

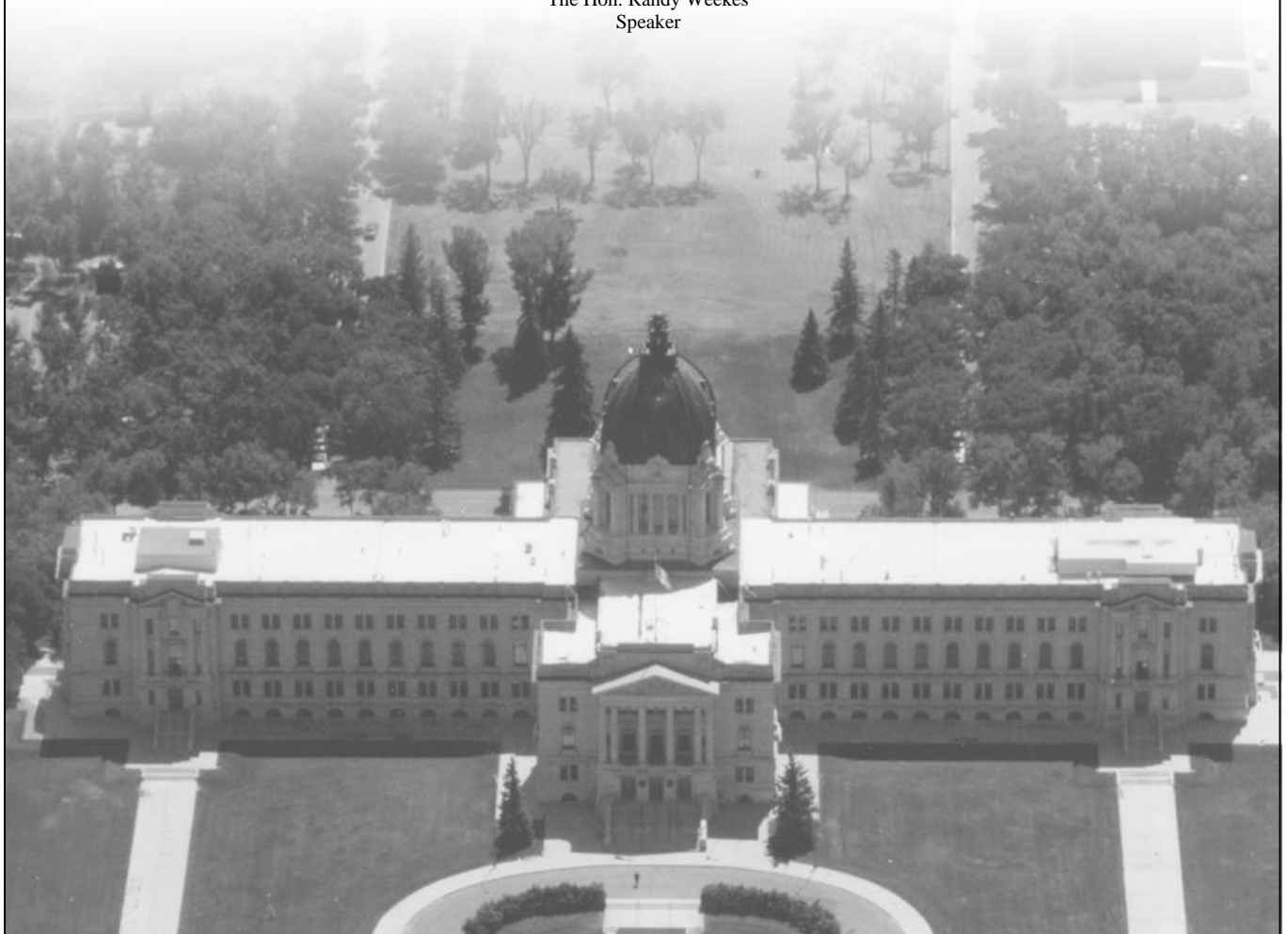
SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
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Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)	McLeod, Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
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Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Meyers, Derek — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Cockrill, Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)	Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)	Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Docherty, Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)	Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)	Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)	Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
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Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)	Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)	Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)	Skoropad, Dana — Arm River (SP)
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Harpauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Stewart, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
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Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)	Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
Kaeding, Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)	Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	
Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)	Vacant — Athabasca

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 47; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Independent (Ind.) — 1; Vacant — 1

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members, it is an enormous pleasure to welcome an amazing constituent of mine, Debbie Wisniewski, and her equally as amazing family that's seated beside her in your Speaker's gallery. We've got here on her left a granddaughter, Josie Fichel, grade 6 student from Bethune who is missing school today — so this is a replacement for school; hopefully you'll learn something very educational — and is a big fan of hockey. She's a centre who doesn't really care too much about scoring but enjoys the body contact. And I asked her if that was allowed at her age and she said, no, it's not but I still like it.

And seated on the right of Debbie here is Carla Serbu, who is from Disley. And you know, Disley, whenever I hear that name, that town, it's our Little League archrivals so kind of a couple of hairs went up on the back of my neck there. But certainly you're welcome.

So this definitely marks a special occasion, Mr. Speaker, for both of us, Ms. Wisniewski and myself, as it's her first time in this Assembly here and she's the first guest, along with her family here, that I've ever introduced in this Chamber. So, Mr. Speaker, while there's much to say about Ms. Wisniewski here today, I'm going to reserve these remarks as she will be commented on in my member's statement. So with that I ask all members to help me welcome Debbie, Carla, and Josie to their legislature.

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

Ms. A. Young: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members, it is my distinct pleasure and joy to welcome a group of 39 grade 5 students from Regina Christian academy seated in the east gallery. Hello and welcome to your legislature. I am so excited as your MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to meet with you later, answer your questions, take a photo, and see what your thoughts are on question period. So, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in welcoming these grade 5 students, their teacher, Ms. Flaman, and their parent chaperones Kevin Shellenberg and Destiny Brown to this, their legislature. Welcome.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery, I'd like to welcome Tim McMillan, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of CAPP, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, certainly not a stranger to this place as a former minister, Energy minister, Mr. Speaker, in this government. And he told me the first meeting we had that it was the best job in government, rightly.

And he's here of course at an important time, given the Prime Minister's announcement that Canada intends to cap emissions on our energy sector. Certainly we're always facing more headwinds and Tim knows this better than anyone, Mr. Speaker, so we have to keep getting our great energy story, made-in-Saskatchewan energy story out there and the great energy story in Canada. And Tim knows that too. So please join me in welcoming Mr. McMillan to our Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to welcome in your gallery as well, Austin Voss and Andrée Morier from Steel Reef. They're a midstream energy company with multiple operations and doing great things in the province of Saskatchewan. Today we announced some exciting news on Steel Reef, an anticipated capital investment in Saskatchewan of \$40 million, Mr. Speaker, and these projects will reduce venting and flaring of methane gas, create local jobs, and help grow our economy. So again please join me in welcoming our guests today to our Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming these guests to their Legislative Assembly, and particularly Steel Reef. It's always great to hear about new investment in the province. And Tim McMillan, obviously as the minister said, not a stranger to this Assembly. We had the opportunity to meet with him this morning. I think we had a very great dialogue.

Tim and I did not have any overlap in the Chamber, but we've had the opportunity to meet several times since I've been elected in 2016. It's always a joy to see him. It's great to see him again in this Chamber today. And I'd like to again ask all members to join me in welcoming all of these folks to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity as well to welcome Tim to his legislature. As the predecessor for the representative of the Lloydminster constituency, I know the strong work and advocacy he did for his constituents while he served there. And I know it's much appreciated by them and by me following there; been a tough job following in your footsteps. And I know that the work he did has strengthened the support for the party, and I'm so happy to have him here. And I want to ask everyone to join me in welcoming him to the legislature.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it is my privilege to introduce Dylan Morin, who I have spied in the gallery up yonder. He will be well known to many of you as a strong advocate in the disability community. I've had the distinct pleasure of getting to know him better as critic for disability issues. He's a student leader on the U of R [University of Regina] campus and, as I said, very active and engaged on issues impacting people living with disability in this province.

You'll find him at rallies, community events, often hanging out outside these doors and sometimes inside. And so I would ask this House to join me in giving Dylan a very warm welcome.

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to welcome a guest today. Like the member from Arm River, this is the very first guest I've welcomed in this Chamber. I'd like to welcome Edwin Wuschke. He farmed at Wapella for many years and now has retired and lives in Regina. I met him in my apartment building, Mr. Speaker, and we visited quite often for the last year since I took up abode in Regina, and I'm very glad Ed could join us and join his legislature and all of us here today.

So it's very important in these challenging times, Mr. Speaker, to have a neighbourly aspect, and Ed's appearance here is going to tie right into my speech today. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present another petition calling on the government to protect contract workers from harassment, abuse, and exploitation. I'd like to read the things that those who signed this wish us to know.

Mr. Speaker, contract workers are not protected by Saskatchewan's occupational health and safety standards. Contract workers, particularly women working in arts and culture, face a disproportionate amount of abuse and are at higher risk of exploitation, assault, and trafficking.

Mr. Speaker, language in the occupational health and safety standards needs to be updated to address mental illness. This would help contract workers targeted by harassment and abuse in the workplace. And, Mr. Speaker, other provinces' occupational health and safety standards specifically address sexual harassment in the workplace; ours currently does not.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We in the prayer that reads as follows respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to modernize occupational health and safety protections to include contract and gig workers and include comprehensive provisions on mental illness and sexual harassment in the workplace.

I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again today to present our petition for pay equity legislation. Pay equity has been pursued by Saskatchewan women for many decades, and it's sad that in 2021 women are still left fighting to ensure that equitable pay is a legislative right for women in our province.

It's time for our government to stand up for women.

The signatories would specifically like to bring to our attention the following points: Saskatchewan is one of only four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation; while *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* prohibits gender-based compensation discrimination, the complaint-driven process puts no positive obligation on employers; that while pay equity advocacy primarily seeks to address gender-based wage discrimination, it must also be mindful of ability-, age-, identity-, and race-based wage discrimination.

I'll now read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to introduce pay equity legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories for our petition today reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on my feet again today to present a petition on the Saskatchewan income support program, the new SIS program. This petition calls on the Government of Saskatchewan to restore the option to directly pay rent and utilities on behalf of social assistance clients.

Now I did spend a great deal of time speaking about this program last night in my response to the Throne Speech so I won't belabour the point, but it bears noting that the Saskatchewan Landlord Association, advocacy groups, community-based organizations, recipients — everyone agrees that this was a misstep. And the signatories of this petition are calling on the government to reverse this wrong-headed policy. The signatories of this petition reside in Regina.

And I'll read the prayer, as follows:

We, in the prayer, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the government to restore direct payment of rent and utilities for income support clients.

I do so present.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly today calling for the government to reject the proposed Lambert Peat Moss development. Many Saskatchewan residents have contacted my office pleading for this government to not sell out the people of Saskatchewan and to ensure that we have an EA [environmental assessment] process that can fairly represent their concerns in a fair and balanced manner, and that would include also widely consulting.

Many of the concerned citizens who contact me have expressed concerns about the traditional uses that this land has been used for and enjoyed over many years and wish to see that continue on.

I will also bring forward the concerns to your attention. Quebec-based Lambert Peat Moss has proposed the creation of a peat moss mine near La Ronge in northern Saskatchewan. Many local residents, hunters, trappers, and traditional land users are opposed to the proposed peat moss mine and concerned about the potential for damage to habitat, including critical habitat for woodland caribou, traplines, and drinking water sources, as well as climate impacts that need to be studied extensively.

More than 20,000 people have signed an online petition calling for the proposed peat moss mine to be stopped.

I will read the prayer as follows:

We call on the provincial government to protect the boreal forest and reject the proposed Lambert Peat Moss development.

This petition has been signed by residents from La Ronge, Saskatchewan. I do so present.

[13:45]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

World Fertility Day

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise here today in recognition of World Fertility Day. One in six Canadians are struggling to start their families — one in six, Mr. Speaker.

I don't doubt that every single member of this House knows someone who is struggling with fertility. I won't detail the crippling toll it can take on spirit or mental health or relationships. But there is a toll, Mr. Speaker, and there is heartache. And fertility is a concern regardless of gender.

And for those members who are unaware, fertility treatments are expensive. If you're not rich, you're out of luck. Even if you are privileged, middle class, tens of thousands of dollars remains inaccessible to too many. It's hard to keep your house or save for retirement if you have to spend 20, 30, or \$40,000 trying to conceive. And if you're living rurally or remotely, enjoy driving and staying in Saskatoon or Regina or even further to try and access services.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we value families, or at least we say we do. But, Mr. Speaker, we have the ability to help and we don't. Other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, support those trying to build families but we don't. I support reproductive choice and freedom, Mr. Speaker, and you best believe that that includes those trying to start families. So today I rise to recognize World Fertility Day and ask all members to consider helping those desperate to grow our province and share the love.

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

Homegrown Hockey Player Begins Pro Career

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize one of Regina's finest hockey players, Cole Sillinger. This homegrown hockey talent is now making his mark not only on the North American stage but on the world stage as well, as Cole was selected 12th overall by the Columbus Blue Jackets in the 2021 NHL [National Hockey League] entry draft. Now it didn't take the 18-year-old long to make his debut. Cole made enough of an impression in training camp and pre-season that he started on the opening day roster.

Now if that name sounds familiar, Mr. Speaker, Cole is the youngest son of former NHLer and Regina Pats star Mike Sillinger and hockey mom extraordinaire Karla. His pedigree, undeniable. His older brothers, Lukas and Owen, they're stars with Bemidji State in the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association].

Now Sillinger, he was born in Columbus while his dad was playing there in the NHL, but he came back here and played his minor hockey with the Regina Pat Canadians and eventually went on to star as a 16-year-old with the Medicine Hat Tigers.

Now in his first few regular-season outings, Mr. Speaker, Cole did not disappoint. In eight games Sillinger, who is currently the youngest player in the NHL right now, already has his first goal. He picked up an assist, and he's making a real good case to stay in the show for good. Not a bad start to a career.

I now ask that all members please join me in congratulating Cole Sillinger and the entire Sillinger family and wishing him the very best as he follows in his father's footsteps and embarks on a promising pro career. Thank you.

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

Leaders Elected to Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Executive

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] elections last week. It was wonderful to see my fellow First Nation leaders, who encouraged me as a First Nation woman to keep speaking truth to power.

I would like to acknowledge those elected: FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron from Witcheakan Lake First Nation, first Vice-Chief David Pratt from Muscowpetung, second Vice-Chief Dutch Lerat from Cowessess, third Vice-Chief Alyson Bear from Whitecap Dakota, and fourth Vice-Chief Heather Bear from Ochapowace.

It is especially wonderful to see strong Indigenous women elected to leadership roles. As mothers and grandmothers, we are the foundation of our families, the keepers of our home fires. And we are standing up for those that come behind us — our children, grandchildren, and future generations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say how proud I am to . . . This makes me emotional because I'm very proud of this young girl who resides in my constituency — Vice-Chief Aly Bear. She resides in my constituency, and I'm so proud of her for winning this. Her grandfather, OC, would have been standing right beside her, cheering her all the way. Please join me in appreciating and recognizing the leaders elected to the FSIN executive.

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

2021 Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was indeed a pleasure to attend SABEX [Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence], Saskatoon's premier business awards, on Thursday, October 21st at TCU Place.

Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that this was a live and in-person event, and was very well attended. I was joined at the awards night by the member for Saskatoon Southeast and the member from across the way from Saskatoon Nutana. Guests were welcomed by board Chair Graham Snell, Mayor Charlie Clark, and the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

In his greetings my colleague highlighted the many, many positive things happening in our province, from potash and oil and gas to helium, to canola crushing plants, to Federated Co-op's innovative partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I want to congratulate each of this year's outstanding nominees and finalists. The 2021 SABEX award winners are: for Safety Culture, JNE Welding; for Community Investment, North Prairie Developments; for New Business Venture, Hometown Homes; for Mistahi Mamîcîhîtowin, Wanuskewin; in the Saskatooning category, Nutrien Wonderhub; for COVID Grit, Curbie; for Community Impact, the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association]; for Entrepreneurship, Rivercity Innovations; for the Business of the Year, Donald Physiotherapy; and for the Hall of Fame, the Raj Manek mentorship program.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce for hosting this annual event, to Conexus Credit Union for being the title sponsor, and to Chamber CEO Jason Aebig and his team. Job well done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Husky Midstream Expansion Project Completed

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this summer the first in-service pipeline project under our government's oil infrastructure investment program was completed near Spruce Lake. The Husky Midstream Saskatchewan Gathering System expansion project will accommodate new shipping capacity of up to 48,000 barrels per day of crude oil production.

Mr. Speaker, the \$82 million investment created about 450 construction-related jobs, providing a boost to my constituency

and the surrounding area. It will also support oil production growth and broader access to export markets. This pipeline will help alleviate record-level demand for rail and truck transportation for oil and at the same time reduce emissions and transportation costs for the energy sector. Mr. Speaker, this will increase safety by taking heavy trucks off our roads. This project will also help us meet our growth plan goal to increase oil production by 25 per cent to 600,000 barrels per day by 2030.

Saskatchewan's oil is among the most sustainable in the world, and with the continuing growing demand for energy, where better to produce and supply the oil than right here in Saskatchewan. We will continue to support the development of oil infrastructure in our province to create long-term, sustainable growth for our energy industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bethune Splash Pad Dedicated to Community Volunteer

Mr. Skoropad: — Mr. Speaker, on September 17th I was honoured to attend the official ribbon cutting for the Bethune Splash Pad park, a park that will help meet the needs of a growing, thriving community on the eastern edge of my constituency.

The portion of the ceremony that struck me, Mr. Speaker, and the others in attendance was the dedication of the park to long-time resident Deb Wisniewski that evening. It was evident from the words that were spoken in Deb's honour that, while all communities have a champion, not all communities have a Deb Wisniewski.

Here is an individual who has selflessly served Bethune for over 50 years. There's not a fundraising gala, July the 1st sports day, homecoming, or community event that does not involve Deb doing some heavy lifting. Deb's passion for community is relentless while at the same time never seeking thanks or praise.

She's a proud breast cancer survivor who meets all challenges the same way, that being head-on. The recent splash pad project was no exception to the rule. Despite battling cancer, Mr. Speaker, she was the first with a paintbrush in her hand, a hammer, or a shovel to use. Further, her fundraising tenacity was instrumental to this \$150,000 project being funded in only a year and a half.

Debbie truly lives with purpose, determination, and service to others. And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members in this Assembly to join me in recognizing Deb Wisniewski, inspirational leader and community builder. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Numbers Show a Strong Economic Recovery

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More good economic news for Saskatchewan from Statistics Canada this morning. Between August and September 2021, the value of building permits in the province increased by 14.1 per cent, well above a national average of 4.3 per cent. Even more impressively, compared to September 2020, the value of building permits increased by 45.4 per cent, far exceeding the national average

increase of 4.9. This is on top of strong employment numbers we saw in September 2021.

Our unemployment rate was 6.3 per cent, also better than the national average of 6.9. Our employment has recovered to 99 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Aboriginal employment was up 7,000 compared to September 2020, for 10 consecutive months of year-over-year increases, and reached an all-time high of 60,600. Female employment was up 5,900 compared to September 2020, for seven consecutive months of year-over-year increase.

Other economic indicators are also showing signs of strength. In the first six months of 2021, the value of our exports increased by 20 per cent compared to the same period in 2020, which was a record year in itself. The value of manufacturing sales increased by 47.3 per cent in August 2021 compared to 2020.

These are just a few examples of the strong economic recovery our province is experiencing. It is truly a testament to the resiliency and hard work of our province's people and businesses. Thank you very much.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apparently the Sask Party now wants us to look on the positive side of the highest COVID death rate in the entire country. Well what Saskatchewan people really want is answers to the motivation behind this Premier's deadly decisions. Why did the Premier wait as the fourth wave raged on, barking up every other possible tree rather than asking for readily available federal help?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did request and did receive some federal help. I believe we received six ICU [intensive care unit] nurses and then maybe another eight staff in the week following.

With respect to the member's comments last night, I think the intent of those comments was clear. However the words that were chosen were not clear in providing what the intent behind those comments were. And that intent most certainly was, Mr. Speaker, to identify and to look at how impactful and how effective vaccines have been, not just here in Saskatchewan but across the nation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we've seen now over the course of the first few days of this legislative session is, you know, an Opposition Leader that is distancing himself from their policy positions. We saw last week, Mr. Speaker, a motion that was introduced in this House, a motion to implement all of the measures that were in the MHO [medical health officer] letter, including the measure to kick kids out of school, Mr. Speaker, if they are not vaccinated, thousands of kids across this province.

Mr. Speaker, then we saw the member from Elphinstone-Centre tweet that same policy position to implement all of the MHO

recommendations, Mr. Speaker, including those that would kick thousands of kids out of school in this province if they're not vaccinated, Mr. Speaker. And then yesterday we saw the Leader of the Opposition go out in the rotunda and act like none of that happened, that isn't the policy of the NDP [New Democratic Party]. The government feels that that is a . . . Kicking kids out of school, Mr. Speaker, in this province because they are not vaccinated is a bridge too far. It's not a policy position of the government. Fair enough, it's a policy of the NDP.

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

[14:00]

Mr. Meili: — Well no surprise there, Mr. Speaker. The Premier playing political games. Putting words in other people's mouths, deriding public health experts, and doing everything he can to spin away from his own record. The biggest threat to in-school learning is this government and an out-of-control fourth wave.

Well let's talk about our kids in Saskatchewan. Let's talk about the fairness to them, Mr. Speaker. This government had the opportunity to get federal help for contact tracing and for testing. They refused to do so. As a result we've got psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists on the phone doing contact tracing.

Why did this Premier refuse that federal help and not allow these folks to get back to work helping kids?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, there's no political games. Mr. Speaker, this is the motion that — and this is read out of *Hansard* — that was introduced in the House last week, I believe, by the House Leader, the Health critic, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Fairview. I don't think the Health critic would be offside with the party policy. But the motion is:

That the Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of Saskatchewan to implement all public health measures identified by the province's medical health officers in their letter to the Minister of Health dated October 21st.

Mr. Speaker, that includes the policy of mandatory vaccinations to attend in-person classes in school, which would literally kick thousands of students out of our schools in this province.

The member from Regina Elphinstone goes on to tweet later that day, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

Today the @Sask_NDP Health critic @Vicki_Mowat_NDP tried to move a motion for an emergency debate on the need to implement all [of the] public health measures identified by SK Medical Health Officers in a letter to Minister . . . [@PaulMerriman] . . .

Mr. Speaker, in those measures was a measure to mandate vaccines to those that are attending school, if they're eligible; and if they are not eligible, to have their family be vaccinated, or they as well couldn't attend school. Mr. Speaker, that would kick thousands of kids out of our school systems here in the province. Not the policy of the government. It's the policy of the NDP, and

the Saskatchewan people should know it.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, we were ready to have that debate, and we're ready to have that debate now. Let's look at all of the options, do what we need to do to control the COVID-19 fourth wave. But this Premier has resulted by his lack of action, his lack of leadership, in the worst COVID death rate in the entire country. And yeah, he's going to spin and spin and try to change the channel every chance he gets, but the world is watching. You can't just change the channel.

Mr. Speaker, you talk about the kids of Saskatchewan. You talk about the kids of Saskatchewan. To the Premier: how many children are not receiving essential therapies because he has their therapist off doing contact tracing instead of their regular jobs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, there are a number of people across the health system that have been redeployed to augment and to support the efforts of our . . . of those that are in our ICU beds, Mr. Speaker, due to COVID-19. A disproportionate number of those are not vaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, as we look to the next number of days, the Ministry of Health is actively working on all opportunities that we have to resume those services as soon as we are able, most certainly, how we will be able to resume the surgeries within the province of Saskatchewan. That being said, we have delivered 88 per cent of the surgeries that have been scheduled for this year, Mr. Speaker. But we do need to as quickly as possible get back to the resumption of services across our Saskatchewan Health Authority as well as the surgeries that we have.

The Ministry of Health is hard at work on a policy that will work . . . that will be able then for the Saskatchewan Health Authority, which is the operational and delivery arm of health care services here in the province, to be able to implement that as quickly as we're able.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, not a word, not a word about the kids who aren't able to get the help they need to learn to walk, to learn to talk. Essential therapies that have been shelved. Essential critical windows in their development missed because of this government's failure to take action.

But it's not just kids that are suffering. It's not just their therapies that have been cancelled. Surgeries. Cancer treatments. To the Premier: how many cancer treatments, procedures, and surgeries have been cancelled because of his failure to get the fourth wave under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, any time that we had to reduce programs or services across the province, this was a very difficult decision. And it was discussed with our experts, our clinical experts, as well as the SHA [Saskatchewan

Health Authority], as well as ministry people, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we were making those surgical decisions.

If we had to remove somebody from their position to be able to help out with the COVID-19 pandemic, whether that was in contact tracing, whether that was in our ICUs, or whether that was in our acute care or long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker, we always did that with the . . . We always did that, Mr. Speaker, that we would get that done as soon as possible and we would return them back, Mr. Speaker.

The ones that they're referencing, there's some 35 individuals across the province that we have reallocated throughout our system. Mr. Speaker, we're going to repatriate those jobs and those people back to the position by Remembrance Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The questions were quite direct. How many cancer treatments, procedures, and surgeries have been cancelled? How many kids are without therapy as a result of this government's choices?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And even though we had these challenging times throughout this year, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier outlined, we were able still to perform 88 per cent of the surgeries. So I want to thank the health care workers that were able to do that within the difficult, challenging times. And that is managing our ICU capacity, managing our acute care, and scheduling these surgeries.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to get back . . . When we were slowing down with the COVID ICUs in the summer, Mr. Speaker, we immediately cranked up and flipped over to our surgeries. And we were doing almost 8,000 surgeries a month, Mr. Speaker. And as soon as things settle down in the ICUs, Mr. Speaker, we will resume that surgical capacity and get that backlog cleared off as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, no answer on cancer treatments cancelled, no answer on kids' therapies cancelled. The highest COVID death rate in the country, and thousands of people not able to get serious, important, urgent care. Mr. Speaker, the Premier maybe can answer this because clearly the Health minister can't.

To the Premier: how many surgeries have been cancelled, and how many Saskatchewan people are on the surgical wait-list today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I had mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, we are very committed to making sure that we can get that surgical backlog . . . This is an unprecedented event since March of 2020 that our health care system has had to pivot and be able to deal with, Mr. Speaker. We obviously had to cancel some programs and postpone some

surgeries, Mr. Speaker, but we're still prioritizing the surgeries that need to be done on an urgent basis, Mr. Speaker. And all those ones that don't need acute care or don't need ICU care, we're prioritizing them to make sure that they get done as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, 88 per cent of the surgeries were done in extremely challenging times, and I want to thank the health care workers for being able to perform those surgeries and getting the people of Saskatchewan back in their homes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, this is information that any Health minister worth anything close to their job would have ready and at hand. So since he won't tell us how many people have missed their surgery, how many have been cancelled, at least he must be tracking the very important measure of who has lost their life. Have there been people who have died due to their surgeries being cancelled, and if so, how many?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and as I've mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, these are very challenging times that we have within our surgical capacity to be able to reallocate people to meet the influx of people mostly that were unvaccinated, Mr. Speaker, into our health care system. Over 80 per cent of the people that we're seeing within our health care system for one reason or another chose not to be vaccinated. If we weren't facing that situation and people had more needles in their arms, Mr. Speaker, we would not be lagging behind in our surgical capacity.

Mr. Speaker, in our budget we had over \$660 million invested in our surgical services since 2010, Mr. Speaker. We had an additional \$20 million that was put into our surgical capacity, and as soon as we are having the human resources available to perform those surgeries, we'll get them done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — So simple question. The minister says 88 per cent of the surgeries have been done. That means 12 per cent haven't. How many is that? Give us a number.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, obviously I don't have that number at my fingertips because it's changing every day, Mr. Speaker. It changes every single day. But I'll endure to get that. Mr. Speaker, as I've said we have 88 per cent, which is a major feat to be able to get that done with our health care workers in a very challenging time, Mr. Speaker.

This also includes a goal to perform 93,000 surgeries, which would be the most surgeries done ever within 12 months. We're going to get that backlog cleaned off as soon as we possibly can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — So no answers on cancer treatment, no answers on kids' therapy, no answers on surgical wait-list numbers, on mortality. How about organ transplants? How many people have not been able to get an organ that are on the wait-list? How many opportunities for collection and life-saving care have been missed? Has anyone on the organ transplant list lost their lives because of this government's choices that resulted in that program being shelved?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, we've had a challenging year this year, and I think that's recognized by everybody in this House, everybody in the province, and across the country. We've had surgeries that have been prioritized, Mr. Speaker. Obviously cancer treatments are prioritized. We're making sure that we have as many of those done as we possibly can.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are people in our ICUs now that didn't need to be there. If they had have been vaccinated, they wouldn't be in that situation right now. So, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage everybody out there — we've said it time and time again — please help out our health care system. This is the best way we can help out our health care system, is go in and get that vaccination, so you have a better chance of, if you do contract COVID-19, you have a much better chance of fighting it off. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is the Health minister who presided over a terrible second and third wave and chose not to learn a thing, in fact chose to do worse for the worst fourth wave in the entire country, highest COVID death rate in the entire country, the least successful vaccination program in the entire country, the worst rate of ICU occupancy in the entire country. And here he stands up today, question after question — cancer treatments, kids' therapies, organ transplants — and he hasn't got a sniff.

To the Premier: how on earth do you keep someone who's such an emblem of failure, such a mountain of incompetence, in the most important chair in the moment during a pandemic?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has been answering questions in this House day in, day out, including today. He very clearly indicated that throughout the . . . Maybe the members of the opposition if they just would zip it for a minute, they'd be able to listen to one of these answers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health has very clearly indicated, through a very challenging time, 88 per cent of the surgeries have been completed here in the province of Saskatchewan. The SHA has been prioritizing those surgeries that are urgent.

And as we know and as the Minister of Health had indicated that we have far too many people, an inordinate number of people that are not vaccinated that are in our ICU beds here in the province, Mr. Speaker. And as we know, those that are not vaccinated —

and I have said these statistics in here before — they're six times more likely to contract COVID, 13 times more likely to end up in a hospital, and 28 times more likely to end up in one of our ICU beds, Mr. Speaker. That is the challenge that we have here in the province of Saskatchewan.

We have taken all measures that we can, Mr. Speaker, to reduce that number by making vaccines available in every province, to implement a number of early intervention treatments, to make testing available across the province. But one thing that we will not do, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP have adopted as their policy platform, is to mandate vaccines to those students that are attending school. And if they don't take a vaccine, they're going to kick them out.

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

Government Policies and Provincial Population

Ms. A. Young: — All right, all right, all right, Mr. Speaker. What an absolute disgrace, Mr. Speaker, that hyperbole. Let me tune in the members opposite. I sat and talked to young women this week, young women who were wondering whether it is ethical to raise their children in this province because of that Health minister's mismanagement.

[14:15]

Not only are the members opposite dragging this province's name through the mud, they are driving people out of this province. And just ask the Health minister. When asked about our worst-in-the-country vaccination rate, the Health minister tried to blame the people of Saskatchewan. When he was asked about people who left the province he said, and I quote, "we've got a whole bunch."

So, Mr. Speaker, does the Sask Party take any responsibility for the fact that their handling of COVID-19 is driving a whole bunch of people out of the province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

[Applause]

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, they're asking about population numbers. The population of this province has grown inordinately in the last 14 years, as opposed to their record. They had the worst record of population growth in the entire country, Mr. Speaker. In fact it went backwards when they were in government.

But I know why they don't want to talk about the economy, Mr. Speaker, a subject on which they have absolutely no credibility. This government on this side of the House in the last eight months, we have seen a rate of private sector investment growth that has not been seen in the history of this province. Over \$10 billion, Mr. Speaker, of new investment from companies from around the world who are making the choice to invest right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this doesn't happen by accident. This happens

because of some very, very hard work, making sure that we have the investment climate in place for these companies to make that investment. Mr. Speaker, that would never happen under the opposition.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Well you know, Mr. Speaker, with folks leaving the health care sector and jobs, there certainly are two jobs in Saskatchewan that are looking for people: selling luggage and renting U-Hauls. Because — news for the member opposite — 55,000 people have left for other parts of Canada in the past eight years, Mr. Speaker. Over 20,000 in the last two years. Faster than any other time this century.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? And I'll ask the members to listen for one second, so they're not so terribly ashamed. As for population growth, the COVID-19 death toll is growing faster than our provincial population. The COVID-19 death toll is growing faster than our population. These are dark times, Mr. Speaker. So what will that government do to keep people in Saskatchewan, and better yet keep people alive to enjoy it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And here's the facts. There have been over 170,000 new residents that have come to this province since 2007, and they are proud of this province. They are proud to be here and reside in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, the number she cited, what she is essentially saying is international in-migration shouldn't count. That's exactly what she is insinuating with the number that she picked.

Mr. Speaker, we are extraordinarily proud of the fact that we have had nearly 200,000 newcomers from outside of Canada that have chosen to move to Saskatchewan to make their home. That is something that never happened under the NDP that never had a provincial nominee program in place that would attract newcomers to Saskatchewan. We are very proud of those people coming to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and they're proud to be here.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Health Care Resources and Policy

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there were a lot of good things done as a government over the past decade. However the question the public wants to know is, why hasn't the government spent money on increasing capacity of the ICUs in the provincial hospitals instead of restricting our freedoms? The public has asked a simple question: why do we spend money on restricting people's rights instead of managing hospitals?

The data shows we have spent huge amounts of the people's money preparing for the restrictions. Why didn't we convert hospitals, use more human resources, do whatever we needed to do to preserve and keep Saskatchewan people here with their

loved ones?

Our rights to body autonomy are very important to citizens. Does the Premier acknowledge and respect every Saskatchewan citizen's rights to equal opportunity for health care? Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as the member opposite would know, because she would have seen the presentation of the last number of budgets, how much that the provincial government has increased the health budget significantly as well as injected literally hundreds of millions of dollars into the health care budget to deal with the COVID-19 situation, the pandemic that we have.

She should also know that recruitment of nurses and critical care health personnel is virtually impossible at this time. Every province is stressed, has had surges within the pandemic where they have maxed out all of their health care providers. The United States is in the same situation. There was a time where my niece was actually considering . . . before we had a significant outbreak, she was considering going to the United States. You cannot recruit health care workers right now in this pandemic. Every province and every state is maximizing all of their health care workers.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The scientific evidence from literally hundreds of peer-reviewed studies have demonstrated that 80 to 90 per cent of deaths in Saskatchewan and Canada could have been prevented if the medical doctors would have been allowed to do what they do best, which is to prescribe life-saving medications as they were needed — beginning in March 2020 and up to this day — to the people who were infected with COVID-19, including preventively and as treatment.

Possible long-term side effects were not known as yet to this vaccine. How does this relate to the Throne Speech in building a safer and healthier Saskatchewan? Does the Premier acknowledge the successes of other countries' highly effective medications? Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, again the member opposite should know that Health Canada approves prescription medications within our country. We do not tell doctors what they can or cannot prescribe. She should know that; I'm surprised she does not.

But you know, what we do know works, just from statistics right here in this province, is vaccinations work, Mr. Speaker. Vaccinations. If you're vaccinated, you are six times more likely to contact . . . Or if you're not vaccinated, sorry, six times more likely to contact COVID. You are 13 times more likely to end up in the hospital and 28 times more likely to be in ICU. Mr. Speaker, it is not helpful to have leaders in our province that discourages people from becoming vaccinated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 38 — *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2021*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 38, *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 38 be now introduced and read for a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy 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. 39 — *The Queen's Printer's Amendment Act, 2021*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 39, *The Queen's Printer's Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 39 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.

Deputy 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.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. A. Ross, seconded by Mr.

Skoropad, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Love.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I only got to begin last night and had a couple of minutes to start out, I'd like to start at the beginning and take the opportunity to express my appreciation and say thank you to some very important and valued people in my life before giving my response to the Speech from the Throne.

Since the beginning and throughout the pandemic, people's anxiety, frustration, and uneasiness about daily living has grown, and many phone calls to my office have not always been easy conversations to have. But my constituency assistant Tracy Patterson has been there to handle them with the voice of reason and as best she can. You are a rare gem, Tracy, and I couldn't do this job without your support. Thank you, Tracy, for your calm, kind, caring, and very, very patient response . . .

[Interruption]

The Speaker: — Security, please remove that person.

The member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was expressing my thanks to my constituency assistant, Tracy, who I couldn't do this job without her support. She's a calm, kind, caring, and very, very patient response to receiving calls from some individuals who are sometimes less than respectful and sometimes downright rude and obnoxious. I've taken many of these calls myself, and I know how hard it is to listen at times to negativity, to try to provide the right information and try to calm their anger and fear into reason.

I also want to take this time to extend my thoughts and prayers to those families who have had to endure the loss of a loved one during this pandemic. I know it has been very difficult and it's not an easy situation to deal with.

I want to thank my many, many constituents who have acted responsibly throughout this pandemic, first by following health restrictions, and secondly by getting vaccinated when it was their turn to do so. They chose to show that caring about their health, their families, and the health of others around them. And acting on it was the most responsible thing to do, and has helped us all greatly throughout these very trying times in the history of this province.

Thank you for acting like true Saskatchewanians and being there when you are needed most. You will be our true heroes through this pandemic, and I cannot thank you enough for your understanding and kindness.

I just want to share at this time. My mom is 97 years old and in a personal care home in Saskatoon at this point in time. And I know on my many visits as I pass through on my way home, I would stop and have conversation with her. And right when the opportunity came for the vaccination to be available to our seniors, she was one of the first people in the lineup. And when her booster shots came here this fall, along with the flu, once

again she was first in line to get one in one arm and one in the other arm at the same time.

And I know in my conversations with her as I pass through, many times her final comments to me was: did you get yours yet? Did you get yours yet? So I thank her too because she showed, even at 97 years of age, that she was acting responsibly and was a caring individual that was contributing to our province in the fight against COVID-19. So thank you, Mom, for taking on that.

As we've all heard in this Assembly since the Speech from the Throne was delivered by our Lieutenant Governor, many of my colleagues have already commented on a number of things that we have achieved and are planning to achieve in this province and are very proud of, and that we, as a government, are committed to doing for the people of this province. And so in the time that I have, I would like to focus on just a few areas of importance and relevance and have created some excitement and some comfort and some assurance and relief to the people who reside in my communities in my constituency.

[14:30]

And a topic of conversation that comes up quite often when I'm out and about is more violent crimes, gangs, drugs, and especially rural crime. Too many residents in communities across the province do not feel safe in their own homes. So I know my constituents are happy to hear our government was listening and has stepped up to address this issue in a number of ways.

We are addressing the gaps in policing and public safety by providing over 17 million to municipalities to fund 133 new police positions and another 11 civilian positions to support new law enforcement initiatives, and will create a new provincial protective services unit in this province. More eyes and ears, Mr. Speaker, to help keep our citizens safe.

We have worked with the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] since the establishment in 2017 of the five crime reduction teams and are supporting them in the addition of four more teams in the province. The expansion adds a total of 20 permanent positions including 16 RCMP officers, two criminal analysts, and two administrative assistants. The expansion of the CRT [crime reduction team] is a key addition to Saskatchewan's evolving suite of policing tools and has helped to make a significant difference in decreasing provincial crime severity and overall crime rates.

One of these new units will be situated in Lloydminster — welcome news for the community and surrounding area which, being along a major highway, is a high-traffic corridor for criminal activity like drugs, firearms, and human trafficking. The CRT activities include high-visibility patrols, tracking dangerous offenders with a history of repeated offences, targeting street gang activity, and executing arrest warrants.

In addition to the expansion of the CRT, Lloydminster will also now be home to a unit of the Saskatchewan trafficking response team. This team will work jointly with the RCMP, municipal police services, and intelligence and enforcement teams in both Alberta and Manitoba. Thirty RCMP officers, six municipal police officers, two criminal analysts, and three support staff for a total of 41 new permanent positions make up the Saskatchewan

trafficking response team.

A warrant enforcement and suppression team consisting of three RCMP officers, one criminal analyst, and one administrative support position for a total of 10 permanent positions will target high-profile offenders with outstanding warrants who represent a significant threat to public safety. The courts will also now have more options to order the use of electronic monitoring, EM GPS [global positioning system], for these violent, gang-affiliated, and high-risk offenders. EM GPS will allow for numerous offenders to be monitored and identify when they have violated their geographical constraints and are potentially about to reoffend. It is both a preventative tool as well as an accountability mechanism that is proven to work in other jurisdictions and give our courts an alternative to remand.

All of these are huge investments in this province and show that we as a government truly care and are committed and want to ensure the safety and well-being of our province's citizens and communities.

The Speech from the Throne also speaks to enhancing the work done within our court system so that those doing the crime will do the time. I've had many conversations with constituents who have been frustrated with delayed trials and the lack of accountability for those who break the law. The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General will enhance training for prosecutors and further develop the capacity to use private bar lawyers as prosecutor's agents to support our new policing initiatives and will help maintain public confidence in the justice system. Senior prosecutors will be able to focus on the more serious work of prosecuting serious crimes.

On January 1st, 2022, amendments to *The Trespass to Property Act*, shifting the onus of responsibility from rural landowners to individuals seeking access to the property, will come into effect. Property and landowners in my constituency are hopeful that these changes will give them more teeth in seeking damages against a trespasser.

I also want to remind folks that it's important to note that enforcement and prevention are not mutually exclusive. The province funds many preventative programs and support services that enhance community safety and well-being by supporting vulnerable people and those living in high-risk situations. These programs will continue. We will continue to invest in them, and they include such things as the community mobilization, victim services, interpersonal violence and abuse services, the northern alcohol strategy, community and restorative justice, crime prevention programs, offender services, northern and Aboriginal justice initiatives, and the family information liaison units.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to touch on the commitment our government has made and is making to ensure there is modern and strong investment in infrastructure that will continue to support our growth plan. Since 2007 we have invested nearly 37 billion to renew, expand, and modernize this province's infrastructure. In the conversations I've had lately with folks on ICU capacity, COVID hospitalizations, and the number of physicians, nurses, and other health care workers needed to take care of not just COVID patients, but for all who need hospitalization services, I can't help but wonder and muse over the very, very critical situation we would be in if our government

hadn't fixed the NDP's closure of 52 hospitals by building new ones, hiring 1,000 more physicians and over 4,000 more nurses in this province. Just imagine where we would be right now.

Investment to improve the quality of care throughout our province is imperative. The Lloydminster Hospital currently is seeing some infrastructure investment, which includes 2.9 million for a new emergency generator and transfer switch, 1.1 million to upgrade the pneumatic controls to digital, over 500,000 to replace deteriorating outside brickwork on the hospital, 79,000 to replace the medical air compressor — all necessary to ensure patients are well cared for, the facility is of the best quality, and staff can do their jobs well.

Planning for new hospital projects in both Prince Albert and Weyburn continues, and the engineering work is under way on the new urgent care centres in Saskatoon and Regina which will help to reduce wait times at emergency rooms by providing alternative care for illnesses or injuries not considered life threatening. This will significantly free up our emergency departments and take pressure off of staff in these two major cities.

Mr. Speaker, it has been said many times in this House that we cannot have quality and effective health care, long-term care facilities for our seniors, good schools and a quality education for our children, and social programs that support our vulnerable population without a strong economy. Our government has created and will continue to create a regulatory environment that entices and supports investment by companies in our province.

The commitment of BHP to invest an additional 7.5 billion to complete the Jansen potash mine, three new canola crushing plants and the expansion of existing plants, Canada's first wheat straw pulp facility, a new urea fertilizer plant, a new oriented strand board mill, a revitalized Prince Albert pulp mill, expanded and upgraded saw mills, and a new cedar manufacturing facility are all extremely good news in helping us to begin creating 100,000 more jobs by 2030 and strengthening our economy.

Our growth plan goal is to invest another 30 billion by 2030 to build and improve roads, hospitals, schools, power plants, communication infrastructure, water and waste water projects. And our partnership in the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program has helped repair and replace lagoon systems in a few of even my rural communities: Ministikwan, Paradise Hill, and soon to begin work on the green street lagoon system.

The Lloydminster Exhibition Association has benefited from our partnership in ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] with an extensive retrofit to their communications and safety technology throughout their 110,000-square-foot facility. The MEEP, or municipal economic enhancement program we introduced during this pandemic, has helped and will continue to support investment in infrastructure to stimulate economic recovery and encourage local job creation.

The city of Lloydminster benefits, receiving \$1,690,965 to replace and repair a very dangerous intersection along Highway 16 and 62nd Avenue that has seen a number of major accidents and some fatalities. The RM [rural municipality] of Britannia and the RM of Frenchman Butte were able to purchase needed equipment to provide road and building improvements to their

communities through this same program.

Better roads and highways are also key infrastructure to economic growth and safety for the citizens of the province. We are making significant headway on this, repaving highways and adding passing lanes. Just completed in my constituency is a 10 million resurfacing of the Frenchman Butte access road, and an 11.4 million to rebuild and repave 40 kilometres of Highway 21 from Highway 3 north to the Bronson Lake Road.

This highway had made the top three worst highways in the province over the last 20-plus years, and my constituents are so appreciative of the investment that was made to make this now a safe and pleasant driving experience. And our goal as a government is to upgrade another 10 000 kilometres of highways over the next decade.

In building a better Saskatchewan we also need a better-educated Saskatchewan. Our children are our future, and continuing to invest in their education will ensure that we will always come out of any challenge stronger, more resilient, and successful in all our endeavours.

Since the pandemic, necessary restrictions created an increase in online learning throughout our education systems. And I just want to take this opportunity to say a very heartfelt thank you to the teachers, all the support staff, and administration for their commitment, dedication, professionalism, and care they showed to, firstly, ensure the safety of our students, and secondly, in quickly adjusting to unconventional and erratic daily learning and working routines.

We will continue to provide important direction and learning policy to ensure students are placed physically in the classroom, or those that choose to continue with online learning . . . The government is also planning to create a new funding pool to enhance classroom supports for teachers working with the greatest number of students. And this includes new funding for school divisions to hire educational assistants.

Mr. Speaker, our government's goal has always been to provide the best learning for our students, and growing populations in some areas of the province and aging school infrastructure signals to us that you don't close 176 schools. It tells us we need to invest into new schools and modernize or renovate those we can. So we have moved forward with 57 brand new or replacement schools and have done 28 major school renovations since 2007.

And we will continue to make progress on another 16 school projects. This year Lloydminster Holy Rosary High School will move forward with a \$10 million classroom addition and another 800,000 in other renovations. And the Lloydminster Comprehensive High School will get a \$25 million classroom addition and another 1.3 million in other renovations.

Mr. Speaker, the province's energy sector, which has contributed nearly 244 billion to Saskatchewan's economy since 2007, I believe will grow and create opportunity for decades to come. Earlier this year Husky Midstream, located partially in my constituency and in my neighbouring colleague's from Cut Knife-Turtleford, became the first company to complete a project under the province's oil infrastructure investment program.

Husky Midstream invested 82 million and created 450 construction jobs as it expanded its gathering system near Spruce Lake.

Saskatchewan produces some of the most sustainable products in the world, and if all oil-producing countries in the world adopted environmental regulations similar to Saskatchewan, global greenhouse gas emissions from oil production would be cut by 25 per cent. Our growth plan goal is to support the oil and gas industry and see oil production increase to 600,000 barrels per day. We have what the world needs, and we are ready to provide it.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, not only is oil and gas a big part of my constituency, but agriculture, the backbone of our province, supports many families and our economy. This year, agriculture exports will be reduced slightly because of the severe drought that affected much of the province and hit hard in some of the parts of my own constituency. But working with the federal government, our government has supported producers as they deal with the impact of the drought. We've provided 119 million in direct support to livestock producers through the AgRecovery program to help Saskatchewan maintain its breeding herd. We increased the AgriStability interim benefit payment from 50 to 75 per cent. Sask Crop Insurance provided relief to producers who used their cereal or pulse crops for feed. We tripled funding available through the farm and ranch water infrastructure program to improve and build dugouts, wells, and pipelines.

I know our government's investment in the Lake Diefenbaker irrigation project will help diversify crop production, increase the number of irrigable acres in the province, attract more value-added processing, and improve water security for municipalities and Saskatchewan industries. This project has the potential to boost Saskatchewan's gross domestic product by as much as 80 billion over the next 50 years.

We're investing 3.2 million for a new engineering biology centre at the Global Institute for Food Security in Saskatoon. This will ensure we remain a global leader in agriculture research and development. Another 30 million will go to support institutions and specific research projects, expand scientific capacity, and assist in the commercialization of agriculture research undertaken in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is slowly running out here, and there's a lot more to talk about from the Throne Speech that is positive and gives our citizens of Saskatchewan the hope that is needed coming out of this pandemic.

But I want to just end on a little lighter and a little more humorous note in regards to the pandemic and the restrictions that have occurred over the past 20 months. I have eight adult children. My daughter has a master's in biology and teaches grade 12 biology and environmental science. She has travelled the world and is a strong, smart, and independent woman. She has a few letters behind her name.

I have seven sons with the letters "Dr" in the front of their names and the letters "MD" [medical doctor] at the end of their names. And some have a few other specialty letters after that "MD."

They have built their own clinics and are building a good life for their families.

I have four daughter-in-laws. One's a pharmacist with her own pharmacy and has a few extra letters behind her name. I have a daughter-in-law who's a special ed teacher with a few extra letters behind her name, and another daughter-in-law that has the letters "Dr" in the front of her name and the letters "MD" at the end. I have one who is a dental assistant, a daughter-in-law-to-be who is an RN [registered nurse] with some special letters behind her name, a son with a girlfriend who's in her second year of medicine and hopefully will have that "MD" at the end of her name, and a husband who is a provincial court judge.

And then comes the politician. I have no letters in the front. I have no letters in the back of my name. But I am in charge.

And living in a border city, you can well imagine throughout this COVID pandemic, and with the restriction differences between two different provinces sometimes and living in the border city, you can well imagine the conversation around COVID in my household. It's always been 14 to 1. But I can tell you they are all caring and responsible individuals and are fully vaccinated.

And as was stated in the Throne Speech and worth finishing with, as I believe it truly is what this province is and what the people of this province represent. A bold, confident province will emerge on the other side of this pandemic: a Saskatchewan that offers hope and opportunity for our young people and for all those around the world wanting to build a better life; a Saskatchewan with thriving, vibrant communities and more people, more jobs, and more opportunities; a Saskatchewan that is stronger, safer, healthier, better educated, and more independent.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition and I will be supporting the motion put forward by my colleague from Prince Albert Northcote, seconded by my colleague from Arm River. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by acknowledging that the land where I stand is Treaty 4 territory and the traditional home of the Métis. We acknowledge the land in an act of reconciliation to those whose traditional territories we are on.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also extend my condolences to the families and friends who have lost loved ones to COVID. I have a bit of a story to tell about COVID. It's my son Jon's story. I got a text one day from my granddaughter that said, dad's got COVID. My heart stopped as any mother, any father would be very concerned. So I immediately phoned my son and said, how are you doing? He said, Mom, I'm going to be okay. I know I'm not going to die because I've been double-vaccinated.

Allison, our daughter-in-law, has also been vaccinated, the same with our oldest grandson and our granddaughter. Only little Charlie, who everybody knows is quite the character, Charlie is too young to be vaccinated. Jon was very sick but did not end up

in the hospital. When I talked to him every day to make sure he was going to be okay, he said to me, Mom, I know I did the right thing. I was double-vaccinated so I know I'm not going to die. But I also know that I did the right thing and that I did the best thing for my family.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to encourage each and every one in Saskatchewan to go out and get vaccinated. I don't want them to have that scary, scary phone call or text saying, Dad's got COVID.

This has been a hard year for all of us, and all of us here, we need the support of our family and our friends. I am so fortunate to have the support of Terry, my husband. He's been my rock, my biggest champion, and I appreciate the support he gives me every day. I also have an incredible constituency assistant, Kelly Zazula. Kelly ends up taking the calls, the front-line calls, and those are angry calls or they're calls of congratulations, thank you to the government for the job you've done. But she's managed to be able to keep our office running and be in a very respectful manner when people phone that are scared, concerned, angry.

We have to answer their calls. We return those calls. Sometimes we don't have an agreeable outcome for the conversation, because we do have people who phone and insist that there is no way that we should be encouraging people to be vaccinated. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find those calls very difficult, but we make those calls, because if we can even encourage one person over a phone call to make the decision to go and get vaccinated when they phone me to scream and say we have no right to encourage them to get vaccinated, if I can make that difference, I'll think my job's well done.

Mr. Speaker, I also have some very good support staff within the ministry, within the office here in the building. I've got my chief of staff, Carter. We've got Sherry, Jaxen, and Desiree, and they also are ensuring that we are getting through this tough time.

But, Mr. Speaker, as a woman standing here proudly wearing white as a trailblazer, we have women who went before us. We had the Famous Five here in Canada. We had women who went above and beyond to ensure that we, myself as a woman, could take my place here in the House. And I want to thank them for that. Each and every one of us, we know that it's important to have the women's voice at the table, and I appreciate that opportunity. And I thank the people of my constituency of Regina Rochdale for electing me to come here and speak on their behalf.

And, Mr. Speaker, the staff within the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport and the Status of Women have also worked very hard and have dedicated a lot of time and energy to ensure that we are keeping our parks open and working smoothly. Our arts community, we're supporting them to every avenue we can. Mr. Speaker, this year our park attendance, we knocked it out of the park, as they say. We had more people participate in camping and daily park attendance than we ever had — 38,000 annual entry permits were sold, and that's not including those distributed for free to seniors over 65, nearly 13,000 more.

So we know that people in Saskatchewan appreciate what our beautiful province has to offer. And this year it was 16 per cent

higher at the end of the season than previous years. So we have to commend our people within the Ministry of Parks for the work they do to ensure that our campers, that our people who come to experience our beautiful parks, have the best experience possible and they can share it with others, so that we encourage them to come and see our wonderful province.

This year we've also continued with the community rinks affordability grant. And that really has made a difference in so many small communities for their ice surfaces, 580 ice surfaces across the province. And so, Mr. Speaker, \$2,500 may not seem like a lot to some people, but you know what? To the smaller communities, this grant was big. It really made a difference to their community. So this is a support program that I am so pleased that the ministry has been able to administer and do it in a very successful manner.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have continued to support our veterans. Our government remains committed to the veteran service club support program, distributing . . . and we have set aside 1.5 million to help sustain veteran clubs in 65 communities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Remembrance Day draws near, we know that our veterans . . . we have a lot to be thankful for. We don't wear this poppy blindly. We all wear it in remembrance of the sacrifice and the service that they have provided to our community.

And so if we can help and pay back with a grant to their facilities, to ensure that they have a place within their community that they can go to, that's so important. And so I always will support this kind of program because, Mr. Speaker, this is the right thing to do.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're also looking at our urgent care centres in Regina and Saskatoon. Now the Regina centre has . . . we have the site secured. The engineer work has been done and shovels will be in the ground within early next year. This is a step forward. This will make a big difference both in Regina and Saskatoon. And I'm so pleased and so proud that our government has chosen this route.

And as been spoken by members here that we believe education . . . We know that a well-educated society is a healthy society. And our education . . . We've committed to schools, but this year we will also be including new funding for hiring educational assistants for students because we know the complexity of students is great. And so in order to ensure that our students are successful in those classrooms, we have committed that kind of funding.

[15:00]

We also know . . . As the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and also within my constituency as the MLA for Regina Rochdale, we do get calls from women who are very concerned about late payments for maintenance enforcement. And so this session we will be amending the enforcement maintenance order to allow the maintenance enforcement office to take quick action when a payer of support is repeatedly and maliciously withholding payments. So, Mr. Speaker, our government is very much in support of women who are in need of that money.

Now every Saskatchewan worker deserves a workplace that

needs to be protected from all forms of harassment. Now I know that the members of the opposition have brought forward a petition asking for this, but we had already put it in place in our Speech from the Throne. And we'll be bringing forward this legislation because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know and we respect our workers within Saskatchewan. And we know that our workers within Saskatchewan need to have the knowledge and the security that sexual harassment of any form in the workplace is unacceptable. And so, Mr. Speaker, we will always stand up for workers within Saskatchewan because it's imperative that people feel safe going to work.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have put forward within the Throne Speech a vision, a vision for Saskatchewan. And this spring we will be bringing forward a budget which helps finance what our vision is. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our schools, our hospitals, all of our health care, our social services, our highways — none of that's possible without a strong, thriving economy. Now I know I heard today one of the members opposite saying things such as, oh debt, debt. But meanwhile they keep asking us to spend more.

They haven't figured it out. I mean, I don't know where their calculator is, but it doesn't seem to be working very well for them, because you've got to have a balance. And we work really hard to ensure that we have a balance, and the balance comes from having a strong economy. In order to be able to pay for these things that people in Saskatchewan want, but also need, is a strong economy. And I must say that the city of Regina and surrounding area is going to be very blessed with some of the announcements of new developments.

Regina Red Leaf Pulp is set to build Saskatchewan's first wheat straw pulp facility. That's a \$350 million project. It'll create 110 full-time, permanent jobs right here in the Queen City.

Our Brandt Group of Companies is hiring more than a thousand people. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they've made a commitment that more than half of those new employees will be located right here in Saskatchewan, in Regina.

Then we have Whitecap signing a memorandum with the Federated Co-operatives Ltd., better known to most people here as the upgrader. Again, these are the things that are moving our province forward.

We also have two new plants that are going to be built by Cargill and Viterra. And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are commitments. These are large financial commitments to ensure that our economy remains strong. It also means that we will have new jobs.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that there will be a challenge to ensuring that we have a workforce that will be able to be employed within these jobs. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan people are up for the challenge. We've never shied away from a challenge. We don't stand here wringing our hands, saying, what should I do, what should I do. The people of Saskatchewan, we roll up our sleeves and we get the job done.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am looking forward to the excitement that we will see within Saskatchewan but better yet, within our Queen City here in Regina. Because we know that new jobs will

also create more industry. We have service industry that will have to supply those companies. So we know that this is going to be an absolute boon for our province. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've never, ever stood up and heckled the member opposite when he has stood up and replied to either his Speech from the Throne or in fact even his budget reply. So now I would ask for him to respect my voice. Now maybe he feels it okay to harass me because I'm a woman. I don't find it acceptable, so I'm going to ask him to respectfully listen to what I have to say and let my voice be heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our goal in this session and the years ahead is to build a better Saskatchewan, a stronger Saskatchewan, a safer Saskatchewan, a healthier Saskatchewan, a better-educated Saskatchewan, and a more independent Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Throne Speech has given us the vision to do this. So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne. I could not support the amendment put forward by the opposition. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Francis: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very honoured to have the opportunity to address you and the members of this House in support of this fall's Speech from the Throne.

Well to be quite honest, the last 20 months or so have been nothing short of awful to varying degrees for everyone, of course obviously much worse for some others. We're all feeling very stressed. I must say and I must commend our Premier and our Health minister for standing up every day and listening to constant criticism day in and day out. And I want to thank them and Dr. Shahab for their steadfast leadership this past two years.

I don't think any of us could have predicted the length of time and the problems that we've faced with this pandemic. As so many colleagues have mentioned, we see so much polarization and division. COVID has managed to bring out the worst in our society at times. And it's certainly fair to say the media isn't always helping with that.

Coming from a constituency where 8 or 9 out of 10 voters used to be supporters, I never, ever would have dreamt that I would see protests or rallies out in front of my office, people that have supported me in the past now inundating my office with emails, phone calls, personal attacks, demands for resignations — general abuse, really. And maybe some of you are used to that, knew what you signed up for. I was not prepared for that. My staff was not prepared for that. But we're working through it together, day by day, call by call, trying to keep each other motivated and focused, attempting to assure people that what we're doing is necessary to ensure our health care system doesn't crash. Telling them there's far, far more to governing a province than pandemic response. There's budgets, there's bills, there's economic policy — all things that matter, things that provide for a brighter future for the province.

And so in this speech I'm going to focus on that, our brighter future. The Speech from the Throne outlines this government's vision for the future and building a better Saskatchewan, already

what I consider the best place when it comes to growing up, going to school, working, starting a business, or raising a family — things I was able to do and I want future generations to be allowed to do.

As great as this province is, we certainly have our share of challenges and the desire to improve our way of life once we pass those challenges. Obviously health care is at the forefront and our most imminent challenge. To be perfectly honest, health care is always a challenge here, especially rurally. Centralized health care service in a sparsely populated province obviously makes the most economic sense. It does at times, however, put an extra burden on us rural folks.

When a community like Melfort gets a CT [computerized tomography] scanner, as envious as I am of that, it's a good thing. It takes pressure off the rest of the system and maybe even, if you guys play your cards right, you'll get a Walmart soon. I often tease the member from Melfort that Kindersley has had some things for years and years that Melfort still doesn't have, but he reminds me that they now have a CT scanner and Kindersley does not. Good for Melfort, good for the province. And I think we can all agree, a healthier province makes for a stronger province.

We continue as a government to invest in our people through investments in this area, \$530 million alone spent on COVID in our health care budget. Beyond the pandemic, our health care investment is significant with more funding for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the University of Saskatchewan ovarian cancer testing and drug prediction programs. We're funding eight projects designed to improve patient flow and reduce wait times in our major cities, along with new urgent care centres that will provide alternative care — and this is an important point — to those that are with mental health and addictions issues.

We're all aware of the mounting mental health and addictions challenges facing every jurisdiction throughout the province and the country. For our province to be healthy, we need to address that right now. New in-patient treatment beds in Swift Current and Estevan are a good example. Pursuing additional opportunities with the help of charitable organizations and third-party providers with a goal of adding 150 treatment spaces over the next three years, awareness and prevention programs, increased access to testing for deadly street drugs like fentanyl, better access to naloxone kits, community wellness buses — all measures that will provide for a healthier population and a healthier province.

And before I switch topics, I think it's appropriate to make some thanks to the folks in health care for their way, way beyond-the-call-of-duty efforts over these past 20 months from front-line testing, contact tracing, vaccination rollout, everything in between. Thank you very much.

Also a big thank you to the businesses that are abiding with the health orders. We know it's hard for you as well. We know you take abuse much like we do from a very vocal minority, but thank you for continuing to do the right thing.

And one last thank you, a thank you to the ever-growing number of folks who have gotten or in the process of getting fully

vaccinated. It's working. Just less than two weeks ago I was a close contact and I've had five COVID tests in the last two weeks. I've failed lots of tests over the years but I'm very glad I failed these ones. I'm attributing it to being vaccinated and the masking measures and all the measures we've been taking to keep us safe. And I feel that that's worked for me. And it's also working for our health care system because currently we're seeing our numbers trending in the right direction. So our measures are working and I'm thankful of that.

So switching gears, I'd like to talk about our plans for a better-educated Saskatchewan. Now at face value, a better-educated province, you know, might mean to some as more people should go to university.

But our vision is that it should start at basic levels, and this starts through child care spaces, a long-enduring concern across the nation. But this government has had a 14-year track record of progress in this area. Since 2007, the number of child care spaces has increased from just over 9,300 to over 16,000. That's a 77 per cent increase, which is significant. Yes, there's always more to do, but we are committed to leverage the federal government's mandate to provide greater and more affordable access to child care across the province and the country.

[15:15]

With our population growth comes a need for more schools. Sixteen major school projects are part of our capital plan for education. Seven of those are new schools in which construction is already under way.

As good as bricks and mortar are, classroom size is often a challenge, and our colleagues graciously point that out quite often. Size, diversity, and composition are different in every school, so we are creating a new funding pool to enhance classroom supports, which includes hiring additional EAs.

COVID has made it very hard for teachers, students, and parents alike, and that's why we felt it important to provide 150 million in pandemic supports to ensure kids still had access to high-quality learning. Schools and teachers, educators, have done a great job in keeping the kids safe and keep giving them what they need, which is a good education.

Keeping students engaged continues to be a challenge. Even without COVID it was difficult to keep some of them focused. We're excited to begin a new parent-teacher home visit pilot project that hopes to build and strengthen relationships between teachers, students, and their families. We also are hopeful that Take a Break from the social media campaign will help students prioritize and focus more on their learning.

Mr. Speaker, our government's commitment to a better-educated province extends into the post-secondary space as well. We've increased the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship program from \$500 to \$750 per year, up to a total of 3,000. To date over 72 million has been allocated to post-secondary students as well as adults taking basic education and GED [general equivalency diploma] courses.

Over the next two years, our government will provide an additional 60 million in operating funding to advanced

education, a true testament to our vision and commitment to building a better-educated Saskatchewan.

Moving now to a topic that is important to us all, but has really become a growing concern of late in rural Saskatchewan, is public safety. Our government has vision for a safer Saskatchewan. Rural crime has grown so much in the last few years, and I'm pleased to see some positive action being taken to tackle this issue.

We have introduced the protection and response crime reduction team and expanded the Saskatchewan crime watch advisory network. We will also add 60 new police positions and 11 civilian positions to create the provincial protective services unit, bringing all levels of law enforcement together where and when needed. We will also create a provincial trafficking response team to combat the growing human trafficking problem.

In addition we will create a warrant enforcement and suppression team to target dangerous offenders with outstanding warrants. Legislative changes will also play an important role in bolstering our newest changes to law enforcement. Historic problems with money laundering and trespass issues will also be addressed in amendments to their respective property Acts.

The amendment to *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act* will be the first of its kind in the country. Another significant improvement to the system, which is of significance to my constituency, is the family intervention rapid support team. In my constituency West Central Crisis & Family Support has been providing assistance for years and our government is very excited to assist them in their important work.

Mister deputy deputy speaker, planning for the future requires investment in infrastructure. Since 2007 this government has invested nearly 37 billion, modernizing this province's infrastructure. Good infrastructure attracts private investment. Our growth plan for 2030 is to invest another 30 billion, which will no doubt equate to additional billions of private investment. We have recently seen the confidence that private companies have in our province's future. Companies like BHP, Viterra, Cargill have committed to very large projects worth billions of dollars, and will equate to hundreds and hundreds of construction and operations jobs.

We aren't just focusing on new infrastructure either. Our rural highway system that was basically ignored for decades under the NDP will see 10 000 kilometres of thin membrane surface improved — again, great news for rural constituencies. This fiscal year saw 200 million invested into that network: 65 million in the intersection safety, 503 million into new capital projects. Important investment in our highway infrastructure.

And speaking of networks, internet and cellular connectivity is rapidly becoming the next must-have utility in every jurisdiction. Our connected world dictates that people and businesses need access to reliable cellular and internet service for both their businesses and their basic daily needs.

Our government continues to be committed to improving our provincial communications network. We directed SaskTel to construct 200 new cell towers to connect rural communities. We made significant improvements to our fibre optic network, but

much more is needed. SaskTel is committed to spending another 100 million to expand and improve the fibre network. By the end of 2024, 45 rural communities and over 60,000 residents and businesses will have access to advanced fibre optic broadband service. As well, we will work directly with private sector providers to help bring service to areas that currently don't have fibre optics infrastructure.

Heading into the winter months very shortly here reminds us of how dependent we are on reliable and affordable energy supply. SaskPower is investing 272 million into its aging transmission and distribution infrastructure. Included in this is a \$50 million grid renewable grant program to enhance the reliability of our power grid. As the world pushes for more, or in some case all renewable energy sources, is quite troubling to me. Our wonderful prairie climate dictates we need a little different baseload power than some jurisdictions.

And not to say that renewables can't play a role; however the notion that these technologies are 100 per cent reliable or 100 per cent clean is a fallacy. There is no energy source that does not have some sort of impact on the environment, uses or emits carbon either at the front, the middle, or the back end. These facts are often conveniently left out of the conversation though.

If the world continues on a path to net zero, we're convinced that nuclear power will need to play a large role in that. Our government is committed to bringing small modular reactors into the clean fuel conversation. It's quite evident that wind and solar proponents are negative to nuclear. They're also negative to hydrogen, and they're also negative to clean coal. They're serving their self-interests and that's kind of human nature, but we really think the conversation needs to be broadened. And as advances in technology come along, as we've seen them advancing very rapidly in the last decade, I personally think that the use of our existing fuel sources, including coal, natural gas, and uranium, need to be part of that conversation.

And I can certainly talk at length about our sustainable oil and gas industry, but last evening our Energy and Resources minister covered that off quite well. She did a great job explaining the great job that our producers do and the utter hypocrisy that our federal government is spewing with regard to the most sustainable energy produced on the planet.

And the fact that we've heard it said many times, and it was part of the Throne Speech, that if every oil- and gas-producing jurisdiction in the world would do it the way we do it here, 25 per cent emissions reductions would be realized overnight. That's a testament to our industry and we should be proud of it, something our Prime Minister should be promoting and proud of in Glasgow right now, but he's not doing it. And honestly something the opposition members maybe could do is talk to their federal counterparts that keep propping Prime Minister Trudeau up, and maybe talk about our industry and how good it is and how it is worldwide.

Technology, like I said, is rapidly moving and Saskatchewan companies are getting in on the action. We see four Saskatchewan companies on the fastest growing companies list. Our government continues to support the tech sector and programs like the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive and the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund. We are

confident that investments like the 15 million provided to VIDO-InterVac [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-international vaccine centre] will ultimately lead to the discovery and production of homegrown vaccines.

To summarize, all of the investments and commitments we make as a government all rely on one thing, and I think the member before me spelled this out quite clearly. Without a strong, healthy economy, none of that other stuff happens. Despite interference and bad policy decisions coming out of Ottawa, our economy is doing quite well and is poised to take off.

We will rely on all sectors of our economy, but especially our agriculture and resource sectors. The 2021 drought was a significant hurdle, but it isn't anything we haven't seen before. The '30s, 1961, 1988, 2003 — dry years or even dry periods of a few years are part of the prairie weather cycle. In 1860 Captain John Palliser reported back to the British government that a good portion of southern Saskatchewan was “too arid for crop production” and should never be settled. Well I think we know how accurate that was. But the point is our agriculture sector always has been and will again rebound, and we'll be ready to provide the world with the agri-food products the world wants and needs.

As a government we feel our growth plan targets are very reachable in every sector. Canola crush capacity, value-added agriculture, potash mine expansion, mineral projects, helium, lithium development, enhanced oil recovery, forestry revitalization, new mills, upgraded mills, OSB [oriented strand board] plants — no matter where you look, success stories are everywhere. Saskatchewan companies and industries are poised and ready, and we as a government are committed to helping tell the Saskatchewan story across the globe with the aid of our new trade offices. When your federal government can't seem to be bothered with promoting our industries, we are more than willing to do that on our own in Saskatchewan, and that's a key part of us becoming a more independent Saskatchewan.

At this time of year, I think it's very important for us to recognize and understand just why we have the ability to live in this great land of opportunity, and that's our veterans. The ones that fought and defended our nation in the face of tyranny and conflict over the last century or so are owed an unrepayable debt, a debt that cannot and must not be forgotten or taken for granted. This government will never forget that sacrifice, and we'll continue to support veterans and associated service clubs that continue to honour our veterans each and every year.

In closing I want to reiterate the comments of my colleagues in their support speeches for the Speech from the Throne, a positive message to begin this session . . . [inaudible] . . . And as we move forward out of the COVID cloud we've been under for almost two years, I'm looking forward to the things ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I am in favour of the motion put forward by the member from Prince Albert Northcote and will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition member from Saskatoon Eastview. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Keisig: — It is an honour to stand here once again and offer my reply and support to the Speech from the Throne. It is always an honour to be here, to work each and every day in this Chamber with all of my colleagues.

This year the Throne Speech spoke about a farm just southwest of Saskatoon, the Dery family. Like many farmers across the province, they were faced with a disappointing crop. Derek Dery was quoted saying, “As tough as it is, you just need to find things to be grateful for and get the land prepared for 2022.”

This statement had me thinking, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What a positive attitude to have. Farmers are always faced with both great and challenging seasons, yet they take a moment to stop, be grateful, and plan ahead for the next season. This year has been a difficult season for not only the farmers in this province, but also for every single citizen in this province. We’ve been dealt a challenge in many aspects, and it is up to each and every person in this province to decide how they are going to react, adapt, and deal with the current season we are in.

Each one of us in this Chamber has the ability to wake up in the morning and decide if we’re going to find things to be grateful for. We can choose to work together, remain positive, and use these values as a tool to push us to make our day, make our communities, and make our province better for the coming year. We can also choose to sit and dwell on those difficulties with blinders on and keep looking back at what could have been done differently instead of dealing with the right now.

[15:30]

Our current reality is that we are dealing with the pandemic, but there are also so many positives happening right now in our province. There’s a lesson to be learned in every difficulty, every hardship that we as individuals have to endure, in addition to society at large. We will work through this pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We will be wiser. We’ll be stronger as a province because of its aftermath. This will be a great season of growing a strong Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I choose to stand here today, to remain diligent and have a positive outlook not only for myself, my family, but also for the people of the province. The people of Last Mountain-Touchwood did not elect me to dwell on our lowest moments. Rather, I truly believe I was elected to be a positive voice. I know that the people of the province will push through as a stronger, safer, healthier, better-educated, and more independent Saskatchewan.

On that note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I’d like to use this opportunity to express my gratefulness to the people in my life who continue to support, assist, and encourage me each and every day. My wife, Sheila, is always diligently serving the ratepayers of the rural municipality of Tullymet as their administrator. She also serves on the Rural Municipal Administrators’ Association as vice-president. The RMAA was started in 1920 and is an organization that brings together senior administration from Saskatchewan’s rural municipalities to meet the needs of its members and to help improve professional services it supplies to Saskatchewan citizens.

My older daughter, Shannara — who managed to come for lunch

today, so that was nice — completed her continuing care aide course and has been working part-time at Strasbourg senior care home. She decided to increase her education and is currently enrolled at Sask Poly in the licensed practical nurse course. She really enjoys her schooling, but I have a message for the minister: she really hates the parking.

My younger daughter, Sharlize, was attending university in Saskatoon but unfortunately she’s become another statistic. Due to COVID and the university moving online, it just was not the educational experience she wanted. So she left school and found a job at a veterinary clinic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and she absolutely fell in love with that line of work. She’s currently enrolled at Lakeland College at Vermilion. She’s taking the veterinary technologist program. She’s enjoying her school but she has full intention of returning back to Saskatchewan once she’s done her education.

My family’s amazing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I’m thankful every day for their level of support. I would not be able to do what I do every day without their support and encouragement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really . . . I need to get something off my chest. I was honestly shocked by the controversial statement that came out of the member from Arm River. I’ve met his constituency assistants, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they are truly good people, very nice, very diligent. But for him to say that they are the best in all of Saskatchewan is very challenging, a very tough statement. My constituency assistant, Tina Knowles, has been helping me since the campaign trail. And her work ethic, her skill set and determination are second to none. I want to thank her for all her help, coaching, and organizing, and I want to proclaim her the best constituency assistant in the province.

Many of my colleagues in here have talked about the myriad industrial investments that are forthcoming in this province. They’ve talked about the new Jansen potash mine. They’ve talked about the three new canola crush plants. They’ve talked about the doubling of the Yorkton plant, the wheat straw plant. I mean, the list goes on and on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Like, these jobs are going to create thousands of construction jobs for all trades involved. From apprentices to journeymen, there’s good times on the horizon for all people employed in the trades.

And it’s also really important to talk about. Like, these construction jobs are really going to be some good opportunities for entry-level positions for young people, first-year apprentices, and everything they’ll want to carry on their education in the trades. And after construction’s completed — oh, now we switch, Mr. Speaker — many people will be employed in long-term jobs at these plants.

A colleague of mine, the member from Moose Jaw North, we recently toured the Belle Plaine potash mine, and I really want to thank the staff at the mine for the great tour. Very informative, very educational, and you really learn what a fantastic employer those potash mines truly are. Belle Plaine employs about 500 full-time staff with a remarkably low turnover rate. Due to retirements, they had five new openings and they received over 600 applications for those five jobs. Like, that shows how badly people really want to work at these potash mines.

Another thing that I’m really excited about all these plants — and

everyone's talked about them; I don't have to repeat it again — is that after construction and even after they're staffed, every one of these plants will go through a shutdown or a turnaround on an annual basis. I have 25 years of experience in the trades, Mr. Speaker, and I know that once a facility is built, it has to be maintained. The Jansen mine is a 100-year facility. The canola plants are typically 50-year lifespan plants. And all of these plants, they have an annual shutdown creating short-term, high-paying jobs. I went years touring this province on the shutdown circuit, Mr. Speaker, and these are good jobs. They're long hours. They're physically challenging but they're very financially rewarding. And due to these investments, there will be so much opportunity for the years to come.

I was really happy to hear the member from Arm River discussing about electrical generation with his children. The exciting renewable technology that's advertising at being carbon-free and environmentally friendly is just what the next generation enjoys talking about. It's crucial to temper these conversations with the realizations and knowledge of how our modern society operates.

We live in an on-demand society, and the critical weakness and unreliability of renewables has to be discussed. I'm genuinely excited about the ongoing research into small modular reactors and a future of safe, emission-free electrical generation that can come from nuclear power. It's also essential to recognize that our coal-fired electrical generation will be part of our diverse network for years to come as we bridge into other forms of energy.

We have to talk about the widespread drought that ravaged many Saskatchewan agricultural producers this summer. The rain that came province-wide that fell in early June was a blessing, and then the taps turned off. Our area was fortunate to receive some spotty showers and yields were heavily reduced, but we still had a crop to combine. Many producers across the province were not that fortunate.

We have to make sure we understand this from a historical point of view. I remember very well the dry '80s. We finished combining in August before school started in September. I was very happy to be done, and then my father said to me, we don't have any grain. It was a very early lesson about weather and simple economics, and I want to thank my father for teaching me that. He often talked about the devastating drought of 1961 and how they had absolutely nothing.

I'm really hoping I get a chance this session, Mr. Speaker, and go for a coffee with the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation and get a little bit of insight from him about the drought of 1937, and just gain a little bit of knowledge and importance. In this province, we've seen drought. We've seen heat waves. We've seen frost. We've seen floods. These are all natural occurrences, Mr. Speaker, and I can guarantee they will all occur again in the future.

It's important to note, Mr. Speaker, how this drought affects different agricultural producers differently. When it stops raining, grain producers stop spending money. They reduce fungicide, herbicide, fertilizer applications. But when it stops raining, that's when cattle producers start spending money. They're forced to secure more pasture, you know, start grazing

hay land early, start buying expensive feed.

Cattle eat every day and require constant care, and nobody does a better job than Saskatchewan producers. That's why we came out with the emergency support plan for Saskatchewan cattle producers of 119 million. This support was welcomed by all cattle producers and was delivered very efficiently by existing staff at Crop Insurance. I want to thank these civil servants for their hard work and diligence. By using existing staff, it allows our government to deliver these programs efficiently.

Earlier on this year, I'd been hearing from many parents throughout my constituency about their concerns that the pandemic was taking on their children. I had an overwhelming number of parents reach out to me wanting their children back in the classroom.

Our school divisions, teachers, and staff have done a phenomenal job working through this pandemic and keeping our youth on track. Teachers are valuable influences in our student lives, and not having the ability to work one on one with students was challenging. Each day has been a learning curve throughout this pandemic. I am in awe of the level of professionalism, commitment, and patience that I have witnessed throughout the province and especially in my constituency.

I recall a conversation I had with a teacher in the constituency. She stressed the challenges that many teachers faced with technological issues, that families with multiple children share one or two computers or tablets. It has been challenging, but our teachers have maintained a level of excellence, expertise, and resilience. They've been remarkable examples of hard work and determination to our students. This pandemic brought us challenges, but it also made us as a government think swiftly on ensuring students who need to use online learning . . . that students in this province will receive the best education, whether our students are online or in the classroom.

Our children are online now more than ever. They have so much technology at their fingertips, so many different avenues to learn different things. We also know that technology has a downside. Social media has given humans the ability to become more globally connected. However as many people in this Chamber are aware, it can become a toxic environment to get caught up in. Social media can be especially harmful to our youth. This is why Saskatchewan education will be launching a new campaign that will encourage our youth to use social media positively. The Minister of Education gave a really good talk about that last night and I really want to thank him for that.

We need to ensure that our kids are safe from the dangers that social media can bring, and I'm sure that this new campaign will assist our youth in using social media responsibly and be mindful of the dangers that come along with use of the internet. This will be a valuable tool to use in order to protect some of our most vulnerable population from being coerced or deceived by individuals on the internet.

Mr. Speaker, trafficking occurs all over the globe and entails various things such as drugs, weapons, humans. In Saskatchewan we are continuing to see a rise in trafficking of serious drugs such as fentanyl. Women and children across this province are more likely to be at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. The

creation of the Saskatchewan trafficking response team will target high-level offenders.

I understand the correlation between low-level crimes linked to mental health and addictions, but a segment of our population has chosen to be career criminals. The STRT [Saskatchewan trafficking response team] program will include 30 RCMP, 6 municipal, and 2 criminal analysts. These highly trained officers will focus on the head of the snake and work on removing it from our society.

I want to talk about our new Chief Firearms Officer, Robert Freberg, who has a very important position for all Saskatchewan law-abiding firearm owners. I'm one of those people, Mr. Speaker, and it is critical to bring a Saskatchewan perspective to the administration of the federal *Firearms Act*. I know we will serve all hunters, farmers, and target shooters across the province well.

[15:45]

As Remembrance Day approaches, I wear my poppy with pride. My great-uncle served in the Canadian Navy in World War II in the Italian campaign. Our government has distributed one and a half million to the veteran service club support program across this province. During a special time of year we must educate our youth on our veterans' long and storied history of keeping us all safe.

These are challenging times, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 is present and this government is dealing with it head-on. I've been doing an experiment of sorts, Mr. Speaker, for the last month. When I'm conversing with constituents, I never mention COVID. If they want to talk about it, I'll join in. There's a small group, Mr. Speaker, that's all they want to talk about. But the majority have moved on. They want to talk about crops. They want to talk about rising fertilizer prices. They want to talk about their kids. They want to talk about hockey. They want to talk about volleyball. The world is always moving forward and so are we.

There are people in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, that have gone above and beyond and I think they need a little bit of recommendation. Our Minister of Health, the member from Saskatoon Silverspring, and the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, the member from Swift Current, they've been inundated with phone calls from myself and my colleagues and constituents and people of Saskatchewan and they have always answered the phone. You know, a lot of times you don't get the answer you want, but they will always answer you and guide you and help you and answer all the questions that you have. It's really good to see.

I was attending a virtual meeting this fall and a quote popped up on the screen: "The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails." I've always felt anyone involved in agriculture has to be an optimist, and that's really what I consider myself. And I want to take this opportunity to thank the Premier for adjusting the sails accordingly and showing us the leadership that this province needs in these trying times. We truly need that Saskatchewan spirit, that compassion, that optimism.

I had the opportunity to introduce a neighbour of mine. I just met

him, you know, 10 months ago in our apartment building in the city, and we visit back and forth. And that's what we truly need right now is just all of us — in this Chamber, city, province — to be neighbourly. Like that's what we really want to see.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion from the member from Prince Albert Northcote, seconded by the member from Arm River, and I will not be supporting the amendment brought forward by the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

And please remember, donate to Movember. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave for introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, through you, to all the Assembly members I would like to introduce my CA [constituency assistant], Josh Fryklund, sitting in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. You know, he's the best CA for somebody who would like to see that in Saskatchewan that's right there sitting in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. I ask all my colleagues to welcome Josh Fryklund in his legislature.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. A. Ross, seconded by Mr. Skoropad, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Love.]

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to enter into debate on the Speech from the Throne today, and to put a couple of comments on the record about this particular Speech from the Throne as we do at this time of year.

I want to start off by thanking my constituency assistants, Jason and Graham. They, in normal times, have a tremendous burden to bear, but in being the face of the office for the NDP Health critic during a pandemic, it is a particularly challenging time for them. And I know that the stories that they hear are sometimes, you know, fivefold, tenfold the information that we get directly as members.

And I can say that in those conversations, I have seen them demonstrate patience, compassion, empathy, and a willingness to

fight the good fight for the people of this province to make sure that they get access to the services that they should have. And you know, I just want to thank them for doing that work, day in and day out, in such a sincere way.

And the other half of the time they work in the Leader of the Opposition's office. So he also hears, you know, so many concerns about the COVID pandemic because of his background as a medical doctor. You know, folks will go to him as well. So it's not like they get any kind of reprieve from this.

And it's hard not to take these issues home. And I've heard a lot of members reflect on the fact that this has been such a trying time for all of us. And I think the pandemic has hit some people differently than others — but we've all been impacted in some way — and that it's important not to minimize the experiences of others and to think about how we can get through this together.

And I know that for those who are hearing these concerns first-hand, you know, I do want to thank them. And I know that this also includes many of the staff in our caucus office who hear these conversations first, who patiently sit through these conversations and really empathize with folks. So just thanks for the care that is being extended as we hear these stories and as we are reminded that these COVID statistics that we hear every day are not numbers. They represent real people.

And we've heard so many of these stories come forward in the speeches already and I know that there are so many more stories that will be told and won't be told. And I want to thank those folks who are hearing those concerns and really hearing the anger of Saskatchewan people right now.

And we've heard so many of these stories come forward in the speeches already, and I know that there are so many more stories that will be told and won't be told. And I want to thank those folks who are hearing those concerns and really hearing the anger of Saskatchewan people right now.

And the tone is different now than it was a year ago, than it was two years ago, Mr. Speaker. There is a palpable sense of anger that COVID is an infectious disease that is ravaging our province, but that so many of these deaths could have been prevented. Illness could have been prevented. Closure of health services across the province could have been prevented. That is what we are hearing, and that is what is my responsibility to reflect as I engage in these remarks.

I had mentioned that COVID has been hard on all of us in different ways, and I think personally I wouldn't have been able to get through the past year and a half without the support of my partner, Grayson. There's all these different roles that partners play, and I know all of our lives look different. And for me that means having a support pillar who is always ready to chat about my day when I get home, is genuinely interested in what is best for the people of the province. He keeps himself informed on current events in a fierce way, like it's his duty, and is always willing to talk about what is best for the people of this province and to be my cheerleader at the same time, and to remind me of the work that needs to be done.

And I always say he's the greatest feminist I've ever met because of his belief in women. And you know, I see that every day with

his belief in me. And of course he's not watching because he's a teacher and he's at school, but I do want to put those comments on the record so that people know. But thank you for the cheering section as well, and to my friends as well.

We don't always mention our friends in this Assembly but I just want to say, I was having a conversation earlier about how impactful this pandemic has been on our whole communities. And one of the pieces that we don't often think about is how we rely on friendship, and we've been encouraged to physically distance ourselves. Zoom really isn't doing the trick for folks anymore, myself included, and I know that I have a lot of friends that I haven't spent as much time with as I used to. And I think that is having an impact on people's well-being as well, is not having those networks.

And I certainly want to thank my colleagues in this space, who I do consider my friends, for their time and attention to I think the emotional needs of the other colleagues as well. And I feel like we lean on each other in good ways, and would like to see that continuing to happen. And I hope that we can all sort of grow stronger as we try to move through this.

And I say this to note that COVID has been hard on everyone, and to say that I would love to be able to move past this more than anyone perhaps. As someone who has, you know, had to be tied to the news and the daily updates and all of the research and following the latest on everything, I would love to take a break from COVID, Mr. Speaker. And unfortunately, we can't do that. We are in the thick of a fourth wave where we have the highest COVID death rate in Canada. I would love to be able to turn the page on COVID-19, but we aren't there yet.

We have patients in intensive care thousands of kilometres away. We have patients in intensive care in Ontario where their families often were not consulted, consulted at the last minute, and are having to deal with the fact that they can't see their family members. And we're dealing with a fourth wave that was predicted through modelling but only recently became available, Mr. Speaker. So yes, we know that this is preventable. And that is the point. That is why we have to talk about these deliberate choices that were made by this government that have put us in this situation right now.

Last week we saw the Premier give a state of the province address. I did tune in to that. And also we got the Speech from the Throne. And unfortunately what we're seeing in both of these speeches is an attempt to change the channel. And I have to say that we aren't there yet, Mr. Speaker. We have to get through this first. The Throne Speech ignores the devastating damage that's been caused by the Premier's refusal to listen to recommendations of Dr. Shahab and experts across the province and beyond. We do have the highest COVID death rate in Canada. That's the state of the province, Mr. Speaker.

We got an account of this in question period today as well. We know that the cancelled surgeries, the cancelled therapies, procedures, organ transplants, pediatric therapies, there are real people behind these cancelled procedures. There are real people that are suffering across this province. And these people know that this was a deliberate choice. That's the state of our province, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

And I want to offer my sincere condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one due to COVID-19, and to say that this is heartbreaking. So many of our friends and family members have been taken too soon. And I know that the impacts of that are starting to bubble up as well as we see an entire shutdown of our health care system across the province, of people who are trying to access health care but it's not available to them.

And I've heard many people say, you know, this is Saskatchewan. We live in a privileged province, a privileged country. I never thought I would see the day where I wouldn't know if emergency care was available to me if I need it, if there was an ICU bed if I got into a terrible car accident. These are things that we have sort of taken for granted as members of this province, in the birthplace of medicare.

And so it's completely devastating to see that we're at a point now where health care professionals are crying out, begging the government to take action. And instead we have a government that is so dedicated to talking points, just recycling political lines, and we're not seeing that action when we need it.

We need to get this fourth wave under control. Our health care workers are burning out. They were burning out before the pandemic. They were burning out in previous waves. Now we're hearing about so many folks who are considering leaving the profession, leaving the province. And Saskatchewan people have been reaching out all summer and fall to express these concerns, to express this anger.

They've asked, where is the Minister of Health? Where is the Premier on this? Why haven't they shown up to a press conference? Why aren't they hosting press conferences? Why aren't they doing anything to protect us?

And I've had these conversations over and over again with concerned citizens across the province who have said, what can I do? What can I do to raise my voice to let this government know? And I see members nodding on our side of the House. This is the most common conversation that I've had with folks in the past three months. What can I do to let them know that their inaction is costing lives, that their inaction is costing delayed surgeries, that we can see a direct path here?

And I've had these conversations not with NDP loyalists, but with people who have supported the Sask Party in the past. And I'm seeing nodding around that my colleagues have had the same conversations. They don't feel like this government has their back.

And we've heard some boasting from this government about the latent actions that have taken place well after the fact that, you know, we deserve a pat on the back for the small public health measures that have been brought in, you know, a month, weeks after they've been recommended by experts, months after the modelling predicted we'd be in this exact scenario that we're in today.

They have to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to do the right thing, Mr. Speaker. And they are putting politics ahead of Saskatchewan people's lives. That is the state of the province,

Mr. Speaker.

And we've seen this over and over again throughout the summer. On July 11th, all restrictions were removed. We became the first province to remove all restrictions around gatherings. There was a palpable feeling that COVID was over and we all needed to celebrate the summer.

There was no acknowledgement of the fact that the Premier had in hand modelling that predicted the fourth wave. We had already started to see the spread of the Delta variant at that time. You know, they knew this was a real threat, Mr. Speaker, and yet there was no acknowledgement of that, no communication about the real state of the province to the people of this province.

The Saskatchewan government then stopped giving COVID-19 briefings for 48 days — 48 days — despite this modelling, despite the fact that we started to see cases going up, despite the fact that throughout the summer, as our cases were rising, experts began to raise the alarm. They had started to see tracking common metrics, test positivity rates, case numbers that we were on a bad trajectory.

And yet at the end of August, the Premier was still dismissing the idea of introducing another indoor mask or vaccine mandate. And at this point, calls for the resignation of the Health minister grew louder. We have people protesting in the streets crying out for action from this government, Mr. Speaker. That is the state of our province.

In September, people had hoped for a back-to-school plan that would keep us safe, and hoped that it would be adopted by this government as well, that the SHA developed. And we saw nothing. We saw, you're on your own, schools across the province. That was the approach that this government took. And we've seen so many cases of our children being infected with COVID-19. We not only have the highest death rate in Canada, but our children are also being impacted at a disproportionate rate. Three of our children have died in this province. Everyone said that they weren't going to be affected, that it wasn't going to be a big deal. We need to protect our kids.

And then we saw on September 10th, despite assuring Saskatchewan people we were not in an emergency, the Premier invoked emergency powers to reassign thousands of health care workers into new roles on the pandemic's front lines, interfering with bargaining that had been happening with unions and the SHA.

On September 17th, the Premier reintroduced an indoor mask mandate, making Saskatchewan the last province to do so in the fourth wave, with no indoor gathering limits — absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker. On the 21st, the Premier asked health care workers to really provide some guidance to Saskatchewan people and counter misinformation on COVID-19. They called this a slap in the face to the advocacy work that they have been doing throughout the entire pandemic.

Later in September, patients expressing extreme frustration as elective surgeries are cancelled . . . And if you've ever had an elective surgery, you know that that word is misleading. These are surgeries that are required for people's quality of life, their mobility, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there isn't a dependence on

opioids for pain management. These are incredibly important surgeries, Mr. Speaker, that have been cancelled.

On September 27th, the federal Health minister was encouraging the provincial Health minister to ask for help early, you know, forecast what you're going to need; we'll put you into the equation, and said this quite publicly as we saw increased COVID hospitalizations. Oh, they said no. You know, they did not respond to that call. Yeah.

October 1st, provincial vaccine mandate was finally implemented, which we knew was coming. You know, we saw other provinces signalling this months prior. While this government took the summer off, other provinces were putting in the work to figure out how the vaccine mandate was going to work. They knew this was coming, but they brought it in, couple weeks' notice, little notice to businesses who would have to figure out this new system. You know, the workers who are often being paid at minimum wage are the folks who were at the front door asking for the proof of vaccination, dealing with harassment, dealing with some very dangerous situations. And this government did not take the time to make sure that businesses were equipped and knew what they needed to do. And in the same breath, the consumers didn't know either. We didn't know that when we were going shopping exactly how we'd have to get our proof of vaccination.

They said no to QR [quick response] codes. Then they brought in QR codes. Then the QR codes didn't work. Then we had to get new QR codes. Now we're hearing that we have to get a new QR code every time there's a vaccine that's updated. This is if you can navigate the eHealth system. Good luck, Mr. Speaker.

The whole vaccine proof rollout has been an unmitigated disaster. It has left people feeling like the government does not have their back. There has been such a lack of clarity. People being told to change their names by eHealth in order to be able to go into a restaurant. No, I'm sorry, you have to change your name first before we'll give you your proof of vaccination. This is ludicrous.

And throughout October, Mr. Speaker, this has been the deadliest month of the pandemic. This is the time where the government says, we need to turn the page, we need to move, we're not going to talk about this any more, no one's concerned about this anymore. More people have died in Saskatchewan this month than ever before in the COVID pandemic, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if maybe they haven't gotten the notice; they haven't heard about this. This is incredibly significant, Mr. Speaker.

We hear in October that 200 elective surgeries a day are being cancelled, that our ICU capacity has reached its absolute limit upon limit upon limit because people were already double bunking. There's already stretching going on to stretch our resources. We hear that finally we're getting some assistance from the military, Mr. Speaker, through a tweet. And we need the federal government to tell us, because this government can't even stand up and own the fact that we need help in our province, that we have got into a situation where COVID-19 has maxed out our health care capacity.

And we knew this was coming. And health care workers have been on the front lines. You know, this government will call them

heroes, but when the rubber hits the road, Mr. Speaker, they don't have their back. And that's what's important here. And under no circumstances should we be hearing about our ICU capacity, about federal assistance coming in, through Twitter, Mr. Speaker. And not even the Twitter of that government. It's like they're ashamed of it. They're not going to talk about it. It's an absolute mystery to me, but I cannot believe that they haven't publicly acknowledged this assistance that we so badly needed.

I see that my time is coming up here, Mr. Speaker. I want to respect the other folks that still need to speak today. But I do think that reviewing the record on some of this is important, Mr. Speaker. And that's because the Sask Party had the modelling. They had the recommendations from Dr. Shahab that they will not share with this Assembly. They knew that our hospitals and our ICUs would be overwhelmed but they chose to, they chose to ignore the advice of professionals, of Dr. Shahab. While front-line health care workers spent months pleading for action, the Sask Party was nowhere to be found. They knew the fourth wave was coming and they chose to take the summer off.

We've talked about where that left us. People are angry. We have the highest COVID death rate in Canada. Thousands of surgeries have been cancelled. We don't know the numbers on how many folks have been impacted, missed opportunities for organ transplants — life-saving, Mr. Speaker — kids' therapies, all because the Sask Party has chosen politics over Saskatchewan people's lives.

[16:15]

The Premier has failed to provide leadership during this crisis. And I will say that it is an embarrassment to hear members on that side of the House stand up in their throne speeches and applaud him one by one by one, which they have clearly been told to do so in their speeches. Oh, make sure you thank the Premier and say he's a leader. That direction was clearly provided, clearly provided to the members opposite. It's an embarrassment. He has abdicated responsibility. He has not apologized. He has not apologized in a fulsome way about what has happened in this pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

The Speech from the Throne announces nothing to address the fourth wave. It's an attempt to change the channel, to distract from the devastation. But we won't let up, Mr. Speaker. We will listen to those on the front lines of the COVID fight. We'll follow the science and the facts. We're fighting for Saskatchewan and putting people ahead of politics. We're here and we won't stop fighting for you. And I will not be supporting the Throne Speech motion, and I will be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to have this privilege to stand up and reply to the Speech from the Throne. It is also my honour and privilege to represent people of Regina Pasqua and speak on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Throne Speech and I do not support the amendment presented by the member from opposite. Mr. Speaker, it covers all aspects and measures necessary to build a better economy while facing many challenges during this pandemic. We all know this world was hit hard by first, second,

third and fourth waves of pandemic. We heard about the experience, severe economic shock from around the world. Small and large businesses alike experienced hard times. School staff, students, and parents were faced many challenges. Mr. Speaker, in the meantime I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you to all the school staff and the parents and the community who helped. Our athletes faced a rough time due to the closure of gym, fields, and how many spectators, if any, were allowed to cheer for them.

Moreover it greatly affected our community and families. We were faced with many challenges related to our social life while looking for creative ways on how to safely get together. Mr. Speaker, during pandemic, something we all experienced together and will remember for the rest of our lives, our communities came together. Everywhere in Saskatchewan, whether it was a rural community or urban, people did their part and reached out to their neighbours and friends to offer help. We have saw individuals, families, and small groups distributing fresh and non-perishable food and household necessities. Mr. Speaker, it is these values that make us a proud nation and proud to be from Saskatchewan.

In the speech many steps and actions has been discussed to bring Saskatchewan economy back on track. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to building a better Saskatchewan, a safer Saskatchewan, a healthier Saskatchewan, a better-educated Saskatchewan, and a more independent Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan is a very attractive place for investors. We have a competitive business environment with incentives to attract investment, encourage value-added processing and motivated innovation. Mr. Speaker, an example of this is BHP announced a \$7.5 billion investment to complete the Jansen potash mine, which makes BHP the total expenditure of \$12 billion will be the largest single private sector investment ever made in Saskatchewan. The Jansen project builds on more than \$20 billion invested over the last 15 years by Nutrien, Mosaic, and K+S to expand and modernize Saskatchewan's potash industry. The Jansen mine will create 3,500 jobs during construction and 600 full-time operating jobs when it begins production in 2027, adding to nearly 6,000 jobs supported by the industry today.

Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech the government said it will continue to encourage and attract new investment to the province. In the very near future, three new canola crushing plants and a major expansion of an existing plant is an excellent example that Saskatchewan is business-friendly and very attractive for private sectors. Agriculture . . . [inaudible] . . . Viterra announced it intends to build a canola crush plant in Regina with a capacity of 2.5 million metric tons. The plant is predicted to have the largest crush capacity in the world. The crushing plant will have access to the rail line and will employ 100 full-time positions. Mr. Speaker, the plant will convert canola seeds into both vegetable oils and meals to be used for food and industrial purposes like renewable diesel. The project is currently finalizing the plant's capability and design, and hopes to begin construction in the next years with a plan of beginning production in late 2024. This has a very positive impact on our growth, employment, and for Saskatchewan's agriculture sector.

Mr. Speaker, canola is high in demand and has been a very

valuable commodity for a long time. It is grown by 43,000 Canadian farmers who produced about 20 million tonnes of canola annually, the crop mostly being grown in Saskatchewan, also in Alberta and Manitoba. In fact it is being grown all over Canada. Saskatchewan has more experience processing canola than anywhere else in the world. The 14 crushing and refining plants across Canada have the capacity to crush about 11 million tonnes of canola seeds each year. As the Saskatchewan processing sector grows, these companies are bringing new jobs and opportunity to Saskatchewan . . . [inaudible] . . . good opportunity for the Saskatchewan economy. And we have the target to crush canola up to 75 per cent of the whole production. We Canadians are the world leader in canola exports, which is mostly grown in Saskatchewan. About 90 per cent of canola grown in Canada is consumed in the export market. More than 50 different nations import canola seed oil from Canada. There are many customers for our raw seeds all over the world.

Now and in the very near future we will crush our canola here in Saskatchewan and will export the final products in markets around the world. This will bring many jobs and add economic values and opportunity for Saskatchewan growth and export. Mr. Speaker, this will export the finished products such as cooking oil, processed seed, biofuel, animal feeds, protein for humans, and I do not want to forget for canola, margarine as well. These are the major signs of growth, meaning more jobs for us to build a stronger Saskatchewan. Our goal is to create 100,000 new jobs by 2030.

Mr. Speaker, there is another investment in Prince Albert. We're investing in revitalizing the Prince Albert pulp mill, which was closed in 2006 and which left 700 people without jobs, Mr. Speaker. And we all know who was in the government in 2006.

Graham Kissack, vice-president of environmental health and safety and corporate communications of Paper Excellence said:

Reopening the pulp mill would be greatly beneficial to Prince Albert's economy. "This obviously represents 200 direct jobs, you know 300 million plus in annual economic lift, and a great deal more in economic spinoff," he said.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, Saskatchewan is the most attractive place for investors. In Regina this will be Canada's first wheat-based pulp mill coming up soon. And the wheat straw pulp mill will create 110 permanent, full-time jobs as well as 250 jobs during construction, according to the company, Red Leaf Pulp.

Wheat straw pulp is used for a variety of purposes and is an environmentally friendly alternative to the wood pulp according to the environmental researchers. The Regina facility will be used to turn wheat straw into pulp for paper products. According to Red Leaf Pulp, using straw instead of wood to create pulp results in a lower carbon footprint, which it attributes to factors like increase in energy efficiency, lower water uses, and use of renewable energy sources.

Mr. Speaker, there's a few projects. There's helium, lithium, and small modular energy reactors are in the pipe as well. Mr. Speaker, we set goals for 2030, and our government is aggressively working on it, whether that be private capital investment or government infrastructure.

This government ensures the Saskatchewan people have better employment, better education, the best child care, the best senior care, and the best health care, and are protected through the duration of COVID-19 pandemic, while also continuing to build on record investment in the mental health and addiction initiatives, enhancing the critical care measures, improving provincial health care program, and planning new infrastructure across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this government is currently working on Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert and Weyburn hospital. We also promise to build 800 long-term care beds in Saskatchewan.

This government is going even further on its drug coverage program. For the first time ever, Saskatchewan is now providing the coverage of the drug Trikafta, a drug considered to be a great innovation in the care of people living with cystic fibrosis.

Mr. Speaker, this government increased the 2020 AgriStability interim benefit payment from 50 per cent to 75 per cent. We tripled the funding available through the farm and ranch water infrastructure program to improve and build dugouts, wells, and pipelines. In the coming years, our government will invest an additional 2.5 million in agriculture water development, and we are also committed to a major irrigation project at Lake Diefenbaker, which has the potential to transform agriculture in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to making significant investment to education infrastructure. We had record budget for education in 2021 and 2022 for a better-educated Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, in my constituency of Regina Pasqua we built two joint schools — Harbour Landing public school and St. Kateri school in 2017. Harbour Landing is a thriving community that is growing very fast. Now we have committed two more joint schools for Harbour Landing and the money has been allocated for those schools in the last budget and it is coming in the very near future.

[16:30]

This government had been investing since 2007 and had spent record amount of money on different infrastructure on the highway project repaving and adding passing lanes, enhancing the intersection for public safety.

Mr. Speaker, before I wrap up my speech, I would like to say a few thank yous. I would like to say the first thank you to my CA Josh Fryklund, very hard-working guy and taking a load off from me and making my job very easy.

I would like to say thank you to all constituents that are reaching out to my office and whoever have my personal phone and reaching out to me, and their feedback and their messages to send over to my caucus and my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you to my wife, Attia. We've been together, we've been married since 22 years. As the member, my colleague from North Battleford mentioned that they just don't sit here with us but they're holding the torch and they are behind all of us. We know that.

We have three boys, Mr. Speaker. My oldest son is Ayaz. He is

in the second year of university, never been in a university yet. It is all online classes these days. Second son is Kashif. He just got a licence a couple of months ago, now it's a car and his job and his gym. I'm so proud of him. And youngest son is Arsalan. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of that little boy. He is also in French immersion and yesterday when he was ready for school he did not get exit from the door and he remind that "Papa make sure that you have the poppy and give me my poppy before I get exit from the door."

I would like to say thanks to my siblings. Mr. Speaker, we had a very hard time during this pandemic. All those brothers I raised up had the COVID other than me and I lost one. Mr. Speaker, my condolences to all those people who lost their loved one. I know how it feels. I had my nieces, nephews, many of those had COVID — very tough. The way is to get vaccinated. Nobody denied for my family to get vaccinated but it was a little slow process down there and he did not get it. He was brother, but father to me. He taught me many skills — my business, he was my hunting buddy too. And it's a bit late, but I would like to say thank you for him. We called him Bhai Jan Basharat by our family, but he was the oldest one.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thanks to everyone across the aisle, to Opposition Leader, that he and his team is also working for the people of Saskatchewan. I would like to mention that we cannot say that we care more than you, or you care less than us. We all care for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say thank you to our Premier. He is carrying the heavy responsibility. If we go back a hundred years of history, we do not see any Premier having this big challenge that he is facing, or every premier right now in Canada is facing that. We did not see that before.

I would like to say thank you to Dr. Shahab and his team, the health authority and all the health workers, and the front-line workers and staff. We appreciate all that you have done and continue to do for this province.

The one thing we can agree upon is that regardless of our differences, at one point or another, we have all been in the same boat of this pandemic. We can see the shore now. We must do one thing, paddle in one direction, and Saskatchewan will see this pandemic through.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. God bless Canada. God bless Saskatchewan. God save the Queen.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me today and allowing me to enter into the debate of the Speech from the Throne. I'm not quite sure how many of these I've entered into. It's been a number, and I'm sure there is somebody who would like to correct the record and probably knows exactly how many it is. I'd rather not know that number.

I want to recognize the member from Regina Pasqua and what a great speech, and how difficult that would be. You know, we're all standing here with kind of life experiences. Some of us, you

know, haven't been impacted nearly as greatly as others. And some, you know, have been impacted but not maybe to the extent or in the time frame. So great job to the member from Regina Pasqua on those very moving words.

I kind of have a template of what I do when I do a reply to the Speech from the Throne or budget. I tend to talk about some thank yous that I need to get out of the way, and then I'm going to get into more of the meat of the Speech from the Throne, kind of the pros and maybe some of the cons, and also talk a little bit about what I've heard in the House. I haven't listened to all the speeches but I have listened to most of them. You know, I guess maybe I have to get a life because over the lunch hour I listened to a number of the speeches that went on last night. Wow. But anyway, so that's my template and that's what I'm going to try and get through in the 20 minutes that I have.

Again, I'll start by a number of thank yous. And a number of people have mentioned their families. I'd like to thank Cindy. She had retired and then went back to work at the private surgery centre. Imagine that, a private surgery centre working in Saskatchewan, doing public surgeries. Interesting how that would work, but it is working out quite well.

The two boys, Mark and Craig, are pretty darn busy. Mark is working hard to qualify for the Canadian team. He's in a very good spot but he hasn't qualified yet to go to, of all places in the world in February, it would be China. But that's what they're all working really hard to do. I could think of many other venues that would be much better, from my perspective, to be holding the next Olympics, but they are in Beijing. And that was decided many years ago.

And Craig is again snowboarding professionally for a number of companies and had the opportunity to be in a very surreal setting back in August at the opening ceremonies in Tokyo. Being in the stadium where the opening ceremonies were, there was about five of them walking around this stadium that held 50,000 people, and what a feeling that would be. But he's blessed to work for CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] on the sports side, which I think they do a very good job, and will be also hopefully participating in Beijing.

I need to thank my constituency assistant, which I do, I hopefully do every time I stand. I know others have mentioned how valuable their constituency assistants are, and I know the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood said he feels he has the best one. And I would say that I think she is very, very good. She's had a lot of coaching from Nicole, my constituency assistant.

But I've been very fortunate. You know, I've been elected for — I wasn't going to say this number, but — for 21 years. And I've had two constituency assistants: Vonni, who worked for me for eight or nine years in opposition; and Nicole, who has worked for us, for myself, since we became government. And just again does such a great job, has such a kind of a read of the constituency because she lives in the constituency. She has got a couple girls that are active in the constituency. Her husband runs a business in the constituency. And really does have a grasp, and I rely on her so much for a lot of the, you know, the intel that I get and what people are saying.

And you know, I have just as much interest in what she does on

the weekends and who she's talked to, as opposed to the calls that come in, because it is a reflection of what people are doing in their lives, not just the political calls that we face in our constituency office. And being able to be grounded in the general public is so, so very important for all of us on both sides because what we consume ourselves with 24 hours a day or 12 hours a day — any of our waking hours generally — right now is the pandemic. And that's not necessarily where everybody is, and to have somebody that is grounded, I try and do it as much as I can.

I've been telling a few people I started playing hockey again, which is really kind of scary for my teammates, not that I want to relay everything that we talk about in the dressing room, but it is more grounded than what we talk about sometimes in this building right here. So if I relay some hockey stories or dressing room stories, which can be dangerous, it is because it's probably more reflective of where the general population is.

I also want to talk really quickly about the staff that I'm so, so very fortunate to have working in this building. There's a number of staff. Julia who does a great job of kind of encapsulating the media clips in the morning and sends me a condensed version because I'm better with condensed than I am with too much information.

Hillary is not in our office right now but is working with the Ministry of Health in the ministry's office because there is such a volume right now, and I know her days are filled working in that area. So thanks, Hillary, when you're in GR [Government Relations].

Andrea, who does kind of the media and is tapping me on the shoulder more than once to say, "Minister, have you read your quote?" Oh yeah. And then about three hours later, "Minister, have you read your quote? This news release has to go out." So thanks Andrea for being so patient.

Melissa who looks after probably the toughest job is my calendar, because I want to go to everything until I have to go to everything and then I don't want to go to everything. So she does a great job. And I was going to do my reply to the Speech from the Throne holding a blue binder because these blue binders have become very valuable in our office. That's a little bit of an inside joke. But I want to thank Melissa. She came from working with WestJet for 21 years. And there is no company, I don't think, that does better customer service than WestJet did when they had a number of people employed. Now she's taking that customer service and transferring it into our office, and I am so well served by someone that can handle the public as well as Melissa.

And finally, not finally, but I also want to recognize Max, my chief of staff. His first role is the chief of staff. I'm not sure it's the best position for him having to be chief of staff of an old minister because old ministers tend to get set in their ways. And chiefs of staff have, you know, great volume as far as taking in information, but again, an older minister can only absorb so much. So Max, thank you very much.

Okay. That was my thank yous, and that one only took five minutes. That's pretty good. I want to go to the Speech from the Throne and talk a little bit about the Speech from the Throne. And you know, maybe I've said this before, and if you go back in *Hansard*, I may have said this before, but I honestly believe

that this Speech from the Throne — albeit a long one; it was over 50 minutes — and I just kept looking . . . I found it maybe even a little bit long in these chairs, and they're pretty darn comfortable. I can't imagine the people in the benches and how long that was for them to sit. But you know, I talked to so many and they said it just flew by because it was such a good Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker. They didn't find those benches hard at all, Mr. Speaker. In fact they said they could sit there longer.

So, Mr. Speaker, they talked a lot about the Speech from the Throne, I think, talks about where more people are today. And it talked quite a bit at the start about COVID and the reality that we are in over the last 20 months and, more importantly, where we have been over that last couple of months, which have been very, very difficult times. And the opposition has really highlighted that. What they forgot to do is talk about — the opposition, that is — talk about the other 40 minutes of the Speech from the Throne that talked about the future and the absolute opportunity in this province. I don't think, since I have been elected, can I remember six months where there has been more announcements of investment into this province. And, Mr. Speaker, people in the province are interested in that.

[16:45]

I am just shocked that the opposition couldn't have a positive word to say. And I really worked on this when I was in opposition, to look at a couple of positives and then try and look at — really easy, quite frankly — to look at the negatives when the NDP were in government. But it's interesting when you listen to these, the dozen over there. Haven't all spoke yet but the dozen over there really haven't had a positive word. In fact I have never heard such doom and gloom in this Chamber as what I've heard. I mean some of them, I hate to say it and I don't have really long fingernails, but I can't imagine. Listening to 20 minutes of them speak would be exactly like 20 minutes of fingernails on a chalkboard. I tell you, it really does cut to your soul.

I do want to talk really briefly, well not briefly, about the whole vaccination, the whole last 20 months. You know, it is amazing. And I am like everyone else. You know, we're getting a lot of phone calls into our office, not so much right now because people have adjusted to the restrictions that we put in place and the mask mandate, the proof of vaccination or negative test. People have for the most part adjusted to that.

But I can tell you, like most everybody else on this side have already said, you know, we have been criticized because we didn't do it soon enough. We've been criticized because we did anything. We've been criticized because we didn't do enough. We've been criticized because we've done too much. It is all over the map.

Now again, listening to the opposition, they've only got one criticism and that's of government. But generally, the general population has been really split on this. And I would admit absolute great supporters and really good friends are struggling with some of the decisions that have been made. But there is no government that has gone through a pandemic before in this country or in this province, Mr. Speaker, for a hundred years since the Spanish flu. These are difficult decisions and, Mr. Speaker, I don't think there is a decision that a government could

make right now that would please everybody. That never is the case, but especially now. And it becomes very, very emotional.

You know, I can't believe that we could go back and at one point people listened readily to how many people you could have in your house. Government had that impact on people's lives to say, you cannot have another couple come into your house. That's amazing. Hopefully that never happens in a lifetime again. But that's what government had pre-vaccine, Mr. Speaker. The vaccines have come forward, and the vast majority of us — everyone in this Chamber save for one — has been vaccinated. And how important it is.

I struggle; I really do. I try and accept everybody's views. Some I agree with; some I don't. But I like to listen to their views, and I try and accept them for who they are and where they're coming from. But for the life of me do you think I can get my head around somebody that will be threatened to go into the hospital or get a vaccination in their arm? I can't. I struggle. I have got very good friends, very good friends with four kids. None of them will be vaccinated. And it doesn't matter . . . I mean, the opposition can say, government, you should have done this and you should have done that, and by doing that that would force them to get vaccinated. Absolutely not. There is nothing that we could do as a government or as a society that will make some people become vaccinated. They just refuse.

And I can't get my head around it when you look at the hospitals that have ICUs full of people that have COVID, and 90 per cent of those people are unvaccinated. What more evidence do people need when you see that the vast majority of people in the hospital that have COVID are unvaccinated? I don't know what more evidence you need. But they won't. I have a couple of friends. The wife works in the ICU. The husband works construction, electrical construction. He refuses to get vaccinated. They have a 10-year-old son. He's no longer living at home. That's the impact that it's having on families. Unbelievable.

And for some to sit here and say, it's government's fault that people haven't got vaccinated. It's government's fault that people are in the hospital or in the ICU. Are you kidding me? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No? That's government's fault that people are exercising their right? I don't agree with it. Are you kidding me? Wow, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that there are thoughts from all sides. But I have listened to a couple of speeches that were given in this House, and two that could not be more contrasting, a little bit like opposition and government right now. And the Premier has identified it many times, the contrast between government and the contrast between the opposition. But I thought never was it more evident when I sat here and listened to two speeches back to back, by two male members, relatively the same age, representing two constituencies that are side by side.

It was the member from Regina Rosemont, who obviously had had the thesaurus out before. And he used a plethora of adjectives to try and describe this government, none of it good. And it was all government's fault. And it was toxic, absolutely toxic, you know. And I respect that member. Absolutely. And he's got an opinion, and he's got a viewpoint that needs to be expressed from his party. I'm not so sure it's completely from his constituency, but it was unbelievable to listen to what he was saying.

And then no more than a minute later, the member from Regina Walsh Acres stands up and talks about how difficult it is in this province right now. And we've all experienced those phone calls, and it hasn't been easy. And then he talked about how positive things were, looking forward. Completely different than the opposition, you know. It's completely different than I honestly believe the reality for the opposition is.

The member from Regina Rosemont could talk about how terrible it is. And I love looking at his Instagram. Boy, talk about two diverging . . . What his Instagram talks about day in and day out, about his son, and his wife, and what he's doing, and then come into the House and talk about how terrible this province is. How do you do that? How do you talk about how terrible this government was throughout the summer, how terrible this government was through the summer, and then tweet, "I'm on a picture from a football game." Absolutely awful, this province. Government is responsible for everything. I'm sure we're responsible for those members going to the football game and having their mask in the pocket. That's government's responsibility because that's what we're hearing on a day-to-day basis from those members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I need to get back on to the Speech from the Throne because, Mr. Speaker, it is a very positive Speech from the Throne. There is so much positive regarding investment, you know, and many other members have talked about the investment. Those members don't want to talk about the investment. The reason why the Speech from the Throne was 50 minutes because it has so much positive, whether it is the investment into the potash mines, whether it is the canola crushing plants, whether it is the straw pulp facility. Mr. Speaker, other members have talked about it, but it is.

I had the opportunity to be in Balgonie the other day and talk to the grade 10 class in Balgonie. And I literally had to say there is never a better time to be in grade 10 in this province, grade 11, or grade 12. There has never been a better time, because if you want to be a health care worker, I'm going to guarantee there is a job for you here in Saskatchewan. If you want to go to a trade, I'm going to guarantee there is a job for you here in Saskatchewan. If you want to go to university and get a degree, whether it's for teaching, whether it's for anything else, I'll guarantee . . . Engineering, there's a job here in Saskatchewan for you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if you don't want to go to post-secondary, and you don't want to go university, and you want to just start out in the labour force, there's a job for you here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe the future has ever been brighter in this province. Never reflected on the opposition benches.

Mr. Speaker, we've talked a lot about truth and reconciliation and a number of the initiatives that our government has put in place. Now we hear lots of heckling from the other side, but that's just a given, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter whether it's the \$2 million that we've put through FSIN to help research for the residential school burial grounds, Mr. Speaker, \$2 million to help with that. Whether it's the residential school memorial led by Lieutenant Governor Russ Mirasty at Government House, Mr. Speaker, that fulfills one of the Truth and Reconciliation's Call to Action no. 82. That has been part of our government and will continue to be.

Whether it's a new initiative in the Speech from the Throne, never been done in Canada before, and it has never been mentioned, hasn't been mentioned by any of the opposition. But can you imagine for the first time I'm going to be able to drive down number 10 highway and know when I go through Treaty 4 to Treaty 2. Sounds pretty simple, sounds pretty simple, but we're going to actually put up signs when you go from one treaty territory to the other. That has never been done anywhere else in the country, so that people in our province know which treaty that they're entering into.

I am blessed to stand on Treaty 4 ground right now, Mr. Speaker, and when I'm in Saskatoon I'm blessed to stand on that treaty, but where is it? Where does it start and where does it finish? That is in the Speech from the Throne. Hasn't been mentioned by the members from the opposition.

Now I hear some of them chirping from their seats, but I didn't hear when they were standing up chirping, Mr. Speaker. If they want to chirp, next time stand up when it's your turn and talk about something that's positive, because we don't hear it from the other side, Mr. Speaker.

Signing the first agreement between Canada and the Cowessess First Nation to assume jurisdiction over child welfare. First in Canada, Mr. Speaker. How important that is as we move forward, Mr. Speaker. There are so many other things. The signing of the new online gaming agreement with the FSIN, Mr. Speaker. These are all positive, positive movements regarding our First Nations, Mr. Speaker, and recognizing the truth and reconciliation.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker — and I'm just going to look at the Whip; I might as well take it to 5, I guess, yeah — Mr. Speaker, is the whole investment in infrastructure. Our government has, if there is one thing, and I can say that I think there's a number of fronts that we are very proud of within our government, but it would be the infrastructure front and the investment that we have made since 2007 on infrastructure throughout this province.

And in the last 11 months that I have had the opportunity to be Government Relations, which looks after . . . and SaskBuilds, my seatmate, that tend to look after the infrastructure file, there have been so many investments in the province, whether it's long-term care facilities, whether it's hospitals, a brand new hospital in Moose Jaw. And I can go on and on about the new facilities, the new facility in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, the provincial hospital in North Battleford.

I think there's 13 long-term care facilities that, when I toured them when I was the Minister of Health and it happened to be raining, you took a lot of hail because that's what was coming. You had to catch the raindrops coming through the ceilings. That's how poor shape they were in.

I've told this story too many times, but really quickly, going to Rosetown and touring that facility, and they had level 3 residents, level 3 and 4 people, 3 and 4 residents in the basement. There was an elevator that they'd go up and down with, which was great as long as the elevator was working, but in an emergency or a fire or whatever, the next exit was a spiral staircase. Can you imagine residents that are level 3 and 4 going up and down, out a spiral staircase to get out? That's a new facility there now, Mr. Speaker, in Rosetown.

There are schools in so many communities. The member from Weyburn just announced the one that just so happens to be in Weyburn, but there are new schools throughout the province. And you know, members from both the major cities, but especially in Regina, I think . . . Is it Elphinstone that you go down and it's new school after new school after new school? Pretty fortunate.

So the investment within infrastructure has been phenomenal, and that's going to continue on, and that was what was talked about in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker. The intake for the next ICIP grant starts in November, as it's a dual intake, November and May, where communities can apply for money to go towards recreation facilities, to go towards arts facilities, to go towards water and sewer, Mr. Speaker. So many initiatives that need to be looked at in the province.

Absolutely. We've been working at it for 14 years, trying to fulfill the deficit in infrastructure and we still aren't anywhere close to having it done, Mr. Speaker. There's still so much work to be done, but the difference between this government is it's investing in our communities as opposed to a former government under the NDP that was divesting and seeing kids leave this province year after year after year, Mr. Speaker.

With that, Mr. Speaker, having a look at the clock here, I am going to be very glad to be supporting the motion put forward by our colleagues, my colleague from Prince Albert as well as Arm River, Mr. Speaker. And I certainly will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition, just another negative amendment. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, can't do it. Supporting the motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It is 5 p.m. We shall recess till 7 p.m.

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

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Fred Bradshaw
Minister of Highways
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Social Services

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

Hon. Paul Merriman
Minister of Health

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

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

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

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

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General