moving forward towards a compelling purpose. Further, I would argue that very few of us, if any, would be seated here right now here today if it was not for our support teams.

Mr. Speaker, my own journey toward this moment began almost two years ago to the very day. It began unceremoniously, seated on the living room sofa with my wife, following a month of

deliberation — that is, a series of talking-about-it, sleeping-on-it, and talking-about-it-some-more sessions — culminating in that, this is the right thing to do; let's do this. And from here began a succession of kitchen table evening sessions of meetings, beginning of course with my mother and stepfather, continuing on to my sister Shelly and her husband, Greg, and then on to my nephews Travis, Colton, and Tyler and my niece Cassidy and all of their families, their spouses, and then on to my cousins and uncles and aunts and close friends and neighbours.

It was their encouragement that fuelled me through the nomination process and, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you there was a lot of fuel required, as some days it felt as though there were multiple holes in this gas tank right here. Mr. Speaker, fortunately though through the whole thing I was not hampered by a weighty carbon tax and I was able to move forward.

At the commencement of the nomination process, the Saskatchewan Party's executive director, Patrick Bundrock, shared with me a nugget of information, advice that the nomination was a tremendous preparatory experience for an election campaign. And let me assure you, Mr. Speaker, no truer words have been uttered than those.

The Arm River constituency is sizable, to say the least. Within its boundaries are found 22 rural municipalities and over 60 communities — communities and municipalities, I might add, that have benefited from this government's \$150 million municipal economic enhancement program. Many of these same communities, as a matter of fact, also stand to benefit from the restart of the community rink affordability program. Actually in my own hometown of Chamberlain a number of years ago, I had the good fortune to join a group of locals who banded together to save our local rink — a rink, Mr. Speaker, I might add, where I scored a lot of goals as a kid. I actually should add as well, Mr. Speaker, in the air of transparency here, that nobody really wanted to play goaltender in our nightly sessions, so my stats might be just a bit inflated.

But that aside I, like many others, grew up in the rural rink. And it was quite a symbolic occasion, Mr. Speaker, when we fired up the grill once more and the smell of rink burgers and fried onions filled the air. We did this, Mr. Speaker, not so that we could relive our experiences and our youth and maybe pop one more goal, but because we wanted our youth to have experiences and that sense of community.

Now apart from its geography, Mr. Speaker, the Arm River constituency, well it's home to irrigated and dryland farming, feedlot operations, mining, manufacturing, and tourism. It is home to pioneers of this great province and to its future. And it's home to honest, hard-working people that are Saskatchewan. Now over the course of this nomination and subsequent election campaign, I have travelled Arm River's many highways, grid roads, side roads, and back roads. And through it all I've had the honour and privilege of speaking to folks from every community. Time and time again people open their doors and their lives and their hearts to me.

Mr. Speaker, there is a time-honoured saying that goes like this, "Gratitude is the least of the virtues, but the absence of which is the greatest of the vices." And, Mr. Speaker, I intend to be always grateful to the people of Arm River who shared their hopes, their

concerns, their challenges, and their dreams with me. Further, I'll always be filled with gratitude for the constituents of Arm River who placed their trust in me to represent them in this legislature. And I plan to show my thankfulness by offering all I possess of these hands and this mind and this heart.

Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, one does not endure a year-long nomination race and election campaign in the constituency a size of a small country without a dedicated support team. And I cannot craft the words that aptly capture the gratitude that I owe for the countless people, the people who generously gave of their time and became less like political party supporters and more like family.

My family has grown exponentially since then to include Lavonne and Perry and Donna and Phil and Ron and John and Lonny and Janet and Brian and Alan and Bruce and Grant and many, many more. And I'm aware, Mr. Speaker, that I have missed naming many; however know that their omission here in no way reflects the value of their contribution nor their friendship.

Mr. Speaker, two people I'd like to single out of the previous list of supporters are Donna Petit and Lavonne Lyke. These two ladies have been a support to me since the absolute beginning of my young career — even though I'm not young, my political career is very young — and will continue to groom me and watch over me as my constituent's assistants. Lavonne and Donna, who are probably watching right now, are truly a dynamic duo and I am blessed to work alongside them.

Those of us here who are parents understand first-hand the parent's job absolutely never ends. Mr. Speaker, I'm blessed to have Gladys Skoropad as my mother and Bob Bennett as my stepfather. These two people did more for this son of theirs than could reasonably be expected by any child. For 21 months — that's 21 months — they made calls, they sold memberships, they pounded the pavement door knocking, and they pounded signs in fields. Their tireless contribution cannot be overstated.

[16:45]

When it was all settled on the evening of October 26, the first words out of my own mother's mouth were, "You know, I'm sad it's all over and I can't wait for the next one." And I'll tell you now, there is one lady who truly takes her duty as a mother to heart.

I also want to thank my wife, Terrill, for inspiring me, at times tolerating me — sometimes — and always supporting me. She has been a gift to me for the past 24 years and I hope that she says the same thing about me, a gift that I will never take for granted. And, Mr. Speaker, by my estimation, there will be heavy demands required for climbing this mountain of service I'm beginning to journey. There's no one else I would rather be tethered to on this expedition of twists and turns, crevasses and crags than her.

Continuing on this mountaineering theme I've got going here, Mr. Speaker, if Terrill is my climbing mate, then our two boys Noah and Sol, well they're the peak. They are motivation for the climb. They are a reason why the aches and the abrasions and the exhaustion, well they're all worth it.

Earlier in the Throne Speech you heard the Lieutenant Governor speak of this government's commitment to our future by continuing to support the graduate retention program and enhancing the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship. We empower more of our children to remain home here in Saskatchewan.

Further, by supporting small businesses through tax reduction and expanding ag, tech, and manufacturing sectors, we create opportunities for our children to have a home in Saskatchewan. By establishing trade offices in Japan, Singapore, and in India, we broaden the reach of the Saskatchewan story. That's our story and the potential of our markets. Really my dream is like that of many others here and many others in the province here. It's to call for our children from the yard and not solely from the phone, and not to be limited by FaceTime chat but to actually look them in the face. Mr. Speaker, what I hope and pray for Noah and Sol I plan to dedicate myself for all the children of this province — the greatest place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, continuing on this vein of gratitude I'd be remiss if I did not make mention of two formative experiences which indirectly brought me here and for which I'm eternally grateful, one involving my own parents, and the other as a young campaign door knocker. When I graduated from high school in 1990, I was the only child of two still living at home on the family farm, and my career direction looked markedly clear — I was to be a farmer. Following graduation, this is where the tale takes, well an unanticipated turn in the opposite direction.

You see, my parents insisted I go off and receive an education before attempting to carve a life on the family farm outside of Chamberlain. After receiving an education degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I found myself enrolled in a three-year business program in Lethbridge. It was here in the late '90s I felt the pull of an Albertan opportunity and the push from a beaten-down Saskatchewan. There was no Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, and I can assure you the Saskatchewan graduate retention program did not exist. Job prospects were bleak, and the need for change was building.

In this environment I returned home and vowed to help make this a better place for the next generation. It was because of this experience that I began asking, why not us and why not here? Mr. Speaker, it was upon my return to this province that I reached out to the relatively new Saskatchewan Party and offered my service where best it saw fit. And thus my journey led me to the doors of Regina Beach as a door knocker for the Thunder Creek constituency candidate.

I'd barely begun the day's campaigning when an elderly gentleman who answered the door insisted I have a seat at his kitchen table. Warily I sat down and prepared myself for what actually might be the worst. But what came next was a lengthy explanation why he'd be casting a vote for my candidate, the incumbent MLA. You see, this constituent had several serious health problems regarding which he had contacted his MLA. In the end what mattered to him was that his elected representative cared genuinely, and genuinely listened, and was concerned for his well-being. Mr. Speaker, I left his home with an understanding that this role is not all about policy and procedure and platforms and procurement. It is at the core about caring, compassion, some common sense, and calling. I walked away

that fall morning in awe of the opportunity bestowed upon us. That moment was . . . It was just a moment, but it's one that has stuck with me for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, my life will never be the same following these past two years. As I mentioned earlier, the campaign trail has brought me places and connected me with people across the Arm River constituency. Time and time again I would leave doorsteps moved by stories I had heard and conversations I shared. I've been humbled, heartbroken, uplifted, and inspired these many months.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just take a moment, if I could, to share two such encounters from a collection of hundreds if I could. It was in late March of this year whilst the world was attempting to get its head around the COVID pandemic, Dan Cordick from Outlook was trying to get his head around a stage IV cancer diagnosis of the liver and colon. It was over the course of the months that followed, Mr. Cordick bravely navigated and endured a battery of tests and treatments the likes that I can only imagine.

He placed his life in the hands of the Saskatchewan health system and put his trust in the amazing, caring professionals there to serve him. It was in the midst of these circumstances that Mr. Cordick reached out to me to share his gratitude for the care he was provided. He expressly noted that the voice of negativity can sometimes resonate far too loudly and that his intent was for me to see first-hand the excellence of the present health system and to share his thankfulness for the men and women who are both professional and compassionate in his care. Mr. Speaker, I cannot recall a more inspiring phone conversation than the one I was blessed to have that October afternoon with Dan Cordick.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, I am confident our government . . . Well it has it right when we proposed to broaden the insulin pump program to include all individuals living with type 1 diabetes, when we increase our funding for families with children with autism spectrum disorder to \$6,000, when we make plans to hire 300 more continuing care aides, when we provide record amounts of funding for mental health and addictions, and when we strive for us making life more affordable for seniors. This is why we continue to make surgical wait times a priority and why we have made record investments in both education and health.

Mr. Speaker, economic growth for the sake of economic growth is not a goal, it's a boast. We aim to use our collective economic prosperity humbly and purposefully to offer better quality of life for all those who call Saskatchewan home.

The second campaign encounter I'm compelled to share took place a year and a half ago. It was an absolute heart-wrenching honour to stand with Garnet in his shop as he explained the series of events that occurred that left the family farm under water. Born and raised on a farm, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, the words "tears" and "farm shop" rarely reside in the same sentence. On this day, however, they went naturally hand in hand.

From the highway you could see several buildings where the yard once was, standing there like lonely islands. Faced with a seemingly insurmountable setback, Garnet and his family, with the support of the local community, began to piece together a life fragmented by natural disaster.

Mr. Speaker, the Webster's dictionary defines resilience as "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change." While I don't believe for an instance that Garnet and his family's adaptation to change was easy in any way, shape, or form, I do feel that his family deserves their picture inserted next to the definition's text. These people epitomize the spirit of Saskatchewan courage and determination.

This same resilient courage is what we presently see in all corners of the province as we face the present COVID pandemic. Mr. Speaker, as both you and I heard during last week's Throne Speech, our government's top priority is to stop the spread of the COVID virus and work to protect the lives and livelihoods of people of Saskatchewan, a phrase we've heard many, many times over the course of these last days.

The saying, we are all in the same storm but not all in the same boat, rings true for the individual effects of this pandemic and for the province as a whole. The vessel that is Saskatchewan is not an exact replica of those found in other jurisdictions in Canada, and it certainly differs greatly from other boats — storm-ravaged boats, I might add — across the planet. Because of the Saskatchewan Party government's prudence, our ship was a sturdy one heading into the stormy seas of COVID. Sturdy because of our solid job creation rate, sturdy because of our low unemployment, and sturdy because of our growing exports. Further, Mr. Speaker, with our strong and steady leader surrounded by a talented crew of individuals benefiting from a blend of experience and eagerness, we stand to weather these uncertain crests and troughs.

Now continuing along this nautical metaphor for a moment longer if I could, we have a navigational team that has a course set for calmer waters. One that responds to the swelling waves while keeping a keen eye on the destination. The Throne Speech outlines a strong plan for this province, one that protects the precious passengers — the people of Saskatchewan — and forges forward toward a better place.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Chapters some months ago and I stumbled upon a book by Patrick Lencioni entitled *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*. It's a work that dissects the pillars of both successful and unsuccessful teams alike. As Lencioni points out, it is trust that is at the core.

Mr. Speaker, I trust the words of the Throne Speech and the members charged with bringing it to fruition. This trust does not simply exist because I sit on this side of the House, but because I am a part of a government whose character is defined by doing what it says it will do.

Already, Mr. Speaker, in the few short days of the course of this session we have seen this government take action to fulfil the promises it has made. Promises like the one-year 10 per cent reduction of SaskPower charges for all Saskatchewan residents, and promises like the home renovation tax credit for home improvement. Simply put, we do what we say we will do.

To close, Mr. Speaker, in the words of George Bernard Shaw, and I quote, "Some see things as they are and say, why; I dream of things that never were and say, why not."

Mr. Speaker, as evidenced by the initiatives outlined in the

Throne Speech, our government is not afraid to ask, why not us and why not here, as it relates to bettering the quality of life for the people of this great province.

And it is for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of the constituents of Arm River that I will not be supporting the amendments, and I will in fact be supporting the motion to move this Throne Speech. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It being 5 o'clock, this Assembly stands recessed until 7 p.m.

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

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
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Hon. David Marit
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Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

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

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

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
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Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General