

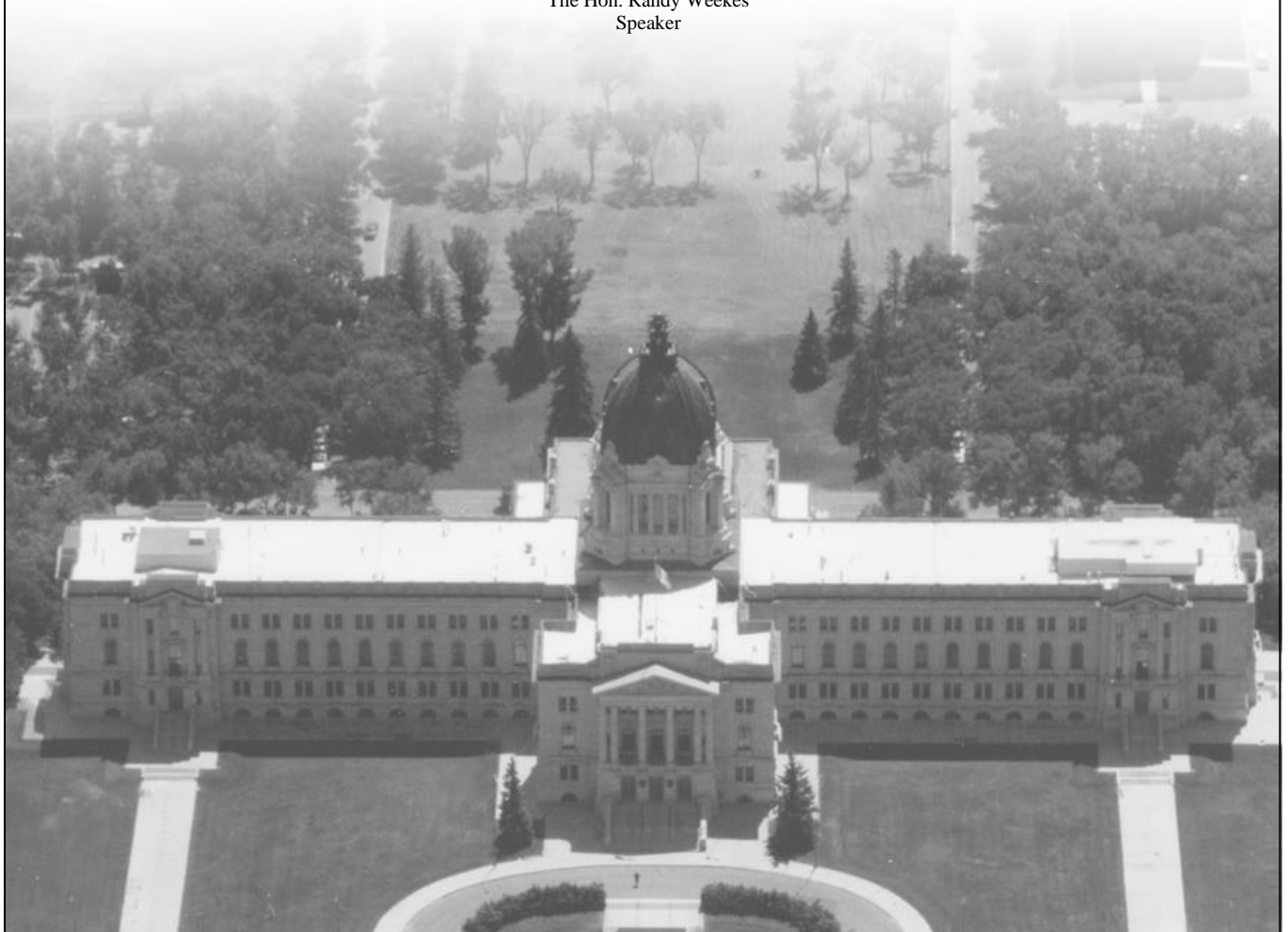
FOURTH SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
4th 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 — Carla Beck

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Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)	Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)	Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
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Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
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Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (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)
Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)	Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)	Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
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)
Hargrave, Hon. Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Harpauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Teed, Nathaniel — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Harrison, Daryl — Cannington (SP)	Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
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, 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)	

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 46; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 14;
Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang
Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, K.C.
Deputy Clerk — Kathy Burianyak
Principal Clerk — Robert Park

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

The Deputy Speaker: — The time now being 7 o'clock, we will resume debate.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by the Hon. Mr. Morgan, seconded by Mr. B. McLeod, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Ms. Conway.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Well thank you, brother speaker. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for providing me an opportunity to respond to the Throne Speech and supporting the motion made by the member from Saskatoon Southeast regarding the Throne Speech, seconded very eloquently, I may say, by our member from Lumsden-Morse. And I will not be supporting the amendment.

You know, quick shout-out to my wife, Carla. She actually missed the Throne Speech. She's actually very actively involved in a regional endowment foundation called the Family & Friends Community Foundation which had their breast cancer awareness event the following night called Pink & Chocolate. And it's a major event raising awareness for breast cancer, especially in our young women.

She's also very busy helping organize the national Outstanding Young Farmers event which is held in Montreal later in November. Carla and I are both proud alumni members, graduating from Outstanding Young Farmers in 1999. And I guess now we're just considered old farts, or maybe old farmers, not sure.

But anyway, I'd also like to give a shout-out to my youngest son, Matthew, who just recently got engaged to a respiratory therapist named Kayla Brown who comes from Manitoulin Island, Ontario.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd just like to note that she was on a goalie scholarship to Sir Wilfrid Laurier and unfortunately now is attempting to improve my game for when we play in the BHP hockey tournament here coming up soon. So unfortunately it's going to be a very lost cause. I'll probably last one period and have significant injuries, and that'll be the end of my career. I'll pull a hamstring early, yes.

Matthew is our aerospace engineer working for a mine supply company right now called Polycorp in Elora, Ontario. Our oldest son, Michael, and his wife, Laine, currently live and work here in the city. He's a mechanical engineer working for a company called Rockford Engineering Works who are very involved in the mining sector, and is extremely busy with all the action going on

in Saskatchewan regarding the mining industry.

Bad news this morning: my oldest granddaughter, Brynn, came down with the flu, so can't go trick-or-treating today. So to torture herself further, she is now watching the legislative channel. And I'm not sure if that's a trick or a treat, unfortunately. However her younger sister, Tessa, is going out tonight, and tomorrow we're going to introduce Tessa to the grandfather candy tax. And I am looking forward to reaping the benefits of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to extend my sincere thanks to my previous CA [constituency assistant], Rick McIntyre, who decided he was at the ripe old retirement age and is now retiring as the golf course manager for Antler Acres golf course in Churchbridge.

Now replacing him is Tim Ziola from Melville. Tim and his wife, Kim, own Pharmsave in Melville. He was a city councillor, former president of the Melville Chamber of Commerce, is a major advocate for the Melville branch of Canadian Mental Health Association, and just retired as a provincial coroner. Tim has approached his new job with youthful enthusiasm and empathy. I really don't believe there is really anyone that he does not know in and around the city of Melville, and I believe we and the constituents of Melville-Saltcoats are so fortunate to have him working in our office in Melville.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, build and protect. That's our goal this session, and it has been of this government to build this province up and protect what we've built. Mr. Deputy Speaker, change is what happens in this province. We have observed over 180,000 newcomers into our province since 2007 from 186 countries. And many of those have come into the constituency of Melville-Saltcoats.

I know anecdotally in one of our schools in Esterhazy, a town of just over 2,500 people, they thought they could detect over 50 different dialects that are in the school of Esterhazy. And we know we've got residents there from Korea, China, the Philippines, Mexico, Nicaragua, Chile, Brazil, Russia, Ukraine, England, Iran, Nigeria, United States, and many more. They are owning businesses in and around Esterhazy. They're working in highly skilled positions and supporting our schools and communities.

On the last national census, our community populations in our constituency have either grown or, as a minimum, remained the same, which is not the same experience shared across our great province. Companies such as Mosaic, Nutrien, Noble Construction, CN, Sask Crop Insurance, just to name a few, have ensured that we have sustained growth in our communities and our constituency, growth that continues to work for everyone.

Just this morning, the world's largest mining company increased their investment in this province to continue to make their Jansen project the single largest private sector investment in this province. And this is the largest single investment by the world's largest mining company.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these investments did not and will not happen under an NDP [New Democratic Party] government. Our

constituency alone saw potash investments of over \$3 billion by Nutrien at Scissors Creek, Rocanville, and another 3 billion by Mosaic at Esterhazy K3.

Yorkton is seeing investments of billions of dollars since we came to power through canola crushing plants being developed there through Richardson Pioneer; LDC [Louis Dreyfus Company]; grain processing plant, Grain Millers Canada; a number of new multi-million-dollar grain elevators put up by G3; Paterson Grain; P&H [Parrish & Heimbecker] elevators — all came into our area during our time in government. Without hesitation these companies are building their businesses here because of the stability in this government and our policies. And that is why this government needs to protect this province from never seeing another NDP government govern this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Throne Speech we state that this government also invested over 66 billion in infrastructure projects in our province since 2007. Our Melville-Saltcoats constituency has benefited from a number of those investments. Sixty new schools and 30 major renovation projects have been undertaken. We have a new \$23.5 million school in Langenburg. Major upgrades of over 18 million were undertaken in Yorkton at the regional high school. A number of students from our constituency attend Yorkton Regional High School.

Approximately 20 million was invested in the Parkland Regional College, now Suncrest College trade and technology centre in Yorkton, a facility that offers everything from agriculture to zoning engineering as a first-year university course.

On Friday the member from Yorkton and I attended a graduation ceremony in Melville of the National Fire Protection Association 1001 for the professional firefighters who've recently revamped a course that's managed by Suncrest College and directed by the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency. This government invested over 1.8 million in capital and operational funding this year to ensure that our professional firefighters are being trained in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this compares to the NDP record of closing a record number of schools, 176 in total in rural Saskatchewan, because they felt it was just too hard to keep them open. Times of declining population growth, declining growth as a result of their crippling socialist policies.

Our government has over 35 major health projects completed, in construction or in planning, including new hospitals, long-term care facilities, and urgent care centres. And Melville-Saltcoats was included in that with planning dollars announced for the new integrated health centre in Esterhazy and the regional hospital in Yorkton.

Esterhazy, which is the heart of potash country, boasts a population of 2,500 but has over 3,000 people employed in and around the community every single day. Retaining emergency services, acute and long-term care beds at a level that exists are necessary for the community of Esterhazy and surrounding municipalities to attract new residents and maintain our senior population that currently exists.

Yorkton offers a regional hospital that services the population from Hudson Bay to Foam Lake to the Qu'Appelle Valley and

has a significant number of Manitoba patients that access the hospital and services daily.

Both Esterhazy and Yorkton have very active health foundations which support access to top-quality equipment and services in the area and are working feverishly to have the funds to support the community contribution to use these new facilities. Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately there were no hospitals built in this constituency at any time during the NDP's time in power; however, there were some closed.

There have been nearly 20 000 kilometres of highway repaired or improved. Melville-Saltcoats has certainly benefited from that investment. We have new passing lanes that we're currently breaking in on the No. 16 Highway between the Manitoba border and Springside. Passing lanes cover the No. 10 Highway between Melville and Yorkton. We have seen significant investment on the No. 47 Highway north of Melville, new surfacing on the No. 80 Highway south of Churchbridge, the 8 south of Spy Hill, and significant safety improvements at intersections on the 22, 15, 47, and 16.

The requirement for passing lanes has been necessitated by the significant increase in goods and services that are being generated in our area and exported out of province. There'll be significant improvements planned for the No. 9 south of Stockholm and the No. 8 south of Langenburg. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's not forget our constituents who are involved in the road-making, road-building business such as Miller's construction in Langenburg, Duncan Construction in Spy Hill, or Potzus construction in Yorkton — extremely valuable small businesses that flourish in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a far cry from the days the NDP told constituents to fix their own potholes.

193 million has been invested in capital improvements, replacement, and preventative maintenance in Saskatchewan's provincial parks. In Melville-Saltcoats we have a number of impressive regional parks in Spy Hill, Saltcoats, Esterhazy, and Melville, and one beautiful provincial park in the Qu'Appelle Valley at Crooked Lake. Since 2007 we've made over \$2.6 million investments in that park, with construction currently ongoing supporting a \$1.2 million campground service centre and the addition of new and upgraded electrified sites and upgrades to their potable water system.

In addition, over 22 million will be invested in the Crooked Lake dam to modernize and improve water flow and controls in the Crooked Lake and Qu'Appelle lake water system. Investments in our neighbouring provincial parks of 6.1 million into Good Spirit provincial park north of Yorkton and 12.5 million into Duck Mountain Provincial Park near Kamsack ensure that our hard-working residents of the area have modern parks to relax in for their summer and winter vacations. Gone are the dark NDP days when the park had clearings, cut the bush for camp sites, and gravel roads built to access these parks.

780 million has been invested in our post-secondary infrastructure, which continues to support our residents as they look to upgrade their skills or prepare for their dream jobs. This investment has supported more than 81,000 post-secondary students who have stayed in Saskatchewan. And we'll continue to support our post-secondary students who stay in the province

with the graduate retention program, which has provided over 739 million in tax credits. And that is helping build our highly skilled and technical workforce. This has helped support my son and daughter-in-law, and their classmates and colleagues continue to make this place a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this Throne Speech we will release a new Saskatchewan jobs plan which is going to identify how we will recruit, train, and retain a highly skilled workforce as part of our growth plan to create 100,000 new jobs for this province. And it's interesting that currently in the SaskJobs website, as of last night there was a listing for 1,093 jobs available in the Yorkton area.

Jobs offered range from machinists to registered nurses, from professional accountants to refinery operators, from Cree language instructors to cooks — literally a job for anyone who wants to work. There are career and training opportunities for our Indigenous workforce, our local residents, and our new residents.

There are opportunities in any of the newly expanded canola crush plants at Richardson Pioneer or LDC in Yorkton; the newly expanded Grain Millers Canada Corp. or Crop Insurance in Melville; or maybe CN in Melville; or the care homes in Esterhazy, Saltcoats, or Langenburg; or maybe in the home building industries found in Langenburg, Churchbridge, or Esterhazy. Maybe pick a trade in one of our two world-renowned potash mines in Rocanville or Esterhazy or any of the machine shops at Noble Construction, Saskpro Industries. Bottom line, there is a job for anyone and everyone who wants to work in Saskatchewan.

And this is what is so frustrating, is we continue to hear from members across the way that this is a government that is worst in the country for blah, blah, blah, blah. 1,093 good- to great-paying jobs available in the Yorkton area. 1,093, and that doesn't include listings at the potash mines or most large farms in the area. BNN [Business News Network] has reported suitcase sales are fortunately way down in our province since we were able to form government in 2007.

And let's talk agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The ag industry remains the backbone of our economy and certainly is a key part of the economy of the Melville-Saltcoats. We were very fortunate to experience a better than average crop this year. Our producers are the best in the world for growing a low-input, highly sustainable crop. We will continue to grow the feed, fuel, and fertilizer that the world needs, and it will continue to be grown sustainably.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about building and protecting our people and our economy. On Monday we reinforced that sentiment by unequivocally stating to our federal government that our citizens need to be treated fairly by this ill-conceived federal carbon tax.

[19:15]

We just want to be treated fairly by our federal government. And it was good to see that our opposition on Monday admitted that the carbon tax is one of the biggest contributors to the inflationary issues that our residents are experiencing. The

carbon tax increases the cost of everything that we produce, manufacture, and transport to market or buy.

Our resource sector is under attack by this federal government through its clean fuel standard regulations or the second carbon tax, and its proposed oil and gas emissions cap are going to be terrible for our oil and gas industry. These new regulations are going to kill thousands of jobs and continue to devastate our resource sector. And we will use *The Saskatchewan First Act* to defend our economic potential and provincial autonomy from federal government overreach.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I am winding up, I'd like to throw support behind our mental health and addictions plan. It will focus on increasing capacity to help people who are struggling with addictions and mental health. We'll improve the system to better serve patients and we will transition to a recovery-oriented system, whether it's adding additional treatment spaces, forming a central intake for patients, or reducing access to illegal drugs. These are the important pillars to building and protecting our communities as we support those who are dealing with mental health and addictions issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no community is immune from addiction issues. I know this all too well as our local communities have recently experienced the loss of three young men to addictions issues. These are boys who I coached for many years in minor hockey, who I had working on our farm, who I'd watch grow up through the issues that young people grow through as they're experiencing life. Unfortunately they made some mistakes and it all ended too early for them. They were actually able to get help a few times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but addictions are a difficult, difficult demon to overcome. It was very difficult watching them, their families, and their communities go through the dark days of addictions.

And that's why I'm proud of this government as we continue to build on the supports for those suffering from mental health and addictions issues. I believe it's 1.7 million that we're providing in new annual funding to Family Service Saskatchewan to expand its free, rapid access counselling services to children, youth, and their caregivers across the province. Young people can access these supports for mental health challenges ranging from stress, depression, to family, to family conflict, addictions, and domestic violence. The best part are these services are being offered in communities — small communities, large communities — all across this province, including the Yorkton-Melville area. And I know there's going to be more to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is so much more that we can discuss of current and new programs and policies. They're going to continue to build and protect our communities across this great province, but we will be better served by our members on this side.

To close I'm reminded of a Winston Churchill quote that was one of my dad's favourites. I had it on posters in our office and our shop, buildings throughout our farm. And it was "Socialism is a philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy. Its inherent virtue is the equal sharing of misery." We must continue to build this province and protect from ever going back to the dark days of socialism. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure and a great honour for me to stand up here this evening and support the Throne Speech. It's been a busy year in our province once again with unprecedented growth in terms of population, investments in the province, the issuance of building permits, as well as employment growth, which will continue to support our growth plan out to 2030.

Before I deliver my Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people back home. First of all I'd like to thank my wife, Noella, and I'd like to note that we celebrated our 30th year anniversary earlier this year. Thank you for the support you have provided to me in this role over the past three years as well as standing with me when I decided to venture into this new endeavour. I have found this position to be so rewarding and am grateful for the people that I've met and the relationships that I've built, which is something that I will always treasure.

Another very important person that I would like to thank is my constituency assistant, Jackie Gallon. The support that she provides to the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford, as well as myself, is invaluable, which I am very thankful and appreciative of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to thank my two boys, Logan and Lyndon, for their support. We are so fortunate to live in a province that has an abundance of opportunities for our children which allows them to find meaningful employment and remain here at home without having to relocate to another province to find a rewarding career, unlike what it was like about 16 years ago.

Our oldest son, Logan, works right at home back in Turtleford for the Turtleford & District Co-op. This employment opportunity has empowered him to have a rewarding career with opportunities to advance as well as provide a good wage which has allowed him to live in small-town Saskatchewan, contribute to our home community, and has enabled him to purchase his own home and become truly independent.

In my last Throne Speech, I mentioned of our youngest son, Lyndon, that he would be convocating from the Edwards School of Business at the University of Saskatchewan with a degree in commerce, his major in marketing. Well I'm happy to report that he not only succeeded in obtaining his degree this spring, but because of our province's robust economy he was fortunate to have the opportunity to obtain full-time employment with AgraCity in Saskatoon prior to him even convocating. This meant he basically finished university, started working right away, and was able to realize what true independence is, just like his older brother.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my constituency association back home. I'm so fortunate to have such a supportive executive who have stood with me every step of the way since I decided to enter into this venture. They've been great to work with and have been very supportive, of which I'm very thankful for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and all of this would not be possible if it wasn't for the support of the constituents. It's my privilege and honour to serve as their representative, and for that I would like to say thank you. This past summer has been great in being out and about throughout the constituency, attending various community events, events such as community parades, western day celebrations, as well as several volunteer fire department open houses in recognition of Fire Prevention Week, just to name a few. This has given me a great opportunity to meet, speak with, and listen to constituents and their concerns.

I also would like to say thank you to this great team I get the pleasure to work with. It's an honour and a privilege to work with everyone on this team, which not only includes my fellow colleagues in this Assembly, but also includes all of the staff in each ministry. The staff in each ministry has been more than helpful every time we've had concerns brought forward from constituents, whom at the end of the day are the people that we all serve in our respective roles.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech once again shows the support that we provide to our province as a whole in so many areas that I will have to limit my remarks to those that are most pertinent to Cut Knife-Turtleford because there are way too many to mention.

This government has provided an economic environment which is desirable for private industry to invest which has provided our residents with many opportunities for both employment and business ventures. We are so fortunate to have seen unprecedented growth in our communities and province which have been threatened by an overreaching federal government that has tried on several occasions to hold Saskatchewan back from our successes. Going forward, we will not only continue to build a strong economy, but protect everything that we have achieved so far to ensure future sustainability for all of our respective communities.

To start with, I'd like to start by highlighting the supports that we have for our agriculture industry. One of the announcements made earlier this year were implemented to assist agriculture producers who were having challenges with wildlife damaging feed supplies, which I personally heard about on several occasions from agriculture producers back home. This government, hearing those concerns raised by producers, implemented funding for those that were eligible to take steps to provide proper protection to prevent wildlife damage to feed supplies.

In addition to this, we also provided 70 million to help offset additional costs incurred for feeding livestock. This will help producers maintain their breeding herd and will be supportive for those areas of the province that have seen significant drought conditions.

To add to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've increased the AgriStability interim benefit payment from 50 to 75 per cent so that producers can access a larger portion of their final AgriStability benefit early. The AgriStability compensation rate also increased from 70 to 80 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognize the challenges that cattle producers face with respect to shortages in terms of the

availability of qualified veterinarians. That's why our government has partnered with the Saskatchewan veterinary association to facilitate a workforce study to determine the labour market and support veterinary retention in our province. As a result of this partnership, we have provided \$100,000 to support this endeavour, as we understand the importance of veterinarians to our livestock sector.

When you take these additional provisions into consideration, along with the Crown grazing lease rental reduction program, where lessees may be eligible for rent reduction due to the impact of areas that had drought, and when you consider all of the forms of production insurance programming available to producers, it just shows how important this government values agriculture in this province.

Moving on to health, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government's working hard with health care professionals which will enable additional health care services from existing and additional health care providers. For example, pharmacists will be able to independently prescribe prescriptions in certain areas, order lab tests, and conduct point-of-care testing such as blood sampling to advise patients on medications.

Nurse practitioners will be provided privileges to admit and discharge patients in certain hospital areas. They'll be able to conduct initial examinations of new long-term care residents, be responsible for ongoing medical care and treatment, emergency care, and sign death certificates for residents in long-term care.

Advanced care paramedics will be able to perform suturing minor wounds, cuts, or lacerations. These are all expanded scopes in practice that will assist in providing additional care immediately and assist the health care system with the additional pressures it's presently seeing. The measures that we are providing will provide some relief of the demands presently required of physicians and allow them more time to deal with matters of a more serious nature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to this our government is increasing physician numbers in the province by expanding the undergraduate program at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] by adding four seats into this fall's intake for medical students. This will increase the total seats from 100 to 104, with plans for further expansion to 108 seats.

Since December of 2022 the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] has hired more than 710 new nursing graduates from in and out of the province. Further to that, 201 positions are now filled of the 250 new and enhanced permanent full-time positions targeted to stabilize staffing in rural and remote areas in the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in the process of introducing 12 new Saskatchewan physician assistant positions, which is just another step we are taking to ensure that we have more tools in the tool box, if you will, to help provide additional medical services to the people of this province. Added to this are the more than 1,000 doctors and 5,000 more nurses practising in Saskatchewan since we became government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since this government took office in 2007, 25 health care facilities have been built in this province. This

includes the new Jim Pattison Children's Hospital in Saskatoon, which has become an essential asset to the province in serving sick children with severe illness.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are also in the process of planning and construction stages for the construction of the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital, which will be an important addition to not only the community but also an added benefit in assisting serving the North. The planned construction of the new Weyburn hospital, as well as several other long-term care facilities, including capital improvements to several health care facilities throughout our province, further show that this government continues to prioritize our health care system.

When you take into consideration the additional measures I have already mentioned and add to that the bursaries that are presently available to various health care positions as well as the recruitment incentives that we are making accessible to individuals willing to fill positions in rural and remote areas, I would suggest that we are taking the health care challenges in this province very seriously. And that's why this government's invested a record 6.9 billion in health care funding in 2023-24.

Turning to energy and resources, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had the wonderful opportunity to check out the Cameco McArthur River mine in northern Saskatchewan this past summer. I felt the timing of this was perfect, as shortly after our spring session earlier this year I was fortunate to be able to attend the Nebraska Advanced Nuclear Forum along with my colleagues from Cannington and Last Mountain-Touchwood.

The mining industry is so important and is a key pillar of the provincial economy, contributing up to 12 per cent of Saskatchewan's gross domestic product. Saskatchewan nearly has a billion-dollar-a-year uranium industry which has made Canada the world's second-largest uranium producer in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, in '21 the uranium industry employed over 1,800 people. Further, in 2023 the industry is expected to produce 15 million kilograms of yellowcake, which is almost double last year's numbers. This province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has 23 of the 31 critical minerals on Canada's list and is home to the world's largest potash and high-grade uranium deposits.

[19:30]

The abundance of mineral resources, backed by competitive royalty and investment incentives, has attracted many of the world's largest mining companies in the world to this province. A great example of this is today's announcement from BHP that they'll be committing an additional 6.4 billion to the already 12.4 billion they had previously committed to the Jansen potash mine. This will make it one of the biggest potash mines in the world, with a total investment of approximately \$18.8 billion.

Added to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is a strong oil and gas sector which recently generated over 11 million in the Crown petroleum and natural gas public offering for the province. Almost 3 million of this was generated from the Lloydminster area, which includes our constituency and was the second-highest amount raised in the province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this speaks to the strong economy and resource sector of our province, which continues to supply what the world needs in terms of food, fuel, and fertilizer.

And with a strong economy comes more jobs, and that's why we will release a new Saskatchewan jobs plan to recruit, train, and retain a highly skilled workforce, as part of our growth plan goal to create 100,000 new jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government recognizes the added pressures with respect to additional housing required to meet a growing population which has exceeded a growth rate not seen in this province in over a century. We recognize that higher interest rates and rising construction costs have made it more expensive to build new homes. That's why we are introducing a provincial sales tax rebate for new home construction which will be reinstated and extended retroactive to April 1st of this year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to the above program this government will help those facing rising mortgage rates. We'll be introducing a secondary suite program which will help owners with renovations to accommodate a rental suite within their primary residence. This will increase the availability of rental suites which will assist those looking for affordable accommodations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at our highway infrastructure, it is an important component to ensuring that our transportation system can support our exports which we're so reliant on as a province. That's why this government has invested more than \$12 billion in highways and have improved nearly 20 000 kilometres of roads since 2008. We will have improved another 1000 kilometres by the end of this year.

Our area has benefited from these improvements which have been made to several highways which included resurfacing, sealing, as well as new truck climbing lanes on both sides of the Saskatchewan River at the Toby Nollet bridge. This will be a huge improvement, as quite often in the winter we have seen semi units jackknifed blocking the highway during bad winter conditions, as well as sometimes bringing traffic to a crawl due to the incline of the road infrastructure. This is a major route for truck traffic either locally hauling oil and agriculture products or goods coming from Prince Albert area heading west and is a very welcomed improvement to our area.

The investments we have and will make into our highways infrastructure will help us meet our targets with the recently signed MOU [memorandum of understanding] with Alberta and Manitoba to strengthen our economic corridors that support our supply chains. The MOU commits the three provinces to work to improve our transportation system to ensure the strength and competitiveness of our economies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our education system is important to ensure our students can be successful after they've graduated from high school. When students continue on, whether attending university, going to polytechnical school, or just entering the workforce right out of high school, we want to ensure they are ready for that next step in their life.

That's why we've provided a record investment in funding of just over \$2 billion which includes an additional 40 million that was provided after the budget to address school enrolment growth beyond what was projected, as well as additional funding to hire more classroom support staff to respond to challenges of classroom complexity.

In addition to this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognize that childhood supports are required prior to children ever attending school and becoming students. A growing population means more children in our daycares. That's why we were one of the first provinces to sign the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, which included creating thousands of new spaces as well as providing \$10-a-day child care to make it affordable for parents. I personally heard first-hand from several parents back home, how much they appreciated having access to affordable daycare services.

Further to that, we recognize that, with the increase in child care spaces that we are making available, we need to ensure there are sufficient childhood educators to provide the appropriate services. That's why we've provided 12 million for tuition-free training for prospective and current early childhood educators to attend 1 of 10 post-secondary institutions which we have partnered with across the province. This will increase access to training and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators. Mr. Speaker, along with providing free training for childhood educators, we've also provided for wage enhancements for them up to \$5 per hour, which will help recruit and retain staffing for children attending daycare.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, protective services are important to this government and to our respective communities. I was pleased to attend the recent announcement of the expansion of the Battlefords RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachment to include the former SLGA[Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] store in North Battleford. This will not only be able to provide additional space for the RCMP, which will include the crime reduction team, but will also be used as a training hub for members in northern Saskatchewan.

Firefighters also play an important role in our communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's why we will be providing municipal firefighting education as well as training for volunteer firefighters, by establishing the Saskatchewan Emergency Response Institute in conjunction with Suncrest College. This will provide additional educational training for both types of firefighters right here in our own province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another challenge in this province that we face, as well as every other province for that matter, is the federal carbon tax. When we talk about inflationary costs and how the cost of living has continued to climb at rates we haven't seen since the '80s, the undeniable biggest contributory factor to this is the carbon tax. This government has gone on record that the federal clean electricity standards and the net zero targets of our federal government are unrealistic and unaffordable.

The president and CEO [chief executive officer] of SaskPower, Rupen Pandya, has said, and I quote, "It's not feasible for us to acquire the capital, material, and labour needed to transition over 150 per cent of our generation system that took us 93 years to build in a short 12 years." The demand for power is increasing. We must replace existing generation while also increasing generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, our resource sector is also under attack by the federal government with the clean fuel standard regulations and its proposed emissions cap. When you consider that our resource sector already produces some of the lowest emissions in the

world when producing our oil and gas resources, we should be promoting our oil and gas sector as being one of the lowest contributors towards producing greenhouse gas emissions in the world. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if all other countries in the world produced oil and gas as efficient and as environmentally friendly as we do, we would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has spent years in building a province that has come to realize unprecedented growth, both in terms of investments, jobs, and population. We are now at a crossroads where we have to continue to build and protect what we have achieved to date and ensure that our federal government's overreach doesn't impair future provincial prosperity.

I believe the recent ruling by the Supreme Court of Canada with respect to Bill C-69, the *Impact Assessment Act*, which ruled that, and I quote, was an "... unconstitutional arrogation of power by Parliament," and clearly "... overstepped the mark." This is a clear indication that the federal government has violated the division of powers between themselves and the provinces. I'm hopeful that this ruling will make it more abundantly clear to the federal government the roles of each level of government going forward and that they will be more co-operative in working with the provincial government in the future.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment to the Throne Speech. I will be supporting the Throne Speech moved by the member from Saskatoon Southeast and seconded by the member from Lumsden-Morse. Thank you.

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

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege once again to enter into the Throne Speech on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills. Mr. Speaker, I am truly fortunate to be able to stand here before you and work on their behalf in this House as their MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about the Cypress Hills constituency and the last summer going by. It was just amazing — people, activities in the area that are happening and everything that's going on, the rodeos, events. It's like I listen to my colleagues and their talk about door knocking. Well if you tried to door knock in the Southwest, you'd get a door a day maybe. You know, the invitations, you come and you stop in. Well can you have coffee? So you have coffee. Or you know, you can come later in the day, we might have a steak or it's a brandy.

It's amazing. Like you know, I like Saskatchewan. I sit in here day after day and we go back and forth across the way and talk here. Oh you know, in Saskatchewan we've got a lot of things, but by gosh, in my mind we've got a lot of things going for us. I'm telling you, this is the place to be. You know, we look at other things happening around the world, and then I think about the people that I represent down there and how they treat myself as their MLA and their representative. You can't say enough about it.

You know, one instance there last summer I had an opportunity. We were up in the healing lodge in the hills, and there's two old

ranchers up there. They were sitting there, and I was talking with them, visiting. I mean, they're old. Like I didn't ask how old, but they're up there, you know. They were darn near as old as the Minister of Ag. But I don't know how much hair they had. They had cowboy hats on.

But we were sitting there just talking, you know, in general about things, the history, a bit of history. And they started talking about in the past when the wars were called, and you know, they were 15 and 16 years old. They left to go to war together out of Maple Creek, got on the train and left. And you know, we sat there and chatted. And they had come back. They were over there and they stayed, and they went through two situations, come back. Then they wanted to know what they were going to do when they got home. They didn't know.

And you know, then I asked them . . . like a lot of veterans don't really want to talk about the situations you run into and the things they experienced over there. And we sat and chatted, and the one gentleman's wife is sitting there. And I kind of reached out to ask him, you know, how they ended up being ranchers. Some of them took over ranches that started in the late 1800s, which a lot of them did down there.

And I said to him, I says, well you know, is there things that you might want to talk about or experiences that you had? And besides that I said, did you feel that there was anything you brought back with yourself that, you know, was concerning? And he says, oh no.

You know, he cowboied up, is what they call it. You know, they don't want to cry or worry about too many things. "Nope, nothing with me." And his wife was sitting just off to the side of him, and she goes like, yes there was. But he wouldn't admit that there was, you know, things that bothered him and stuff that he'd brought back with him.

That's maybe like, from down in that part of the world you go and, like I say, they're so accommodating. And it's volunteerism, which Saskatchewan is built on volunteerism in what they do. You know, we couldn't have our communities as strong as they are — and they do have struggles — but if it wasn't for volunteers stepping up to assist and work together to . . . you know, whether it's fire services, EMS [emergency medical services] and doing what we can, or a fall supper where we bring a few pies and stuff.

And like I say, maybe it sounds a little exaggerated, but the amount of requests and calls that we get to be part of things — whether it's a function, a fall supper, or just coming in for tea and those things — you try to get to as many as you can. And like I say, that's my door knocking in the Southwest, you know. The hospitality is amazing. And I'm sure there's other parts of the province that are like that, but that's what makes Saskatchewan what it is.

You know, we started from nothing. Immigrants come here from countries that, you know, where it wasn't possible to own properties. So they gathered up their families; they come out here. I remember talking with my grandma when she was alive, and they immigrated from over in Scotland, Ireland, and that part of the world. Come over, got off the train in Gull Lake, Saskatchewan and got on in the moonlit night, come out to our homestead there. It's fourth, going on fifth generation. And they

sat there, and there's nothing, not a thing.

They were immigrants and they were that. And like grandma talked about there was other families in the area from other countries. They couldn't speak to each other, didn't know the language and that type of thing, but they got together and got behind each other and helped them survive.

There was no daycare. There was no hospitals of such and these things, but they did it. And they built what we have today and what we have here in this, you know, pristine building, and what we're having. And I feel for families and folks that are struggling. And you know, I don't sit here in this legislature wanting somebody to be in need. I hope I'm part of a team that's going to try and build, along with the opposition members, to try and help as much as we can. But there are limitations, that sometimes we won't or we can't achieve what we would really like to, but we'll keep working on it.

[19:45]

So you know, it's just a great place. And like I say, it's hard some days. We get a little heated here back and forth. And you know, we're discussing things that, oh gosh, you shake your head. And it reminds me of my days back at school some days, but it's okay. We'll get through it.

But like I say, those stories that we got to listen to from our grandparents and seniors and stuff. . . Like I started off in a small elevator. I was 18 years old and in an elevator just 3 miles from where we lived actually on the farm. And you know, I bought grain. I had an electric one. I had a diesel and I had a gas one. And we had the walkways where we had the belts underneath there and the ropes. And we had bull pens beside these elevators.

And you know, we did what it took. They come with the one-tons. They come in. I never had any horses and teams. I was a little further ahead than that. But I heard about it, because the old fellows that come in, you'd be out loading cars or buying grain, and they'd be making coffee.

An Hon. Member: — Ask the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Steele: — Well he's not quite that old either. But anyway, I think about what I got to listen to and what I heard in that office while they're sitting there chatting and making up some tickets, or you know, doing some samples and talking about their experiences and how they got what they have or got to where they are at that point in time. It was pretty amazing. You know, I think that's where we need to remember, when we're in here some days, that we're doing our business and to think about those things. I think about it quite often.

I just lost my uncle, and the Minister of Ag knew him very well. He was a fellow that, he knew every homestead plot and all that stuff. History meant a lot to him. We'd go for a drive and we talked. He had the history of that homestead, what that family come from and what happened and how come they maybe aren't there and these types of things. And you know, there was a couple of stories.

I know my dad, when he was alive, he mentioned a family down the way, that they had their, you know, the homestead quarter

and the pre-emptions. Because you had your homestead quarter . . . And it was the Nelsons. And some of them would go away in the wintertime to make it possible to be able to stay here and farm. You know, they'd go and they'd cut trees in Eastern Canada or they'd go to work. And this family, I don't think any of . . . They moved away. But it was the Nelsons family, to mention their name.

And Mrs. Nelson, like they would talk about she had six kids. And her husband was away for the winter, working in the bush cutting cords of wood to make money to come back and try to farm and survive old Saskatchewan. And they'd mention she would cry at night because she didn't know what she was going to feed her kids, because they didn't have, you know, a lot.

And these are things that built this province, and these are things we can be proud of, because during that journey we managed to retain quite a number of families. But we lost quite a few too. They moved on and just couldn't bear it, you know, and these types of things. So you know, as we're going along, and with health care we've built, we get up here planning on certain things, trying to improve education, health care, roads, infrastructure, we just got to think back on what they did for us to be here to get to this point in time.

You know, like my grandfather, my grandpa Steele, he'd come from down east. His side of the family, they're 100 years in Ormstown, Quebec. And then they come out west — he's the only one that come out west — and went across, and then he homesteaded here in 19-whatever. But you know, how many of those people did that? So you know, it's just something, little tidbits to remember when we're getting heated on some of these things during the day and to remember the history and how our province was built.

You know, we put Throne Speech things, there's so many good things here. Maybe it's not quite as much as we'd like to do, and maybe it's not always what others think we should do, but it's a lot of thought put into these throne speeches, the speeches and budgets that we've come forward with. And that's like why I say I am so proud to be the representative here, with the other MLAs across in the room, to be able to say, hey you know, I put my foot forward to try and help, to continue on, to try and grow our province.

And then I remember too as a young guy, like I said, I went in the grain industry. And I farmed and did different things, and I had friends that we lost them to Alberta. They'd go to Alberta, but they'd come back. They'd go, just like the homesteaders did, to earn some money to come back and buy that farm or build that farm and worked hard. And very successful at what they did. There's some good farmers, but they couldn't do it in agriculture because we were going through some pretty tough times. Whether it was weather, prices, world issues that were way out of our control . . .

An Hon. Member: — Wheat Board.

Mr. Steele: — Well, yeah, that Wheat Board. Exactly. I bought grain during the Wheat Board days and stuff like that. And I tell you, there was some pretty sad situations you see. And you had your spring advance — well first of all you had your cash advance on the grain you had in the granary — and then you had

your spring advance.

Your spring advance was on a crop that wasn't even in the ground yet. Then you borrowed on that to get the crop in the ground, then you went and you harvested. So you had that debt from the spring, then you had your cash advance on your grain. So when you started to . . . And then, well deferred inputs come in. That was a real good one. Yeah. So we deferred. So we had all this debt, hoping that old mother nature would drop some rain, markets would be there that would help you be successful to pay your bills and raise your family.

Well there was a few times, you know, as a farmer starting off as a young fellow, I had to get a . . . Well I had cows until my wife decided I wasn't around enough to have cows anymore, but that's a story in itself. I even had new fencing pliers. She changed her mind.

But anyway, I guess it's just a little bit of information that relates back to my constituency. And the oil and gas being in the area, now we have helium, plus agriculture, plus there's many different things contribute to our economy to be strong. It's just like the province . . . But we're smaller, like a smaller constituency. And when you have oil and gas, for example, you give us a job, an off-farm job. Some went working on drilling rigs. Some got to operate the wells that we drilled in our area and stayed and raised families and put children in our schools, and you know, just continued the growth and the forward moving.

So anyway, to get into my speech here, I'm rambling on on some of those things. We could go all day hard. But it's just an amazing story that, you know, makes me feel so proud to be here tonight to speak. And every day I get to be here I hope I get to be here one more term. We'll see where that journey takes us, because that's just a journey of life and stuff like that.

And like I say, that constituency — I imagine it's the same for a lot of other MLAs in the building here — it just makes you feel proud when you go, and the welcoming feeling you get when you go in there. And it's not every day's a ball of fun, but you know, it's just being transparent and approachable and willing to talk to your constituents. And you build that trust and you build that respect and you give that respect and you can move forward and you do a lot of things. So anyway that's just, like I say, I'm proud to be part of the Cypress Hills constituency, and I hope to do good things with my team here and as we move forward.

Anyway I'd like to also say thank you to my executive, my CA, Sean Checkley, which everyone knows. He's spends a lot of time up there. But you know, my first CA was Twila Wedrick. And I think everyone would likely remember she had a situation when we had the wildfires over west. And her husband and son, while they survived, they were burned quite, you know, very bad.

But Twila's dream was to go and have her own bakery. And you know, we're sitting there, and it was a sad day. Twila says, you know, Doug, the bakery in Gull Lake come for sale and I'm going to pick that up and I'm going to take a chance.

And I'm thinking, a bakery in small-town Saskatchewan, like it could be good and it could be bad, but you know, pat her on the back. Twila, go for it. And you know, here it has come and it's four years later. Twila has taken the bakery, she sells her product

in many different communities in the Southwest. People drive to get her baked goods, and she's just doing amazing. She's not making millions, but she's doing good. And she's got the biggest smile on her face. She was always a great people person. The biggest smile on her face every day. And you know, there's what I hope for a lot of our new Canadians that I think, you know, they could have that success too. And Twila is, you know, doing great things. She got a couple of young Mexican women, they're like young girls working for her. And they're doing a great job, and you know, it's just rolling right along.

So we talk, communicate quite often. We go up and get some of her cinnamon buns and her doughnuts and stuff, you know, and Sean eats them all. I get one, you've got to be lucky. He's a big guy. He can eat a lot. And then I've got to say, Sean, we joke around. He's a heck of a guy. Like he can talk to a farmer, a rancher, an oil guy, and he's focused, you know. And when we go on the road, we put "gone to meetings" and stuff like that, we forward the phone. The phone's there. We take it and we'll talk to that person. You know, that communicating with your constituents is, I'll tell you, that's pretty amazing. Everyone knows that. It's the biggest part of our job to get to where we're at.

And he takes it home on the weekends, and he phones me and lets me know. And we bounce things off each other. You know, I'm pretty fortunate to have a CA like that. And we all know, I think, what CAs really mean to us as MLAs and what we can achieve as MLAs. So you know, like I say, I can't say enough about Sean. I joke around, like I say. Like you guys see him up here and he comes, he's coming up here again in a few days. But I'm very, very fortunate to have him.

So then I'm going to just touch on my family. Like I say, my wife, Phyllis, actually yesterday — and it's not a guess — it was 41 years we were married, bang on. So she's retired after 34 years as a librarian technician. She worked with kids in the library, plus computers. That's one thing: she works with kids and helps them work their computers. Her and I can't work together . . . [inaudible] . . . It doesn't go anywhere. I need a lot of help, so that's why it's a good thing I got Sean, you know. He kind of gets me through that.

But no. She's 34 years been in this education system in Gull Lake and you know, I get to bounce things off her, and you learn a lot from those people that are hands on in the classroom with the kids, whether it's high-needs kids to kids that are, you know, they're all levels, you know. And it's like, I get a kick out of the way we head into the city or we go to, you know, into Speedy Creek there — Swift Current — and go to the mall, and she's always . . . I'm always talking to somebody. Well, she talks to more people than I do. And these kids come up from across the way, "Mrs. Steele!" They go running over there. Okay, now we stand there and got to compare notes over there, and that type of thing.

And now she's substituting in Gull Lake. She can't let go. And so she's like, she's retired, in and out of there. And then the kids, "You're back, Mrs. Steele. You didn't leave us." So it's all good. No, her heart and soul was in her job and what she was achieving, too.

And you know, I hope we can get this settled with the education

situation we're dealing with right now. Because it has its impact on the students, and it has impact on the communities and all that. There has to be a way to sit down and work our way through these things. And I know we can do it. I know we'll do it. And the Minister for Education, definitely he's going to do a great job.

Yeah, like I said or mentioned earlier, I did have cows. So we don't have cows, so she doesn't have any chores to do. But the Minister of Ag, when him and I were with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] together, I had about 150. That's a pretty good-size herd, I thought.

An Hon. Member: — Phyllis did; you didn't.

Mr. Steele: — Well, but you have to remember — I don't know who knows that — but she was a city girl. She didn't stand on this side of the gate. It was behind the gate. And she wouldn't, you know . . . But it's quite a story, that. Anyway, she threatened me so many times. We were in SARM for quite a number of years, up towards 20 years.

And so, you know, a new fence stretcher didn't do it. A new pair of pliers didn't do it. You know, I thought even one time I was going to get one of them Wheatheart post pounders. They're all automatic, hydraulic levers, and everything's done with them. It didn't save the cows. It didn't save the cows.

[20:00]

An Hon. Member: — You're such a romantic.

Mr. Steele: — I'm going for the heart. It's *The Pull of the Land*, didn't you hear that? Remember that old community stuff? *The Pull of the Land*.

But anyway, no, I've been really fortunate to have the support through my family, too. And, like, we have three children, and so they're all into . . . work serving the public, and have great jobs. My oldest daughter, she's a teacher, and she's like her mom. She loves it; kids love her. And you know, it's just unbelievable. So my daughter Nicole, and they two little boys, and her husband Eric.

And then my middle guy that was supposed to take over the farm that I worked four jobs to get paid off and stuff, he left. He went to the police force. But I'm pretty proud of him. He's an exceptionally good police officer. And if you know him, he's not here in Saskatchewan right now but he's coming back. He's sure he's coming back. He specialized in the RCMP. He's a trained instructor, sniper, whatever you want to call all that kind of stuff. You know, they do kind of some of the toughest and worst-case scenarios that they have to deal with.

But you know, you think of your children that you don't want anything to happen to them — like we talk about this periodically between my wife and I — but they're trained. He's trained to deal with situations that, you know, are exceptional to normal happenings and these types of things. So you know, he's in Ottawa right now. He's trained 12 individuals through the system that they all passed. And his wife, Audrey, she's an RCMP officer. She works in Ottawa in corporate crime or whatever and that type of thing, and she does very well.

And we have these two cute little fellas there, a girl and a guy, Beatrice and Sam. They are the cutest little fellas you've ever seen, boy and girl. Fellers — that's a farmer thing. But they're just amazing. Grandkids, I got to say, are just something we all got to love and you got to have if it's possible.

And then my youngest daughter. Not in the province of Saskatchewan. I hope she'll come back. But she got her nurse's training in Lethbridge and she's been there, and she then met a fellow up there. She's on the O.R., in the operating room. And she works there and then her husband has a fabricating business and stuff there, so I'm thinking they're not going to pull him back to Saskatchewan. But we're going to . . . We'll be here. I'll be here anyway if they do come back.

But anyway, I better get into some of my speech here, guys. Kind of rambled on there a little bit. What time have I got here? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thirty seconds. Well, I don't want to ramble on about what everybody else said. You guys said great things. We don't want to crunch the numbers every time we're doing this. This is what it's all about, and I said we get things done in here. And I know the folks across the way don't . . . It gets heated, but I know deep in their hearts we're trying to achieve the same thing. But we can't agree together all the time, right. We've got to disagree to agree, right. What do you think there, young feller, what do you think? But anyway, now I've got to really look to where I should go to. Okay, jumping all over.

But like I say, since — okay, we'll get it in here — since our government took over in 2007, 180 new residents have made Saskatchewan their home. Well I mentioned something about, you know, new immigrants, and I think 180,000 residents in 450 communities across the province helped build success of our hometowns.

You know, and I just got a note here. This tired . . . What do we get? Tired, old government? Tired and out-of-touch old government? Tired old government. That's just some of it. Tired, out-of-touch government. Is that right? That work? That one?

[Applause]

Mr. Steele: — Oh thanks there, guys. Well, I don't agree with you. Well I don't know. If we're tired and out of touch, yeah you know, you've got to fill me in on the next comments. Anyway I'm really looped now. But anyway, yeah, here we go.

And like this summer down in the Southwest there were many of our ranchers who went through a drought. You know, as a party we stepped up, the minister of Agriculture the year before, we seen this. But this is part of being Saskatchewan. Okay, this is part. We listen. We're there to hear. You know, we might not achieve as much as we want to do, but we're going to do the best we can do at the time.

Okay, yeah. Mr. Speaker, I'll support an amendment and support the Speech from the Throne. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will do my best to respond to the Speech from the

Throne here.

I want to start by thanking my staff both in the constituency office but also in the caucus office here. They do such a good job of keeping us on track, making sure that we have our research right and of course making us look good in this space.

We have far less resources than the government does, and I think we do quite a good job of looking at the issues, of bringing forth the issues despite that. So I want to thank them for that, as well as my constituency assistant. Right now Zach Nelson is working in my office while Twyla Harris Naciri's on maternity leave, as folks will remember as she visited the House yesterday with her little kiddos. So I want to thank Zach for all the work that he's done.

And of course we know that none of us does this alone. I want to thank my partner, Grayson, who has also had the pleasure of being in this Assembly I think twice now since the fall, which is atypical. But you know, I do want to thank him for everything that he puts in at home. Right now he is back home in Saskatoon handing out candy to trick-or-treaters and has some kind of amazing optical illusion happening on the house, where he's maybe projecting on it or something, and there's something creepy going by in the window. I have yet to learn how this has happened, but he did send me a video of it, so it's quite impressive. He works hard to hold down the fort there and look after my dog as well, who I often miss dearly when I can't bring him with me to Regina.

And I know that our families and our loved ones are the supports that we have that allow us to be here, but they're also the reason we do this work in many ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think about my young niece and nephews and the world that they're growing up in and how we all have responsibility to make Saskatchewan the best place to live as possible. And I take that role very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I was quite underwhelmed by the Throne Speech, and maybe I'm just . . . Now I've been around for too long maybe. It's only been about six or seven throne speeches that I've seen at this point, but I was expecting quite a bit more from this government, you know, especially after we saw this emergency session that they called, where they're, you know, the Sask Party was using the notwithstanding clause and they had all these arguments about what needed to happen here for education in Saskatchewan.

Yet we haven't heard them talk very much about education, Mr. Speaker. And you know, if they want us to talk about education, I'm happy to do that after 16 years of Sask Party government here. I've heard from a number of folks in the education system. My partner's a teacher, but we also have a lot of teachers in our lives. A lot of my friends are teachers, you know, niece and nephew that go to school. You know, I encounter tons of constituents that work as teachers and educational assistants within the system. And, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot to be desired in this system right now.

This government has cut per-student funding to an abysmal rate, to the point where we have the second-lowest levels in Canada. We also at the same time have the highest level of kids who are learning on empty stomachs. We're talking about child poverty

here, Mr. Speaker. We have overcrowded classrooms. We have low math and reading levels. And we have science labs and music rooms that are being converted into full-time classrooms as overflow.

And we know that kids don't have the supports they need to be able to learn and thrive in these environments, and they also don't have the mental health supports that they need to be able to ensure that they're going to be successful when they go home as well. And that's this government's record on education. And we're happy to talk about that, but very unhappy with the situation in education right now that our kids are dealing with.

And despite these claims that the new Education minister is making about how there are ample supports for children who are facing mental health concerns, we know that is certainly not the case. Their own numbers show this to be false. Since the Premier took office five years ago, we've seen a 5 per cent reduction in school psychologists, an 8 per cent reduction in teacher counsellors, and they've also decreased the number of teacher positions in our K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system by 66 positions. Yet the number of students has increased by 3,840 students meaning there's more work for teachers, less support for kids.

And to highlight this we've heard a heartbreaking story from Sarah Mackenzie, which we've referred to a number of times in this Assembly, a mother who lost her 14-year-old child due to suicide, who clearly stated that those supports were not there, Mr. Speaker. And she clearly stated that what we have now isn't working and it's not enough.

And this should be a call to action for this government to very seriously look at the situation here, you know. Not make this about political announcements and spin, but to think about the children that are dying by suicide. And the leading cause of death for teenagers in our province, Mr. Speaker, is suicide. And if that's not a wake-up call for this government, I don't know what is, Mr. Speaker.

We've been hearing about a number of issues, as we've heard in our constituency offices, you know, phone calls, emails, as people reach out, write letters, as we've been door knocking. We even have polling that supports this information, Mr. Speaker, if you don't want to listen to me. Those are my sources. The biggest issues: cost of living; affordability; health care, access to health care in our province, mental health care; the environment; being able to access housing; experiencing crime in your neighbourhood. Those are the issues that Saskatchewan people are most concerned about right now, yet we don't see the government addressing those issues in a serious way. So let's take a look at this government's record and what they're trying to distract from, the issues that people are talking about.

Cost of living. This is the number one issue we hear about on the doorsteps across the province. We heard about it in the by-elections where we were out supporting our lovely new colleagues who are just doing an amazing job since they've been elected, Mr. Speaker, from Coronation Park and Walsh Acres. This is the number one issue we heard about on those doorsteps.

We've raised these issues consistently. In fact we raised these issues in question period today about how this Throne Speech

fails to deliver real cost-of-living measures for everyday folks and fails to deliver measures that will make a difference in people's lives.

And of course it's encouraging to see some measures in place for folks who are building their own home or can afford to renovate a rental suite, but this is so far from the situation that most people across the province are in right now, Mr. Speaker. People are talking to us about the lowest minimum wage in Canada. They're talking to us about going to the food bank. The food bank numbers are up. You know, people having to feed their families at the food bank, stopping at the food bank on the way home from work, not being able to afford meat at the grocery store, not being able to afford the utility increases that have taken place under this government, the tax increases, the PST [provincial sales tax] increases that I have fully lost count of how many have existed since 2017 when I was first elected.

[20:15]

And this government is not taking these issues seriously, repeating the same tired lines that they were talking about back in 2017. It probably extends further back than that, but that's when I entered this space. They've been saying the exact same thing since 2017, Mr. Speaker. And it's cold comfort for the people who are struggling to put food on the table right now.

And it's really disappointing as I go and have these conversations with people. And we talk about the fact that this government just came out of a year of record revenues, and this is how they treat people. When times are good, when our resources are doing well — for bad reasons because of what's happening in Ukraine — but when our resources are doing well, this is how they choose to treat people. Just increase the utilities to squeeze more out of the taxpayers. Distract them with something else and see how that goes for them, Mr. Speaker.

This doesn't do anything to help people who are struggling, and I seriously expected so much more. I really was wondering, what are they going to do to address cost of living? Throughout the summer they said, well just wait. Just wait. The Throne Speech is coming. We're going to address cost of living in a real way. And I had my hopes up, and I was really excited for the province and for the people of the province. And I'm actually shocked at how bad the Throne Speech was. Yeah.

But what else are they doing?

An Hon. Member: — Careful.

Ms. Mowat: — Does the Minister for Social Services . . .

An Hon. Member: — No, it was Mr. Bonk.

Ms. Mowat: — Oh, the member from Moosomin doesn't like me talking about cost-of-living measures. You know, I never want to be talking about this either, Mr. Speaker. I would like it if people were doing well in this province. That's the province that I want to live in. That's the province that I want to work in. I want us to be thriving.

And I've heard a hesitation, reluctance, refrain from the government members about how we need to be more positive on

the opposition side. The member for Saskatoon Riversdale in his Throne Speech response told us we need to smile more, smile more often. It would be sure nice if the members opposite would smile more often. I don't even want to . . . You know, someone needs to tell him to do a little bit of research on the gendered reality of that language and the history of using that language and telling women to smile more when we have a majority of women on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It's not a good look. It's really not a good look for them. And I think they should do a bit of research on that before they talk to us about this.

But these issues are serious. This is what we were elected to do, is to represent the people of this province, and I'm not going to apologize if those issues are hard to hear. I'm not going to apologize if it makes the members opposite feel bad when we're talking about them because this is the reality these people are living with, and this is what we've been entrusted to do as the loyal opposition, Mr. Speaker.

And as the critic for Health, there is . . . The government's been saying they have a lot of work to do. Well I'll say, I'll say, Mr. Speaker, that they have a lot of work to do. And it's honestly hard at this point to pick what to focus on in, you know, my remaining seven minutes about the work that they have to do in health care, Mr. Speaker. But there is so much of it, and there are so many people that they are letting down across this province because of their failure to plan, their failure to create strategies, their failure to have a long-term robust plan to recruit, to retain health care workers. Mr. Speaker, there is so much work that needs to be done.

In seniors' care there's a lot of work that needs to be done in making sure that our moms, our grandparents, have places to live. But instead they're closing down homes, evicting people, residents of long-term care facilities, with less than a month to figure out where they have to live, Mr. Speaker. This is heartless. This is not the type of province that makes me proud to be from here. This is not something that makes me want to smile more, Mr. Speaker.

Seniors in hospital beds that are actively there because there's nowhere else for them to go, which also, we've heard, creates issues within the whole system with patient flow, with our emergency rooms getting backed up, with people not being able to enter the hospital because those seniors have nowhere to go. Mr. Speaker, this government forgets that they have a responsibility to the seniors of this province, but the seniors don't forget that. They know.

Ambulances and emergency room care. We've talked in the last year about the number of times that people called for an ambulance and there wasn't one available. Doesn't even include Saskatoon. Doesn't even include any community that has private ambulance, Mr. Speaker, in those numbers.

And our own member for Saskatoon Centre experienced this exact issue last week after having fallen on the ice out front of the legislature. Waiting for over an hour and a half, shaking, trembling, bleeding, pleading with people to get help, you know, going into shock. She felt like she was going to throw up. And there was no ambulance care available.

And I'm certainly not arguing that she needs to be treated

differently because she's elected, Mr. Speaker. I think it's an example of a broken system. And it's heartbreaking when it happens to someone you care about, and it's heartbreaking when you have to sit there feeling helpless because your friend isn't getting access to health care.

And the minister said that day, this is an anomaly. And I immediately heard from paramedics that said that is garbage, this is not an anomaly, this is the norm, this happens all the time, who are incredibly upset with that minister's insensitive comments toward this.

Ambulances lined up at emergency rooms. Emergency rooms in our bigger centres that are full, in our smaller centres that are closed. The severe lack of family doctors that exists across this province, where people don't have access to primary care — a family physician, a nurse practitioner — to keep them healthy, to do those initial interventions to make sure that people don't end up in the emergency room. This is all part of the bigger picture. But it's incredibly unacceptable when 200,000 people across our province don't have a family physician, don't even have a family doctor to go to.

The mental health and addictions crisis, with record numbers of overdose deaths that this government is not reacting to, these are real people — families, children, parents not getting the care they need in community, not having access to counselling, addictions services, Mr. Speaker, not having an entry point into a treatment facility from detox. People think it's a seamless transition when you go into detox. You say, today's the day I'm going to get clean. Those supports need to be there for you when you need them. But instead, wait time allows for windows. And those windows are the last thing that people need when they're trying to get out of using drugs, Mr. Speaker. Leads to more homelessness, housing, open drug use.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what else this government needs to hear. There's so much work that needs to be done here. And sure, there are some encouraging pieces in the Throne Speech. You know, we want to see mental health services for kids. Rapid access counselling is something. It's something for them there, but it's not going to help them long term. It's not going to be able to deal with traumatic experiences. We've heard that it's a good first step, but we need additional steps in community.

You know, those treatment beds that have been promised will be great, but we need the connection between detox and treatment. We need to make sure that people can get into those spaces, and we need to make sure that those spaces are staffed. And that staff is not going to appear out of thin air, Mr. Speaker.

So it's incredibly concerning when we see the government talking about "continue." I think "continue" is the verb I saw most often in the Throne Speech. We are going to continue to do the health human resources. We're going to continue to cut down the surgical wait-lists. We need to do so much more than what we are doing right now. The status quo is not enough, Mr. Speaker.

And when it's the first time in a quarter century that we have the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses marching on the legislature, Mr. Speaker, on the same day that this government says everything is okay in health care, who are we going to believe? We will stand

with the front-line workers any day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of other things I want to talk about. Unfortunately the agreed-upon time is up here. I do want this government to think long and hard about their legacy and how they are choosing to govern right now because people are noticing, Mr. Speaker. They're fed up and, Mr. Speaker, we're hearing from more and more people that it is time for change.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Speech from the Throne. I will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague, and I will conclude my remarks.

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

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had sort of a little speech prepared but obviously I've got to change that up. I just, you know, have to . . . I live in this province. I am very proud to live in this province. And my family immigrated into Canada in 1812, and my family has lived in Saskatchewan since before Saskatchewan became a province. And I'm very proud. My four kids and my seven grandkids, they're very proud to be here and live in Saskatchewan.

I don't know where we walk. I don't know where you walk around this province. But I walk and I talk to so many people who are so excited to live in Saskatchewan, who say, we're doing so well. Go to other provinces. Try other countries. Maybe travel a bit and see what other people have, and then look at what we have in our province and what this government has brought to this province. It is incredible what we've been . . .

We come from a province . . . I grew up here. I've been born . . . I'm 67 years old and I grew up here in Saskatchewan, and I lived mostly under an NDP government. So I lived under an NDP government for most of that time and I'm going to tell you, it was pathetic. Thank God for Brad Wall come through and give us, you know, let us live and guided this government into power and started to change the way this province was run under the NDP for all those years.

My family's always been conservative and my father was involved, always involved, and always encouraged me to get involved. He said, son, if you want to make a difference you've got to get involved. And I've gotten involved because I believe that I can make a difference. I can contribute to making a difference in this province, and that's what I'm doing and that's what all these members are doing.

And I'm sure, you know, I'm sure at the end of the day you think the same thing or you wouldn't be here. Well maybe you would be but I wouldn't be, for sure. And I do pat myself on the back — thank you very much — because I am here and I'm making a difference. So I am very pleased with that. I'm very pleased with my role . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . If you want to come over here and make the speech, come on across the floor, you know, because if you're just going to sit there and yap the whole evening while I'm going . . . Oh my God, you think you're so hot, but anyway.

So my new role at SaskBuilds is so important to me. It's important because this province is growing. It's building. It's

building. It's getting, it's getting so incredible. It's a very busy role that I have in here because we're building schools. We're building hospitals. We're building long-term care centres, in case you didn't know.

[20:30]

We're contributing to the growth in this province. It is incredible what we're doing. We're investing every, every day. We're not closing schools. We're not closing hospitals. I lived in those days. And I know the member from Cumberland. He lived here in those days too when he seen schools and hospitals being closed. So he knows very well that that happened.

So I live in Prince Albert. My constituency is Prince Albert. So we got a hospital. We've got a new hospital, expanding hospital coming. We've built a hospice up there. We've got product centres and arenas being built, that whole Yard district. There's construction. There's so much going on up there. It's incredible.

We've built 31 Habitat for Humanity homes in Prince Albert and more coming, on the go. It's incredible. And that's all for people that need a hand up, not a handout. So that's what's really nice about that. But it's a different world.

I knock on doors as well. We obviously don't knock on similar doors because the people that I talk to go, thank you very much; thank you for what you're doing; thank you. And funny, I was talking to my constituents. I spoke at a church here a couple of Sundays ago. You know, it's amazing how they all said, thank you for what you're doing and your government is doing. They're sure appreciative.

You know, we've got investment coming into this province. It's incredible. A \$6.4 billion announcement today by Billiton. It's just incredible. BPH is incredible. That's up to almost \$20 billion that that one company is investing in this province. It's pretty amazing.

In Prince Albert we've got the OSB [oriented strand board] plant is really close to starting, so that's coming there. That's going to make an incredible amount of jobs and good jobs, good tax-paying jobs in our wonderful city.

You know, we talked the other day about the carbon tax. This was I guess yesterday. And it was good that we talked about that because, you know, how the federal government has been so unfair with us and unfair with the West, period. And it's just kind of, you know, they're just out trying to get seats, whatever they can do. And they seem to be saying and doing whatever they can, and it's been unfair.

This province, we do our things most sustainable than anywhere in the world, how we do anything — how we do our farming, how we do our mining. If every other country in the world did it like Saskatchewan, it would go down, you know. The carbon emissions would go down like 25 per cent overnight. So it's what Saskatchewan is doing, and that's in part to this government and what we've been doing.

I'm going to tell you a little bit, a little bit about that EV [electric vehicle] and, you know, the pushing on the EV. Well maybe that works in Toronto. Maybe that works in Montreal or Vancouver.

But we travel in this province. We travel long distances. You know, it's six hours up to La Ronge. From here it's, you know, to Lloydminster, to wherever we go, it's a long distance and it's hard.

You know, we have a dealership. There's a doctor lives in a town close to that. He travels to Saskatoon and back with his Tesla, and we have a free charging station outside our dealership. And well he goes to Saskatoon. He comes home. He's coming home. He has to stop at our dealership. He's not a customer of ours. He doesn't come in for coffee, doesn't buy anything from us, but he plugs in and he sits in his car for over two hours so he can go from there to Tisdale, from Melfort to Tisdale. Pretty sad, right. Pretty sad.

So we don't have the infrastructure. We don't have the infrastructure to push EV vehicles. Hybrids are a good option, and they're sort of moving along. But you know, that's still there. But to sit outside, I don't know, and plug in for two hours, it's pretty sad.

In Prince Albert, newcomers. We've got so many newcomers that have come into Prince Albert, it's amazing. The president of my riding association, he hosts newcomers. He's president of an association that welcomes them to Canada. He had, you know, in the paper there yesterday — I think it was in yesterday — a picture. And there must have been 50 newcomers that were there that were celebrating their arrival to Canada. And various nationalities coming in, that's what's so nice to see. It's nice to see. I don't care what country they come from, it's nice. They're all friendly, they're happy to be here, and they're contributing people to our economy, our society. They're fitting in. They're wonderful people.

My president happens to be originally from Nigeria. And he and his family have made their home in Prince Albert, and their friends are in Prince Albert. And they welcome the Ukrainians. They welcome people from every country in the world. They still know how nice it is and how wonderful it is to live in this country and to live in this province. And so he's very, very pleased to be here. We had . . . Yeah, want to make a difference to the building of the schools, my community, different worlds, all these things that I like to talk about.

You know, I want to say though a thank you to a few people. I want to say thank you to the Premier, the Premier for putting me into cabinet and putting me in this position that I am at SaskBuilds. It's an incredible role there, a very responsible role, and it's a pleasure to be in there, and like I said earlier, to watch this province grow and to be participating in that. So it's a wonderful opportunity and a pleasure and an honour to be able to be here and to be able to participate in that for now. So I'm very happy and very proud of that.

I want to thank my family of course. I want to thank, you know, my four kids and my seven grandkids. Wonderful. I mean they're just all amazing. They're all doing well. And they love living here in this province. And you know, my wife had sent me some pictures of a couple of the youngest ones. The youngest one's three, and the next youngest is six. They were out trick-or-treating and she was . . . Of course my wife loves that. She was out trick-or-treating with them. Hopefully she brings me home some chocolate bars.

But anyway they're just so wonderful to be with. But they all do well. And my wife, she's an amazing lady. She backs me 100 per cent. But you know, she volunteered, and this is what's great in this province. We've got a lot of people that volunteer. They volunteer in Regina. They volunteer in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, every, every community in this province. I can't believe the number of volunteers.

My wife was Meals on Wheels. Ten years she volunteered for Meals on Wheels. And all those people, she says they become friends. She says, you get to know them. She was on the same route for almost 10 years, and occasionally one would pass and she would be upset for days. So she would be upset, but she did a wonderful job on there.

She was Habitat for Humanity. She's been involved with Habitat for Humanity for 10 years. She was on the board in Prince Albert, and she was on the provincial board and spent 10 years with Habitat for Humanity. And I don't care who you are, you know the good work that they do for people in this province. I mean 31 homes and one more coming in Prince Albert. They're starting to build another one right now. It is wonderful.

And I know some of those families that live in there, and they're just wonderful, wonderful people who are working hard. And they're so appreciative because they've lived elsewhere and they see what it's like, and they know what a privilege it is to have one of those homes and to live in this province. So I'm very happy with what she's done.

She oversees our business. I mean thank goodness I have . . . I'm a lucky guy to have her because she oversees the business. She does everything else. And yeah, I get to be here. And the hardest part is, of course, being away from family. Being here it's nice, but it's hard for them to come down here. It's a long drive. So it's tough.

I met with the school boards, the school boards in Prince Albert and area here in the last few weeks, each one of them. It's amazing. Really positive conversations. You know, of course there's always wants for more, always. I mean that's just the nature of the beast. They want to be more and more for the kids, and I understand where they're coming from. But they were very appreciative, very appreciative of what this government is doing for them and what this government has done.

And I didn't hear a lot of complaining from them. There's always a wish for more, but I didn't hear lots of complaining from them, so that's positive. And you know what? We have a really solid relationship. And they know they can call me any time and that if there is an issue that I'll take it up with the minister. And so I'm pretty happy about that, pretty happy to have them as friends. A lot of the members on the board are very close friends of mine.

You know, we had this meeting here yesterday, this reception here yesterday, you know, with Sask Polytech, who's showing 95 per cent graduation rates, you know, convocation rates. I mean that's incredible. Ninety-five per cent . . . or 92 per cent Indigenous graduation rates, which is wonderful. I go quite often to the convocations in Prince Albert especially, and it's so nice to see all those graduates there. And they're so pumped to get out there and get at it and get working at, you know, so many different things.

They have a 98 per cent increase in the apprentice trades, I mean, which is what there's a huge demand for. I mean you can't find people to work, I mean, is the one problem. We're so short of mechanics, plumbers, electricians — all the trades. I mean there's a massive demand for that. We're out there. We're actively trying to recruit. Sask Poly's trying to train and be involved in the training, and it's wonderful.

Again you know, mechanics. We're short on . . . We don't call them mechanics anymore. We call them technicians because the trucks and cars these days, I mean you're not just a mechanic. If you don't know computers, you don't know . . . You're a technician, trust me. And they know what they're doing. But hey, it's hard to get those people. There's such a demand for them and they're going through.

But you know, what's nice is with our growing population, there's needs, wants and needs. We need more schools. Yeah, of course we do. That's why we're building more. We've got 17 schools in the queue here right now and, you know, discussions for many more because we need that. But when you grow 30,000 people in a year — there's that many kids; there's that many more adults — we need more. So we always need more schools. We need more hospitals. We need more doctors. We need more nurses.

We do but everybody does, right. Manitoba does. BC [British Columbia] does. Alberta does. Ontario does. Quebec does. You know, everywhere in the States, travel through the States, they all need people as well. You know, there's a demand, I mean, for professionals, professional medical people, and we do our very best. Our programs that we offer for medical professionals to come to Saskatchewan are some of the best in North America, and we do our very best to try to recruit them. We try to recruit the nurses, try to recruit the doctors, and we're working on it and it's coming.

It's not like it used to be. You know, I agree. It's not like it used to be. But doctors used to sometimes work seven days a week back when I was younger and when some of the members opposite were younger. I mean doctors for sure, lots of them worked six, seven days a week. You know, it was just . . . They didn't even know there was any difference. But our work-life balance has all changed for everybody, for them and for me, for everybody. It's changed, you know, that we shouldn't have to do that anymore. So it's changed.

We have our programs in place to recruit and train and expand all that workforce. And we're doing that and we're going to continue to do that in making sure that it gets done.

You know, I grew up in small-town Saskatchewan. We didn't have a hospital. For sure we didn't have a hospital. We had to go to a neighbouring town for sure. I mean there was 75 people in the town I grew up in. I was the youngest of five and we grew up in a 750-square-foot house. So you know, I was in grade 12 before we had running water. So when you had to run to the washroom, it was, you ran outside to the washroom and it was in the back corner of the lot. And that was the run-to-the-washroom program. And you know, water downstairs, we would run to the pump downstairs. Mom needed a pail of water, it was go downstairs and get a pail of water and on a hand pump.

And so we grew up in that. My family was very happy. We were a very close family. And my father was a grain buyer for the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and I used to go down there and help him all the time. And he would work many, many extra hours. It was a dirty, filthy job, quite honestly, you know, but I'd be down in there. I'd get in there and help shovel grain in the annex as we're trying to load cars and do all that stuff. I mean that was even before the member from Cypress Hills. I was working in the elevator long before him.

So it was a long time ago. Trust me. So he wasn't even thought of by then. But it was, you know . . . but he worked there. You know what? But he also volunteered. He was also on boards and he believed in that saying of, if you want to make a difference, you've got to get involved. And he taught me that as well. He was on boards. He was on, you know, the credit union board. He was on the church board. He was on the cemetery board. He was on, you know, he was on the skating rink board, you know, on the curling board. I mean he was just involved in community. I don't know how he had time to do it all, but he did.

[20:45]

And it was about your community and doing the best you can do for your community. And he never sort of sat there and complained about having to do this. He never complained about the community, you know. He was a conservative but he still never totally complained about anything when it come to that even though . . . I mean we had our own chickens and we had our own cows for milk, and we had all that stuff. I mean it was just . . . it was hard work but, you know, he just was happy.

He'd go to work. I remember him saying this very clearly to me. He said, I would go to work at the elevator and I'd be so mad. I'd come home and I'd say, you know, I'm done. I'm done working at the elevator. It was a tough job, he said, and I'd come home for supper, and he said, I'd look around at the five faces that were my children, and he says, the next morning I'd get up and go to work again. Just go to work, he says, and do that.

And he worked long and hard and he passed away when he was 91 years old. And you know, but he worked at the elevator until he sort of semi-retired. And he went to work at a hospital. He was the head gardener at the hospital in Prince George, British Columbia until he retired at 65.

And in those days at 65 — I remember it was a Tuesday — and he said to them, could I . . . They said, you're done today because you're 65. And at that time the rules were at 65 you're done. And he said, well could I not finish out the month at least? And they said, no, you can't. He said, well can I finish out the week? No, you can't. You can finish out the day and that's it. Then you're done because you're 65 today.

And now, I mean, wow. It's kind of hard to believe. But you know, I guess in a way he enjoyed his retirement. He very much enjoyed, him and my mother . . . My mother worked a few more years because she wasn't quite as old, but they enjoyed their retirement. They travelled around. They come to see their . . . They didn't like to travel out of the country. They liked to travel to see their kids and grandkids and that was their enjoyment. That was the big joy in their life.

But I learned about hard work and I learned about . . . you don't get . . . Nothing's free in life. I've had some success in my life. I sort of slowed down with my businesses so I could give back to my province and my city and my country by being here. It's not a job that I need; it's a job that I want. It's a job that I want to do for my country and my province and my community. Because it's so important to me that it's done and it's done right, that we get involved, that we make these decisions about moving things ahead, about growing our province, about being accepting of more people coming into our province.

We have 200,000 more people here now than when we took power. It's, like, I welcome people to come to my province because it's now our province, right. As soon as they come it becomes all our province. And so I'm so proud of the mixed cultures that we have here. And I love to go to those events where you can have . . . And it's people from Mexico; it's people from India; it's people from Ukraine. It's people from wherever, and they're all there and they're hosting and they're telling you about their culture, their original culture. So, you know, it's a wonderful thing.

It's a good thing to be involved with the First Nations. You know, I have good friends. I have many good friends, First Nations friends. I get along so well with the grand chief in Prince Albert. Grand Chief Hardlotte is an amazing man. He's been re-elected not that long ago. So we work so well together. He's a wonderful man to be able to sit down and have a good discussion with and we have many. So he works well for his community and speaks well of everyone and works well with the province in advancing the needs that he speaks for and works so hard for his people that he represents.

As I do. And I represent all the people that live in my community, and whether they're NDP or they're Sask Party or Liberal or Greens, or whatever they are, it doesn't matter. We still represent everybody and that's what we have to remember. So when we're out knocking on doors, remember we knock on good doors and we knock on doors where people have problems.

But we also knock on doors where people say, thank goodness. Thank goodness for you. Thank goodness for this province. Thank goodness for this Premier. And there's our people, we knock on another door where the guy says, I don't like what the Premier's done. And I go, what part don't you like, and I would love to take it back and see if it can be changed. But it's not, you know . . . If every door that you knocked on was that negative, I think I would probably stop knocking on the doors and maybe change and maybe look at moving, because if it was that bad, I don't know if I'd want to be here.

But anyway I'll wrap up. I think I'm close to my 20 minutes. I don't know. I got to look around at the time. Am I over? Doug? So somebody else, some guy from Cypress Hills, I mean he started off this whole thing. And I actually had a real speech but then I had to change it up, but that's okay. I didn't get into all the stories at the grain elevator like Doug.

But anyway I'll close. And I will be supporting the motion put forward to support the Speech from the Throne and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Swift

Current.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an honour to be here once again in this Chamber here this evening to deliver a reply to the Speech from the Throne that we heard last week, Mr. Speaker.

As many have done here in the Chamber earlier today, earlier this week, and last week as well, Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by providing a few thanks to people that I need to extend some gratitude to. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful once again to continue to represent the constituents of Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. I've had the fortune and the good opportunity to be able to have served since 2018, Mr. Speaker. And that is something that I never take for granted each and every day, whether it's here in this Chamber, whether it's back home in the constituency, or no matter where my travels with this job may happen to take me across the province and across this country, Mr. Speaker.

As all members of this Assembly do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to acknowledge some people who are important to me personally and professionally as well in supporting the work that I do on behalf of the people of Swift Current who have sent me here.

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost are my family back home. My wife, Anita, who has been by my side for many years now, Mr. Speaker — 21 as a matter of fact that we have been together and married for not quite that length of time. But she's been with me through thick and thin and I just could not do this without her.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our kids, Raven and Adler, who are now in their mid- to late-20s. It's hard to believe how time flies and things that they are up to. Raven is here in Regina, just opened the doors on a new business here that she is proudly venturing into. And Adler is running his own videography company based out of Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, where he this fall is busy being a dad but also doing some videography work, actually on tour with the Hunter Brothers from southwest Saskatchewan down in Shaunavon. He actually has shot their last three music videos, and he's going on a cross-Canada tour with them. He's their personal videographer. And I'm so very proud of the work that he also does as an entrepreneur, a small-business man who has stuck his neck out and is doing remarkably well, Mr. Speaker.

The little guy in our lives, six-year-old Axel, who as we've heard tonight a lot of kids out doing some trick-or-treating, and I'm sure I've seen some videos and pictures of him as well being out there on another cold, blustery night across the province. And Axel is, you know, the centre of our lives in so many ways. As a family unit we call it team Axel. We do whatever we can to support that little guy who is in French immersion in grade 1 right now, and whether it's his mom and dad or us as grandparents and aunts and uncles, everyone pulling together for him and hoping for the best for him because he is just so special to our family.

Mr. Speaker, my family back home in the Melfort area. My mom and dad, Tom and Pat Hindley, who recently just celebrated on the weekend their 50th wedding anniversary, Mr. Speaker. And I had a chance to FaceTime them on Friday night. They were having a quiet night at the farm, but it was just good to see them doing well, and hard to believe that they're celebrating their 50th. Congratulations to them.

My siblings, Melissa and her daughter Elizabeth, who are in Tisdale; my sister Erica and her husband Brad, just south of Swift, or of Melfort, Mr. Speaker; and my brother Taylor and his partner Elise and their kids Lizzie and Harrison, who are in the great community of St. Brieux, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, as well, and you know, involved in a number of different areas of work and career and also in service clubs. And as we've heard tonight of how important it is that the people right across this province contribute to their communities.

My cousin back in Melfort, who may be watching tonight, Darlene Campbell. I expect I'll see her probably this weekend, potentially at our convention here. And she is watching question period I think pretty much every day and provides advice, I think it is, to myself and other members in this House, including the member for Melfort and possibly Kindersley as well.

My constituency assistant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Nola Smith, who's been with me for some time and as all of us know, we wouldn't be able to be here in this Assembly because they are truly the face and the voice and the other end of that phone. They're the ones answering the emails and providing that conduit for us when we as MLAs are not able to be in our constituencies. And I am just so very grateful for the work that Nola does holding down the fort in Swift Current.

Other volunteers in my community that help out with my local constituency executive and the campaign team as well, couldn't do it without them. They help organize fundraisers and keep the wheels moving at the constituency level to make sure that things are under control from that front as we get closer to, of course, election time in about a year's time here, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Just shifting a little bit, Mr. Speaker, as well to the staff who support the work that I do here in Regina at my office here that I'm so very fortunate to work with. Just an absolutely amazing team. My chief of staff Clint Fox, Cheyenne Quam, Christian Kainz, and Lisa Birnie. And then next door my first team, my old team, and there's been some shifts there of course. In all of our offices there's staff that come and go. But my old team of my former chief of staff, Elias Nelson, Cole Blatter, Angie Pasiechnyk, Nolan Slusar — who's new to that office — Stephanie Fuchs and Savanna Smuk, also some new folks to that office. And thank you so much for the work that they do helping us do what we need to do here on behalf of the people of this province.

And finally to my caucus team, the Premier and the MLAs here on this side of the Chamber who I am just so very fortunate to be able to serve alongside with. Just an amazing team and great perspectives and discussion and debate that we have around the caucus table, around the cabinet table, and I just can't say enough about the team that we have here on this side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's move to the Throne Speech and talk a little bit about what's in the Throne Speech. Of course the theme this year is around build and protect, and what has been built in this province and why it's important, why it's significant, and why we need to protect those investments, what we've built here in Saskatchewan.

And there's much that we, as a government, that we're very

proud that we've been able to bring forward on behalf of the people of this province that we have been elected to represent, that has been built over the past number of years. And a number of my colleagues already here this evening — also yesterday, this afternoon, yesterday afternoon, last night — as well have touched on some of these initiatives and projects. But I think it's important to repeat some of those here again tonight in my time that I have here.

As we've heard, 60 new schools — not 16; six-zero, Mr. Speaker — 60 new schools across this province, 30 major school renovation projects. That includes projects in my community, the city of Swift Current, where we benefited from a new joint-use school project a number of years ago, plus some renovations that have happened to other educational facilities. They have benefited in Swift Current from that.

Thirty-five major health projects completed, under construction, or in the planning phase, Mr. Speaker. Again the community of Swift Current has benefited from that as a result of, as an example, the construction of The Meadows long-term care facility that opened several years ago in our community and is a state-of-the-art special-care home offering that very valuable service to seniors and older adults requiring level 3 and 4 care in Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan as a regional long-term care facility.

Twenty thousand kilometres, Mr. Speaker, of highways repaired or improved. That's an amazing, an amazing number, Mr. Speaker, when you think about it and something that we continue to work on and make progress on as we drive across this province as MLAs, as the Minister of Highways does. And we've had several folks who have served in that ministry and have been advocating on behalf of the people of those areas of this province to make sure that we are making those continued investments for the people that live in those communities to support economic growth and to support communities right across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

[21:00]

\$193 million in provincial park upgrades, Mr. Speaker. That's a significant number that has been invested into our provincial park system right across this province. In my neck of the woods just north of the city of Swift Current, about a half an hour or so north of Swift Current, you'll find one of the, just the greatest parks in our province, Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park where there's been significant upgrades over the past number of years.

That's a busy park, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when come May long weekend through September long weekend it can be tough to find a site there. They got a great golf course there as well. But it's well utilized by the people of not just Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan, but you'll go there and you'll see plates from other provinces as well that are coming to enjoy the many new amenities and services and infrastructure that's been invested into that wonderful provincial park in our part of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$780 million in post-secondary education, I think is the number, into our post-secondary institutions across Saskatchewan, whether it's at, you know, our two universities in Regina and Saskatoon, our post-secondary institutions. Sask Poly

has a number of campuses around the province as we've heard earlier tonight. A reference to a wonderful reception hosted here by them last night to get an update on their priorities and work that they are doing and to support not only their communities but to support the government and in turn support we need to provide and want to provide to institutions like Sask Poly, like our universities, to make sure that they are training the workforce for the future and all the people across this province that'll be starting some very exciting careers, helping to continue to build this province, Mr. Speaker.

Of course I'd be remiss if I didn't mention as part of that also the regional college system, which also plays a very, very integral role in a number of our cities and towns across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, including in Swift Current where the Great Plains regional college has a campus there and wonderful leadership there by the relatively new CEO and president of Great Plains College, Brad Mahon, who is a wonderful addition to our community in Swift Current and helping to . . .

And I have the opportunity to have conversations with him from time to time about what's happening in Great Plains College in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, how they are pivoting and advancing and working to help support the government, support the economy, and helping to continue to build our communities in southwest Saskatchewan and beyond. I'm just very grateful for the leadership that they provide as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll maybe talk a little bit now about some of the health care initiatives that are important that are part of this Throne Speech and just touch on a number of those highlights, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-five health care facilities have been built since 2007 and more are under way, as I said earlier, either under construction or in the planning stages of development.

Twelve million dollars here, Mr. Speaker, for the Regina urgent care centre, which is now at least 75 per cent complete — probably further along since the last time I checked, Mr. Deputy Speaker — with scheduled to be opening in 2024. And how that is going to have a significant impact here in the city of Regina by building and adding capacity to health care here in our capital city, not only for urgent care when it comes to things, you know, of an ambulatory flavour — you know, broken bones, that sort of thing — but also with a specific mental health and addictions intake as well and staff to be able to handle those calls as they come in. And that will be very important to also building capacity that we need within our health care system, and very much looking forward to the opening of the urgent care centre doors here in Regina.

Also, Mr. Speaker, continued investment into the Saskatoon urgent care centre. And I've had the opportunity on a number of occasions to meet and speak directly with the leadership and the partnership team at the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation on what's happening on that particular project. And again, similar to the Regina urgent care centre, will have a significant impact on the capacity of health care in the city of Saskatoon and in that area in particular, being able to provide more opportunity for people to be able to access care on a timely basis, and also access that mental health and addictions support as well as part of the work we're doing in that area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, funding continuing for the construction of

the new hospital in the city of Weyburn. I had the opportunity earlier this summer to go down there for a sod-turning. And it was a very quick sod-turning as I joined the MLA for Weyburn, because as we were there for some quick speeches and to turn the sod, the equipment was right behind us ready to go. Get the podium out of the way. We've got work to do. And that project, which is very much needed in the Southeast, in Weyburn and surrounding area, is under way and progressing very well.

Investments into a new long-term care home in the community of Grenfell. My colleague, the Minister of Rural and Remote Health, was recently there along with the MLA for Moosomin, for a sod-turning event to mark the next stage in the progress of that particular initiative. And I had the chance as well earlier this summer to make a stop in Grenfell prior to that sod-turning. We talked about, with the leadership there — the mayor, the reeve, other community leaders, local health care leaders — about the importance of that significant investment into the community of Grenfell. And they're so very gracious and we are as well, for them, for their contribution from the local share piece to make sure that that is going to be just an amazing long-term care facility in Grenfell.

Funding towards a new and expanded long-term care facility in the community of La Ronge, Mr. Speaker. And that is going to be very much needed, and looking forward to work getting under way on that particular project to support La Ronge and northern Saskatchewan with more beds there, Mr. Speaker, and more staff to support people in that community.

Plus, Mr. Speaker, planning dollars towards new long-term care facilities in the city of Estevan, also the community of Watson, to advance those projects for the recently announced, earlier this year in the provincial budget, replacement of the Rosthern Hospital, Mr. Speaker. I had the opportunity to meet with them a couple of times as well on how important that project is for Rosthern and area.

The Battleford District Care Centre, which is also very much needed in northwest Saskatchewan, and the Esterhazy integrated facility, which the MLA for Melville has been a very, very vocal and strong advocate for, and has done an excellent job representing his community, and we're just so very pleased to be able to advance that particular project, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've also worked very hard as a government because we've heard this from the people we represent in our communities and also from front-line health care providers. Now, Mr. Speaker, in this job and my previous job I've had the opportunity to tour and visit and meet I think at least 42 communities thus far, and we've talked a lot about building the health care workforce, about filling the vacancies that may exist and working to build and expand our health care system.

So it was roughly a year ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we launched our four-point action plan to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain health care workers. Since its launch, Mr. Speaker, we've hired 728 new nursing grads from not only Saskatchewan but also from across Canada. We've implemented an accelerated, streamlined pathway for internationally educated nurses.

My predecessor in this role was part of a recruitment mission to the Philippines in November of last year. We do have, Mr.

Speaker, 34 registered nurses who've arrived from the Philippines this summer, with more to come as they're working through the bridging process. Nineteen Ukrainian newcomers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who are now working here in health care and establishing their homes here in our great province.

Twelve physician assistant positions that have been created and posted, as we announced earlier today. Also adding a physician assistant training program in collaboration with our partners in Advanced Education. That will be an important addition as we build our health care system.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, 250 new enhanced permanent full-time positions in health care, a number of these in rural and remote communities. Well over 200 of those positions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have already been filled. And that is, you know, some important work that is happening I think and will continue to happen.

A couple of other highlights I wouldn't mind touching on, Mr. Speaker: the new action plan for mental health and addictions that my colleague, the Minister for Mental Health and Addictions, mentioned earlier this fall, Mr. Speaker; the expansion of the nursing loan forgiveness program to include Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Yorkton, and The Battlefords; continuing to reduce the pandemic-related surgical backlog, Mr. Speaker; and also expanding mental health services for children and youth in a number of communities in this province at the free mental health walk-in clinics in Estevan, Weyburn, Carlyle, Oxbow, Regina, Saskatoon, North Battleford, Humboldt, Prince Albert, Kindersley, Yorkton, Swift Current, and Moose Jaw, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm mindful of the clock, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to make sure that we keep things on track here. There's many other speakers to come ahead . . . or after me, I should say, Mr. Speaker. And so as I'm mindful of that, I check to have a look to see how I'm doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we spend a lot of time with these things here, with our cell phones. We look at, we check them probably 100 times a day. Sometimes members have their alarms go off when you least expect them, Mr. Speaker. And we check them often to check the schedule, to check our texts or emails, what's coming through.

And I end with a question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that question is, when you pick up your phone, what do you have on that phone? What do you have on your lock screen? What's that home screen image that you have on your phone? Now some people might have . . . They might have a car. They might have, you know, the logo of their favourite football or hockey team or something like that. They might have a vacation spot, you know, a place that's special to them.

But I think a lot of us, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . For me, I get a picture of my grandson that I talked about earlier in the speech. So every time I go to pick up this phone, that's the first thing I see. And I suspect that many other members in this Assembly probably have something similar — a spouse, a family photo, something or someone who is important to them.

And the reason I have that there, Mr. Speaker, is no matter

whether I am in here or if I'm in a meeting and if I'm at an event, whenever I go to pick up that phone and see why it's buzzing, that's the first thing I see. And it reminds me of what the priorities are for me in my life. It's my grandson. It's my family and wanting to create a better life for them and for every family in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a pivotal time in our province. As I put on the record earlier, we have . . . there's a lot that's been built here in Saskatchewan. And I say that "we" have built. And it's not the government. It's not the government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that builds hospitals, that builds schools, that builds highways, that helps the people in the emergency room, that takes care of the most vulnerable, that teaches our kids. It's the people of this province that do that, Mr. Speaker. It's our friends. It's our neighbours. It's our families. It's our businesses, large and small, charities, other organizations, non-profits who each and every single day strive their very, very best to do their best for their communities right across Saskatchewan.

And that is something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I know I am proud of and I think so many people across this province are proud of — proud of the accomplishments that we achieved thus far, while also remaining forward-looking and optimistic of what yet is to come for this province that we all call home. Continuing to build Saskatchewan and also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, continuing to protect Saskatchewan. Because we owe that to the people who have built this province, and we owe it to the current generation and to the future generations who will also continue to build and protect the great province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to conclude and say that I am very, very proud to support this Throne Speech moved by my learned friend, the member for Saskatoon Southeast, and seconded by the new member for Lumsden-Morse. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Honoured to join the debate here this evening on Halloween evening. I'm not sure how often you get to have that chance, Mr. Speaker. I hope there's lots of fun had by the kids out there all across Saskatchewan — a fun, safe time.

I hope a lot of them came to my house, Mr. Speaker, because if they didn't that means there's going to be a bunch of Halloween candy sitting around, and you know who's going to eat that, Mr. Speaker. It's a tough time for me. The suits get a little tighter this time of year. And so hopefully everybody had fun and came by our house here in Regina.

I'd like to say a few congratulations to the new members in this House, particularly a new member on this side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker.

I was able to do some door knocking here in Regina during the summer and the lead-up to those elections and always thought of my good friend who has passed. And every time I think of Walsh Acres, I think of Derek Meyers and what he brought and the great work he did in the far-too-short time he had here. So I wanted to mention that.

Of course I'm very thankful for a lot of things and the people I get to work with, not only on this side of the aisle, the elected colleagues, but people that I work with on the constituency side. Scott does great work for the folks of Regina Gardiner Park.

The people in the ministry's office, thanks to all them. And they're really great people, work hard, and they're a joy to have and they have a lot of fun as well as doing very important work and very hard work at times in the area of social services. And thanks for them for the good work they do.

All the people in the ministry. There's a lot in the Ministry of Social Services, an honour to be able to be the minister of that particular area on behalf of the people of our great province. But the people that . . . We have a lot of front-line workers in the ministry, I think perhaps the most FTEs [full-time equivalent] in government.

[21:15]

And we run a lot of programs along with our community-based partners, Mr. Speaker, and thank goodness for all that work that they do. It's so important: child protection, income assistance, all those areas, CLSD [community living service delivery]. Some of our most truly vulnerable citizens in our province are served by some wonderful, dedicated people who do great work and some very, very difficult work at times. So I thank all those people I get to work with — not always directly — but doing that very hard work in each and every community to keep our most vulnerable folks safe.

I'd mention my family here. The member that just spoke before me, far more eloquently . . . [inaudible] . . . The words flow from his voice much easier than mine. Hard act to follow. But he talked about what's on his cell phone. It's a picture of my wife and myself from many years ago. She put it on there. I'd have no clue how to put it on there, but I'm glad it's on there. And just a reminder how important she is to our family and the work she does at home, but also as a registered nurse here in our province. She's done that for many years now and she's obviously proud of that work. I am of course as well.

And there's been some talk in the Chamber about how long you've been married, anniversaries, etc. We're coming up on 25 years here early in the new year, Mr. Speaker. Those that played football for a number of years, they never had summer weddings for probably obvious reasons. They're always in the spring. And so upcoming this spring, 25 years.

You know, I guess I'd move on a bit. I'll talk about my kids in a second here. We had just today, and it was mentioned in the Throne Speech about firefighters and the advocacy work they do, we were able to have a meeting with them here today. And firefighters kind of intersect on two things I did today.

I had a meeting with those firefighters and talked about all the great work they do in our province on the front lines, again connecting people with supports. It seems they're doing less and less about fires. That's still an important part, but dealing with individuals, they're often the first contact for people who are challenged with mental health and addictions, for example, or going through some challenges, whatever it may be. And they're doing a lot of that important work. And so we were able to

discuss those matters here today.

But I know in Regina here specifically there's been firefighters that not only do obviously great work at their jobs, but they also give back to their community. Many members have talked about community here and those key people that drive those community-based organizations. They drive their community associations. They're involved in amateur sports. They're involved in so many different things and service clubs in their communities.

And it seems that here in Regina anyway, a lot of firefighters are involved in Regina Minor Football, whether on the coaching side or the leadership side. And one person I can think of and I haven't mentioned here in the Assembly before — maybe I should have — but we lost one of those fairly recently. I guess it's been a bit of time since I've been able to rise in the Assembly. But Kelly Hamilton, the Hammer. He was involved with another firefighter, and I believe it was '99 or 2000, they . . . with Len Antonini. I should mention Kelly and Len. So the Kelly and Len show. And they've been . . . they were stalwarts with Regina Minor Football, and I was able to coach in that. And so many have been able to be coaches in that awesome organization.

And that sort of intersected with what I did during the supper break. I was out coaching a high school team — Miller, the Miller Marauders. And that was at Leibel Field. It's tough with all the snow on the ground this time of year. And we're very fortunate to be playing this late into the year, similar to the Wildcats. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you always mention that when you get up, so I'll ask for some leeway to talk about our high school team, if that's okay. But again, we're over at Leibel Field, and because of the field conditions — it's one of the turf fields here in Regina — that we're able to practise. So when you play late in the year, you've been a little bit successful, you get to go to Leibel or over to Mosaic.

And so this Friday we're playing the city final against LeBoldus. I'm looking forward to that game. They're a very good team as well. We've had a good season so far, and it's all due to the great kids that you have the pleasure to coach with, and they've worked so hard. And it's great to have individual success but also team success.

And I'm sure I can talk for at least an hour about how much I like amateur sports and high school sports, and what they do for our communities and bring people together and allow people to give back who have gone through the system as they were growing up. And just a shout-out to all the people involved, and the guys like Kelly and Len and all the board members of Regina Minor Football who are the grassroots of all the great things that happen in our province in the area of football.

And every sport has that, every association has that, whether it's band or it's theatre groups or whatever it is. People like Kelly Hamilton are the drivers of that. They put in so much time. Len Antonini — you can't go to a football game without him bothering you for 50/50 sales each and every game, whether it's the Thunder, the Rams or every RMF [Regina Minor Football] game — giving back tirelessly, tirelessly to our city here.

And we'll miss Kelly. I'm going around in circles here, but he was a great individual and never be replaced. But one of my

constituents is working at what Kelly did for many, many years in the equipment room at RMF, and thankful for him and all the great work that he's doing.

But back to Miller, you know, we've had a successful season so far. I'm able to represent many of the families that go to Miller but also LeBoldus as well as Campbell as well as Balfour. And so it's nice to have that connection through some of my constituents.

And it's nice when some of my former players, you know, you meet them on the doorsteps and you talk about . . . and they think about voting and all the great things they're able to do later in their lives. And they go to school and have had kids start businesses. We've had kids become doctors, and gosh, giving back to our community that way. And so that's just great to see. So looking forward to that.

The other teams our family is involved in. The Rams didn't have that great of a year, Mr. Speaker, this year. A bit of a younger team. My oldest son, he's done playing his years in junior football. He graduated this last year. He played with the Thunder for a number of years. Really enjoyed that. What a great program. And I again thank those volunteer coaches. I can't imagine how many hours they put in. And all the equipment folks and the team managers. And it's just a wonderful program, and so thankful he was able to participate in that.

Of course they lost. You know, my colleague just behind me here will enjoy pointing out that they lost to the Hilltops in the PFC [Prairie Football Conference] final. Two good teams. The Hilltops, I mean, again, undefeated and on their way to the Canadian Bowl once again. Could very well be, once again, Saskatchewan it turns out — obviously it can't be decided on the field — might have two of the best, or the two best teams in Canada although they don't get to meet in the final. So anyway, great seasons under way.

We'll see what happens with our Huskies as well as they gear up for the playoffs. So that is under way. And certainly a special time late in the year when we're wrapping up here in various football seasons across the province. And an honour to be part of that, to be able to find some time to work with young people. That's always been important to me to be able to give back and have some fun with those students throughout my time and as my kids have gone through that program.

So, Mr. Speaker, in terms of directly, we've touched a bit on the . . . in terms of the firefighters that were mentioned in the Throne Speech. But the theme is "Build and Protect." And some of the things I think about . . . Just today — it seems things come up each day that I think could fit into the themes that were in this Throne Speech — BHP, just today, another \$6 billion investment. That seems like it's . . . And it's never, you know, you never get used to that thing, but it's certainly become more . . . It happens more often here in Saskatchewan, and it's welcome news. And it's so important and so many jobs in the construction phase and when it's up and running. And those investments, I think, are obviously the assets that we're able to have here.

But the regime we're able to have and the political stability that we have allows us to build, along with the private sector partners,

those important pieces of infrastructure that, you know, are so important to the economy of our province.

I go back just quickly to Regina Gardiner Park. I forget to mention that things are growing there. My constituency association, we appreciate the work that they do and the time they volunteer and put in.

But in terms of that particular area of Regina, Gardiner Park area, the last, I guess, bare piece of land that was ready for development has recently been started construction on. There's going to be apartment buildings going in there. I don't know how many at this point but looks like a pretty big development. That land had been sitting there for quite some time, so interested to see how many units the private sector is building in our community to be able to have help with that affordability on the supply side. We have some of the lowest if not the lowest rental rates here in Canada for major cities as compared to right across Canada. We'll be able to enjoy that. So we're seeing building continue in the outskirts of Regina and other major centres, so we're glad to see that.

New businesses in the area, Mr. Speaker. Been able to come attend several openings of new businesses in this constituency, in my constituency. In particular newcomers, new Canadians have opened several businesses that I've been able to attend the openings of and glad to do that.

One of my sons is employed in a local national chain of grocery stores, so he's able to find employment in Regina Gardiner Park. I'll mention that, so happy that my kids are involved in the economy with being able to work. My oldest son's at SaskTel as well as taking some classes at the University of Regina, my two oldest kids in that case.

So anyway, Mr. Speaker, back to the building side of things. Great private sector investments in our communities, Mr. Speaker — likely, and as pointed out by the minister today in question period, likely not happening under the previous government if they were government in the last several years in terms of their nationalization agenda of important resource extraction by private companies, Mr. Speaker. Let the private sector do what they do best.

We talked about political stability, how important that is to decisions for international companies to make billion-dollar decisions as to where to invest, and so that's important. Several members have talked about new schools, and 60 new schools. That's a number I remember, one of my favourite numbers, Mr. Speaker. But that is a lot of building here in our province and as you pointed out I believe in your speech last year, the NDP, there was zero schools, zero schools that were being built.

Mr. Speaker, we have more and more housing spaces come online with the Sask Housing Corporation, Mr. Speaker. We had an event just the other day to talk about the rejuvenation or revitalization of 89 new units, 2- and 3- and 4-bedroom units here in Regina, to be able to house those families that have larger sizes. And they're great new units, more efficient. There's new windows, new high-efficient furnaces and those sorts of things that help with those energy bills, Mr. Speaker. And so those new spaces are coming online in every community across our province, just a recent announcement here in Regina.

In terms of housing in the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister talked about the new program for those who might be building a new home, Mr. Speaker, to again increase the supply, as well as a secondary suite program, grants for that to be able to help with the rental situation in our province, but also for those to be able to help pay with their mortgage to take on a renter in their existing space or on their property.

[21:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech talked about, and as was recently talked about by the Minister of Health, about new spaces for those who are struggling with addictions and those, through the Ministry of Social Services, new spaces for emergency beds for those who are most vulnerable in our communities. So we're able to try and help those who are experiencing homelessness, not only those who are able to stay in traditional emergency shelters, but those with some of those complex needs that we're hearing more about and dealing more with in these two ministries. New spaces for those individuals, and hopefully we can help them, put the wraparound supports around them, be able to support them to rebuild their lives in many cases, and to help on the outreach side to have an intake process for those individuals who do want treatment. And so that's part of what we'd be able to build and talk about in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

It talks about the urgent care centre here in Regina, how important that is. We were at the opening of a parkade for the Regina General Hospital that is coming online soon. And that is . . . for anyone in Regina and really southern Saskatchewan that has had to access that property, that is going to be certainly welcome news. So again we've built some of the infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, here in our province, and this government wants to continue to do that, as mentioned in the Throne Speech.

But we also want to protect our most vulnerable citizens. We talked about the new spaces for mental health and addictions, for those experiencing homelessness, protecting our citizens against things like carbon taxes. We talked about the Premier's work for many years on that area and how harmful it is. It's 40 per cent of our SaskEnergy bills, Mr. Speaker. We have seen a decrease in the natural gas costs. I think it's been about 8 per cent on average for Saskatchewan citizens who heat their home with natural gas. And so that certainly helps on the affordability side, Mr. Speaker.

We talked about protecting people and families. Just recently we had members of the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association here at the legislature in and around the Throne Speech, and boy, talk about protecting and giving and showing love to some of our most vulnerable people. I wanted to mention that, and just the work of saints here in Saskatchewan that takes place by those who are willing to take children into their homes and look after them, whether it's a short amount of time or long amount of time.

I was recently at a banquet that shows some thanks to those folks, giving them an evening off to be able to thank them for their work in becoming foster families and staying foster families. There was a couple who, I would say, are probably not on the young side of things. They've been doing it for many, many years. And there's awards for 25 years, 30, and 35 years. And they've been in it for quite a long time and they'd mentioned they'd looked after nearly 200 babies. Two hundred babies in their time

fostering. Talk about giving back to our province. That work is absolutely amazing. So they're protecting our most vulnerable and we're so thankful for that.

Mr. Speaker, quickly talk about the Sask employment incentive. More to say on that in the coming days and how that will be rolled out, but again, helping low-income families here in our province to be able to continue to work or maybe make the decision to take on some more work and the costs of doing that for, again, our low-income families.

Certainly could have talked a little bit more about that on the income assistance side of things and all the things we're doing, Mr. Speaker, but I appreciate the time I've had here tonight. I think it's coming near an end here. Some of the things I wanted to get to, right at the end of the Throne Speech, talked about the surplus provincial budgets have enabled the government to pay down \$2.5 billion of the debt. That's how you build a strong province with strong finances into the future, Mr. Speaker — to lower the debt burden on our children as we go along here. That saves \$110 million per year in interest costs. So that money stays right here in Saskatchewan to fund vital programs rather than being sent to New York or London or financial centres around the world, Mr. Speaker. That's important work and I'm not sure it gets enough attention and leaves our finances in great shape so we can continue to build this great province.

The first line in the conclusion of the Throne Speech is the last thing I'm going to talk about in my short time here and it says, "There's so many opportunities right here in Saskatchewan, regardless of whether you've lived here your whole life or you're brand new to the province." I couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. The member for Prince Albert talked about that eloquently how . . . the contrast between this side and that side over there, in terms of opportunities and optimism and looking forward to the future, Mr. Speaker. I'm definitely on the side of things that's looking forward to it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know today was Halloween and I mentioned that at the top. And to conclude about, you know, there's trick-or-treats and scary things, Mr. Speaker. You know, I don't get too scared by a lot of things I guess I'd say, Mr. Speaker. But one thing would be scary, very scary for this province is an NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to work hard on this side, on this side, Mr. Speaker, to continue to work hard to represent the people, to continue to listen, and, you know, continue to move forward with optimism and looking-forward approach, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly happy to support this Throne Speech. Thank you.

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

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to join in on making some comments. Before I start out I want to say thank you to a few people that I appreciate. This could be some of the members that are not seeking re-election, could be the last opportunity — because we just never know — to say thank you to constituents. The good Creator will take care of me. I'll be here until the time that I'm supposed to leave this Chamber.

But having said that, I want to thank the executive. The

Cumberland executive does an amazing job. We always have our executives within our ridings on both sides, you know, we're happy to work with and proud of. And they believe in the cause and they fight for what's best for people. And that's on both sides. And so I want to share that.

When I think about the constituents of the Cumberland riding, have honoured me with four terms, have shown me nothing but respect, and truly some have accepted me as family and extended family. And that is amazing, the friendships that you make. The true friendships when you support families when they lose their loved ones, whether it's addictions, suicide, whether it's just aging. And that's what you want. You want our people to age out and pass on. I've shared a lot of time and, you know, supporting families when they've gone through rough times.

So I want to thank, you know, those individuals who have always supported me and showed me the, you know, respect and love. And they've taught me. And our elders, our elders are amazing. They truly are. They will give you advice, and sometimes when you need to be told exactly the way it is. And you know, I can get a little hotheaded sometimes, and they'll remind me, no, no. They'll remind me.

But on the other side of that, you know, I look at the staff. I've been blessed with great staff, CAs working in the office who truly do the amazing work. The casework that comes in, it's amazing, and I want to thank . . . There's so many of them that, you know, that you get to work with as staff even in the building here that we work in our office, our caucus office. But I think about Devin, Jude, I just want to thank them for the many years. One was seven years. One's going on three and a half. And I want to thank them. And there's been others that have worked casually, part-time, and I want to just thank them for all the hard work they've done on behalf of the constituents to help them when they've needed help with the service, with the ministry, or just whatever it is they're willing to help. I want to thank them that way.

I also want to take time to thank truly the local leaders, our First Nations, our Métis leaders, our municipal leaders. I want to thank them for the good work they do and the advocacy that they do for their communities and the way they are passionate and how they care for their community members that they represent. I want to thank them.

Again I want to thank my wife and my family. We've been blessed with 17 grandkids and five great-grandkids, truly a blessing. We've had our challenges like every family does. You know, you come up with hurdles in life and sometimes it's not good. But you know, we've got our grandson that was really seriously injured on March 1st, pretty bad. We didn't think he would live, and today he's coming along. And members opposite, on this side and the other, you know, on the other side of the House, on this side have always asked me and reached out. I want to thank those members who have reached out on the other side of the House to just say, I hope he's doing better. And so I want to pass that on, you know, to make sure.

There is the passionate side, and the member from Cypress Hills said that there's the politics. And we will play our politics. And I'm going to do what I need to do and you'll do what you need to do. And I'll get into some of those comments. But for the most part, you know, we made friends as we go through this process.

Whether it's on this side of the House or on that side, I've made some friends. And you know, some are closer than others, but some you forget about and they go on and do other things. And some of them I wish they would go on and do other things. But it's up to the people. And this is where I'm going to get into my response.

You know, I think about our local leaders and how they advocate for their communities. Whether it's the mayors and councils, the chief and councils, the Métis leaders, they're passionate about the issues that are facing them in their communities. They care about them. They get elected in, they do what they need to do, and they try hard. And they try to do it themselves first. But then they'll go to their government, whether it's a provincial or a federal government, but in this case I'm going to respond to the provincial government.

They'll hope that when the crises are in their community, they can reach out to their government and their government will respond. Whether it's our school divisions, when they need services for their students to make sure their students have the best quality of life, they'll reach out to the government. Sometimes they have opposition members that represent them. And you know, my role is to bring their issues forward, and I've tried to do that as best I can. Sometimes maybe it's hurt and sometimes you're angry because the government for some reason doesn't seem to be listening, or I feel maybe doesn't get it or people I represent feel the government's not getting it.

But there are many challenges. And I think about those local leaders and all the work they do and the meetings we have with them and, you know, hearing their concerns and the challenges that we're faced with as northern people, as Indigenous communities. You want a government that truly means you can . . . the duty-to-consult and accommodate meaningfully is important.

The issues that face First Nations and Métis communities, northern communities . . . I guess there's other communities, jurisdictions will say the same thing. They want their government . . . I know there's many challenges facing our First Nations and our Métis, and I think about their traditional lands and when they're impacted, that they should be consulted, and meaningfully. There should be legislation that protects them so that when they talk to their government and they say to their government, these are the issues facing us, we want you to . . .

Industry. And most of them want industry. They want jobs. They want all that. And I hear you talk about the positive things, and I will say there is positive things and that's good. That's good for the province. We all want our province . . . But we have to make sure we're not leaving behind the most vulnerable, and that truly sometimes happens. And there's a group of citizens I don't think gets the attention of government the way it should, and I hope one day we can change that, that they will have that.

And that's so many I represent, and there's so many First Nations and Métis in our province. The Indigenous population, it's a giant. Our young people are a giant. One day I hope we can get them to come forward and make sure they come out and vote in municipal elections and federal and provincial elections so they can send a message, so people will stand up when their leadership comes to talk on their behalf. The leadership has the power of the

people behind them saying, we come out and vote and we'll hold you accountable at election time.

[21:45]

And that's important, and I hope to one day be able to encourage and work on that. I'm not seeking re-election, but I would like to be able to do that one day. It's something in my heart.

You know, I think about the water crisis in Cumberland House, and I want to thank the local leadership for the way they're responding. And I give them credit. I've seen some of the communities that are dealing in northern Saskatchewan with challenges when it comes to crime, alcohol, drugs, just the issues that are facing so many communities, and I give them credit for coming forward and doing what they can. So I want to thank them for that.

You know, there are many things we would like to see in this Throne Speech, and the government . . . you know, on some of the things I can give you some credit. I will, and I said that. You know, but you've patted yourself pretty darn good as members of government backbenchers to say how great it is, and I think we've jokingly said I'll supply pillows for some of you, because I think you hit yourself a little too hard and your back's going to be sore, so I might get you an NDP pillow to put that behind there.

But having said that, you know, it's the cost of living is facing so many people, whether you're seniors, you know, low-income people, people working, single parents trying to make ends meet. They are. They're working. They're hearing everyone say, well get out there; there's jobs. Get to work. There's some trying. Some of them are working three jobs. And my colleagues on this side have shared that, you know, through their responses, how the struggles . . . We see the struggles. We're hearing it.

And I don't know if government's hearing it. Like you've got to be hearing it. You can't tell me you guys can't be hearing the challenges that people are facing to make ends meet. I know that. And I'm hoping that you actually will show some compassion and will work on some of those issues.

We talk about the mental health, the addictions. I will always advocate to help, to see First Nations and Métis people, citizens, and whether you're in the rural area, or the urban, whether you're in . . . You know, it doesn't matter. I don't care if you're non-Indigenous. But we see such an impact when it comes to . . . The number's high when it comes to our Indigenous population. And I hope the government can respond to work with the leadership, to work with those individuals that are advocating, saying we need help. We're in a crisis. Our children, we're losing too many of our grandchildren, our children to mental health, addictions, and suicide.

And again I go back to all the things you want to talk about that would be positive. I think about Highway 106, the Hanson Lake Road. I think about how many leaders, whether they're band councillors, mayors, just the individuals, the leadership that represents the Hanson Lake highway that goes to Creighton, Pelican, Denare, how they're asking the government to put cell service in for safety. There's been accidents. I got a call today, talking to one of the band councils again about a crisis.

You know, even if you phase it in. We've talked it up. We've petitioned. We've asked. Leaders have asked, I know. Even if you were to phase it in. We own SaskTel. You're managing it. The people have elected you to manage it. I'm just asking you: sometimes look at ways that you can work to find ways to make sure that for safety things can be done. It's up to you. You're the government, and I know you're hearing the people. You have to be.

And if you're not hearing the people, then I guess soon you will get the report card. Because on education, so far it looks like you're failing miserably. Like you can sit there and say oh, you're doing great. And that's fine. Go ahead and do that. But I think your report card when it comes to education is not too good, from what I've seen from teachers. And we'll see how that goes and plays out.

We look at front-line workers, and we look at so many in health care. And my colleagues have expressed it, so I'm not going to go over and say it again and again about what it is. Family after family come here, you know, that are needing health care. So we'll leave it at that. And you know it. They're coming here, they'll continue to come, and we'll do all we can. But I want to thank our front-line workers, our health care workers, the amazing job they do. They do. They do the amazing work. Nobody's ever going to criticize them. We'll stand with anybody to say they're doing their best and we need to have more supports.

So you know, just the way the teachers were treated and have been treated, again I just feel . . . I thank them. I have family that's teachers, and I want to thank them for all they do.

You know, when I think about long-term care, in this Throne Speech you mention again La Ronge long-term care. I want to take a minute about that 80-bed facility. Since 2008 and further — the Croft report came out 2009 — the petitions came out. We had hundreds, maybe thousands of petitions that residents, people who cared about keeping our seniors at home in the North and not taking them down south, where they passed away.

And we had people in the community, non-Indigenous people who brought forward concerns about it and said, Doyle, this isn't right. And they didn't support me. They didn't vote for me. They said, this isn't right. And they said, let's draft a petition. And that's fine, and they did. And I give those individuals the credit when they did that. And I've had others that have come forward signing the petition.

We've had community members that we have lost. They've died, but they advocated. They were seniors, and they advocated to say we need long-term care. Our tri-community, the leadership, they have done an amazing thing with pushing. We've done all we can, and sometimes you know . . . I've found the one thing: a member of the opposition, you'll never get anything done.

You know, sometimes it's amazing what you have the people behind you and you go after a government to say, hey, this isn't right. You need to do the right thing. And they can take that government along. And the government maybe don't want to come sometimes, but they'll eventually get there. And I want to give credit to so many who have accomplished getting the long-term care for La Ronge and area. That's going to be amazing,

keeping our loved ones, our seniors, home with their families. And that's a good thing. So I'll give you credit on that. But unfortunately you had to be pulled so bad to do it.

So having said that, you know, I think about the challenges, you know. It is an honour to serve. And you know, I think about the politics. And I'll never forget, you know, sometimes even the Premier did some door knocking in my area when a young politician ran against me. And I got the heckles from here. And I have to be honest with you, you know, they . . . Oh, he's gonna take you out; he's gonna take you out. And you start playing the head games back and forth. And I know that's the politics of it. But just remember when you do that to others . . . I get it. It's the politics. It happened to me. I'll give it back.

But truly at the end of the day, it'll be the people of our constituencies that will vote for who's going to represent them. And if you're doing the great job as MLAs, the backbenchers, if you're doing the people in the big centres — Saskatoon, Regina, P.A. [Prince Albert] — if you're doing the work that you're supposed to be and you're listening to the people, and your government is doing what your representative wants and that your citizens want that have sent you here, then great. You'll get re-elected time and time again.

But if your government's not doing what the constituents want and you're not listening to the people when it comes to health care, affordability, and all these other issues that we've raised and they're raising, then at some point they will hold you accountable. And that is the residents. It's up to the Saskatchewan residents to decide who it is. For now they have given you the opportunity and for 16 long years it's been you. And you know what? I think some people . . . I'm hearing talk. It's interesting that supporters of yours who question some of it. So I'll leave it at that. It's up to you. It's up to the people. They will decide.

But I know, you know, the challenges are out there and there is hope. There is hope. And I keep telling families that I talk to and I go try to help. And I'll advocate for people to get into mental health, to addictions, to treatment. I'll keep doing that. And I'll advocate as much as I can for anyone who asks me: Doyle, help me; we need help. And I'll do all I can to advocate. And I will continue.

And I hope the government . . . You know, we can talk about all these beds that are going to open and open, to now. We need action now. Action is what's needed. You talk about building and protecting. We need action right now. We have a crisis going on in our province with mental health, addictions. And it wasn't just because of COVID; it wasn't just because of COVID. Yes, I agree it's gotten a lot worse. And now the government . . . You are government. You are the government of the day. You get to decide. Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll try to go to you towards the members.

But they are the government, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The people have chosen. You know, they fight. They say they want to fight. Well we'll see the actions. Actions speak louder than words when it comes to so many files, so many files. Action is what it is. And you can pat yourself and you can say you're doing a great job, but when people come to you and say, you're not. It's not helping me.

You know, I think about the member that left here. You know, I don't know if I can say his name, but he left Regina. He decided to leave the Sask Party caucus. And just some of his comments. Growth that works for everybody. Like, you know, I don't know. So those are interesting when you have comments. So I think you have your own, some of your own problems with your own, that maybe that's not resonating from the backbenchers that, you know, maybe it isn't working as good as it is.

So I'll leave it with you. That's up to the Premier and his cabinet and his team to do how they want to do. But all I can say — and then I'll be done shortly here, Mr. Deputy Speaker — is I hope at the end of the day the government understands how truly our leadership, local leadership is working hard to try to help their communities. And they are having struggles in many areas, and they're asking for help. And I hope this government will hear those concerns and do what it needs to do.

So on that note, one day hopefully we'll have legislation in here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will be meaningful. The duty-to-consult and accommodate First Nations and Métis people, that is important. And when we see what's going on in some of our northern communities when it's with the industry, we talk about, you know, that those individuals are truly being consulted in a meaningful way. And it's got teeth. It's legislated. It has teeth, so that once and for all our Indigenous people . . . And if at the end of the day they have to take governments to court, then that's what they need to do. And you know, that's up to the leadership. I give them all the encouragement they need. They know what they need to do. They have experts that are working with them and they'll do what they need to do.

So you know, again I'll just say, we get emotional in here. Sometimes we have our sides and the politics. And I do like the comments from the member from Cypress Hills just saying we've got our jobs to do. And you know, I'll do what I need to do for the people I believe I'm representing, and you'll do what you need to do to defend your government. I get it.

But at the end of the day, let's hope this good province, our people are not forgotten, that the citizens of this province who own everything, this is their province. It's all their assets that we take good care, and it's entrusted with you as a government that you take care of the citizens the way they should be. They have a right, our seniors, most vulnerable have rights. And I just hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this government will understand that and will work.

And I hope that at the end, when the election is called, they'll either get the message or they won't get the message or they'll be changed. Who knows? You never know. Times are funny.

But on that note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I got a chance to weigh in on a few things and share a few things before . . . And this could be my last time. You never know. But I want to make it very clear, very clear. I will not be supporting the main motion. I will be supporting the amendment 100 per cent. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rochdale.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the

motion in support of the Throne Speech. Build, protecting growth — those are very, very powerful words. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what this government does. We follow what this mandate is. This is a blueprint. The Throne Speech is a blueprint of how do we best serve the people of Saskatchewan.

But before I get into the discussion of the Throne Speech, I have some thank yous to do. I would like to thank the residents of Regina Rochdale for supporting me. Since 2007 I've had the honour of representing the northwest sector of the city. It's a great honour. We have a lot of exciting things happening in Regina. In my constituency alone we've got a beautiful, brand new school, a joint school that at first, it looked like it was built on the edge of Lumsden because it was in an empty field. And today that beautiful joint school is supported by homes. So our area is growing by leaps and bounds.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to thank my family. My husband, Terry. My husband, Terry, is my biggest rock. You know, Terry taught for a lot of years at the university, and in fact he's taught some members of the opposition. When he retired, he really changed his focus, because when he taught at the university, he would get up bright and early every day, walk through Wascana Park to the university, and not come home until late at night. So when he retired, his focus changed. And I feel very fortunate that when I come home from serving the people of Saskatchewan in this House, I have a warm supper waiting for me. And that is a real treat and I really appreciate . . . He's my biggest rock and supporter.

[22:00]

I also have an absolutely wonderful family, a son Jon and his wife, Allison, and three absolutely incredible grandchildren. Simon, who just turned 17. And Simon is an interesting cat, I've got to say. You never know what colour his hair is going to be. It's either blue, it's a purple, it's whatever. And I said to him, you know, Nana really likes the natural colour of your hair. And Simon said to me, you know, Nana, I looked at my papa — which is Terry — and I looked at my dad. He said, you know, I don't have a lot of years to have fun with this hair. He's got the same . . . I've got to say, Terry's got the same haircut as you do, Deputy Speaker. You know, he's got a very wide part like you guys do, you know.

But you know, and he's just a wonderful, wonderful older brother to Holly and Charlie. And Holly and Charlie have special needs. And so you know, Simon is grown up. He may have just turned 17 but really he's about 25. He's probably one of the most responsible young men that I can imagine.

And my son Jon. Jon works for CN. He's a yardmaster. You know, when Jon was young he played video games, and I said, jeez, Jon, you know, you're not going to . . . how is this going to help you? Oh well you know, he just said, I enjoy playing video games. Well today as a yardmaster. He sits at a desk that has about six computer screens in front of him and then two other TV monitors. And he says to me, guess what. All those years of playing video games gave me this job. So you know, when we have young people who we sometimes question what they're doing, a lot of times it's a gateway to the future for them.

And my daughter-in-law, Allison, she's an absolutely incredible

mother. And she has just obtained her early education certificate. And Jon and Allison are really interesting young parents in that having three children, and two with special needs, they feel totally blessed that God gave them children that they could help. I've got to say that's pretty special.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so lucky to have such incredible support staff. I had Kelly Zazula in my office for going on 16 years. And wonderful person that she was, you know, I don't feel that she left me. In fact I feel that her going on to a new career is a real blessing because the skill set that she learned by being a constituency assistant for Regina Rochdale for me really gave her the skill set for her career to blossom. I'm very lucky to now have Sherry Simpkins, and Sherry treats the constituents who phone in. Doesn't matter what their issues or concerns are, she's prepared to go to the wall to help them. And so I feel very honoured and blessed to have Sherry now occupying my constituency of Regina Rochdale.

I'm also very lucky to have in the minister's office Drew, Alexis, Paige, Halle, and Sherry. Sherry's taken a leave of absence to help look after her husband, Neil, and so she is greatly missed. But I have to say I have a powerhouse team of women in that office that they really know how to get things done, and I really do appreciate them.

And the ministry, the staff of Parks, Culture and Sport, Status of Women, Lotteries and Gaming, heritage, and Francophonie, I am very fortunate to again have very talented and dedicated people who want to ensure that Saskatchewan is the best place to be. But you know, all of this came from growing up on a mixed farm in Saskatchewan. I have to say my work ethic comes from there, and others have shared this evening of growing up on a farm, understanding that you didn't quit until the job was done. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's how the staff within the ministry operates. They always do their best to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan are well served.

You know, a lot of people kind of refer to this ministry as the ministry of entertainment, fun, but in fact this ministry . . . And I feel so honoured that the Premier has asked me to be the minister in charge of this very diverse portfolio, because the programs that we serve are the people of Saskatchewan. And they may be very different because it is a very diverse portfolio, but each and every one of them works hard to ensure that the quality of life here in Saskatchewan, bar none, is the best.

You know, our park system — and I've said this many times — this is a slice of heaven. We have absolutely some of the best parks in Canada, and we can be proud of them. And people come from all over to really appreciate what we have to offer. You know, last year alone 900,000 park entries, day entries. Now that's a lot of people come into our parks. And overnight camping permits were 364,000. You cannot . . . you know, like I mean those numbers are staggering, up over 60 per cent.

To ensure that people are enjoying our parks to the best, we are investing in our parks. We are investing to ensure that their time there, that when they leave, they tell their friends, they tell their families. They go on social media and they let people know exactly what kind of upgrades they have experienced in our parks.

You know, last year we invested over 14 million in capital projects in our parks and whether it was accessibility into pools, or wheelchairs that can go into the lake, or things such as providing free life jackets for day users. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to come and enjoy and spend time.

And like I say, it's very affordable and it's very accessible. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we don't charge school groups that want to come to the provincial parks, and we also have free passes for seniors because we know that it's important that affordability is being addressed in our parks.

And also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have, within this ministry, looked at different projects and programs that address affordability. As I said, we are ensuring that our parks are inclusive, accessible, and are enjoyed by everyone. We also are offering sports programs through lotteries.

Our lottery program here in Saskatchewan . . . When I attend meetings with other ministers from across Canada, they absolutely look at how we fund our sports and our cultural activities through our lottery foundation. They look upon it and say, how do we get to do that.

Well here in Saskatchewan we ensure that the money that is obtained through lotteries goes back into community organizations, and it's done at arm's length. So no one can ever say, well they picked that group because those people are . . . You know, what would Gудie Hutchings say? Well I guess they should have voted more Liberals. Well it has nothing to do with who voted what or where, and who is their MLA. It is the need of that organization and they put forward a request and they are able to obtain money.

And also too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like I said, we do address affordability because we continue to allocate 4 million to the active families benefit. So that means every individual child who wants to participate in a sports or a cultural activity, we will have \$150 of a tax refund for them. And if that child who would like to participate in an activity has a special need, it's \$200. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are addressing affordability in this province because this tax credit provides families. Another is an annual income of less than \$60,000, so there is that threshold. So like I said, affordability is being addressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know our community rinks, they're absolutely, you know, they're the backbone of a lot of our small towns or larger urban centres. And so last year we — and again this year — will be allocating 1.6 million to the community rink affordability grant. And this is, like I said, delivered through Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association. And that again supports winter physical activities because we know that when individuals . . . Be it young or old doesn't, age doesn't matter. If you're physically active, it really is good for mental health. And last year over 580 ice rink surfaces across the province received funding.

So that absolutely, that's doing good work and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also realize that the Saskatchewan veterans' service clubs, we have a support program for them and we will continue to provide them with 1.5 million per year to support these clubs. We don't wear these poppies lightly. We realize the sacrifice that

many have given, and our veterans need to be respected. They need to be able to gather at their facility in a respectful manner. And so it's really important that we are able to provide some funding to help with across the province. And again last year we allocated over 75 projects and that was 4.5 million. So like I said, it's pretty exciting when you realize in total we've had 312 projects being supported through the veterans' service.

So like I said, we're pretty proud of the work — not falsely proud but in fact very proud of the work — that the people within the ministry are doing to ensure that accessibility and affordability is top of mind.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity — and I'm just going to find it in this large cadre of papers here — of attending an event in Prince Albert, I, along with the MLA from Prince Albert Northcote and the MLA from Athabasca. So we had an announcement. Now previously this project had been announced, but the product has now been shipped. And we had the opportunity to talk about our partnership with Shoppers Foundation for Women's Health. And this foundation will provide 20 million free menstrual products over three years to individuals in Saskatchewan who may not be able to afford them. Now this support for women and girls in their participation in school, work, in their communities, it helps reduce the stigma and promotes gender equality and supports dignity.

Well we did some homework, and it's about \$20 average per month for women and girls who are menstruating. So when we talk about affordability, this is exactly what this government's doing. And through the office of the Status of Women we were able to come to an agreement with Shoppers to provide this. So like, I mean this is good news. This is good news for everyone and also to . . . So this will be provided to schools in need but also to women's shelters.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about affordability, we talk about accessibility, we really do pay attention to the people of Saskatchewan. And I have to say I'm proud of the work we're doing because, as I say, I grew up on a farm where you didn't quit until the job was done. And to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's my motto. I don't quit until the job is done. Thank you very much.

[22:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Wood River.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you so much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It really is an honour for me to stand here tonight in this Assembly and really talk about the Throne Speech and what really does depict "Build and Protect." And I think, you know, of all the speeches I've heard, everybody on this side has really talked about how we're building this province and how we're doing what we can to also protect the citizens of this province as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As my colleagues have all said, they always want to thank the people in their constituency. I do as well. I am truly honoured and humbled to serve the constituents of Wood River constituency over the past two provincial elections, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity, Deputy Speaker, to thank

obviously a lot of staff people that I have working for me in my office in Assiniboia. Sandy Ellert and Kimberly Simpson just do a fantastic job for me. As many of my colleagues know, when you're in cabinet, you're away from your constituency more. And these two young ladies really do look after the office, and any concerns that come into that office are dealt with as quickly as possible. So I really do want to recognize them and thank them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to take this time obviously to really thank the Premier for giving me this great honour and opportunity to serve as the Minister of Agriculture, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Crop Insurance, and also the Minister Responsible for Water Security Agency. That is truly an honour for a farm boy born and raised in this province, never left my constituency, and loved where I live and still love where I live to this day.

I want to take this opportunity obviously to thank the staff that work in the Ministry of Agriculture: James Cherewyk, my chief of staff; Derek Griffin, a young guy that just moved into my office for communications assistance; Regina Kowalsky is my admin assistant; and Kristen Ferguson and Jacob Sawatzky are my two case workers as well, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank them for everything they do to really look after issues and challenges that come into the ministry office and keep me in line too.

I want to take this opportunity obviously to thank a lot of the ministry officials. When I look at the team that I have in the Ministry of Agriculture, with the Deputy Minister Rick Burton leading that team over there — and we really do consider ourselves a team — and I can't say enough about the dedication of everyone who works in the Ministry of Agriculture. And I've had the opportunity to get to know a lot of them over the past five years, and it really is an honour for me to work alongside these folks as well.

I do also want to take this time to thank Jeff Morrow and the entire team over at Saskatchewan Crop Insurance as well. As everybody knows, over the last few years we've had challenging issues. Obviously with drought in 2021 and significant drought again this year, but also the other things that all the folks at Saskatchewan Crop Insurance help deliver when we did ag recovery with the livestock sector in 2021 and what we've done for the livestock sector here just recently in ag recovery as well to help those livestock producers that are having challenges trying to source feed. And hopefully with this program we can help alleviate some of that pressure as well, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously as all my colleagues have said in all their speeches, we obviously couldn't do this without the support of family. And I want to take this opportunity obviously to thank my wife, Lois, my wife of 46 years, for being a real champion and giving me this opportunity to serve the people of Wood River constituency, and also the support of my family members.

And tonight I was blessed. I had permission to leave here and go and trick-or-treat with our grandchildren that are here in the city of Regina. So I got to walk around for a bit with at least Jack, the youngest one. I got to go with him. The girls are a little older and they of course went with their friends. But I did get to see them and at least have a good visit with them for a couple hours.

I also want to talk about a gentleman that I have the greatest

respect for, and that is Lyle Stewart. I've known Lyle for over 20 years. In my years in municipal politics, I met Lyle and we've become good friends. But I mean he was minister of Agriculture for this province for over six years and really put it on the right direction to really work for the producers of this province in all aspects. And he made it pretty easy for me to move into this role and really just to I guess see what Lyle had did and just to carry on everything he did in the ag sector.

But Lyle is one of the true gentlemen that I think everyone has grown to aspire. And I always thought that Lyle never spoke very loudly but when he spoke, everybody listened. And I think that's the respect that Lyle had from every member on this side of the House. And, Lyle, I just want to wish you all the best and get well, my friend.

You know, I've come from a farming background. My colleague from Cypress Hills talked about the same thing. And I think it's important for us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as MLAs to really talk about our values that way. Born and raised on a farming operation, my dad had an implement business. I had the privilege of farming with my brothers all my life. And that is so close. Because the relationship that you grow that way and which we still have to this day brings us into what we would deem almost our retirement years. And we still hang out together and have a lot of fun together. And I just want to thank Robert and Cameron for everything they did in helping me, in supporting me in this role to get me where I am here today.

And I think that's a core value when we talk about friendships with our neighbours and helping our neighbours. It seemed to be that either way. If we needed help neighbours came over, and if neighbours needed help we all did it. And it was just a core value of what Saskatchewan is really all about. And we'll continue to see that in everything we do.

I do want to talk a little bit . . . Obviously I'm going to talk about agriculture and I'm going to talk about a few other things as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I see I'm getting close to the 10:30 time, but I'll definitely try and finish it out.

Obviously agriculture is important to this province. And I've had the privilege of travelling around the world on trade missions that really talk about what we're doing here in the province of Saskatchewan. And it's a story that is a great story to tell, and it's a story that the farming community in this province adapted 40 years ago.

When we look at what we call zero-till and minimum till, there is no other jurisdiction in the world that is doing it to the degree that we are doing it. Over 95 per cent of the land in this province that is cropped is either zero-till or minimum till. That is unheard of in virtually every other jurisdiction in the world, and that's why we have a great story to tell, and that's why companies around the world are really asking not only what we grow but how we grow it.

We've always talked about and are really encouraged by the high-quality food we grow, and that is attracting the customers. But now we're attracting global companies around the world because of how we're doing it, when we can talk and we've proven it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through the research we've done, that our carbon footprint for growing our crops is far better than

any other jurisdiction in the world.

Examples of that would be obviously for canola. We're 60 per cent better in our carbon footprint on canola than any other jurisdiction in the world. Durum wheat and wheat, we're over 60 per cent better than any other jurisdiction in the world. Yellow peas, we're over 90 per cent better than any other jurisdiction in the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So these are the great stories that we really want to tell and talk about on what we do.

I do want to talk a little bit about some of the programs that we have put into effect, that we have really worked with through crop insurance. Crop insurance for 2023, record high coverage at around \$446 an acre. We paid out \$70 million in ag recovery funding for cattle producers this year, and 77 million is coming from our federal government as well. But we also paid out over 60 million in rainfall forage insurance for this year as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So those are great things that we have done that were really helping the industry to grow and to prosper. And that comes right to even trying to protect, making sure that we can keep the industry viable here in the province of Saskatchewan. We want to make sure our breeding stock and the livestock sector remains strong, and we want to continue to do that as well.

I do want to talk if I could, I think if I can for the few minutes, I really want to talk about things that we've done in the constituency over the past few years. And I think a lot of my colleagues have done the same.

When I just looked around what we have done and drove through the community just a little over a month ago, through a lot of it, and saw a lot of work done, and I looked at the town of Coronach and I was there, their entire main street was all redone as far as all new infrastructure underneath — that's important to that town — obviously through funding mechanisms, through the ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] program under the provincial government and the federal government. Those are projects that would obviously cost the community an awful lot of money to do.

Same thing in the town of Rockglen. When I went through there just a few weeks ago, main street, same thing. All new infrastructure underneath. And obviously they'll be probably repaving those streets once it settles down. Assiniboia, same thing. Main street all dug up, all new infrastructure, getting ready for new paving of Main Street, which is a highway. There's two major highways going through that community.

But the one thing I do want to talk about is their new arena in Assiniboia. That has been drawing people from around the province. I had a friend that was over there earlier this year from Moosomin, and he looked at the facility and thought, this is unreal. We've had a Western Canada hockey game there. Swift Current and Moose Jaw played an exhibition game there. Over 1,000 people there. The 50/50 was just over \$12,000 I believe. There was a AAA midget game there — Moose Jaw and Swift Current. We're seeing these teams want to come out and play. It gives them an opportunity. It's a beautiful facility. We'll continue that side of it as well, Mr. Speaker.

I looked at the community of Willow Bunch, you know, where

our kids went to school. They got significant funding for their park expansion, which they're trying to do as well. So we're starting to see things like that.

And I want to talk a little bit about some highway projects that were done: 36 Highway from 13 down to the US [United States] border, all new highway. That was something that we heard from the communities of Coronach, Willow Bunch, and all along there about no highway to get them to a decent highway. And we heard about the ag community talking about trucks, where they really virtually almost break an axle with the previous, you know, where the highways were in such rough shape.

The same thing with Highway 4 from Cadillac down to the US border. All redone, Mr. Speaker. Brand new highway. Those people were so appreciative of a highway. And that was the community, if you remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under the NDP government where they told them to go and fill their own potholes in, Mr. Speaker.

So you start talking about trust in rural Saskatchewan and why people do not trust the NDP government, that is why. Because the NDP government totally neglected rural Saskatchewan. They abandoned it, and that's why we saw hospitals closed, schools closed. In my constituency I can give you the names of four, five, six schools that were closed within a matter of just a few years, and the challenge around that.

And so when I hear them talk on the other side about, you know, 16 years ago or 20 years ago, I'll tell you one thing: people in rural Saskatchewan do not forget. And they will not forget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They will not. It's something that has been instilled in them. I've lived in rural all my life and I've seen it. I've heard it. And I can tell you the people in rural Saskatchewan will never, ever forget.

And I think that's even one of the things that we're doing with the marshals service. It's going to be an added service, an enhancement service to rural Saskatchewan that is going to be very important to rural Saskatchewan. And I think that's something that we look forward to in how we roll that out and work that with the RCMP. It works enhancement with. It's not anything else but that, and we will see that opportunity work.

I can tell I'm getting close to the end. In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Saskatoon Southeast, seconded by my new member from Lumsden-Morse, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time now being 10:30, this Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30.]

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Hon. Jeremy Cockrill
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