



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

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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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CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Ross, A. | 205 |
| Conway | 205 |

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Prairie Sky Chamber of Commerce Awards | |
| Jenson | 205 |
| Recognition of Assembly of First Nations National Chief | |
| Nippi-Albright | 205 |
| SaskTel's Rural Fibre Initiative | |
| Nerlien | 206 |
| Long-Term Care Facilities | |
| Love | 206 |
| Unity Resident Wins Kinsmen of the Year Award | |
| Domotor | 206 |
| SaskParks Wins Award of Excellence | |
| Bradshaw | 206 |
| Six-Year-Old's Fundraising Efforts for Toy Drive | |
| Docherty | 207 |

QUESTION PERIOD

| | |
|--|-----|
| Testing and Contact Tracing during COVID-19 Pandemic | |
| Meili | 207 |
| Moe | 207 |
| Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic | |
| Meili | 208 |
| Moe | 208 |
| Support for Businesses and Employees | |
| Young, A. | 209 |
| Harrison, J. | 209 |
| Mental Health and Addictions Supports | |
| Vermette | 210 |
| Hindley | 210 |
| Support for Vulnerable People during COVID-19 Pandemic | |
| Conway | 211 |
| Carr | 211 |

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Bill No. 14 — <i>The Protection From Human Trafficking Act</i> | |
| Wyant | 211 |
| Bill No. 15 — <i>The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020</i> | |
| Wyant | 211 |
| Bill No. 16 — <i>The Pawned Property (Recording) Amendment Act, 2020</i> | |
| Wyant | 212 |
| Bill No. 17 — <i>The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act, 2020</i> | |
| Morgan | 212 |
| Bill No. 18 — <i>The All Terrain Vehicles Amendment Act, 2020</i> | |
| Morgan | 212 |
| Bill No. 19 — <i>The Human Resources Profession Act</i> | |
| Morgan | 212 |

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TABLING OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Harpauer | 212 |
|----------------|-----|

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| Ottenbreit | 213 |
|------------------|-----|

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Meili | 213 |
| Moe | 217 |
| Recorded Division (amendment) | 223 |
| Recorded Division (main motion) | 223 |

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

MOTIONS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Withdraw and Recommit Supplementary Estimates | |
| Harrison, J. | 224 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Officials' Participation in Committee of Finance | |
| Harrison, J. | 225 |
| COMMITTEE OF FINANCE | |
| General Revenue Fund — Supplementary Estimates No. 1 | |
| Parks, Culture and Sport — Vote 27 | |
| Ross, L. | 225 |
| Love..... | 225 |
| Tourism Saskatchewan — Vote 88 | |
| Harrison, J. | 226 |
| Love..... | 227 |
| Trade and Export Development — Vote 90 | |
| Harrison, J. | 228 |
| Morgan | 228 |
| Young, A. | 228 |
| Education — Vote 5 | |
| Duncan..... | 231 |
| Beck..... | 231 |
| Health — Vote 32 | |
| Merriman | 235 |
| Mowat | 237 |
| Hindley..... | 237 |
| Love..... | 239 |
| VOTES AND RESOLUTIONS | |
| Education — Vote 5 | 241 |
| Finance — Vote 18 | 241 |
| Government Relations — Vote 30..... | 241 |
| Health — Vote 32 | 241 |
| Parks, Culture and Sport — Vote 27 | 242 |
| Saskatchewan Research Council — Vote 35 | 242 |
| Tourism Saskatchewan — Vote 88 | 242 |
| Trade and Export Development — Vote 90 | 242 |
| Advocate for Children and Youth — Vote 76..... | 242 |
| Chief Electoral Officer — Vote 34 | 242 |
| Lending and Investing Activities — Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan — Vote 151 | 242 |
| Lending and Investing Activities — Saskatchewan Power Corporation — Vote 152 | 243 |
| Debt Redemption, Sinking Fund and Interest Payments — Debt Redemption — Vote 175 | 243 |

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. A. Ross: — 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 would like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Carrot River. I do so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to rise and present a petition calling on this government to stop clawing money back from the most vulnerable Saskatchewan residents, and to increase income assistance rates. Poverty, Mr. Speaker. You'll be hearing from us a lot on this topic, because this opposition lives in the real world, and we are seeing people struggling more and more.

Before the pandemic families were on a frightening economic treadmill living paycheque to paycheque. During this pandemic many more are joining the ranks of those in need of food banks, those in need of subsidized housing, and those who will come to be reliant on income support.

The signatories of this petition recognize this province is among the worst provinces in terms of poverty in Canada. But it's important to put a face to those statistics, Mr. Speaker. Who are the majority of people living in poverty? Children in lone-parent households led by women, and single individuals over 65. Women, children, and seniors, Mr. Speaker. And this opposition will continue to fight for those people.

The signatories to this petition point out that even those on the assured income disability program still do not live above the poverty line. These signatories are calling on this government to address the crisis of poverty in our province.

And I will read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the government of Saskatchewan stop clawing back money from those on Saskatchewan income assistance

programs who received federal CERB payments, return to those on Saskatchewan income assistance programs CERB money already clawed back, and significantly increase income assistance rates as a first step towards raising them above the poverty line.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Prairie Sky Chamber of Commerce Awards

Mr. Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Prairie Sky Chamber of Commerce is made up of nearly 200 members, including some of the region's biggest employers as well as small and medium-sized businesses, home-based entrepreneurs, and other organizations. Nearly six months past the original scheduled date, the Prairie Sky Chamber of Commerce held its fifth annual Warman, Martensville & Region Business Excellence Awards.

The gala was held on Thursday, October 29th, and although the event looked very different than in past years, Mr. Speaker, businesses and organizations throughout the region gathered virtually and celebrated in their own way. Viewers enjoyed an appetizer platter, cupcakes, wine, and other thank you gifts as they celebrated remotely.

Of course these awards would not have been possible without the hard work of the Prairie Sky Chamber of Commerce staff and board, as well as the sponsors of the event.

Mr. Speaker, the Prairie Sky Chamber of Commerce received 174 nominations across seven categories. Some of the award winners included AquaTemp Plumbing and Heating Solutions. They won Employer of the Year. Warman Small Animal Hospital won Business of the Year. And Upstage Dance studio won New Business of the Year.

Would you please join me in recognizing this year's award recipients, and congratulate them on their terrific achievements. Thank you.

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

Recognition of Assembly of First Nations National Chief

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chief Perry Bellegarde, a First Nation leader from our province who has spent decades representing First Nations people in his community across Saskatchewan and across Canada. Earlier this week the national chief announced that he will not be seeking re-election, bringing an end to a remarkable career fighting for the rights of First Nations people in Saskatchewan and in Canada.

Chief Bellegarde was instrumental in advocating for treaty and inherent rights. He served First Nations in Saskatchewan in various ways, including as national chief of the Assembly of First

Nations. There's no question that much more needs to be done before we have equality and real reconciliation in this country, but there is also no question that Chief Bellegarde's decades of work have helped move things in the right direction and helped make life better for all Saskatchewan people.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing the remarkable contributions Perry Bellegarde has made to our country and our province, and in wishing him well in whatever comes next. miigwech, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

SaskTel's Rural Fibre Initiative

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Saskatchewan's homegrown communications leader, SaskTel is firmly committed to being the best at connecting the people of Saskatchewan to the world. On December 3rd SaskTel announced the launch of their rural fibre initiative. Mr. Speaker, rural connectivity is vital for safety, agriculture, education, and economic growth.

RFI [rural fibre initiative] is a multi-phase project that will see SaskTel invest over 50 million to bring its blazing-fast Infinet service to approximately 30,000 homes and businesses in over 20 rural communities in the next four years. Mr. Speaker, as part of phase 1 of the initiative, SaskTel plans to bring Infinet services to the towns of Balgonie, Biggar, Langham, and Pilot Butte, with a majority of homes and businesses in those communities expected to be connected by the end of March 2022.

SaskTel anticipates that approximately 70 per cent of Saskatchewan residents will have access to fibre optic internet near the midpoint of the decade. Mr. Speaker, Infinet service currently offers speeds of up to 300 megabits per second to residential customers, allowing them to participate in video, video chats, watch movies, and surf the internet. Our government remains committed to working with SaskTel to ensure that Saskatchewan residents have the best internet available. Thank you.

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

Long-Term Care Facilities

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, for months this government pointed to low cases of COVID-19 in long-term care as an indication of their own success in handling this pandemic. We all knew that those low numbers wouldn't last forever. And the thousands of older adults that make Saskatoon Eastview a great community told me time and time again that they were taking extra precautions to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.

But even when those low case numbers were so low, we joined front-line workers, care workers, families, home care operators in sounding the alarm about the dangerous conditions in long-term care: crumbling facilities, crowded and poorly ventilated homes, dangerously low staffing levels, a casual and underpaid workforce, and residents who rely on visitors to get

the care they deserve. These conditions were unacceptable before the pandemic. And this government knew that not if but when COVID-19 made its way into our care facilities, the results would be tragic.

Mr. Speaker, like many who have debated the Throne Speech here from both sides of this Chamber, I entered politics to make a difference in the lives of others. I encourage all members to consider whether they would have their loved ones live in the conditions our seniors are living in, whether that would be good enough for their mother, their father, or their spouse. We should all desire for others what we desire for our loved ones.

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

Unity Resident Wins Kinsmen of the Year Award

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 19th Unity Kinsmen member Bryce Woytiuk received the Zone A Kinsmen of the Year Award, which is presented by the district governor, Russell Goebel. Mr. Speaker, Zone A includes the communities of Meadow Lake, St. Walburg, Paradise Hill, Lloydminster, Lashburn, Unity, and Macklin.

Not only was Mr. Woytiuk instrumental in getting a Kinsmen Club back in Unity, but he also learned that he had received a commendation from past national Kinsmen president, Brian Cooper. Mr. Woytiuk was very grateful for the nomination, as well as the Kinsmen team who made his two years as Unity Kinsmen Club's inaugural years memorable and exciting. While at the presentation, it was also learned that with 19 members, Unity has the seventh-largest club of all Kinsmen and Kinette clubs in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Woytiuk was Unity-born and -raised. Mr. Woytiuk returned to Unity about eight years ago and is proud to call it his home. Bryce's parents also reside in the community. Mr. Woytiuk also dedicates many hours of volunteerism to other community events such as announcing at local sports events, as well as giving his time to the Unity rodeo, Western Days, over the last six years. Mr. Speaker, I now ask that all members of the Assembly please join me in congratulating Mr. Woytiuk on his accomplishments with the Kinsmen. Thank you.

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

SaskParks Wins Award of Excellence

Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, SaskParks has been unanimously selected to receive an Agency Award of Excellence from the Canadian Parks Council. This award is in recognition for the exemplary work of the visitor experience programming team at Saskatchewan Parks.

Mr. Speaker, our camping season was just eight weeks away when COVID-19 arrived in our province. With gathering sizes reduced, the visitor experience team was worried programming would be cancelled. Instead of allowing uncertainty to get the best of them, they got right to work. First, they created SaskCyberParks, which offered nature-themed crafts and activities on social channels for families to do at home. When the

reopen plan allowed for in-person programming to resume, the team started offering guided hikes and geocaching. They also introduced new activities that would be safe for the whole family like drive-in movie nights.

Mr. Speaker, our SaskParks found an innovative and new way to welcome people to our parks during what would have been a very difficult year for our tourism industry. These new initiatives and programs were a success and greatly contributed to the health and well-being of all park visitors.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me in congratulating SaskParks and the visitor experience programming team for all their hard work during these challenging times. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Six-Year-Old's Fundraising Efforts for Toy Drive

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in my place to recognize a young girl named Harlee Marre. At just six years old, Harlee is wise beyond her years and wanted to make a difference in children's lives this holiday season. In an effort to support those less fortunate, Harlee asked her parents if she could give all her toys to kids who may need them maybe a little more than she does this year. They thought it was a great idea but warned her that it may not be possible, as some donation centres were not accepting used goods due to the COVID this year.

Without hesitation, Harlee got right to work and quickly sold all of her toys so she could buy new ones to donate. Mr. Speaker, her first sale brought in \$130 that she used to buy new toys to donate to Santas Anonymous. Knowing there was more she could do, she then called on her friends and family to join her fundraising efforts. Donations came from far and wide, Mr. Speaker, and Harlee was able to collect \$1,330 to buy even more for the toy drive. Thanks to Harlee, many kids in this province will have an extra-special holiday season this year.

I now ask all members to join me in congratulating Harlee on her successful efforts and thank everyone who helped along the way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Testing and Contact Tracing during COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Government Relations all described our COVID case numbers as having plateaued. What a dangerous mixed message to give on the day when we had the highest numbers of people who died, the highest numbers of patients in hospital, the highest number of people in ICUs [intensive care unit]. And we had an 8 per cent positivity rate on only 2,300 cases. Today we see a positivity rate of 11.4 per cent, 300 cases out of only 2,650. We don't know our true COVID case numbers because it's our testing that has plateaued. So to the Premier, why is this government failing to conduct and process the promised 4,000 tests a day?

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the reference, at least that I made, I think other members would have made yesterday was that the rate of increase that we are seeing on our seven-day average rate of increase in COVID infection that we are having here in the province is looking like it is plateauing, Mr. Speaker. It is looking like that rate of increase is plateauing.

We're quite confident that that is due in part to the measures that have been implemented over the course of the last couple of weeks, most notably the measures that were implemented about 12 days ago now, November the 27th. Those measures were implemented on the advice of Dr. Shahab. They will be then re-looked at on December the 17th, where we will have a choice of three, Mr. Speaker, where we will either move forward status quo with those measures, which appear to be having an effect. Or we will look at increasing those measures, Mr. Speaker. Or the third option would be some degree of relaxation heading into the Christmas season.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to that third opportunity of possibly relaxing some of those measures heading into the Christmas season, I think given the numbers that we are seeing on our seven-day rolling average — and the Leader of the Opposition is right, with our seven-day test-positivity rate at over 8 per cent — it's looking improbable that we are going to be able to relax our measures around long-term care facilities and our home-based visits, our home-based bubbles, Mr. Speaker. But we are looking towards December the 17th where we will continue to take Dr. Shahab and his team's public health advice with the plan that we have going forward from that date on.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The shortage of lab techs in the province has been a known issue for years, and the first wave clearly showed we needed more staff. And yet this Premier, this government, did nothing. They took the summer off. They didn't scale up. They didn't staff up, Mr. Speaker. And now we have lab techs telling us that they're having to leave 500 to 2,000 cases unprocessed at the end of each day.

So to the Premier: knowing these testing numbers are far too low, what will he change today to get to those 4,000 tests a day and get the people of Saskatchewan the real picture of what's going on with COVID-19?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, there's been significant increases, not only in our testing but in our contact tracing, as well as the ability to actually conduct the swabs out in the field, Mr. Speaker. Thinking back to January, there was very little of this testing that was occurring in any province, in the nation, in Canada or around the world for that matter. Our contact tracing has increased from originally 60 people up to well over 400, and continues to increase with the advent of public service people that are moving into that area, as well as now some federally employed people moving into that area, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have today's numbers, but as of a few days ago the seven-day average for our tests that were completed was over 3,500. I believe we're just around 3,400 tests per day. We have approved the hiring of 76 additional FTEs [full-time equivalent] into the provincial lab, Mr. Speaker. We have also approved a number of rapid tests that are being made available in our long-term care facilities here. We have the GeneXpert test that we've been working with the federal government to ensure that we're able to procure cartridges for those tests that are placed in rural and remote locations around the province.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we are looking to the private sector for additional options to enhance the testing capacity that we have here in the province of Saskatchewan. This is something that we have worked very closely with, with our provincial resources, with the private sector, and we have worked with the federal government on providing the resources for testing capacity here in the province.

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, Saskatchewan reached the unenviable position of being second-highest in the nation for the number of per capita active cases, second only to Alberta where Premier Kenney, despite, like this Premier, having resisted evidence-based measures to control the spread of infection, had to introduce sweeping changes, shutting down key sectors to reduce the spread of infection.

Now it's been three weeks since the opposition called for a targeted, short-term circuit breaker with appropriate supports for businesses to get through that difficult time, Mr. Speaker. If we'd made that choice, we could be in a very different position today. Instead of bragging about slowing growth, we could actually be seeing case numbers falling. And instead of business owners being told that they had to stay open but their customers needed to stay home, we could be in a very different situation today.

So to the Premier: does he regret, when he looks at the numbers, when he looks at what's happening in Saskatchewan today, does he regret not acting sooner, not getting ahead of this, and leaving us like Alberta, facing the risk of potential more serious shutdowns as we head into Christmas?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, there has been some different approaches that have been taken in, yes, Alberta recently, in British Columbia. And the approach that British Columbia is taking is very similar to what we are doing here in Saskatchewan. Some areas, regions of British Columbia have some stricter measures in place; others have some more lenient measures in place. We see in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, where they have employed a fairly broad-based circuit breaker shutdown or whatever you'd like to call it. That was extended again here this week.

Let's just be clear, Mr. Speaker, about what we are talking about here with respect to a circuit breaker. That is a massive shutdown of the Saskatchewan economy. It would cost . . . Literally tens of

thousands of people would not be able to go to work the very next day. And for how long, no one knows. We saw Manitoba extend theirs yesterday.

We saw this happen in Victoria, in the state of Victoria, Australia. It went for between 111, 113 days. Massive shutdown of their economy throughout the entire state. People were confined to their homes towards the end of that shutdown for 23 of 24 hours a day, and for that one hour they were allowed to go out for groceries, they had to stay within 5 kilometres of their home. If that is what the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting that we do in Saskatchewan for about the better part of four months, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have none of it.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, we called for targeted measures for three weeks — for three weeks. And in those three weeks, things have gotten much worse, Mr. Speaker. Under this Premier's watch, things have gotten much worse. We have double the number of people in hospital, double the number of people in our ICUs. We have hundreds of health care workers who are infected, hundreds more who are isolating, Mr. Speaker. Outbreaks in long-term care and hospitals. They're having to call in firefighters. The army may be next, Mr. Speaker. Things are not going well.

Thirty-four people. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: 34 people have died; 34 families are grieving lost loved ones because of this inaction. That inaction has consequences.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm as ready as anyone for this to be over. And the hope that the vaccine brings, that excites me. I hope that we are through this soon. But it is still a long game and this Premier has dropped the ball. And when I asked him this the other day, he showed his strong leadership: he got the Minister of the Economy to answer instead.

But to the Premier, what does he regret the most about his failures in this pandemic so far, and what's his plan to get this under control? Because this isn't working.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, throughout this pandemic we have taken our advice, this government, this Premier have taken our advice from the very competent, very steady hand of Dr. Shahab and his team, our chief medical health officer here in this province, Mr. Speaker. The latest advice that has been provided to this government from Dr. Shahab was released on November the 27th where we introduced a number of additional measures to ensure that we were able to stop the rate of increase of COVID-19 that we have here.

We had said, on December the 17th we are going to revisit those measures that were put in place with an eye to either status quo those measures through likely to the new year, or to increase some of those measures through to the new year, or the third option, as I said, was potentially to relax a few of those measures to allow families to come together for a few days over Christmas. Mr. Speaker, given where we are with our numbers and our transmission rate here in the province, that third option is looking improbable as we move forward.

Mr. Speaker, however, we are continuing to work with our Saskatchewan Health Authority, Dr. Shahab and his team, to ensure that we now are focusing our intention in deploying our vaccination program across the province so that every dose of that vaccine that we receive in this province, we are going to make it available to Saskatchewan people immediately and ensure that we are able to cross the finish line of this COVID-19 pandemic that we have all faced.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's made it clear that he's the one calling the shots. The question is, the question is, does he think this has gone perfectly well? Is he happy with these results? Or if not, does he have the humility to tell us, what does he regret the most about the failure that has allowed us to be in the terrible situation we're in today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Leader of the Opposition is listening to the answers in any way. Mr. Speaker, I have repeatedly been on my feet here today, over the course of the last two weeks, throughout this pandemic, in the public eye saying that this government, this government is taking the advice, the very capable and competent advice that we are receiving from Dr. Shahab, our chief medical health officer, that has helped this government and the people of the province as it has provided the public health advice throughout this pandemic, that has served this province well.

He continues to provide that advice as we plan to deploy our vaccines in this province. We're going to start here next week with the pilot program, with a couple thousand doses arriving. We had the approval of the Pfizer vaccine in Canada here today, looking for the Moderna vaccine to be approved very shortly, roll into phase 1 of our vaccination program keeping our vulnerable, our elderly, our long-term care residents, and our health care employees safe first and foremost. And then moving into phase 2 to ensure the people of this province have access to every dose of vaccine the federal government will provide us.

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

Support for Businesses and Employees

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, small businesses are struggling. And this government's worst-of-both-worlds scenario, a real lose-lose, where businesses are being told to stay open while customers are being urged to stay home, is again a recipe for economic disaster. And now, with more than 500 layoffs at Evraz here in Regina, things are going to be even harder for Saskatchewan's economy and for families.

The circuit breaker we'd called for would have been ending. We could have had hope for the holiday season and the busiest month for retailers. And instead the Sask Party has teased at further half measures expected to be announced the week before Christmas. Manitoba is staying the course on restrictions and Alberta is locking down.

All eyes are now on this government, Mr. Speaker. So will the

minister admit that his reactionary COVID response has failed, and will he come to small businesses with the help that is so desperately needed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, and this House very clearly what approach small business and the business community do not support. And that is the approach of the members opposite to shut them all down.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that small businesses have operated responsibly, have operated safely throughout the pandemic, and the reality is that they can continue to do that going forward, Mr. Speaker.

The other reality, we have stepped up in a more consequential way than any other jurisdiction in Canada. In fact our business support programs have been copied right across the country, Mr. Speaker. We just announced phase 3 of the small business support program, a program that's been very well received, very well supported, very much helpful for small businesses in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we came forward with the tourism sector support program. Another \$35 million program to support our hard-hit tourism and hospitality sector. And just a couple of days ago, Mr. Speaker, we came forward with another program, the strong recovery adaptation grant, an \$8 million program to help businesses continue to operate safely through the pandemic, of which they have done an amazing job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small-business owners just have to look to the east and west to see better examples of what government support looks like.

Now with 500 layoffs at Evraz, that's 500 households scrambling during the holiday season. And that's 500 households that are worrying about paying their bills, not reinvesting in the local economy and small business. And, Mr. Speaker, that's just one workplace, just one workplace in our province. Never mind the other 21,000 people who have lost their jobs since last year.

And now what has this government offered? They've offered, Mr. Speaker, this elusive rapid response team, which seems to be geared up to tell people to dust off their CVs [curriculum vitae] and point them towards EI [employment insurance].

And they've also offered broken and inaccessible small-business support. And now the government's own documents show that this won't be available to the majority of small businesses. So what does it mean, Mr. Speaker, to be substantially curtailed? I'll quote: "Substantially curtail does not mean using physical distancing or PPE or a revenue decline due to COVID-19." Hmm.

[14:00]

So this is the government that sits on a quarter-billion dollars for

pandemic stimulus, and inaction is smothering our economy. So when is this government going to fix the program that is shutting out so many small businesses?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, talked about employment. Mr. Speaker, we have the second-lowest unemployment rate in the country. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, how that unemployment rate would go up in a catastrophic way. That would be a massive shutdown of the economy, which is precisely what the Leader of the Opposition not just is suggesting, but what he is demanding.

Mr. Speaker, we believe firmly that small business can operate responsibly and safely. They've shown that they can do this throughout the pandemic. And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have provided very real and very substantial resources for those businesses to continue to operate safely and responsibly.

What they don't support — and I can tell you that they don't support this; they've said it publicly over and over and over again — they don't support the approach of the Leader of the Opposition, which is to shut them all down and put literally tens of thousands of people out of work just weeks before Christmas.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I spent yesterday morning before coming in here running payroll, and I would suggest that it's the member opposite, a career politician who's been in politics since I was in high school, who's out of touch with small-business owners here in the province.

So we've listened, Mr. Speaker, and we proposed immediate solutions. We've called for a more accessible small-business emergency payment program. We've called for incentives to keep employees on the program, and assistance for unemployed workers that no longer qualify for the federal programs.

Twenty-one thousand fewer jobs, Mr. Speaker, than this time last year, and this minister stands and seemingly quivers with delight proclaiming how great things are. But it's cold comfort to those in the province living paycheck to paycheck and those who have lost their jobs.

So I've kind of heard enough of this out-of-touch, echo-chamber oratory, Mr. Speaker, because you can't point fingers if your hands are on the wheel. So what is this government's plan to provide real supports for small businesses and the countless working families staring down poverty at Christmastime?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can clearly say, and not just me, small-business owners across the province in the vast majority will say that the out-of-touch party in this Chamber are the members opposite. The ones who want to shut them all down. The ones who want to send all of their employees onto the unemployment line.

And I would say this, Mr. Speaker: we have had a challenge in the labour market. We have. Twenty thousand people have lost their job through this pandemic, which is a terrible thing. But what would be worse, Mr. Speaker, is putting another 50 or 70 or 80,000 people out of employment tomorrow, which is what their plan is, Mr. Speaker.

We believe small businesses can operate safely, that they can operate responsibly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It is their plan, Mr. Speaker. It is their plan. We believe that they can operate safely and responsibly, and they have. We've stepped forward with tens of millions of dollars of support, the most significant support programs in the entire country, Mr. Speaker, which have been copied, which have been cited across the country as the model for support programs for small business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mental Health and Addictions Supports

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Far too many families have lost loved ones to addictions and overdoses. This year, the number of people who have died from overdose is up 65 per cent since last year. We have a new Minister for Mental Health and Addictions, but what we need is new action to save lives. Families are asking me, so I'm asking the minister: what is this government going to do to reduce the number of deaths from overdoses?

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would start by offering my condolences on behalf of the government to the families of anyone who has passed away as a result of an overdose or an addiction or mental health issues, Mr. Speaker. Our government takes this issue very seriously. Myself, as the new minister on this file, responsible for this portfolio, also takes this very seriously.

We've made some significant investments in recent years, Mr. Speaker, including this budget year where we've invested \$435 million into mental health and addictions. Of that, 57 million is directly targeted towards the addictions file.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, we do recognize that there's been some additional challenges this year presented by COVID-19, by the pandemic, and additional stress this has caused on people across this province. And it also created some challenges in terms of people being able to access those services.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward . . . I've been having conversations and have some upcoming meetings with folks in the front lines and stakeholder groups to hear from them directly as to get to their advice and some suggestions as to where we need to go to help address some of these challenges. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a lot more needs to be done by this government. Mr. Speaker, we're not only losing

people to overdoses, we're also losing far too many to suicide. In the last session, I introduced a bill to bring in a suicide prevention strategy, and the Sask Party members all voted against it. So if the Sask Party government won't support legislation for a suicide prevention strategy, what will they do to reduce suicides in our province? Families who have lost loved ones want to know.

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

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I said previously, this is also a serious concern for us as a government. We've made some investments. And the announcement and the creation of the Pillars for Life strategy that was released in May, Mr. Speaker, we've got some funding dedicated towards that strategy this year.

Mr. Speaker, we've identified that a suicide prevention strategy is not simply a one-size-fits-all approach. That's why we've taken a look at what other jurisdictions across the country have done in terms of implementing suicide prevention supports, Mr. Speaker. Of the Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan, we've invested \$1.25 million this year into improving access to psychiatric consultations, Mr. Speaker, to further expand mental health first aid and enhance research and data and surveillance as well.

As well, Mr. Speaker, on the First Nations side of things, in late September the provincial government along with the federal government and the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] signed a letter of commitment as well to look at addressing some of the issues that First Nations face, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Support for Vulnerable People during COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 is out of control in Saskatchewan. It has laid bare the crisis facing vulnerable communities who are especially at risk. People living in poverty or facing homelessness were struggling to keep their heads above water well before this pandemic. Now the cold winter months are upon us and lives are at risk.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just the colder temperatures that are making it more difficult. Services have had to close down due to the pandemic. They've had to scale back their services, and community organizations are struggling to fill those gaps.

How is it that this Sask Party government is doing nothing at all to help the vulnerable people of this province during a pandemic? And how is that everything they have done so far, from clawing back CERB [Canada emergency response benefit] payments to failing to help these community organizations on the front line, are actually making things worse? Why is it taking resources off the front line just when we need them the most?

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, we have not

removed services during this time of this pandemic. We have helped our community-based organizations in more than one way. Mr. Speaker, when our shelters let us know that they were having a financial crunch because of COVID-19 and that they were struggling, in April we actually gave them a bump in funding so that they could get through that time.

And then most recently in November, these shelters actually told us again that they would need a little bit more to get through that tough time. So at that point in time we gave them another bump.

Mr. Speaker, we're here for our community-based organizations. We are all in this together, and we are here to help. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 14 — *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 14, *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 14 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? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 15 — *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 15, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 15 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? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 16 — *The Pawned Property (Recording) Amendment Act, 2020*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 16, *The Pawned Property (Recording) Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 16 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? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 17 — *The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act, 2020*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 17, *The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Crown Investments that Bill No. 17 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? I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 18 — *The All Terrain Vehicles Amendment Act, 2020*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, *The All Terrain Vehicles Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Crown Investments that Bill No. 18 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? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 19 — *The Human Resources Profession Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 19, *The Human Resources Profession Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Crown Investments that Bill No. 19 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? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

TABLING OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to submit the supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: — Would you please rise for the message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates no. 1 of certain sums required for the service of

the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2021, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Honourable Russell B. Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

[14:15]

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 1 through 8.

The Speaker: — Questions no. 1 to 8 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to order questions 9 through 13.

The Speaker: — Questions no. 9 to 13 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 14 and 15.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question 16.

The Speaker: — Question no. 16 is ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, finally I'd like to table the answer to question 17.

The Speaker: — Question no. 17 is tabled.

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 Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by — as I respond to the Throne Speech — congratulating you again on your election as Speaker of the House. People have been pretty well behaved so far. We haven't put you through your paces yet. Maybe you're a good influence. Happy to see you there. Looking forward to working with you. And to Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Sask Rivers, congratulations on your election to that role as well.

And to the former Speaker, I do want to again thank you for your

service. From where I stand here with the Plexiglas, it does look like you've gotten, you know, two minutes for roughing. It looks like you're in the penalty box along with the member for Swift Current. Not sure who swung their fists first, but I do want to recognize . . . I imagine it was the former Speaker.

I do want to recognize a couple of particular contributions of the former Speaker. Bringing in the imam and the rabbi and First Nations elders into ceremonies here in this House is an important contribution. And many of the ways you've spoken and stepped out to speak to and meet with folks from different communities, in particular the Indigenous community, I really respect and admire that. And you know, Mr. Speaker, sometimes there's some tension between our side and their side and the Speaker, and you know, we don't always agree. If ever that agreement wasn't expressed as it should be, my sincere apologies and my thanks for your service.

I also want to thank some of the folks who work so hard to make this work in here. The Clerks in front of us, who give us such good advice and have been so flexible and able to adapt, got us into this strange space with our masks and Plexiglas. And hey, so far so good. It seems to be working well. So thank you for that and all the work you always do.

And to the folks at Hansard and the folks behind the camera for making sure you capture our words, mispronunciations and all, and keeping this record so that the people of Saskatchewan have access to what's said in this House for years to come. And of course the Sergeant-at-Arms: thank you for your work protecting us from ghosts and whatever other threats there may be, and keeping us all safe in this House.

And I do want to thank — speaking of folks working in this House — our staff. Our caucus staff does an incredible amount of work. You know, we don't look this good by accident. They work really, really hard to make sure that our members have the information, the facts that we need. And they support us in so many ways. So thank you to one who isn't working with us anymore. I want to give a special thanks to Adrienne King, who's moved back home to Edmonton but served us very well in the campaign and the months leading up to it as our chief of staff. And to welcome Sally Housser as our chief of staff. Really excited to have Sally on board. She is the definition of a firecracker: great spirit and doing great work, pulling our team together. And thank the rest of the team of course as well: Cheryl Stecyk, Jannet Shanks, Mitch Bonokoski, Thomas Linner, Dave Mitchell, Amy Huziak, Nathaniel Cole, and Kat Norton. And if I missed anyone, please remind me. But we've got a great team, and they're working so hard. Thank you for everything you do.

And thank you to the folks who have helped to get these members here and that support us — our CAs [constituency assistant] and all the folks who worked on our campaign. And for me, that's a special thanks to Nancy Morrison. Nancy was my campaign manager in Meewasin in 2017, and again in Meewasin for this election. She was also my CA for the last couple of years, and sort of an adopted grandma to Abe and Gus. And Nancy is somebody that I care deeply about. And I'm really happy that she's been able to make the move out to BC [British Columbia] where she's able to stay close to her daughter and granddaughter and be close to family at this time when it's been pretty tough being far away. So thank you to Nancy.

And to Liz, who is working as my CA and worked as a CA with Nancy and was a big part of our campaign team and is a great support. Really grateful for Liz, and all of those folks who worked on our campaign team in Meewasin and also across the province. We had so many people, we could spend all day thanking the folks, but I'll just say a couple. One is Trevor McKenzie-Smith, our campaign director, who did an incredible job bringing together a team that ran a really strong campaign. And also a little shout-out to the folks who were in the Yes We Van with me: Sally and Adrienne; but also Josh Berson, our photographer; and our driver who we will only refer to as the man known as grandma.

We had a great time out on the campaign. I'm proud of the campaign we ran. And I'm grateful. I'm grateful for everybody who worked hard on behalf of New Democrats, on behalf of Saskatchewan people during this campaign.

And of course, particularly grateful, especially grateful, Mr. Speaker, to my own family. We all mention our families in here. I put Mahli and Abe and Gus through a lot through this campaign, and all the time doing this job. And Mahli's on call today. She's going to be in pediatrics on call. Sometimes the schedules work out to be a pretty crazy situation. She's juggling life at home with Abe and Gus and also doing her work in which she puts her heart into the kids of Saskatchewan as a pediatrician in such an amazing way. And she's someone I admire a great deal, and I'm so happy I get to hang out with her once in a while.

And then there are those little guys. Abraham, he's nine, a self-described bookworm, would probably be stuck in a book at all times if we let him. Although with the big dump of snow this year in Saskatoon, we've been getting outside a lot more, more tobogganing and he's learning to cross-country ski. And he's a pretty great pal.

And then there's Gus. Gus is three and, as most three-year-olds are, he's ridiculous. I don't know whether he'll be a walrus or a beetle or an octopus when I get home. He's a different animal every time I turn around. And he asks me every day . . . He wants two stories of problems — "Tell me a story of a problem, Dad" — every night before he goes to bed. Fortunately I work with these folks so I've got lots to draw on from real life.

And I'm very grateful to the folks at Meewasin. I always remind myself, what is Meewasin? Meewasin, it's the Cree word for beautiful and the Cree word for good. And I try to remind myself it is a beautiful part of the province in a beautiful province, and that idea that I've been elected by the people of Meewasin — we've all been elected — to work for the good, to work for what's right for Saskatchewan people.

And I'm grateful to the people of Meewasin not just for frustrating the Premier's oft-stated desire to remove another NDP [New Democratic Party] leader. The support that they gave but also those conversations and the feedback, the information that my constituents provide in those calls into the office and the conversations on the doorstep. Because it's a hugely diverse constituency. People from all over the world, all walks of life — business owners, doctors, teachers, renters, folks on social assistance, the whole spectrum in Meewasin. And really as I hear from those folks, ordinary people from all walks of life, I hear from them the ways in which they've stepped up during this

COVID-19 pandemic and the way that they have worked hard to keep themselves and those around them safe, to support those that are the least fortunate. And I believe that the people of Meewasin, like the people everywhere in Saskatchewan, deserve a government that will step up for them as well.

I'm proud to be a part of a team that will stand up, that will put people first. And it's been such a great time this first couple of weeks to really get to know in a different way our new team of MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. We've got returning veterans, the old-timers like the member for Regina Douglas Park or Saskatoon Fairview and the member for Lakeview, for Cumberland, for Athabasca, for Rosemont all returning, bringing their experience and wisdom from their long, long years of life to this House, as well as the rookies.

We've got some really great, new folks joining us here from Saskatoon University and Regina University, Regina Elphinstone-Centre, and of course Saskatoon Centre, Saskatoon Eastview, Saskatoon Nutana — brand new members keen to get to work and bringing so much of their own experience, their own ideas, and a fresh set of eyes to the work that we do in this House.

And it's also extremely cool to be part of the first caucus where the majority of members are women. We can already see the difference that provides around the caucus table, the influence of their experience, and some of the calming influence of Hara Roadhouse hanging out around our caucus table as well, bringing . . . It just changes how you approach life.

So I'm very thankful to them and congratulate them, and congratulate all new members who were elected to this House. And you know, the best maiden speeches were obviously in this corner of the room by far, but I heard some pretty good speeches on the other side. And I even mentioned to one of the members on the other side that I really appreciated his speech.

And I heard some really important values brought forward in that discussion, people talking about why we're here, our reason to be here to serve, to bring hope to the people of Saskatchewan, and an appetite and a desire to try to work together to do less of what divides us and more of what unites us. And I really appreciate those values of collaboration. And I urge the new members — some of us old folks, it's too late; we're never going back — but I urge those new members to hold on to that, and to hold on to a spirit of critical thinking.

Because as much as I heard that spirit in many of the speeches, I also heard a whole lot of speeches from the folks on the other side that uncritically echoed the message of the Throne Speech without any questions whatsoever, that just parroted this as the perfect speech and the perfect plan for the moment without recognizing that you have a role to play within your own caucus, within your own government, to ask some hard questions as well. You're the first line before it gets to us, to make sure that what's chosen, what's decided over there is actually the right thing to do.

And I heard this Throne Speech. And what I heard was a speech that was written in October. It was written maybe in the first week of November, but is completely out of touch with the moment on which it was presented. And it echoed for me something that really stood out for me in the Sask Party's

platform. The first line of the Sask Party's platform in this election was "we faced COVID-19 together," as though it was already past. And then we've heard "post-pandemic" as language as early as this summer from this government. And this government ran on the idea that this was over, that we'd already beat it, and that they should be applauded for the fact that it was over and done with and they'd done a great job.

[14:30]

And that's how out of touch this Throne Speech is, not just today, but with the reality of what people have gone through in the last year, with what people have experienced in the last year. Thousands of people have contracted COVID-19, most of those in the last few weeks. Thousands have caught COVID-19. Thousands of people have lost their jobs. Thousands more have struggled with mental health and addictions challenges, which is why this Throne Speech, this call to please applaud our meagre efforts is just so jarring to me, so out of touch with what people have really experienced through this year.

And I want to talk a little bit about that year — the Sask Party's year with COVID-19. We got our first case of COVID-19 in Canada back in January. And at that time I called up the Minister of Health. I asked for an update. He didn't have a plan.

And we didn't hear again, we actually never heard publicly from the Minister of Health about COVID-19 at all until we raised it as the opposition here in this House. We raised it and the folks across the way, what did they do? They laughed. They laughed at the very idea that we would even talk about COVID-19. The former minister of ... [inaudible interjection] ... Oh, it's absolutely true, and the tape would show it. And the former minister of Rural and Remote Health, he sat in his desk and yelled, what if? What if? As though we were fools to imagine that Saskatchewan wasn't immune to what was going on in Italy or South Korea or France. They laughed. They laughed at the very idea that COVID-19 was an issue.

And when they were forced to come out with a plan, they showed, they proved that they had not given any attention because they released in March a PowerPoint, a warmed-over version of the H1N1 plan that had nothing to do with the challenges of today. And they had no plan because they had another plan. They were hell-bent on a snap spring election. That was their big surprise. That was their big plan. And they wanted nothing to knock them off of that plan.

I recall very clearly walking up to one of the ministers, and I won't say which, but walking up to one of the ministers just two days before they cancelled that spring election and saying, please take this seriously. This isn't about politics. If we have an election right now, people will die. And that minister said, ah, it's Zika. It's West Nile virus. We hear this from you all the time. Everybody's going to die. They didn't take it serious. They didn't take it seriously on their own because they had something else in mind. They wanted to put politics ahead of people.

But fortunately the people of Saskatchewan, who we've all praised in this place for stepping up, they did step up. They stepped up and pressured this government. They stepped up and pressured this government to cancel that election, to not have the Junos, to take the choices immediately to protect us. And we're

so fortunate that the people of Saskatchewan did bring that pressure because who knows what this government would ever have done on their own.

And fortunately we had cases arrive here later than other places in the country, and thank goodness we did. And fortunately other provinces acted and this province had to follow suit with that peer pressure. And we're lucky that we did because who knows what would have happened without that pressure, the public pressure for this government to act, because we never have seen that sort of leadership from them on their own.

And even once they'd acknowledged that it was happening, they were very slow, very slow to support small businesses, and meagre supports in what they did bring forward. Slow to bring top-up wages for those folks that they were praising for being on the front lines but didn't want to give any more actual compensation to. Absolutely resistant, absolutely resistant to the idea of a moratorium on evictions. Perfectly happy to see people kicked out into the streets at the same time as we're asking them to stay home. And they never, and the former minister of Social Services knows this well, they never stepped up in response to the needs of the most vulnerable, those struggling with food security, those struggling with lack of housing, anywhere near what every other province provided. They just weren't willing to help.

They were slow to encourage mask use. And they refused every offer, every serious and sincere offer from this side of the House to work together to bring forth the best responses. They didn't want to hear from anyone but their own echo chamber.

And then there was the day of the fake election when they pulled the stunt. They announced, they told us they were going to call a state of emergency. They told us that there was community transmission. They told us the case numbers had spiked, but they waited to tell the public for several hours so that they could release a fake budget, a budget that had nothing to do with the financial realities of the day. Because once again they wanted their own press conference more than they cared about the needs of Saskatchewan people. They once again put politics ahead of people.

And all that summer they resisted. They didn't want to come back in here. They resisted returning the House, resisted having a budget. They refused over and over again to come back in the House. And when they finally did, what did they give us? They gave us the same warmed-over budget that had nothing to do with the reality of the day — nothing new for health care, nothing new for education, none of the investments, the serious investments that are needed to deal with a problem of this magnitude. A problem of this magnitude and this government was not ready and was not willing to make the investments.

Now we're fortunate. We're fortunate. The summer did go well. Our case numbers stayed low. It was a beautiful summer. People got to spend time outside. The case numbers stayed low. But the government and this minister took the exact wrong message, took the exact wrong message from that experience of low numbers. They decided, oh good; we're done. They didn't have to try anymore.

They didn't come up with a back-to-school plan until they were

absolutely forced. The back-to-school plan that was brought in was the worst in Canada, putting so much pressure on teachers, on students, on staff. They didn't come up with a back-to-school plan, and when they only made changes under great pressure from the education sector, it still put all of the pressure and all of the responsibility on the divisions, on the teachers, to step up with no guidance, no support from this government that has, over and over, disrespected teachers and shown how little they care about education.

They didn't do the work in health care. They didn't staff up in testing and tracing. They didn't staff up in long-term care. They didn't staff up in our hospitals. They're now scrambling to recruit contact tracing, scrambling to recruit doctors and nurses to work in field hospitals because they were so committed, so committed to being the heroes, to being able to say, oh we got this, we did it already. So committed to running an election on having beaten this thing that they were drinking their own Kool-Aid.

And this is my message to those new members. To those new members, pass on the Kool-Aid when it's offered to you. Don't drink the bathwater. Think critically. Think critically about what's happened. Think critically about the fact that this government took that summer off, did not do what they needed to do, wanted to tell the story that this was perfect and over so much, so much that when those case numbers started to rise, they didn't want people to talk about it. They didn't share the modelling that surely would have been shared with the Premier, with the Minister of Health. They didn't share that with the public. They didn't share it after the election and they waited as long as they could. And the Premier made it very clear. He made it very clear that he was the one calling the shots, although I suspect it's the guy nodding his head over there.

The Premier repeatedly made it clear that he would resist any further measures, that he didn't want to see any further restrictions, and that his plan was going to supersede any public health recommendations, that it was him who was calling the shots and that our health was simply an afterthought.

So again, only because of public pressure, only because the public spoke up did we see any action. Four hundred doctors, 400 doctors signed a letter calling for action. Hundreds more . . . And they'll say, well that's not all the doctors. Well the Sask Medical Association, SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses], the association representing the pharmacists, all of the organizations representing health care providers made it very clear that the way things were going was not okay and that this government needed to act. They dismissed that. They dismissed the voices of the folks who are actually on the front line, the folks who are actually going to be making those decisions about who gets care and who doesn't. They didn't listen to that. That was just noise. It didn't matter.

And yes, we called for a three-week, targeted, evidence-based, short-term circuit breaker to get this under control. And we heard the ministers beaking about this during question period, saying well it didn't work in Manitoba. Manitoba waited too long and so has this government waited way too long. Over 400 people have died in Manitoba and we're on the same trajectory when it comes to cases to catch up to them.

And had we acted sooner, had we acted when we should have,

we'd have got this under control, causing far less damage, far fewer deaths, and far less damage to our economy, an economy where this government has seen businesses not able to welcome customers the way they should have if we'd made those actions sooner, as we should have. Instead you're telling them to stay open, that they're required to stay open. They can't be eligible for any federal support. There's almost nothing for support from this province. They have to stay open, but their customers have to stay home. That's the message.

And these organizations, these businesses, these enterprises are bleeding money, ineligible for federal support, and completely unsatisfied by the anemic support from this minister and this government. And now we're facing, as we've seen in Alberta, the real threat of an undefined, ongoing lockdown as we approach Christmas because this government failed to act when they ought to have acted.

In those same three weeks, what did we see? We saw our ICUs become overwhelmed. We saw 150 patients in hospital now. We've got a test positivity rate of over 10 per cent. That means this virus is everywhere and continuing to spread. We've got outbreaks in hospitals, outbreaks in long-term care that are bad enough they're calling in firefighters and may need to call in the army. And 34 people have died in those three weeks that this government failed to act — 34 people. Thirty-four more families are grieving loved ones right now.

The inaction of this government has real consequences in real people's lives. And they laugh about it. They laughed. And that's where we are. That's where we are. That's where this Premier has led us. And so you can see why this Throne Speech, this endless self-congratulation, uncritical of the performance. I asked the Premier, what does he regret? He has nothing to say. He thinks he's done a perfect job. No one does this job perfectly. No one is doing a perfect job. Admit that not everything has gone right and maybe you can get it better next time. But no, completely uncritical.

I often share a story, and I'll share it again because this is the story that I think about the most when I think about what this place is about. And I ask people to imagine they're standing at the edge of a river and you see a kid floating in the river, and that kid's about to drown. Well, Mr. Speaker, you're a brave fellow. You throw your tricorn hat to the side, you dive into the river and you save that kid. Well that's wonderful. You saved a life and that's a beautiful thing. But then along comes a second kid. You've got to dive in again. And a third kid, and a fourth, and a fifth. You're calling everybody you know to come haul these kids out of the river. Eventually, somebody's got to ask the question: who's throwing these kids in the river in the first place? And go upstream to find out. Well I talk about that a lot, that being on the shore downstream matters too.

And so this Monday I'm going to be starting my training shifts to get ready to work at the field hospital if those have to open. I'll be working on the COVID unit in respiratory and in internal medicine, getting trained up to be ready to be there if we need to. A field hospital that I hope will never open. Work that I hope I will never have to do. And I hope that no one — the internists, the family doctors, the psychiatrists, the pediatricians — that they don't have to find themselves in a field hospital. What would that say about our preparation, about our commitment to keeping

people safe if we get to that point?

That downstream work matters. I'm ready to do my bit. But the hope, the hope for that upstream change, the hope that we prevent that kind of situation, that hope lives here. It resides in this House. And every day that we're here, we have an opportunity to do better. Every day we fail to act is another opportunity for more damage to Saskatchewan lives, to our economy, to the minds and hearts of those who are struggling today.

And that's why I'm urging this government: use your tools. Use the power that you have, not to downplay and skate past and spin what's happened here. Not to pretend that everything's been fine, but to take this moment as seriously as you should and to truly do what it takes to keep people healthy and whole, so that when this is over . . .

[14:45]

And God knows we're all ready for this to be over. We're tired. We're sick of this. And I know I am. I'm tired of being worried about, tired of being worried about my wife as she goes to work, and the health care workers she works alongside, our friends and colleagues. I'm tired of not seeing my own parents. I'm tired of telling my kids that yes, it's another holiday where they can't go hang out with Grandma and Grandpa or see their friends. And I'm tired of this, and I know we're the lucky ones, you know. We're doing fine, comparatively, when so many people have lost their jobs, lost loved ones. People are really struggling.

But that is why, that is why I urge all of the members in this House, this House that could be, that should be the House of hope, to do what we can now. Do what we can now and when this is over, do not, when this is done, go back to that reflex of austerity. Do not cut. Do not sell off Crown corporations. Learn the lessons. Learn the lessons of COVID-19, the lessons that our schools, that our struggling small businesses, that our hospitals, that our long-term care centres are showing us. Learn those lessons. Invest in people. Invest in using the power of government to make our strength a reality, not just a slogan.

And this Throne Speech is as far away from that approach as the normal times of 2019 are in our memory. So that's why I'll proudly support the amendment, and I will certainly not be voting in favour of this Throne Speech.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would take this opportunity to thank not only the member opposite, but thank all of the members in this Assembly for their comments with respect to the Speech from the Throne this year, and thank all of them.

For those returning members, I guess I would first of all congratulate them on successfully returning to this Legislative Assembly, thank them for their efforts throughout the campaign, thank, through them, their teams for the efforts that were made with respect to all parties across this province in the great political process that we go through once each and every four years. And I would congratulate those members that returned on their successful campaigns, Mr. Speaker.

To the new members on both sides of this House, I also would offer my congratulations on their successful run in their, likely, maybe their first campaign. Some it would be maybe their second or third campaign, Mr. Speaker. But through them as well I would offer my thanks, my congratulations to those successful teams again across this province.

The political process, the elections that we go through every four years or so in this province — we do it nationally; we do it provincially; we do it at the municipal level; we do it at the education board level, Mr. Speaker. It should never be lost on us the importance of having the ability to select our leaders, to select our governments, to select those that are going to make those decisions on behalf of us as residents at any level across this province. And I want to thank each and every one of you as members of this House as representatives of this province — regardless of the party that you sit on — for the efforts that you have made thus far, and I thank you in advance for what I know you will make over the course of the next four or so years.

I take the opportunity as well to thank my team, Mr. Speaker. My campaign team had to work a little bit harder this time as their candidate was somewhat of a delinquent candidate in the constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook. And it actually worked out pretty good for us and they've informed us, informed myself, that I am no longer going to be allowed to campaign in the constituency as we did increase our vote count there, Mr. Speaker. And that is very much due to the very diverse and the broad campaign that was ran by a number of volunteers from a number of communities across the vast constituency that I have the honour of representing.

And I would also thank the constituents that elected me once again to this legislature, the third time that I have ran and been successful in representing them as their MLA. And isn't a day goes by that I am not honoured and appreciative of the opportunity that they are providing me. And I know that can be echoed, those very comments, by 60 other members in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, very quickly, part of that team and part of the work that we do at the local level — each and every year, each and every day, each and every week — is my constituency assistant, Sally Fitch, who works very hard on behalf of the people that have elected me and now, as I say, elected us as the government. And I thank her for her efforts.

I thank the staff that works with myself and works with cabinet and caucus down here, and executive council and the ministers' offices and in the caucus offices, the respective caucuses' offices, for the effort that many of them made, yes, in campaigns, but also the effort that they make in this building on behalf of the government, their party, and ultimately the people across Saskatchewan.

Like the Leader of the Opposition as well, in these very different times where we are addressing COVID-19 and this global pandemic, Legislative Assembly services, the people that tend to this building, have changed how we sit in this building, how many of us are in here, where the desks are located, and the Plexiglas that is between those desks to ensure that we are in the very safest environment that we can be. And I appreciate the work and the effort and the preparation that you have done as

well.

Last, but not least, and I think I would speak on behalf of many if not all in this Assembly, I would like to thank the people of the province. The people of the province, the people of this very strong and vibrant province that have really built the communities from corner to corner in Saskatchewan. And again, as we say, we've come through an election campaign where we are out engaging not only with the people in our constituency but often working with our neighbours and in neighbouring centres, neighbouring geographical areas of the province. We came through an election campaign that was most certainly like no other election campaign that has been run in this province. We did so safely.

We are coming through a year like no other, and I would just thank the people of Saskatchewan for everything that they have been asked to do over the course of the last 9 or maybe 10 months now, and thank them for actually doing it, Mr. Speaker, and showing the relative success that we can achieve. And really being a model for others around the world in how to use — we often have heard the Minister of Health say this, and I've said it — use good old-fashioned Saskatchewan common sense to navigate our way through this global pandemic.

A little bit of my speech here, I would briefly like to run through — and this would be a little bit different than maybe the comments that were entered by the Leader of the Opposition — but run through a little bit of the chronology, chronological events that have occurred since this virus has been introduced here in the province.

And if you think back to March the 12th was the first presumptive case that we had in Saskatchewan. The day before March the 12th we had actually invested in VIDO-InterVac [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-international vaccine centre] to do some work with respect to their production facility, their production facility for vaccines just like COVID-19. Later I'll speak to the fact that that was increased through a partnership at the request of the provincial government and VIDO-InterVac of much more dollars being provided to ensure that VIDO-InterVac can be in this vaccination conversation globally. And they most certainly are, right here out of our province in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

So March 12th was our first presumptive case. First set of measures were introduced on March the 13th. Schools were subsequently closed on March the 16th, Mr. Speaker, moving very, very quickly. The state of emergency was then on March the 18th. Within roughly a week of the first case, we were into a state of emergency here in the province, most certainly not a delayed action. There was new measures that were introduced on that day. And on March the 20th, eight days after the first presumptive case, the first set of financial supports were put in place for the people of the province. They included a number of deferral programs, the business response team that was put in place, so that not just businesses but people across the province would have an access point into the Government of Saskatchewan for questions that they might have.

And the very first in the nation, the self-isolation support program was put in place, later mirrored and taken over by the federal government so that it was provided to all Canadians. But

started here in Saskatchewan, where we provided people that may be feeling unwell or ill some degree of support so that they could stay at home rather than feel that they had to go to work that very next day, understanding how asymptomatic people already would be able to spread that virus. Mr. Speaker, the self-isolation support program that is now available to all Canadians started right here in the province of Saskatchewan eight days after our presumptive first case.

The day after that, on March 21st, the provincial lab received approval to confirm testing in cases so that we could, in the very initial stages, be able to confirm a COVID-19 test and then work on building that capacity in the days and the weeks and the months following that.

March 25th, back to my original conversation around funding of VIDO-InterVac. Even prior to the first presumptive case of COVID-19 here in the province, we partnered with the federal government on what became \$50 million of funding, \$50 million of funding, so that this world-class organization could work with their partners around the world to be part of that very global conversation in finding a vaccine, a viable vaccine, for COVID-19 for us this year and years into the future. They most certainly are a part of that conversation. It came about through requests of VIDO-InterVac, supported by this provincial government, opening doors so that we could partner with the federal government on what is proving to be a very, very important partnership for vaccine manufacturing capacity not just in Saskatchewan but in the nation of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we heard a little bit about field hospitals here in the province on April the 8th. Within a month, prior to a month of our first presumptive case here in the province, we were building those field hospitals. Some of the equipment that is going into those hospitals is actually going to be procured early so that it can be made available for the new hospitals that we are building in Weyburn and Prince Albert. And these are some of the efficiencies that you can find when you're actually building new hospitals in this province.

Mr. Speaker, but we built those hospitals months ago. In the event that we may need them, they would be up and running and be available to us should we find ourselves in what would be a very challenging situation. We have not, fortunately, been faced with that decision as of yet. But we took the very early action to put in place the measures, the field hospitals, the funding in place, and actually physically started to construct them so that they are ready should we need them. And we're hearing some conversations around field hospitals from the Leader of the Opposition but also others around Canada.

April the 9th, we introduced our emergency support programs for small businesses. That had been a theme throughout this response to COVID. April the 30th, we introduced . . . the wage support program for low-income essential workers was announced, many of these working in our health care fields. May the 1st, introduced with the chambers of commerce across the province, the buy-local campaign. And on May the 4th, on May the 4th we introduced the phase 1 of the Re-Open Saskatchewan plan.

And now, Mr. Speaker, we are going to get into some significant differences between the opposition party and the governing party, and the faith that each of these parties may have or not

have in the Saskatchewan people and what Saskatchewan people can achieve in reopening our communities, our economy, and our health care system, and doing so safely.

May the 5th, the SHA, the Saskatchewan Health Authority — not the hockey association but the health authority — announced its plans to resume services in their elective surgeries and a number of other services across the province. And on May the 6th, Mr. Speaker, a \$2 billion booster shot was provided to our economy, an infrastructure stimulus to build on the five and a half billion dollars that we were already investing over two years, bringing that up to seven and a half billion dollars to invest in our highways, invest in our schools, invest in our communities across this province.

\$150 million in MEEP funding, the municipal economic enhancement program, to ensure that our municipalities can continue to build the infrastructure that they need to serve the people that live in towns, cities, rural municipalities, villages, resort municipalities right across this province, Mr. Speaker, most certainly a commitment to building strong communities and building strong families in this province.

On May the 8th, we extended the small business emergency program, of which the minister spoke to in question period, which is a program that has been looked at by other provinces and implemented in their jurisdictions, again implemented very early days here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, on May the 19th, phase 2 of the Re-Open Saskatchewan begins, and this is actually when the MEEP funding was announced.

Mr. Speaker, here I'm going to get into one significant difference between the governing party and the opposition party. On May the 4th, our phase 1 was introduced. May the 19th was then indicated phase 2 would be operational then. So May the 4th, the Leader of the Opposition asked us to not introduce the reopening of phase 2 here in Saskatchewan. May the 7th, he repeated that he did not want the phase 2 to move forward here in the province of Saskatchewan. He did not have faith, nor did that party have faith that Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan communities, Saskatchewan businesses could reopen and do so safely with a structured set of parameters.

[15:00]

On May the 8th, he had this to say, Mr. Speaker, and this is in one of our local newspapers here in the province, and I quote — this is the Leader of the Opposition:

The Government of Saskatchewan's first phase of reopening the provincial economy began on Monday, May the 4th, and based on what they've seen so far the Official Opposition doesn't think phase 2 should happen any time soon.

NDP leader Ryan Meili calls on the provincial government to delay the reopening plan.

Mr. Speaker, this is indicative of a theme of the members opposite, a theme where the members opposite ultimately, ultimately would have shut down more of our Saskatchewan economy. They would have shut it down sooner, which they asked for. They would have shut down more of our Saskatchewan economy.

And here's a positive story in this COVID fog that we have been living in. Saskatchewan shut down 13 per cent of our economy in the province; 87 per cent of the Saskatchewan economy was allowed to continue to operate, and do so safely, because we had faith. We had faith in the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, the Re-Open Saskatchewan plan was one of the first to be announced and implemented in the nation of Canada. We had faith in the people of Saskatchewan that they could reopen. Again, our communities, our health care system, we had faith that they could most certainly reopen our economy and do so safely.

The NDP would have shut it down earlier. That economy and our communities, they would have shut it down to a much greater degree, and they would have shut it down longer. And this is relevant as today, that difference extends through today as we see as recently as question period here a few minutes ago where the Leader of the Opposition and that party continues to ask for a circuit breaker. Mr. Speaker, I alluded to exactly what a circuit breaker is in question period, but I'd like to go into a little more depth.

And I'll use one example, and that's in the state of Victoria in Australia. A circuit breaker — let's call it what it is — is a massive shutdown of our economies, our communities, and a massive shutdown of our personal rights and freedoms to see anyone, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. And it isn't for two weeks. It starts off as two weeks but then it continues, and it continues, and it continues. And we're seeing that happen in some areas of Canada.

Here's what happened in Victoria, Australia. Now there's some differing reports, but it happened for somewhere between 111 and 113 days, so just shy of four months the state of Victoria, Australia went into a lockdown. People were confined to their homes. They were allowed however to go outside for one hour a day. But 23 out of 24 hours a day they were confined to their homes with no visitors outside of those that lived in that home. There was nighttime curfews of course. You could go out for one hour but not too late. And there was a ban on travel. During that one hour that you were outside of your home, you were not allowed to travel more than 5 kilometres from your home.

The result of this, Mr. Speaker, was that families were separated for almost four months. It resulted in the state's economy shrinking by about 7 per cent, literally hundreds of thousands of jobs that did not return, Mr. Speaker. Literally cost in supports to the government that are literally unaffordable.

Mr. Speaker, this is what a circuit breaker is. A circuit breaker locks you in your home, shuts down businesses, prevents you from making an income, Mr. Speaker, not for two weeks. It will do it for three to four months. Let's call the circuit breaker what it is. It's a massive shutdown of economies. It's a massive shutdown of our ability to even visit with any of our family members, Mr. Speaker. It most certainly is detrimental, not only to the economic aspects of our communities. It's detrimental to the opportunity for our youth to go out and play any type of sports. It's detrimental to our mental health in our communities. And I would put forward that the consequences of a circuit breaker for almost four months, where you were locked in your home for 23 of 24 hours a day, have yet to be seen. And I fear what they might look like.

Mr. Speaker, as I find my way through my list of events, it brings us into the end of May, into the month of June . . . Sorry, May 28th, we did provide new funding for caregivers that are providing respite, for those at home that might be providing respite for their family member, keeping them safe at home. June the 4th, we're into temporary wage supplements, a program that was expanded to include even more workers. Again, even more workers that are working in health care taking care of our family members, in particular in long-term care homes.

June the 8th, phase 3. Not phase 2 of which the NDP asked to slow down, but phase 3 of our Re-Open Saskatchewan plan begins. And on June the 15th we introduced a provincial budget here in Saskatchewan, the first provincial budget to be introduced in the nation of Canada post-COVID, Mr. Speaker. To my understanding, there has been one provincial budget that has been introduced since then. I believe it's Prince Edward Island. The federal government has provided a fiscal update, not a federal budget. There has been, to my understanding, no other provincial budgets that have been introduced in this nation.

It was introduced by our member for Humboldt-Watrous, and most certainly has provided — and I think this is important for us to acknowledge — it's that budget that provided us the resources, the resources to provide to Saskatchewan people as we ultimately navigate this COVID pandemic. Two and a half billion dollars in that budget allocated to COVID supports to Saskatchewan people to ensure that our businesses have the resources to operate, operate safely. To ensure that those that are impacted in their daily jobs, in their daily incomes, are able to access resources to ensure ultimately that our communities are able to operate and operate as safe as possible.

June 18th — we've been accused of taking the summer off — June 18th, school guidelines were announced for school coming into the fall by then the previous minister of Education. June the 22nd, Standard & Poor's had a look at our budget and reaffirmed our AA credit rating here in the province. June the 26th, again thinking about education in the middle of summer — actually early summer — \$110 million provided in education stimulus to build some new schools in the province, Mr. Speaker. That very same day almost \$30 million was provided in maintenance funding to our education system to ensure that the schools, that we have have the proper and appropriate maintenance to ensure that they are providing the very best learning environment that we can.

June 29th, phase 4 of our Re-Open Saskatchewan plan and on July the 6th, phase 4, 2.0, the second portion of that plan, did take effect. Mr. Speaker, that means our economy here, our communities, many of the functions that we have have been open now for about six months here in the province. We were among the very first to open. We have done so and done so very safely. Yes, we have some challenges today that we are dealing with with the public health advice that is being provided by Dr. Shahab, Mr. Speaker. But we can be very proud of Saskatchewan people of what we have done. And we had faith that we could do that, and we continue to have faith in the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

This brings us up into the fall and ultimately to . . . We didn't take a break, but we all left this building, Mr. Speaker, to go run a provincial election. A very safe provincial election, I might add,

where the people of Saskatchewan provided on October the 26th . . . They had a choice. They had a choice between the relative platforms that were put forward, a platform that was focused on, yes, controlling the virus and ensuring that we are protecting lives in this province, but a platform that was also focused on ensuring that we could protect the livelihoods of Saskatchewan people — the jobs and the opportunities that we have to continue to live here and to earn money and to raise our family here, Mr. Speaker — versus something completely different that came from the members opposite.

And on October the 26th, the people of Saskatchewan, they provided the members on this side of the House and now part of that side, Mr. Speaker, they provided us with a mandate. They provided us with a majority government. They provided us with a mandate on the balanced and measured approach that we had put before them. They asked us to continue to make the decisions to ensure that we are protecting — we are protecting, yes — the lives of Saskatchewan people, in particular those of our most vulnerable, but also protecting the livelihoods of people across the province.

Mr. Speaker, they gave us a mandate that we are delivering in this Speech from the Throne that was read into the record here about a week ago and that we have been debating over the course of this last week, a Speech from the Throne that really mirrored the campaign platform that we had put before the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has always done what we said we would do. This is a government that from day one has said, when we step forward and make a commitment, that is a covenant that we have with the people of this province and we are going to keep that commitment. And, Mr. Speaker, that holds true with the campaign platform that we had put forward. Holds true with already moving forward to deliver on a 10 per cent power rebate, Mr. Speaker, to everyone across the province. The home renovation tax credit, in process. To increase the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, Mr. Speaker, which will be available to students. We're going to reduce the small business tax to ensure that those small businesses that employ so many in our communities have every opportunity of success during what is likely the most challenging time, the most challenging time that the Saskatchewan small business community has experienced in our short history as a province.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that this is likely one of the swiftest election platforms that will ever be delivered on by any political party. We are going to do it, and we are going to do it in a matter of weeks, and we are going to do it because we said we would, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Speech from the Throne, it's going to fulfil the agreement that we have had a number of times, four times now, with the people of the province. We're going to deliver on those campaign commitments. Those campaign commitments ultimately are going to lead us into our broader objective that we have and the broader covenant that we have made with the people of this province. And that is to achieve the targets that we have set out in our plan for growth, our second plan for growth that we have provided on behalf of the people, our plan to grow this province out to the year 2030, to grow our opportunity and to grow that opportunity for that next generation so that they can

ultimately have the chance to raise their family in a community right here in Saskatchewan. And for those of us that are now getting a little long in the tooth, we know that opportunity hasn't always been here for Saskatchewan people.

In that plan for growth, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of targets — 30 of them, to be exact. One of those targets is to increase the jobs in this province by 100,000. In doing so that will provide us the opportunity to attract over 200,000 people to live in communities across this province, Mr. Speaker.

And some will say, how are you going to do that? The opposition party is going to say, how are you going to do that? Because, quite frankly, when we put those targets in place in the original plan for growth and said we were going to — actually even before that — we said we were going to grow this province at the same rate as the national average, I believe the members opposite said that that just couldn't simply happen. In fact to even suggest that would be farcical. Mr. Speaker, this is a true difference between the parties. A party that has faith in the opportunity and the growth of this province, has faith in the people in the province versus one that quite simply does not.

So how are we going to do that, Mr. Speaker? We are going to increase the value of our exports by 2030 by 50 per cent. And if you're asking what the exports are in this province, Mr. Speaker, you can look no further than drive out of the city and look into one of the agricultural fields we have. We are going to increase the value-added capacity of our ag industry up to \$10 billion, and we are going to further increase our crop production capacity to 45 million metric tonnes. Mr. Speaker, this will grow our ag exports in Saskatchewan to north of \$20 billion. And yes, that's going to create jobs in community after community, Mr. Speaker, from Yorkton to Moose Jaw to Prince Albert to Saskatoon and Regina.

We're going to increase our oil production by 25 per cent for a number of reasons. One, yes, it creates jobs in Shaunavon, in Estevan, in Weyburn, in Maidstone, and Lloydminster. But we're also going to increase it because this is some of the most sustainable energy product that you can find on the face of the earth. And it would do all of us well in this Chamber to support not only the increased production of that product, but to support our ability to make it accessible to all Canadians, make it accessible to everyone in North America, and make it accessible to everyone around the world. Because if we truly want to have a global conversation around reducing our emissions, we should make choices about the products that we're buying today. That includes the sustainable energy products that are provided in Saskatchewan, rather than trying to source those from a country like Venezuela, Brazil, or Saudi Arabia. Mr. Speaker, we have a great story to tell in our energy industry, and it's high time we all come together and started to tell it.

Mr. Speaker, in this small province in the middle of the prairies of this nation, we produce uranium. And when people talk about Canadian uranium exports, they're talking about Saskatchewan uranium exports. Again, Mr. Speaker, a claim to fame of this province providing that clean fuel source for nuclear power to be utilized in countries all around the world. Mr. Speaker, we're going to increase our uranium sales.

We're going to increase our potash sales. The most sustainable

potash product in the world again is mined right here in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I would beg all members of this Assembly to engage with Mosaic, Nutrien, K+S, to engage with BHP who is building a mine at Jansen as to their carbon footprint comparative to other potash mines around the world, their entire environmental footprint compared to their competitors around the world. It's truly a tremendous story of what we are doing here in the potash industry. And it's one that we should collectively be very proud of, never mind the fact of the thousands of people that they employ in our communities, Mr. Speaker, never mind the fact of the tens of thousands of people that this industry indirectly employs in our communities across the province.

[15:15]

We're going to increase our manufacturing exports by 50 per cent. Again many will ask how are we going to do this, how are we going to triple the growth of our tech sector. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are going to engage with those countries. Yes, through the nation of Canada, but we're also going to engage parallelly from the province of Saskatchewan with our export markets around the world through hiring the very best consultants that we can. For example, we have had success in the US [United States], Mr. Speaker, and we're going to have success globally, but also opening up trade offices in those markets as well, most recently opening up three additional trade offices in addition to the one we had in China. We now have India, Singapore, and Japan open, Mr. Speaker, and looking to open even more trade offices to ensure that we are supporting this very growth, these very jobs, in communities from corner to corner in this province in the years ahead.

What this will provide us, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity to continue to invest like we are today — seven and a half billion dollars we talked about. Investing in our strong communities and infrastructure. We have a commitment in this plan for growth to invest \$30 billion by the year 2030. I would say that we're well on our way with the commitment that we have in this most recent budget, Mr. Speaker, in doing that, in providing that opportunity for companies, for businesses, and to provide jobs for Saskatchewan people in this province, thereby providing us with the opportunity to invest.

We also have an eye on our finances here in Saskatchewan. Again a very significant difference between the governing party of the day and the members opposite — very significant difference. We will keep our fiscal house in order in this province, Mr. Speaker. This budget coming this spring is the next rung on the ladder that we will take another step in achieving those targets in our plan for growth. We had the election, Mr. Speaker. We had the budget last June. We're going to have another budget in the spring. And just let me provide some framework without putting forward what exactly might or may or may not be in that budget. But let me provide some overall framework on where Saskatchewan is situated, where our fiscal house is with respect, comparatively, to other provinces as we head that towards that next rung in the ladder: this spring's budget.

When we entered into this pandemic, many governments, including our federal government, have run substantial deficits, very large deficits in some cases across Canada and around the

world to support people and communities right across this nation, and in fairness, to support people around the world. But when we entered into this pandemic in Saskatchewan — and yes, we're running a deficit this year as well — we were third in the nation compared to other provinces, we were third in the nation in our debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product].

Today, as we navigate through this pandemic, Saskatchewan sits second in the nation with respect to our debt-to-GDP. There are now some rating agencies that are forecasting that upon exit of the COVID-19 pandemic, that Saskatchewan will actually move from first to second in our debt-to-GDP ratio and may be the strongest province in the nation of Canada when it comes to having our fiscal house in order. This is where we are sitting as we enter, as we move towards that spring's financial introduction of our finances here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, most certainly something Saskatchewan people can be proud of.

We have today, the second-lowest unemployment rate in the nation. We have today, some of the largest investment in communities that is happening in the nation. Mr. Speaker, we comparatively have some of the strongest finances of any province in the nation of Canada. Part of the reason we're able to do that, Mr. Speaker, is we also have one of the strongest economic recoveries that is already under way in this province, Mr. Speaker. And we have one of the strongest and most vibrant economies, and have for a number of years in the nation as well.

We are poised, Mr. Speaker, and here is the opportunity. As we leave this COVID fog in Saskatchewan, and as the world starts to leave this COVID conversation and look towards revving its engine again and actually having an economic recovery, we are in a very, very good position in Saskatchewan.

We have, in this province, the food, the sustainable fuel, the fertilizer to provide the world as the world starts to rev its engine, Mr. Speaker. We have our fiscal house in order. We have a plan on how we are going to engage with countries that we are doing business with each and every year as Saskatchewan people and as Canadians, Mr. Speaker.

And we have faith. We have faith in the very people and the families and the communities across this province. We have faith in the folks that, quite frankly, built this province. Mr. Speaker, we have faith in the fact that we know they are going to continue building this province. We have faith in the fact that they are going to continue to ensure that we have a strong and vibrant economy. And we have faith in the people, quite frankly, that they have and will continue to adhere to the public health advice that has been provided with respect to COVID-19.

People have shown in this province, time and time again throughout the summer into the fall and now into the winter, that they are not going to let something like a COVID virus get in between where we have been and where Saskatchewan people and this government believe we can get to. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan people are a resilient bunch and they are filled with Saskatchewan common sense. And I am so very proud to be a part of this leadership team that represents them at the provincial level.

Mr. Speaker, many years ago prior to the Saskatchewan Party coming into government — I believe it was in 2004 — there was

a commitment made by the leader of this party at that point in time. It was Brad Wall. But it was a commitment that was made by all of the party members at that point in time, and some on this side will remember that commitment in 2004. It was called *The Promise of Saskatchewan*. It was a commitment that would outline what this party would do, in general form, what this party would do if the people of Saskatchewan ever provided this party with the honour of forming government. And at the very basis of that commitment is this: we are a party that believes in Saskatchewan people, and we are a party that will do what we say we're going to do. That promise, that promise, that covenant that we had with Saskatchewan people that I would say started really in 2004 with the release of that document, continues to be delivered on by this party.

It has been delivered on day by day throughout our response to COVID-19, including the budget that was released on June the 15th of last year. It was delivered on, Mr. Speaker, by saying what we would do if the people of this province gave us the opportunity to govern post-October 26th of this year.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing that in very short order through this Speech from the Throne that was introduced here just about a week ago. Mr. Speaker, that promise and that covenant that we have with the people of this province, that is as true today as the day that it was introduced. And that is a promise that we are never going to forget, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to today. I look forward to the very first vote for many members on both sides. I look forward to the opportunity to vote on behalf of the platform that we presented in this last election. I look forward, Mr. Speaker, to the voting on behalf of the people that we represent, on behalf of the people that provided this government with the mandate to move forward with that platform, those platform items that were laid out in this Speech from the Throne. Mr. Speaker, and I also look forward to the result of that vote.

That's why today I am not going to be supporting the amendment. Mr. Speaker, I am going to be supporting the main motion on the Speech from the Throne that was moved by the member from Kindersley and was seconded by the governing member from the constituency of Riversdale. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the proposed amendment moved by the member from Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member from Regina University:

That the motion be amended by adding:

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

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the amendment please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the amendment please say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — A recorded division has been requested.

Pursuant to the sessional order, voting will occur in two tranches. Call in the first set of members.

[The division bells rang from 15:24 until 15:29.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the amendment please stand.

[Yeas — 6]

| | | |
|-------|-------------|-----------|
| Meili | Wotherspoon | Young, A. |
| Bowes | Beck | Conway |

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the amendment please stand.

[Nays — 23]

| | | |
|------------|--------------|----------|
| Moe | Reiter | Duncan |
| Tell | Eyre | Merriman |
| Docherty | Kaeding | Makowsky |
| Ross, L. | Cockrill | Wilson |
| Ottenbreit | Lawrence | Jenson |
| Ross, A. | Dennis | Kirsch |
| Goudy | Francis | Lambert |
| McLeod | Harrison, D. | |

[15:30]

The Speaker: — Call in the second set of members.

[The division bells rang from 15:31 until 15:33.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the amendment please stand.

[Yeas — 6]

| | | |
|----------------|---------|----------|
| Sarauer | Mowat | Vermette |
| Nippi-Albright | Ritchie | Love |

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the amendment please stand.

[Nays — 23]

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Harpauer | Morgan | Wyant |
| Hargrave | Harrison, J. | Hindley |
| Cheveldayoff | Marit | Carr |
| McMorris | Fiaz | Bradshaw |
| Bonk | Skoropad | Keisig |

| | | |
|---------|------------|-----------|
| Meyers | Buckingham | Young, C. |
| Steele | Nerlien | Domotor |
| Friesen | Grewal | |

The Speaker: — I will now call on the proxy votes. This is in favour of the amendment. I recognize the Opposition Whip.

[Yeas — 1]

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the following member is in favour of the amendment:

Mr. Belanger

The number of members in favour of the amendment is one.

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amendment, 13; those opposed, 46.

The Speaker: — I declare the amendment lost.

The debate will now continue on the main motion. The question before the Assembly is the main motion, the address in reply to the Throne Speech, moved by the member from Kindersley and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale:

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

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

May it please Your Honour:

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

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion please say yea.

Some Hon. Members: — Yea.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion please say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — A recorded division has been requested. Call in the first set of members.

[The division bells rang from 15:37 until 15:40.]

The Speaker: — All in favour of the motion please stand.

[Yeas — 23]

| | | |
|-----|--------|--------|
| Moe | Reiter | Duncan |
|-----|--------|--------|

| | | |
|------------|--------------|----------|
| Tell | Eyre | Merriman |
| Docherty | Kaeding | Makowsky |
| Ross, L. | Cockrill | Wilson |
| Ottenbreit | Lawrence | Jenson |
| Ross, A. | Dennis | Kirsch |
| Goudy | Francis | Lambert |
| McLeod | Harrison, D. | |

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the motion please stand.

[Nays — 6]

| | | |
|-------|-------------|-----------|
| Meili | Wotherspoon | Young, A. |
| Bowes | Beck | Conway |

The Speaker: — Call in the second set of members.

[The division bells rang from 15:42 until 15:44.]

The Speaker: — All those in favour of the motion please stand.

[Yeas — 23]

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| Harpauer | Morgan | Wyant |
| Hargrave | Harrison, J. | Hindley |
| Cheveldayoff | Marit | Carr |
| McMorris | Fiaz | Bradshaw |
| Bonk | Skoropad | Keisig |
| Meyers | Buckingham | Young, C. |
| Steele | Nerlien | Domotor |
| Friesen | Grewal | |

[15:45]

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the motion please stand.

[Nays — 6]

| | | |
|----------------|---------|----------|
| Sarauer | Mowat | Vermette |
| Nippi-Albright | Ritchie | Love |

The Speaker: — I will now call for the proxy votes. Those in favour of the motion? Those opposed to the motion? Proxy? I recognize the Opposition Whip.

[Nays — 1]

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to report that the following member is opposed to the motion:

Mr. Belanger

The number of members opposed to the motion is one.

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 46; those opposed, 13.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To request leave to move a motion to withdraw the supplementary estimates from the standing committees and commit them to the Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move a motion to commit the supplementary estimates to the Committee of Finance. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is being granted. The Government House Leader may proceed.

MOTIONS

Withdraw and Recommit Supplementary Estimates

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

That notwithstanding rule 139(5) and rule 148(1), the votes contained within the 2020-21 supplementary estimates no. 1 be withdrawn from their respective standing committees as follows:

1. from the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies, vote 18, Finance;
2. from the Standing Committee on the Economy, vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council; vote 90, Trade and Export Development;
3. from the Standing Committee on House Services, vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer; vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth;
4. from the Standing Committee on Human Services, vote 5, Education; vote 32, Health;
5. from the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice, vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport; vote 30, Government Relations, vote 88, Tourism Saskatchewan; and further,

That those votes be committed to the Committee of Finance.

I so move.

The Speaker: — Will the Assembly take the motion as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — To request leave to move a motion to permit officials to speak during today's deliberations in Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to permit officials to speak during today's deliberations in the Committee of Finance. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Officials' Participation in Committee of Finance

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

That on December 9, 2020, officials be allowed to speak from their seats during consideration of supplementary estimates in Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved:

That on December 9, 2020, officials be allowed to speak from their seats during the consideration of supplementary estimates in the Committee of Finance.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for the Assembly to go into Committee of Finance.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Chair: — Good afternoon. The business before the committee today will be the 2020-21 supplementary estimates no. 1. The following supplementary estimates will be considered today. For executive government: vote 5, Education; vote 18, Finance; vote 30, Government Relations; vote 32, Health; vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport; vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council; vote 88, Tourism Saskatchewan; vote 90, Trade and Export Development.

For Legislative Assembly and its officers: vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth; vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer. For lending and investing activities: vote 151, Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan; vote 152, Saskatchewan Power Corporation. For debt redemption, sinking fund and interest payments: vote 175, Debt Redemption.

Before I begin, I will advise the committee of the process for today's deliberations. Once I call the supplementary estimates, I

will call on the minister or ministers to introduce their officials. If required, officials will be permitted to speak from their seats. If officials do speak, please raise your hand to be identified by the Hansard operator and clearly state your name prior to speaking.

Once the committee members have completed consideration of the votes, I will ask the officials to leave the Chamber and I will put the questions on the votes and the resolutions.

General Revenue Fund Supplementary Estimates No. 1 Parks, Culture and Sport Vote 27

Subvote (PC19)

The Chair: — The first item for consideration will be vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport, community engagement, subvote (PC19). I invite Minister Ross to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And today with me I have Twyla MacDougall, Candace Caswell, and Carter Zazula.

Our government is honoured to fulfill our election platform promise with the reinstatement of the community rink affordability grant. The community rink affordability grant will ensure that when rinks and the activities held at them are safely reopened, they can continue to be the staple of many communities across Saskatchewan. The community rink affordability grant was widely accessed by municipalities and local non-profit rink operators across the province from 2012 to 2016.

The grant may be used to offset the cost of rink operations, minor capital upgrades, or to outfit the facility with COVID-19-related expenditures. The program will provide \$2,500 a year per indoor ice surface to help cover the cost of operating rinks in villages, towns, and cities. First Nations, schools, and non-profits are all eligible and encouraged to register for the grant. It is expected that more than 600 ice surfaces in nearly 400 communities will be eligible to receive this support. Registration for the grant will open Monday, December 14th on the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association website. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you. Is there any questions? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a few questions here for Minister Ross.

You know, certainly a very popular program in the past, many communities took advantage of it. It had a massively positive impact. It was well received. So I'm just curious if you could make any comments on why this grant was taken away in 2016 when the deficit projected was half of what it is now, and what the thinking was in determining that now was the right time to bring it back to our communities.

[16:00]

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well I'd like to thank the member for the question. I think what's relevant is that if ever there was a time for a program to be brought forward again, it's this time, because we know that so many of the rinks being closed are going to be suffering financially. And so we felt that this was a really good time to bring back a program that had been put into hiatus. And so this is, like I said, I know that we're going to have a really good, positive uptake in this program at this time.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Minister Ross. I may come back to another question on the timing of this announcement later. We'll see what we have time for.

But you know, my next main question is, I'm just curious, with three consecutive years without this program, you know, we know that would have left many rinks in many communities falling further behind with the needs. And we know, like, needs aren't going to be the same in every rink. So I'm curious, is the program that you bring forth today, is this the exact same one that was here in 2016? And was there any consideration in perhaps creating a grant with a sliding scale for funding based on the needs and the means of each community, instead of just offering the exact same grant across the board?

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Okay, previously a rink had to be open to the previous grant. The rink had to be open in order to be able to qualify. And this time, with the rinks being closed, all of them that are community non-profit rinks would have the opportunity to apply for this. Also too, it's not . . . Maybe to us we would say that it's not a huge sum, but to each and every one of those rinks, \$2,500 is going to be fairly significant.

To be able to have a sliding scale would mean that we would end up spending more time doing the administration of the program, you know, rather than making sure that the money gets out to these rinks in a timely manner. So in order to be fair and do this in a prompt, reasonable way, we've set the bar at \$2,500 per rink. And so, like I said, we are anticipating that we're going to have a substantial uptake in this program.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Minister Ross. I know we have only a limited amount of time and, well, we'll be watching that. I guess it's just my last question. You brought up the timing and this is just on my mind, like all of us. With the outbreaks that are happening, 22 have been traced to indoor hockey rinks and to curling rinks, 22 separate outbreaks. So I'm just curious, like, right now as we are encouraging more people to do outdoor activities, if there's any discussion — as you mentioned, you've made some changes this time for this particular time that we're in — about perhaps offering anything to, you know, the hundreds of outdoor rinks that people are being encouraged to enjoy more at this time.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — This program applied to indoor rinks last time. We're applying it to indoor rinks this time. The indoor rinks are the ones that are suffering extensively being closed. And as you said, yes, there has been COVID traced to it. The rinks are closed at this point in time, but that does not stop them from being able to apply for this grant. So we've ensured that all the rinks that are closed have the opportunity to apply for the \$2,500 and to be able to use it to the best of their abilities within their specific ice surface.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Tourism Saskatchewan
Vote 88**

Subvote (TR01)

The Chair: — Thank you. We will now consider vote 88, Tourism Saskatchewan. Tourism Saskatchewan subvote (TR01). I invite Minister Harrison to introduce their officials.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. And my officials will be joining me shortly here. Mary Taylor-Ash, the CEO [chief executive officer] of Tourism Saskatchewan, Mary's just entering the Chamber.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought tourism in Saskatchewan to a standstill in 2020 and caused major shifts in marketing and support for industry. It's estimated that under a best-case scenario, Saskatchewan's tourism industry may suffer losses of over \$700 million in visitor spending by January 2021. Destination Canada predicts that travel will not recover to 2019 levels until 2023. This is also a best-case example based on borders reopening next year.

According to Tourism Saskatchewan's economic model, the tourism industry will record lost labour income in the range of 230 to \$607 million in 2020. Saskatchewan's outfitting industry contributes over \$120 million to the provincial economy annually. The COVID-19 pandemic and closures of the Canada-US border have really hurt this industry. And I'm likely going to have more to say on this in the future, but I can assure this Chamber and members that this is going to be a major focus of my time again, having the honour of being Minister Responsible for Tourism.

American hunters and anglers make up the bulk of outfitting consumers in Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Commission of Professional Outfitters states that nearly all outfitting revenue for 2020 will be lost. Over 2,000 jobs have been affected. Many of these businesses are family-owned and operated and the sole source of income. The majority of outfitters in Saskatchewan did not open this year, and there's a strong possibility that some may close for good. It's impossible to fully gauge the long-term effects of COVID-19 on the tourism industry.

The Government of Saskatchewan's investment in the tourism industry, announced in August, had two major components. The new Saskatchewan tourism sector support program received \$30 million for one-time emergency payments to eligible tourism operators, and that was through Trade and Export Development. Tourism Saskatchewan was issued \$5 million over and above the \$30 million to support marketing and growing the demand for tourism experiences, and that's what we're here talking about today.

Tourism Saskatchewan allocated the \$5 million in three ways: one, 1.5 million was provided to the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association to launch a multi-channel, province-wide paid advertising campaign. The campaign is designed to stimulate short-term business for Saskatchewan accommodation properties and restaurants. And we worked very closely with that representative organization of hospitality industries in putting

that program together.

\$1.5 million was made available through Tourism Saskatchewan's marketing and event partnership program to support tourism products, services, attractions, and events. The funds enabled the creation of quality content marketing assets, and assisted with digital readiness and targeted research. \$2 million will be invested in promoting winter activities and the 2021 summer travel season to Saskatchewan residents and awareness marketing in the US to support the outfitting sector and in reaching targeted domestic markets through partnered investments with Destination Canada.

To further support the recovery of the visitor economy, Tourism Saskatchewan is working to develop a forward-thinking restart marketing strategy to chart the province's approach over the next two to three years. A broader event-specific strategy will be created with emphasis on attracting national and world-class events, conventions, and trade shows. I'm happy to respond to queries from the opposition. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Madam Chair, just again some basic questions here for the minister. Just looking for some clarifications on things. If you could just maybe explain to me the tourism sector support program. There's different levels and different thresholds for funding for events versus accommodations, and I'm just curious . . . And I know that those are kind of two different options there, whether it was an event attendance or accommodation. There's kind of different thresholds. I'm just wondering if you could explain very briefly what was the rationale for using these two different thresholds? And did you consider any other markers in determining how these funds would be disbursed?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you, thanks for the question. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know the member is a new member to the Chamber. But I will respond to the portion of the \$5 million, which is the tourism, the component of tourism sector that we're talking about here today. Of course it's supplementary estimates. We're confined; I'm confined as minister. Obviously members opposite are confined to the items before the Assembly for deliberation.

So as I said in my remarks, \$1.5 million of the 5 million will be provided to the SHHA which is the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association for a marketing campaign. And I believe members will have seen billboards up. They would have heard radio advertisements encouraging folks here in the province to take the opportunity to take advantage of the great resources we have here, right here in their own province of Saskatchewan — 1.5 million made available through the marketing and event partnership program. And that is looking to support tourism products, services, attractions, and events particularly as we move forward into the place where people are going to be able to be mobile again and come to our great province.

And \$2 million invested in promoting winter activities and the '20-21 summer travel season. And I specifically pointed to the outfitting sector in this portion, but I think there is tremendous opportunity. We really do have the best product in the entire world if you are a big-game hunter particularly. If you are a

whitetail hunter or a mule deer hunter, we have the very best hunting in the entire planet. I encourage hunters from other parts of the world, particularly from the United States, come to Saskatchewan. You're going to get a trophy buck.

Mr. Love: — Okay, we'll continue. I'm not quite sure what my newness has to do with the questions that I'm asking. But again, Minister Harrison, I'm just looking for clarification here on things so I can better understand, as a critic, the questions that I need to answer and ask moving forward.

So I'm just curious. I know that applications closed on October 1st. I'm curious, how many applications were received? Did the number of applicants exceed the expectation? And will there be any need to reopen applications before the next budget year? And again, this is specifically about the tourism sector support program.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Right. Well thank you, Madam Speaker. So with regard to the \$1.5 million that was provided under the MEPP, which is the marketing and event partnership program for 2021, I can speak to the intake. There were two intakes.

So applicants who submitted prior to the original winter deadline of February 28th, 2020 can reapply under the new guidelines. And during this intake, 58 applicants were successful in accessing approximately \$1.1 million.

A second intake for phase 2 for the amended program closed on November the 15th, 2020 with a record 116 applicants. And applications are currently being adjudicated, and it's expected that up to \$1.4 million in support will be provided, with agreements and payments commencing in December.

Mr. Love: — Thank you for those numbers. Just a further question for clarification. So I understand that the eligibility rules require businesses to show at least a 30 per cent reduction in their income compared to either 2019 or 2018.

But I'm thinking, you know . . . So, Mr. Harrison, you brought up outfitters, and as you mentioned their business almost completely dried up, you know, those that rely on out-of-province or out-of-country travellers and visitors and clients. So I'm just curious, is there any recourse available for businesses that will lose much more than 30 per cent? Like are they eligible for greater levels of support from this government? You know, some may have lost a slice of their business, whereas others maybe lost the whole pile altogether. I'm curious if there's any recourse available for these types of businesses.

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to the broader tourism sector support program, I'm happy to respond to questions with regard to that whether it be through question period or whether we get into the main estimates next year.

What I can speak to though with regard to the marketing and event partnership program, which is one of the three elements that are before the committee right now, is that we are seeking to provide support for outfitting businesses to market their company

and market what they can do for clients into the US market particularly. And it's something, you know, I think some members opposite are aware that I'm passionate about supporting.

Our outfitting industry which really has a huge and tremendous potential going forward, suffered, you know, significant challenges this year and in some cases very, very significant challenges. But I can tell you these are resilient folks. We stepped up. We were there with supports beyond just what I'm talking about right now, which I'm happy to speak in venues where I am able to go into more detail about that. But what I can say is that through this particular allocation, this is one part of the pie and one part of the support system that we have in place for our outfitters who really are the best in the world, who are offering the best product in the world. And this is going to be an increasingly important industry as we go forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Love: — Okay. My final question, Madam Chair. So, Mr. Harrison, I hear you wanting to focus this discussion much on the estimates related to marketing, especially to outfitters, and you know, I fully understand your desire to focus on that. I'm just, I'm curious, as far as the timeline goes . . . So you've discussed wanting to market to American clients and I'm curious how much money has Tourism Saskatchewan spent on advertising to out-of-province markets during the pandemic? Or is this something that you're planning for? And at what time will you feel like it's safe to start advertising for international visitors to return? What will the benchmarks need to be to say it's now good for international visitors to come here?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would just say that I'm happy to get into all of those details. If we were in the main estimates, I would be thrilled to go in. I'm constrained though as you know, Madam Speaker, as the minister, to speaking to the matters that are specifically before the Committee of Finance.

So what I can say though is as far as our advertising campaign and our partnership with the Hotel and Hospitality Association, that marketing campaign was aimed very much domestically within the province, because of obvious reasons with respect to the inability to travel internationally, and the guideline to limit interprovincial travel unless necessary. So that advertising campaign, in conjunction with the Hotel and Hospitality Association, \$1.5 million, was very much targeted at taking advantage of our great resources here within the province by people who live in Saskatchewan.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Trade and Export Development
Vote 90**

Subvote (TE05)

The Chair: — Thank you. The next item is vote 90, Trade and Export Development, Saskatchewan economic recovery rebate (TE05). I invite Minister Harrison to introduce their officials.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — All right thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to be here today to discuss supplementary estimates

for the Ministry of Trade and Export Development. And I'll introduce my one official here from Trade and Export. And Minister Morgan will have the opportunity to speak following me, and he will introduce his officials from SaskPower. So I have Jodi Banks behind me, my acting deputy minister, and also Richard Davis, chief of staff.

During the election in October, we made a number of important commitments to help Saskatchewan families and businesses recover from the impacts of the global pandemic. The announcement regarding the 10 per cent SaskPower rebate fulfills one of the commitments made. The program is estimated to cost \$262 million in total, and will be funded by the General Revenue Fund through the Ministry of Trade and Export Development. This includes 87.2 million for this current fiscal year which we are to discuss today.

The Ministry of Trade and Export Development is delivering this rebate as a grant to SaskPower who will then provide the rebate to their customers. Government committed to the rebate being cost neutral for SaskPower. As such the government is flowing this money through the General Revenue Fund and using the Saskatchewan economic and co-operative development Act to flow money through SaskPower to their customers. And with that, I will turn it over to my colleague, Minister Morgan.

The Chair: — I recognize Minister Morgan.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to be here today to discuss the Saskatchewan economic recovery rebate. With me today are Troy King, SaskPower vice-president, finance and business performance, and CFO [chief financial officer]; Scott Chomos, SaskPower director, business planning and rate design; Cole Goertz, SaskPower management of government relations; and my chief of staff, Jared Dunlop.

As Minister Harrison explained, this 10 per cent rebate on power bills will be delivered by SaskPower through a grant from the Ministry of Trade and Export. The rebate will apply to the electrical charges section of customers' bills which includes the basic monthly charge, energy charge, and demand charge. It does not apply to GST [goods and services tax], PST [provincial sales tax], municipal surcharge, federal carbon tax, or other charges such as connect fees or late payment charges.

The Saskatchewan economic recovery rebate will help everyone get through this pandemic, including individuals, families, and businesses. Madam Chair, I look forward to answering the questions from the committee and from the members.

The Chair: — Were you going to stay sitting?

An Hon. Member: — If that's okay. I can stand if you like.

The Chair: — That's fine. I see you have the baby. I recognize the member from Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Madam Chair. And thanks to the members opposite for the indulgence, and apologies for the baby. And thank you to the minister for introducing the individuals from SaskPower who are here today and welcome.

My first question is just a really basic, I hope, yes or no question

just to make sure I understand fully. The 10 per cent rebate is being applied evenly across the board?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Yes, that's correct, to all businesses, all individuals. Every account will see that, so yes.

Ms. A. Young: — Okay, perfect. Thank you very much. And my next question is, I'm wondering if someone is able to identify the top 10, I suppose, largest consumers or top 10 largest customers. I guess what I'm looking for is the biggest consumers of power in the province, specifically private as opposed to a public sector entity like the education sector or the General Hospital here in Regina, for example.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Madam Chair, that's information that would be confidential information. The ratepayers protect their information. We wouldn't disclose an individual's bills and we wouldn't disclose a corporate entity. I mean the members opposite may have some sense of who they might be, but we would never release the size of a bill or the consumption of any individual or group entity at all.

The Chair: — I'd caution the member to remember it's supplementary estimates, to try and be specific. Thank you.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you. I promise it is related, and I am building to a point, I hope.

So one other question just for clarification. My understanding is that industrial energy rates here in Saskatchewan are negotiated directly with, say, a large industrial consumer as opposed to being publicly published as they would be in, I believe, Alberta. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Madam Chair, Mr. King will answer that question.

Mr. King: — Thank you . . . [inaudible] . . . published rates. We only have a couple customers that are on negotiated contract. But beyond that, almost all customers are on published rates.

Ms. A. Young: — Okay, great. Thank you. I suppose what I'm building to is a question just generally about how this rebate is being applied. Certainly I have no concerns with this going to small businesses, to families, to farmers. But my concern with this spending is that larger industrial consumers — and I can, you know, speculate as to who those would be — would potentially be seeing tens of millions of dollars with this 10 per cent applied evenly, whereas a business such as mine might be seeing . . . You know, my average power bill at my business is about 400 bucks a month, so I'd be looking at, you know, approximately \$500 a year. And I'm just, I guess, curious if there's any comment to be offered on how equitably this is being applied to different levels of consumers.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Ten per cent is uniform applied and the more a consumer uses, the greater the 10 per cent is. If you look at, for example, school boards across the province . . . You were a school board trustee and you would certainly know what the consumption levels might be, and so there's certainly those users would be more. There was no intent to eliminate any particular entity because they were of a certain size or not of a certain size, because the most equitable way of applying this was a straight 10

per cent, and this applied to all users.

Ms. A. Young: — Is the minister able to offer comment or do we know whether any of that rebate money — again specifically I'm thinking of the larger consumers — would necessarily be coming back into Saskatchewan? I understand, you know, the premise that business drives business and having more money in the economy will benefit us all. But I guess I'm curious, when we look at say some of those bigger energy consumers whether those potential millions of dollars that are now being just directly rebated back would perhaps be accompanied with, you know, jobs that are staying in Saskatchewan or if there was any kind of discussion along those lines.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Madam Chair, I can tell the members that this was for the purpose of trying to help businesses and individuals get through the COVID pandemic. The reduction in the bill is 10 per cent applied there. We have chosen to do this through the GRF [General Revenue Fund] so it does not impose an unnecessary hardship on our Crown corporations, which are of course, they're something that are part of the fabric of this province. But we have not imposed conditions on the users or the customers that you have to use it for this or for that, because it's a straight 10 per cent reduction on the consumption on the bill.

Clearly the vast majority of the entities that carry on in our province have got deep Saskatchewan roots, whether it be a school board or an automobile dealership or cheese store, whatever. These are businesses that are based here and some of the larger ones may have ownership that is outside of them, but they certainly spend money here. Most of them have got significant payrolls here. They pay PST to our province. They pay payroll here. They pay payroll taxes with the source deductions. They pay WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] that stays in the province. So a large amount of the money that those businesses pay is within the province.

But I would say this, Madam Chair: this has been a difficult and challenging time for the businesses and the individuals in our province. So we're not saying to these businesses, oh here's a bonus for you. Most of these people aren't thinking of bonuses right now. A lot of these businesses are thinking of, what is it going to take to survive? What can they do to try and maintain a payroll? If you're a restaurant or in the hospitality sector, you've got major challenges in trying to do it.

[16:30]

So that was the purpose of this, and our expectation is that that money will be spent as the businesses would, and we did not impose a restriction on them. These are businesses that will know how to do it, the same way that an individual that's got a home, a cottage, whatever else, we'll use the same logic with them. We're not saying to those people, you must do this or you have to buy energy-efficient windows. We're just saying we know it's been a challenging time, we thank you for the work, the commitment that you've put in as citizens, and know that our citizens and our businesses will need this and will use this.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you to the minister for that. And I'm not . . . I mean, I guess on one hand, of course I appreciate what he's saying. I'm not trying to get into a debate over this because I recognize this is supplementary estimates, but when we do look

at those millions of dollars . . . And I'm thinking specifically of some of the communities that might be home to those larger industrial consumers who would be seeing millions or potentially tens of millions of dollars in rebate money coming back into them.

I guess I'm just wondering if there was any contemplation of how that money might have been better deployed, whether in, you know, local economic development opportunities, increased jobs, or heck, you know, writing the good people of Weyburn a bonus cheque for whatever. I'm just speculating on other uses for the money, which is probably not a good use of my time, but I guess I'm just curious with those huge sums of money potentially on the table.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Well the individual customers will certainly need and will use their benefit from this money. Larger customers will also need it. You make reference to the businesses that carry on in our province. We know that we try to provide our businesses with as much of a competitive edge as we possibly can. The labour force that we have in Saskatchewan is well-educated, make major commitments to their employers. We're glad that they're there, but we want those businesses, whether they're large or whether they're small. But if they come here from out of province to build a mine, build a manufacturing plant, they hire people, they pay taxes, and we're not about to say to those people, we think you don't deserve this or whatever else.

Everybody's gone through the pandemic together and I think it's one of the things that we should take a little bit of pride in, is how the Saskatchewan people have demonstrated an amazing amount of resilience. We're certainly going through a challenging time with the pandemic right now, as all of the provinces are, and certainly the States. We look to North Dakota whose infection rate is far higher than it is here. They chose not to do some of the earlier stages that we did.

But it appears that no matter what people have done or what governments have done, whether they've flattened the curve, whether they've delayed it, whether they've clamped down, invariably the numbers creep up as soon as you lift restrictions. We're hoping that what we've done now maintains the level that we're at or is able to reduce it. And we will work with Dr. Shahab, get the best . . . And we're hopeful that the vaccine is in place fairly soon and that we can have a different kind of 2021 than we had in 2020.

And I think you have been a school board trustee, and I'm well aware of the challenges that we worked with teachers. When I was door knocking, I certainly heard from people that were teachers, who were parents, and those people had major concerns at the end of August, beginning of September. A few weeks after that the return-to-school program appeared to work out remarkably well, and I'll give credit to the teachers and the school board trustees and the boards for doing great pieces of work on keeping that operational and getting so that the parents and the students were comfortable with what was taking place. And I think we had a very high level of success with that.

And even now in our schools we've had a few hundred students that have become infected, but I think all are doing relatively well. So in the 700-plus schools in the province we have less than one infection per school on average. So I give credit and give

thanks to our professionals across the province who have worked at keeping the schools clean and classrooms safe. And I thank them for that.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Minister. I learn something new every day, and today my learning seems to be that the SaskPower rebate is primarily for the education sector which, as a proud former school board trustee, I'm glad to hear. So thank you for that.

But seriously, I guess circling back to power consumption, you know, you spoke about COVID-19. And I'm curious, a question for you or your officials, whether you're able to offer any comment on fluctuations in power consumption and patterns of usage due to the pandemic. I don't want to speculate but, you know, for example, I'd assume people working from home may potentially be leaning to increased residential power bills. So that's just to give you some context for kind of the direction of my question.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I don't think it's something that would be within the scope of where we're at for estimates, you know, whether there's a shift between one or the other. What this is, the purpose of the estimates is to try and give rationale for the 10 per cent rebate across the province, and I've given that. And I think that's certainly where we're at on things.

The Chair: — Does the member have any questions relevant to supplementary estimates?

Ms. A. Young: — Yes, I would propose that this is relevant. My intention, again, in asking is related to the 10 per cent rebate. And if say, for example, residential consumption is going up but say curtailed sectors of the economy, their power consumption is going down, I'm just curious if those patterns are something of which the officials would be aware or able to offer comment on.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — The effective time period for the rebate is December 1st to November 30th of 2021. So we don't know what the consumption will be during that period of time, or whether there's a shift from one level to another, one's gone up, one's gone down. You know, we've indicated what the overall estimate is, and that's sort of where we're at. And I don't think we're in a position, 10 or 11 days into it, to try and speculate as to how it would be broken down.

Ms. A. Young: — Okay. Thank you. So I understand we're not kind of projecting or speculating in terms of any patterns that we've seen over the past year going forward. That's fine. I just wanted to ask.

Is there anyone able to offer any comment on whether there has been a decrease in consumption of key accounts, and what this may look like going forward?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — No, we don't have any information that we're able to provide or willing to provide on that.

The Chair: — If the member doesn't have any relevant supplementary estimate questions, I think in the essence of time, we'll have to move on. Thank you very much.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Education
Vote 5**

Subvote (ED03)

The Chair: — The next item is vote 5, Education, K-12 education, subvote (ED03). I invite Minister Duncan to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to the members. We appreciate the opportunity to be here today to address the additional funding required by the Ministry of Education in order to provide important support for students, families, and the education sector in Saskatchewan.

And to answer the committee's questions, with me I have Deputy Minister Donna Johnson; Acting Assistant Deputy Minister Rory Jensen; Angela Chobanik, executive director of education funding; and Kathy Deck, acting executive director of corporate services; and Mitch Graw, my chief of staff.

Planning for the reopening of schools in 2020 has been unprecedented in our province's history. School divisions have been working closely with their local medical health officers to implement their local division and school-level plans based on the advice of the chief medical health officer.

In August of 2020 the Government of Saskatchewan announced \$40 million to support the Saskatchewan safe schools plan, providing funding for additional costs related to ensuring the safety of students and staff throughout the pandemic. The Government of Canada subsequently committed an additional 74.9 million to our province to support the reopening of schools for the 2020-21 year. These amounts are in addition to the \$40 million of savings identified by school divisions from the suspension of classes in the spring.

Cabinet approved the 40 million from the provincial COVID-19 contingency fund subsequent to the passing of the 2020-2021 budget. The 40 million, new one-time appropriation was provided by special warrant on September 2nd, 2020. Of this, 30 million is allocated to the Ministry of Finance to flow grants to the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] sector, including school divisions, historical high schools, and qualified independent schools. Funds are accessed by application to the Ministry of Education. The remaining 10 million is allocated to the Ministry of Education for central procurement of masks, PPE [personal protective equipment], and other COVID-19 related supplies for the K to 12 education system. There is approximately 155 million available to support the education sector in ensuring the safety of students and staff throughout the pandemic.

On September 8th the Government of Saskatchewan announced \$51 million in approved funding for classrooms for emergent, one-time expenses associated with a safe return to school. Of the 51 million approved, 41 million comes from the province and federal funding; 10 million represents the expenditure of the remaining school division savings.

In the first round of applications, 24 of the 27 school divisions received the full amount of eligible funding that they requested.

In total, the following funding has been approved for school divisions: \$19.1 million for sanitation including 191 staff; 6 million for equipment and furniture; 13.2 million for supports for immunocompromised students, which includes 150 staff and teachers; 9.5 million for additional distance learning capacity, which includes 102 teachers and staff; and 4 million for technology upgrades.

The latest intake for funding applications was on December 1st. School divisions and independent schools have submitted applications requesting additional funding to support costs related to the pandemic. These applications are currently being reviewed and will be communicated to all the organizations in the near future. In addition to the funding provided to the school divisions, 3.5 million has been used for centrally purchased masks and other COVID-related supplies.

As we move forward in 2020-21, our efforts will continue to focus on the safety of the students and the staff. The Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring that school divisions have the funds that they require to ensure safety in the K to 12 sector. And with that, Madam Chair, I'd be pleased to take the committee's questions. Thank you.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the minister for your opening comments. I welcome your officials here this evening and thank them for joining us. Congratulations to the new deputy minister on your appointment as well.

Minister, so I think you did answer some of my initial questions just in terms of the numbers that we were arriving at here. So what is represented here with vote 5 and vote 18, the 105 flowing through Finance and the 10 million flowing through the Ministry of Education, is that \$40 million that was previously announced by the province in addition to that 75 million from the federal government? I'm just looking for a nod.

How much of those funds have already flowed to school divisions, and how much will be flowing to school divisions with this December 1st allocation?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well thank you, Madam Chair, for the question . . . to the member for the question. Forty-one million dollars was approved and provided to the school divisions through phase 1.

Ms. Beck: — All right. Thank you, Minister. So \$41 million was approved. I recall from that September 8th news release that there was \$64 million yet to be released in this segment of the funds. I'm trying not to ask all of the questions all at once. Who will be adjudicating that? And has the criteria changed from the initial allocation of those funds?

[16:45]

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you to the member for the question. So the criteria is the same as it was for the first phase, as it will be for the second phase. The Ministry of Education takes the applications, makes recommendations to me, and then I ultimately make the recommendations to government in terms of

approving those applications. So within that eligibility, that is the criteria that's already been established through the first phase.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. The reason that I asked that particular question is this: I think when the funds were initially allocated to schools, there maybe was a little more emphasis on transmission through surfaces. And there was a lot of attention paid to spraying down surfaces and cleaning, extra cleaning.

What we've come to know, or in layman's terms — certainly I'm not an expert — is that there's more of a concern about aerosol transmissions and droplet transmissions in schools.

So I guess going back to the reasons for the criteria, maybe explaining why this wasn't changed. And also especially given that we're now in, you know, winter months, was there any consideration for, you know, air purifiers or HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] systems or things like that? They really seem to be more troublesome for transmission.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I want to thank the member for her question. I would just say a couple of comments to that. First, I think the theme or the category of sanitation can include a lot of things. And so while there probably was more of a focus on things like you've mentioned in terms of sanitation of desktops, tabletops, etc., the first phase did include applications for things like air purification, filters, such as that. So that was always a part of the criteria. And I would say that we have seen similar types of requests as a part of phase 2 as well.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. One of the decisions that appeared to have been made, or was made, was not to provide additional allocations for substitute and casual staff. I'm just wondering . . . I know that school divisions are already seeing a marked increase in their costs for those subs and casual staff. I'm wondering if school divisions can expect any support with this new funding for those costs.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Madam Chair, I want to thank the member for her question. And certainly this an area that we've been working very closely with school divisions on. We have used a three-year average as a typical year, as a baseline, to establish what the expectation is in terms of sub costs, understanding that it likely is going to be significantly higher this year. And so I think through the second phase of the COVID response dollars that we've set aside, you know, we'll likely see some dollars provided for that, and if we do a third phase as well. So we've indicated to school divisions that we fully expect that sub costs will be higher than they have been in past, and that we will be providing dollars to meet those needs.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. I'm encouraged to hear that. I would look forward to more details about that, and I'm sure that school divisions would as well, of course. There are some school divisions that have moved, not solely for that reason, but largely due to that reason — the inability to hire staff, inaccessibility of substitutes, and the increased sub costs — have moved to online learning at least temporarily.

Adjacent to that, not in the K to 12 sector but I think something that is significant especially for families that I'm hearing from this week, is now with that decision to move to online learning for a number of school divisions around the province, that's

putting additional pressures on the early learning and child care centres in the province. I've heard nothing in the supplemental estimates about increased support for those providers in the province, even though I know that they've had a decrease in revenue and an increase in their costs now in uptake in the need for those spaces. I'm just wondering if those folks can count on some support with this allocation.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. To the member, thank you for the question. And I appreciate the concern that the member raises, and I know that we had a brief discussion about this at the end of, I think after question period or after the vote this afternoon. That concern wouldn't be specifically addressed with these supplementary estimates.

Ms. Beck: — Is there any allocation that would . . . Within the supplementary estimates that we're discussing today, is there any allocation to support it, those additional costs of . . . Can child care providers expect any additional funds to help them meet the needs that they're experiencing today?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and to the member, not through these supplementary estimates.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. I'm just looking for the numbers. In the news release from September, there was an indication that there were projected 643 additional staff to be hired within the education sector, the bulk of those coming from the contingency fund dollars, but also 200 from the allocation from the June budget. I'm just wondering of that 643, how many additional staff have been hired? And what are the number of FTEs? And what are the classifications of those folks who've been hired?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the member for the question. I'll just say first off I won't be able to provide at this point a classification of all the individuals that would have been hired through the dollars that were provided. We can certainly endeavour to try to provide that information but we don't have all of the classifications for all those individuals.

What I can say is that as a part of the application for phase 2, school divisions had to report, essentially, their outcomes on phase 1 in terms of the application dollars and, you know, we wanted to make sure that they were, you know, obviously using the dollars for what they had indicated that they were going to. And it's my understanding from officials that in almost every case, school divisions that indicated that they would be hiring additional individuals have hired those positions.

And what I'm told is the handful of cases that that hasn't been the case, for the most part because school divisions were basing their applications in phase 1 on estimates, in many cases they overestimated the number of people that they were going to require. And so for the vast majority of the applications, the school divisions did hire the individuals that they had asked for.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd take a rough estimate of the numbers from the applications that you received in September. How many additional staff were hired?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. And to the

member, in terms of a rough estimate, over 400 of the positions were hired by the school divisions based on the requests in the applications that they asked for. So I think if you total up that news release, it's somewhere in the neighbourhood of about 450 that they applied for. And they have hired well over 400 of those positions.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. Just an indication with your head, yes or no, would be sufficient, but I guess I could ask the question. Those are through all classifications? And are these FTEs or these include . . . Yes, okay. The minister is indicating yes. Thank you.

[17:00]

I think adjacent to that question, and a question that I did have, was around the September 30ths, which now that I understand we have a new term for them. They'll be the January 29ths in terms of school attendance and getting in the enrolment numbers to the ministry.

I'm hearing some things anecdotally, but I'm just wondering what indication you have in terms of the number of students attending in-person classes in the province right now, and where that meets with what was estimated in the spring with the budget. How many students are online? How many students are home-schooled? And how many students do we not know exactly where they're being schooled right now?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for the question. So as the member has indicated, the January 29th, 2021 is when we have pushed back the date for the normal enrolment count. Just generally speaking, it's about 91 per cent of students are in-class learning, about 7 per cent are online, and about 2 per cent would be considered home-schooled, home-based schooling.

Ms. Beck: — Minister, we know that in normal years — and I think we all have well canvassed we're not in one of those — we sometimes have adjustments at mid-year based on enrolment. I've had a few different messages. I'm just looking at the news release from September 30th in front of me right now promising some level of stability regardless of the actual enrolment.

So I'm wondering today if you can tell me if there are any plans. I know that there are plans to get \$64 million out the door to divisions to help with this next phase of learning through this pandemic. I'm wondering if there are any other considerations being made for adjusting between school divisions based on enrolment; particularly, will there be clawbacks in cases where enrolments have dropped?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for her question. I guess I would just say that if there are any changes based on enrolment, they wouldn't be done through supplementary estimates. But I can say to the member that certainly we're working very hard to get the next tranche of dollars out the door as it relates to the COVID funding for school divisions, and we'll be making a decision. You know, I can't give a date at this point, but we'll be making a decision based with respect to the enrolment issue that she speaks about.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. I guess the next question that

I have is with regard to the decision not to provide really additional, meaningful support to reduce class sizes and to reduce those cohorts within school divisions. I understand that transmission rates within schools have been low. However close contacts within schools have been very high and have had a lot of disruption too as we've seen teachers' families, casual staff's families, and the families of the students in the classroom.

I'm wondering if with this new allocation and given the rates of such high transmission in many communities, is there additional consideration being placed towards keeping those cohorts tight, reducing class sizes further within schools so that we can keep transmission low and get out of this pandemic as quickly and safely as possible?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for her question. I would just say as it relates to the supplementary estimates, what we look to do is to work with school divisions to identify the needs that they've identified through their applications, fund them as best we can, certainly trusting that they know best how to use the additional dollars that we've provided. So I would just say that we are working hard to provide, in this case, what could be up to \$155 million in addition to their dollars that were allocated as a part of the budget. And you know, I will trust the school divisions to make wise decisions based on those dollars that are available.

Ms. Beck: — Minister, just to clarify your answer there: is the indication then that the reason that school divisions didn't apply for additional staff to reduce class sizes is because they looked at that and deemed that that wasn't necessary in this situation? That's different than what I'm hearing, but I'm just looking for clarification from you.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and to the member, too, and thank you for her question. No, I would just say that as we have seen through phase 1 of the application, school divisions in some cases did provide for additional dollars to provide for additional staff including in-classroom supports. And so we have funded well over, I think, 200 positions as a part of the funding that's been required. You know, I think that that will help to alleviate some of the challenges.

But you know, I certainly know that school divisions are working with not only Dr. Shahab but also their local health officials to try to make the best of obviously a very challenging situation for everyone. Is that going to alleviate all of the issues that are out there that I think the member is concerned about? It likely won't, but it certainly is providing additional support in these challenging times for teachers, for students, and for the school divisions.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. Part of the reason I want to, you know, canvass this a little bit is some of what I'm hearing about what's going on right now in schools. You know, we've canvassed the shortages of subs, but even within buildings right now you have staff who are out, administrators doing contact tracing. You have LRTs [learning resource teacher] and teacher-librarians who are teaching in classrooms because they don't have enough staff. So not only are those things problematic but the roles, you know, the teacher-librarians and the LRTs normally aren't taking on supporting children who are falling behind. That's an issue as well.

I'm wondering if it's in this supplemental allocation that we're going to start to see some additional supports for those kids who have already fallen behind with the gap in learning and the disruption of learning. Are those kids going to have to wait longer in order to receive some of those additional supports? This is an issue that is coming up in this province. And lest you think I'm just picking on the new minister, this is an issue that's been brought up in *The Globe and Mail*, that this is something that provinces are dealing with right across the country and most likely across the world.

To wrap back and put my question more succinctly, in this \$64 million will there be some allocation for additional supports to help catch up those kids who are already falling behind?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for her question. I'll just, because I know I think we're probably running out of time . . . I think I know that member well enough that there's usually more questions than there is time. So I'll try to get as quickly to my answers as possible.

I would just say that, you know, as what we see through the first phase of the funding that has been provided through the COVID funding for school divisions, obviously school divisions were focused on not only ensuring that there were safe environments — and we've already had a discussion about sanitation — but also significant supports. I think over \$20 million was provided to help students, for example, in remote learning, transitioning to remote learning.

So I think school divisions have been cognizant of concerns about the disruption of education during a pandemic. And we wanted to ensure that they are able to provide the supports, not just teachers but also support staff, technology, to ensure that there is as little gap as possible during a school year in the midst of a pandemic. So I understand where the member is coming from in terms of her question. I think everybody is going to be interested to see how our kids do throughout all this, and I'm included in that. As the member knows, I have a youngster in grade 1.

[17:15]

And so you know, I think as we move through this year and as school divisions make adjustments as they need to make adjustments, and if we're all as individuals concerned and interested in the sector, I think we're all going to be watching how our kids do through a pandemic school year.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Minister. I'm going to go at it one more time, and I know that this is . . . I raise this in earnest, Minister, because I think we know how important especially those early years are for kids. And if there are gaps already — and you know, we've gone through a pandemic — it's going to take some additional allocation for those young folks to catch up. And those kids who would need just a little extra support, that's going to have to be there and if it's not in this allocation, then it's going to have to be in next year's allocation. But I just wanted to highlight it because I do think that it is something that can't really wait until the vaccine is fully out there or we're going to, you know, get further and further behind with those young ones and we don't want that to happen.

I wanted to go back and clarify, Minister, the question about the FTEs that were hired with the additional funds back in September. You indicated that there were 400 FTEs through all classifications. And then when I was asking a question about reduced class sizes, you mentioned a number of 200 staff. So my assumption, and I'm going to ask you about that, is it 200 teachers and then 200 other classifications or have I gotten that wrong?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. And I want to thank the member for her question. And certainly I hope she didn't take from my last answer that I question her earnestness in the question. I do, I do . . . I certainly don't.

So clarification in terms of the positions. So over 400 FTEs have been hired through the first phase. So that's a mix of teachers, in-class support staff, custodians, etc. So that's the kind of, the highest or the overall number. Of that, approximately 200 are teachers or support-for-learning positions inside the schools, inside the classrooms. And that's on top of the roughly 200 positions that were funded through the spring budget. And that would be a combination of teachers, support-for-learning positions in the classroom as well. So it's 400 was from the COVID dollars. Of that about 200 are teachers and EAs [educational assistant], etc. And then that's on top of the 200 positions that would have been funded through the budget process.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you. Thank you, Minister. No, I wasn't taking offence to your answer at all. I just wanted to put a fine point on that particular concern. I have a few questions I'm going to ask, try to ask really quickly. One is particular to a concern, I think, in urban centres and that is around some of the efficiencies that have been asked of busing. So normally . . . I mean I understand that when you're trying to keep cohorts together, not only are you mixing cohorts on a bus within the school, but you're sometimes mixing two schools on a bus. I'm just wondering if any of the supplemental funding has gone to deal with increased busing costs and if there is any consideration for increasing that amount, given what we see with transmissions where maybe one school has transmission or has, rather, COVID cases and the other doesn't, but they're on the same bus.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well thank you, Madam Chair, and to the member for her question. Through the supplementary estimates, through phase 1 of the funding that has been provided, there has been no additional funding provided for transportation. That's largely as a result of the work that had been done prior to the school year in looking at the safe transportation of students, based on the advice of the school divisions working with their local public health officers as well as Dr. Shahab's office.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you for that answer, Minister. I guess I wonder, you know, given circumstances, of course we all know more now than we did back in September. I'm just curious about two things. I guess I'll ask this question: when school boards are invited to apply for this funding, are they given an amount that they're able to ask for or is it wide open, is the first. And the second is, what sort of material changes are you seeing in terms of the kind of things that school divisions are asking for with this second group of money that's different from what they were asking for back in September, back in August?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for the question. On the first part of the question, there was no cap that was put on school divisions in terms of their applications, what they could apply for, the amount that they could apply for.

With respect to what we're seeing in terms of the first phase compared to the second phase, I think the first phase there was a lot of emphasis by school boards on sanitation as well as FTEs particularly related to be able to deliver remote learning. We're still seeing applications in phase 2 for sanitation. Obviously it's a consumable product, and so you know, what they've run out of in terms of the actual product, there'll be requirements for more of that.

But I think the second phase is likely going to be characterized with more asks for equipment, so both in terms of being able to help deliver technology, remote learning to students. So I think there has been a focus on that as well as equipment, furniture, for example, more front-facing desks for students that may be in a learning environment where they're at tables. So we're seeing more requests for things like that.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the minister and your officials. I think I've come to my agreed-upon time here so I sincerely thank you. I know these are not easy times, and I really thank you for the work that you've done and for coming here to answer questions this evening.

The Chair: — The last item is vote 32. I think we'll just take a brief minute for the officials to get settled.

[17:30]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Health
Vote 32**

Subvotes (HE03) and (HE04)

The Chair: — The last item is vote 32 in Health. If an official stands up, just please state your name and then answer the question if the minister doesn't. Saskatchewan health, subvote (HE03) and provincial health services and support, subvote (HE04). I will invite Minister Merriman to introduce his officials please.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight. Again I thank you, Madam Chair, on behalf of the Ministry of Health and our partner agencies including the Saskatchewan Health Authority. I'd like to introduce some of my officials that are here today in attendance. From the Ministry of Health we have Max Hendricks, deputy minister. In attendance we also have Scott Livingstone, CEO of the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

COVID-19 has had a devastating and traumatic impact across many countries, including Canada. Currently Saskatchewan is experiencing an escalating situation due to COVID-19. Our leadership must continue to do everything available to protect Saskatchewan people, and we expect Saskatchewan's citizens to continue to take personal responsibility. Beginning early in 2020

and throughout these past several months, the Ministry of Health has closely collaborated with the federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts, the SHA, and many other partners to plan for, respond, and react as effectively as possible to COVID-19 in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan's COVID-19 high-level and comprehensive strategy integrates offensive elements that focus on public health actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as defensive measures to ensure our system will be ready to offer the care that is required. Offensive strategies refer to public health actions such as increased access to COVID-19 testing, increased levels of contact tracing, effective management of community outbreaks, and assisted self-isolation sites for vulnerable populations. The defensive component of this evolving strategy focuses on sustaining acute care capacity to meet increased demands for patient and ICU beds, while also continuing to provide essential services to non-COVID-19 patients.

The Ministry of Health and the SHA anticipate and prepared for multiple waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SHA, operating in collaboration with and under the oversight of the ministry, has developed an acute and community care strategy capacity plan, a robust COVID-19 workforce strategy, as well as a COVID-19 testing strategy to effectively manage increased demands as our case numbers change. Saskatchewan's pandemic planning continues to be informed by evolving science and evidence, along with capacity-planning models developed by provincial modelling experts.

At the mid-year point, we are forecasting \$174.8 million in additional cost pressures over budget, mainly due to pandemic-related impacts. Of this \$174.8 million, 72 has already been reported by the Ministry of Health in the first-quarter budget update. The 72 million was required to address COVID spending pressures.

Today I am requesting an additional 100 million in necessary funding to cover the ongoing and evolving operating cost for this pandemic. This will ensure we can continue to appropriately plan to react to situations that is constantly changing — not only the situation changing, but bringing with it new and complex issues to overcome. These additional operating costs for the health sector cover a wide range of need and increased capacity in multiple areas.

COVID-19 testing is an important tool to detect and isolate new cases, support follow-up with close contacts, slow the spread of infection, and prevent outbreaks as much as possible. COVID-19 testing capacity in Saskatchewan has significantly expanded throughout this pandemic. In September the province announced specific strategies to complete more tests. The SHA is in the process of hiring 76 full-time positions to support the labs and have already hired 50 of those staff, which are undergoing training. Saskatchewan has set a capacity target of 4,000 tests per day and offers testing to anyone, including those who are asymptomatic. This encourages more testing and better surveillance across the population.

Testing sites are located in 52 communities throughout the province. To make testing even more accessible and efficient, on-demand drive-through testing is available in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Yorkton. The province is

anticipating the introduction of its first rapid testing device over the next few weeks. This we'll use to complement existing testing platforms, including GeneXpert, already mobilized throughout the province.

Detailed contingency plans have been developed for acute and community-based health services in both rural and urban settings. Unlike the situation in the spring where we saw a sudden closure of a wide range of services, the current plan outlines a gradual response that is based on the prevalence of COVID-19 and the need to ensure the availability of both acute care services to the staff to support expanded testing and contact tracing.

Last week the SHA announced a range of service slow-downs, phased in based on the requirements of different communities, that support the requirements of our offensive and defensive surge plans. One element in the overarching plan involves field hospitals. Additional funding is required to cover the costs of the construction and set-up of the field hospitals in Regina and Saskatoon. Field hospitals were developed to provide an additional acute care capacity over and above what is available throughout our existing facilities.

The field hospitals will be ready to accommodate 125 beds in Saskatoon at the University of Saskatchewan and 184 in Regina at Evraz Place. Construction costs include mechanical, electrical, design fees, washroom facilities, and the development of a patient-area zone. Costs associated with the supplies are factored in.

There are increased payroll costs that need addressing that we have almost 570 positions to support essential HealthLine 811 services, contact tracing, testing, and assessment sites. HealthLine 811 continues to provide its traditional phone service for general health, mental health and addictions services, education, and support to Saskatchewan people. However, HealthLine 811 has taken on a very central role in the health system's COVID-19 response through screening, services, and referrals.

As an example, from June to October, weekly calls to HealthLine 811 COVID-19 screening has ranged from 2,500 calls a week to over 11,400 calls per week. As a result of the both the increased calls for the traditional HealthLine 811 service and the operational of HealthLine 811 COVID screening services, staff have increased by approximately 60 full-time positions.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the SHA has increased contact tracing resources from approximately 60 trained staff to 400. This includes public health, occupational health, infection prevention teams, public health inspectors, and other licenced health care providers.

There are also increased human resources costs for affiliate long-term care homes that must be factored in. These expenses are related to implementing the public health orders such as altered meal services and increased cleaning.

An additional 40 million is required for personal protective equipment or PPE. Saskatchewan has dedicated health care workers who provide excellent care to all residents including through this pandemic.

Funding will address the need for additional gloves, surgical procedure masks for the front line staff and patients who enter the facilities. The SHA works to establish a six-month supply of pandemic supplies.

It's our government's responsibility to ensure health care providers have appropriate PPE for the services that they are providing and our patients are safe while receiving care. The Ministry of Health worked with health sector unions and the SHA in developing and signing the joint statement of principles for protecting for the health and safety of health care workers, patients, clients, and residents. We must honour this agreement.

\$32 million is essential to cover the cost of equipment. The equipment that we need to continue reacting to the pandemic includes nearly 400 more ventilators; added critical care beds; ward hospital beds and stretchers; expanded lab testing equipment such as GeneXpert devices, incubators, and other COVID-19 testing technology receiving approvals; more patient monitoring equipment, respiratory equipment, and supplies; construction equipment and supplies for the field hospitals, including hospital beds, supply carts, oxygen tanks, IV [intravenous] poles, and vital sign monitors.

The ministry will continue to make ongoing efforts to manage COVID-19 pressures and identify opportunities for savings throughout the year; however, the health and safety of our patients and health care providers must be prioritized over the cost and expense. We must act to protect the lives of the health of our citizens during this very challenging and uncertain time.

Funding received from the safe start agreement and the government-wide health and safety contingency fund are available to help address the COVID pressures, but these funding sources do not cover everything. We need to immediately protect and care for our Saskatchewan people.

Finally, the remaining \$2.8 million of financial pressure will provide coverage to fulfill an important commitment of reducing ambulance costs for seniors under the senior citizens' ambulance assistance program. This funding will ensure Saskatchewan seniors benefit from a reduction of ambulance fees from \$275 per trip to \$135 per trip to come into effect December 14th.

As well, there will be no cost to seniors for transfers between health care facilities such as hospitals and special-care homes. Seniors will receive full coverage for these transfers under this program and will be provided the affordable health care they deserve.

Thank you for considering this request for essential funding throughout the supplementary estimate process. We are experiencing a very challenging and high-stress situation together, and I know everyone is concerned about their family and friends. The science around COVID-19 continues to evolve, and the people of Saskatchewan deserve to have access to the best preventative measures, the best care available to fight this pandemic.

I ask that we work together in providing everything possible to protect the lives of Saskatchewan people. The request for today's additional funding is an important step in the direction. We must continue to move at a very fast pace. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[17:45]

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister and for the officials for being here today as well. I did appreciate the detail of your opening remarks, Mr. Minister, in terms of breaking down some of what this spending is. When you look at an allocation and it says 174 million, we know that there are a lot of . . . There's a lot of detail in that piece. And I think we'll have some questions about where that spending is going today.

I heard you mention a whole range of topics. I can't begin to assume that they were comprehensive though. Does any of this funding go toward our mental health and addictions crisis? We know that rates of mental illness and overdose have been on the rise throughout the pandemic, and that clients are struggling with virtual appointments. So I'm just wondering what's being done to address these high rates, and if there's any of this spending that's going toward that?

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. With respect to . . .

The Chair: — Minister . . . I'll just recognize Minister Hindley.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Sure.

The Chair: — Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Okay, all right. Sorry about that.

Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for the question. You know, we've made some significant investments into mental health in this budget year, as we've talked about previously into other budget years as well. And of course with what we're seeing this year with COVID-19, that's created some challenges across the board and including with respect to the mental health services that we're offering here across Saskatchewan. And that being said, you know, we do recognize that this is a serious area for us as a government to continue to support despite the challenges that are created by COVID-19.

We've been able to continue to maintain intake services for mental health and addictions. Some of that's been done through virtual means, as we've talked about. In-person visits are available for urgent persons who are best seen in person, depending on what the situation is. Just as an example of some of the other services that have been maintained, Family Service Saskatchewan has continued to provide walk-in counselling services with options for virtual means or telephone as well if that's an option.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, I know, through a number of its branches, has continued to offer services. A number of them, I believe 10 of them around the province, have created phone lines for people to call into in their local communities. Community services such as the community recovery teams through the provincial government, those have been maintained for people with chronic and persistent mental health illness as well.

You know, I could go into some of the other areas here as well. Detox, of course, have remained open. Residential addiction treatment centres, SHA and CBO [community-based organization] are operational. Opioid therapies continue to be provided, with the note of course that with all of these services they are being now provided with increased safety measures of course, which can have an impact on the number of patients that are able to access the services.

But that being said, many of the new investments that were announced in this year's budget continue to be implemented, although sometimes at a slowed pace just because of the measures that have been required to be implemented as a result of the pandemic.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Minister Hindley. So I'm hearing a lot of ongoing operating costs in the areas of mental health and addictions. It sounds like there isn't a targeted funding in these supplementary estimates toward any new initiatives. So I think that is . . . Is that clear? And I ask this because I'm also curious about the Throne Speech announcement around mental health in schools and whether that's coming out of the Health budget or if that is coming out of the Education budget.

Madam Chair, just in the interest of time, I was wondering if I can remind the ministers that we have made special provisions that officials are allowed to address the committee here today. So if the officials just want to speak directly, they're more than welcome to do that. I don't know if they were informed of this.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think you're referring to the announcement just in the last week or so with respect to the 400,000 to be provided to the schools. That actually comes from . . . that's from the Ministry of Education's budget, and as the announcement indicated, the funding is dedicated to ensuring that each of Saskatchewan's 700-plus schools have the ability to train at least one staff member to offer mental health supports within the school. But yes, that's not part of the Ministry of Health budget but comes from Education.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you. I wasn't sure where it would be allocated. These things kind of sit on both lines.

I was interested in the minister's comments about testing. Certainly this is one of the key tools that we have in fighting the COVID pandemic and so it's encouraging to hear that some of these operating funds are going toward testing. I think we're all quite interested in the rates of testing, our ability to expand those rates. I'm curious about how many staff we have that are currently processing COVID-19 tests in each facility.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Glad to say that we have been working on our testing capacity since COVID-19 has come to Saskatchewan. We've gone from 60 people that were in the contact tracing to in and around 400. As I mentioned in my opening comments, we're in the process of hiring 76 full-time staff and 50 of those staff have already been hired and undergoing training.

We've also reached out to the federal government and got some

good folks from Statistics Canada. We've got 35 individuals from Statistics Canada helping us with that, as well as 86 individuals from the public service have come across to be able to be trained up and help us with our contact tracing. And also that we have 80 nursing students from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. So all of this combined helps us out with our contact tracing and our testing.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Minister. A lot of numbers for different roles, so I'm specifically looking for the folks who are processing the tests. So I suppose you . . . I'm trying to follow what you just said. So I think that would be under the 76 staff that you were referring to because I think you were talking about lab staff in that situation.

So with the reports that some of these staff have been hired already, what has been reported to us is that these efforts to hire lab scientists to work in the Saskatoon hospital labs have not really added any capacity to the lab system because most of the hires were already working in the lab system in other classifications. So I wonder if you can speak to that a little bit and also what the government's plan is to maintain these lab services.

[18:00]

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much for the question. From what I've been told, there is 49.6 new positions that have been allocated. There may have been a few positions that have crossed over from other areas, but these are the new positions in the new hire.

It is a challenging time right now across our country and in North America, recruiting these individuals that have a very specific capability and a very specific skill set. So we have been able to cross-train some other individuals to be able to help us in our capacity. But we also have added in shifts at the university as well as making our point-of-care testing that we have, or rapid testing that we have out there through Spartan and through Abbott and various others to be able to help out with our testing.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you. We've heard about varying numbers of unprocessed tests at the end of each day. Can you speak to, over the last week, how many tests remained unprocessed at the end of each day?

Madam Chair, I wonder if, in the interests of time, considering I asked a numbers-based question, if officials are in the process of looking for those numbers, if we could proceed with further questioning.

The Chair: — The officials are aware that they can answer questions if they wish, but we'll let the minister proceed with the questions that you've asked.

Ms. Mowat: — Just for clarification, Madam Chair, often in these situations when we're doing Health committees and they're looking for the numbers, the officials will talk to other officials and get the numbers brought up for a later point in the committee or provided when they can. Just because I asked a specific numbers-by-the-day question, it's all information that can be tabled.

The Chair: — Thank you. I'll allow the minister to respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the easy answer to this question is there's an ebb and flow to our tests. There's some days where we have no backlog and then there's some days that we do have that we catch up on on the next day.

But because we have opened up the testing to drive-through testing through multiple points, through 52 communities in our province, we have a volume of tests that could come in. It could range anywhere from 2,500 up to 4,000 tests a day. So depending on what that dictates how we are able to process that.

But what we are doing is we're continuing to work on, to make sure that we get those test results back that are a positive nature back to those individuals within 24 to 48 hours.

Ms. Mowat: — Madam Chair, so I just specifically had asked for the number of unprocessed tests each day. In light of what the minister is saying, I think I'd revise my request to include the number of overall samples that were provided that day, so that we can see what the proportion is. I think it's something that is of great importance when we're talking about testing capacity.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you. We will endeavour to get those to the committee as soon as they're available.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. For clarification, are you thinking that you will be able to get them to the committee by the end of the committee this evening, or are we talking about a future follow-up email, and if so, can you put a timeline on it please?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — I thank the member again for the question. We'll get them done as soon as they're available. The committee ends in 30 minutes. I don't think that I'll have it here by the end of the committee, but I'll endeavour to have that as soon as it's made available to me for my officials.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you to the minister. I would request, if we could put in a request on this . . . Usually we kind of agree to a specific timeline in these conversations. So I'd request a couple of working days, if that's reasonable.

We are running out of time rapidly, and I do have a great number of questions but this is a significant amount of spending. With regards to the contact tracers that were mentioned, the minister's referred a couple of times to the number 600. I wonder, we know that a number of these individuals have taken on the contact tracing . . . Or sorry, 400 — 60 to 400. A number of these individuals have taken on contact tracing in sort of an ad hoc way, so I would assume that they're not all full-time FTEs. So I wonder, how many FTEs are we talking about here?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Out of the potential 400 positions, we're continuing . . . That's why we have our surge plan, that we're actually pulling individuals in to be able help them backfill these positions. We're continuing to try to make sure that we have the right complement of people to be able to do our contact tracing. And we will continue to make sure . . . As far as the FTE positions, I don't have an exact number, but I'll endeavour to get

you that tomorrow.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that. When we talk about vaccines, there was a press conference about vaccines today. It's certainly encouraging news for us that vaccines are on the way. I know a lot of folks would like to press the fast-forward button on the rest of this until we get there. We know we still have a responsibility to provide these crucial health care services and our offensive and defensive strategy until that point in time. And I think although we know that vaccines are on the horizon, today also highlighted the fact that we're still months away from them being accessible to the general public. I have a myriad of questions about vaccine distribution, but I'll try to consolidate to one question.

So right now I'm hearing from a number of individuals across the province who are immunocompromised in some way. And they're wondering, how am I going to be considered in vaccine distribution and how can I get myself on that list or how am I going to be factored in? Is the government going to know about me?

So I think in terms of what the overall plan is, I wonder if you can speak to how vulnerable populations are going to be factored in. You know, we've seen outbreaks in our First Nations communities. I know that long-term care was addressed and I have heard that health care workers will be a priority, but I know there are a number of vulnerable populations across our province that are wondering where they fit into this.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you. It's a very good question. Certainly on the vaccines, I just have my deputy minister checking on the specific questions for people who are immune compromised.

But what I can tell you is, working with Dr. Shahab and his team and also with the federal government, we have identified, as was laid out in the vaccine presentation today, elderly residents in home care and staff, health care workers, seniors over 80, and residents of northern and remote communities are going to be prioritized.

We're still getting information, as far as I understand, about people that are immune compromised and whether the vaccine is going to be able to be used for those specific individuals. And I guess, not having a medical background, it would depend on what their ailment is and whether that ties into one specific vaccine or a multitude of different vaccines.

But what I can say is that we have a very good record in this province on vaccine distribution and uptake. We have had Dr. Shahab and his team roll out the H1N1, which was a leader in our country. And we also have had a huge uptake within child vaccines as well as our seniors.

And I believe that the number I used earlier was around 87 per cent of our residents in our long-term care were able to get vaccines on the next go-round. I'll just check with my officials and see if I can update the final answer on people with individual immune compromise.

[18:15]

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to start by acknowledging the difficulty of the road that we're on and the challenging work that we engage in. And you know, I'd like the members opposite to know that, certainly for me as I'm sure for you, that we're motivated in a sense by the challenging stories that we hear. And as elected officials we're privy to stories of heartbreak, and that we share that in common. And certainly that's what will motivate my questions this evening and moving forward as critic for seniors.

My first question is related to the supplementary estimates. If we could get just a very brief update on the exact number of cases, the number of facilities where seniors in long-term care are experiencing outbreaks, and as well if you could give a precise dollar amount that will be used from these supplementary estimates targeted towards seniors in long-term care.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much for the question.

Just to follow up on the last question, was a lot of the immune-compromised individuals are captured in that first phase of those individuals. But if there is something specific I'll have to get some more information from Dr. Shahab on, depending on the illnesses, because there's a wide variety of illnesses, and we want to make sure that if one vaccine lines up with somebody that is the best one for them with their illness that they're facing.

As far as the question on long-term care, out of the 40 affiliates and designated health care organizations, we've allocated at mid-year an additional \$18 million.

Mr. Love: — Yes, Mr. Minister. Included in my question was a requested update on the exact number of cases in long-term care and the number of facilities. I'll pause before I move forward for those numbers.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — We're just going to go get that answer. I don't know if you wanted to ask another question and then we can come back to that one.

Mr. Love: — Yes, absolutely. I appreciate that. So my next question is, of the 174.8 million in supplementary estimates . . . You did a nice job and I know that Vicki expressed her appreciation for breaking that down. I see PPE equipment, but I don't see any indication here of human resources or staffing, although the Premier seemed to indicate yesterday that recruitment of staff has already begun. So I'm wondering if you could explain if these estimates will be used to backfill ongoing human resource recruitment or if it would be expected in the coming days to staff up in long-term care facilities.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Just to clarify — and I know that the member gave me the kind of, the two signal — it was actually 18 million just for the long-term care, just to make sure that it was 18, was the additional costs. And I thought you said two, and I just wanted to clarify that.

As far as our cost, and there's a whole bunch of numbers rolled into this on the human resources side of things, it does add up to \$44 million which is our costs for compensation, also moving

people around, our cohorting, all of our operational costs, our backfilling, everything that rolls up into that. And as far as the previous question on long-term care, we have 293 active cases, 14 long-term care facility outbreaks, and 11 that are under suspected outbreaks.

Mr. Love: — I'm sorry, Minister, is there any way . . . Could you just update me again on the number of cases? I've got the facilities but not the cases. 293, is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Sorry. Yes, there's a correction on that. I just misread a little bit of the handwriting here. It's actually 253, so I apologize to the committee.

Mr. Love: — Okay. So I just want to follow up again on the question about increased staffing. So the Premier seemed to indicate again that recruitment had already begun, but there is some confusion about whether or not the election promise of 300 new hires in long-term care and home care . . . If you could just be clear here please, Minister, is that election promise, will that be waiting until March for the new fiscal year? Or is that something that has already actively begun? And if so, is that covered by supplementary estimates today?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Well I can say that we're actively recruiting these positions right now. It is something that we're forecasting for next year's budget, but if we can find the positions and plug them into the system, then we will look at putting that cost into this current year's budget.

Mr. Love: — Okay, so currently there's about 70 CCA [continuing care aid] jobs posted on the Health Careers in Saskatchewan website. So those are 70 job postings that have been there and are unfilled. So I'm curious, are these positions included in the 300 promised, or are they funded through supplementary estimates? Or are they an indication that current staffing level quotas are simply not being met in the present?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you. From what I've been told, those 70 positions are positions that are out there currently right now. This is normal turnover of staff that we're looking at. And again, I'll reiterate. If those positions, if they're . . . And everybody across the country and around the world is recruiting these positions right now, and we're trying to get as many in-house as possible. If there is an opportunity to fill these positions immediately, we will take that opportunity.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Minister. I mean certainly we're hearing the same, that these are positions that are hard to recruit. And I'm wondering in terms of like a long-term plan, like, does your ministry have a plan for how to perhaps increase funding for training and retaining these types of positions that are . . . You know, certainly what we're seeing in this pandemic is positions that are very hard to recruit.

They're well known to be underpaid, and many continuing care aids are also working second jobs. And this is not a safe scenario, where they're coming from one job in a bar or restaurant or retail into a care home, but they need to have a second job to afford life. So I'm curious, what would be the long-term plan? And again, coming back to supplementary estimates, like is there any way that you, through the wage benefit, are recognizing the underpaid and casual nature of the work force?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much. What we have done, and my officials have advised me, is we have learned a lot from what has happened with COVID-19 in our CCAs and a lot of our positions. We understand the value of cohorting, so we can have individuals kind of ready to go in a specific area. We're actively recruiting these externally, but also any time these positions are vacant and we see a large vacancy, we're working with our partners in Advanced Education to be able to increase the amount of seats that are available so we can get individuals trained up and ready to go.

Mr. Love: — Okay, so I'm just curious here, Minister. A simple nod will do. So the current commitment is to increase the number of seats in post-secondary training, to increase the capacity to hire more down the road? Is that something? I can repeat the question if that's helpful. Yes, just asking for a simple nod here just to clarify that the plan is to increase the number of seats in post-secondary training so that down the road we'll have increased capacity to hire CCAs in the future. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — What we do is we identify some positions that are out there and work with the Ministry of Advanced Education to be able to let them know that these are something that we're foreseeing as a future position within. And then the Advanced Ed does their part on their side of the coin to be able to make sure that they have the seats available, the instructors available, and the classes available for those individuals to complete those courses.

Mr. Love: — Okay, I'm going to move on to a different focus here. I'm curious, and this is something that's very pressing and obviously evolving. I'm wondering, can you explain exactly who made the decision and who funded the deployment of the Regina Fire Department to Parkside Extendicare, and if the cost is in any way included in the estimates from today?

[18:30]

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — From what I'm being told, the decision was not ours. It was Extendicare's decision to be able to do that. As far as I understand, under the contractual agreement that they have, that they would bear the costs for that. But I will inform the committee that we did have people on the ground from the SHA at the time that this had happened. We had already put our teams in place to be able to make sure that Extendicare was following all the public health guidelines. So we already had our people on the ground when that decision was made and it did come from our office.

Mr. Love: — I may come back to the exact situation at Parkside here in a moment. But just for the sake of time — and we're getting close to our limit — I'm curious about through the use of supplementary estimates and these funds that you're asking for today, if you can state precisely how will these funds be used to ensure that outbreaks like the one at Parkside are not repeated in other facilities?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — As far as the exact dollar amount for Extendicare, what we have done is we provided 40 of our affiliates dollars to be able to meet the needs and be able to supply their staff with the proper PPE. Most of the cost that is incurred within these estimates right here are in and around our contact tracing, our testing, but also included in there is dollars for

long-term care facilities. And we want to make sure that everybody has the proper access to that. So those costs are included in here for PPE.

Mr. Love: — Okay. I'm just going to come back to the situation at Parkside probably for my last question here. And I do appreciate . . . You know, you answered previously that there were folks on the ground from SHA as the decision was made to call in the fire department. But I'm curious, was there any discussion or is there an ongoing discussion of requesting from the federal government Canadian Armed Forces, reservists, to be involved with the ongoing outbreak at Parkside? And have you examined the difference in costs that will be incurred between, you know, this decision to call on the fire department, or is it simply an emergency measure that needed to be taken in the moment? Again, just any comment on ongoing discussions on calling in army reserves to Parkside.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — No, there isn't any discussions happening about calling in anybody. I'm very confident in the people at the SHA to be able to deliver this service to these individuals. That's why as soon as there is any outbreak in any specific area, the SHA has their people on the ground immediately. I'm very confident in them having the ability to be able to manage this over the next little while. That's why we've entered into a co-management agreement with Parkside for 30 days to be able to bridge them with this. And then we'll reassess at that point in time if we have to extend that.

The Chair: — All right. The time being 6:35, the discussion will be over. And I ask the officials to leave the Chamber — thank you — before we begin voting.

Seeing there is no more discussion, we will now vote on each of the votes and resolutions.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Education
Vote 5**

The Chair: — Vote 5, Education. K-12 education, subvote (ED03) in the amount of 10,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2021, the following sums for Education: \$10,000,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Finance
Vote 18**

The Chair: — Vote 18, Finance. Miscellaneous payments, subvote (FI08) in the amount of \$117,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2021, the following sums for Finance: \$117,000,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Government Relations
Vote 30**

The Chair: — Vote 30, Government Relations. Municipal relations, subvote (GR07) in the amount of 70,300,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Provincial Capital Commission, subvote (GR14) in the amount of 500,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: —

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2021, the following sums for Government Relations: \$70,800,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Health
Vote 32**

The Chair: — Vote 32, Health, Saskatchewan health services, subvote (HE03) in the amount of 172,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Provincial health services and support (HE04) in the amount of 2,800,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12

months ending March 31st, 2021, the following sums for Health: \$174,800,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Parks, Culture and Sport
Vote 27**

The Chair: — Vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport, community engagement, subvote (PC19) in the amount of 1,700,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: —

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2021, the following sums for Parks, Culture and Sport: \$1,700,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Saskatchewan Research Council
Vote 35**

The Chair: — Vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council, subvote (SR01) in the amount of \$15,500,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2021, the following sums for Saskatchewan Research Council: \$15,500,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Tourism Saskatchewan
Vote 88**

The Chair: — Vote 88, Tourism Saskatchewan, subvote (TR01) in the amount of \$5,000,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: —

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2021, the following sums for Tourism Saskatchewan: \$5,000,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Trade and Export Development
Vote 90**

The Chair: — Vote 90, Trade and Export Development, Saskatchewan economic recovery rebate, subvote (TE05) in the amount of \$87,200,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2021, the following sums for Trade and Export Development: \$87,200,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Advocate for Children and Youth
Vote 76**

The Chair: — Vote 76, Advocate for Children and Youth, subvote (CA01) in the amount of 20,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Chief Electoral Officer
Vote 34**

The Chair: — Vote 34, Chief Electoral Officer, subvote (CE01) in the amount of 5,500,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Lending and Investing Activities
Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan
Vote 151**

The Chair: — Lending and investing activities, vote 151, Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan, loans, subvote (MF01) in the amount of 30,000,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

[18:45]

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Lending and Investing Activities
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Vote 152**

The Chair: — Vote 152, Saskatchewan Power Corporation, loans, subvote (PW01) in the amount of 125,400,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates No. 1
Debt Redemption, Sinking Fund and Interest Payments
Debt Redemption
Vote 175**

The Chair: — Debt redemption, sinking fund and interest payments, vote 175, Debt Redemption, in the amount of 189,500,000. There is no vote as this is statutory.

That completes our consideration of the supplementary estimates. I would invite a member to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Committees.

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. It being past the hour of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:49.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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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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Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation

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Minister Responsible for First Nations,
Métis and Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the
Provincial Capital Commission

Hon. Paul Merriman
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Hon. Don Morgan
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Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
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Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
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Saskatchewan Water Corporation
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Hon. Jim Reiter
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
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Transportation Hub Authority

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

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

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General