



FIRST SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

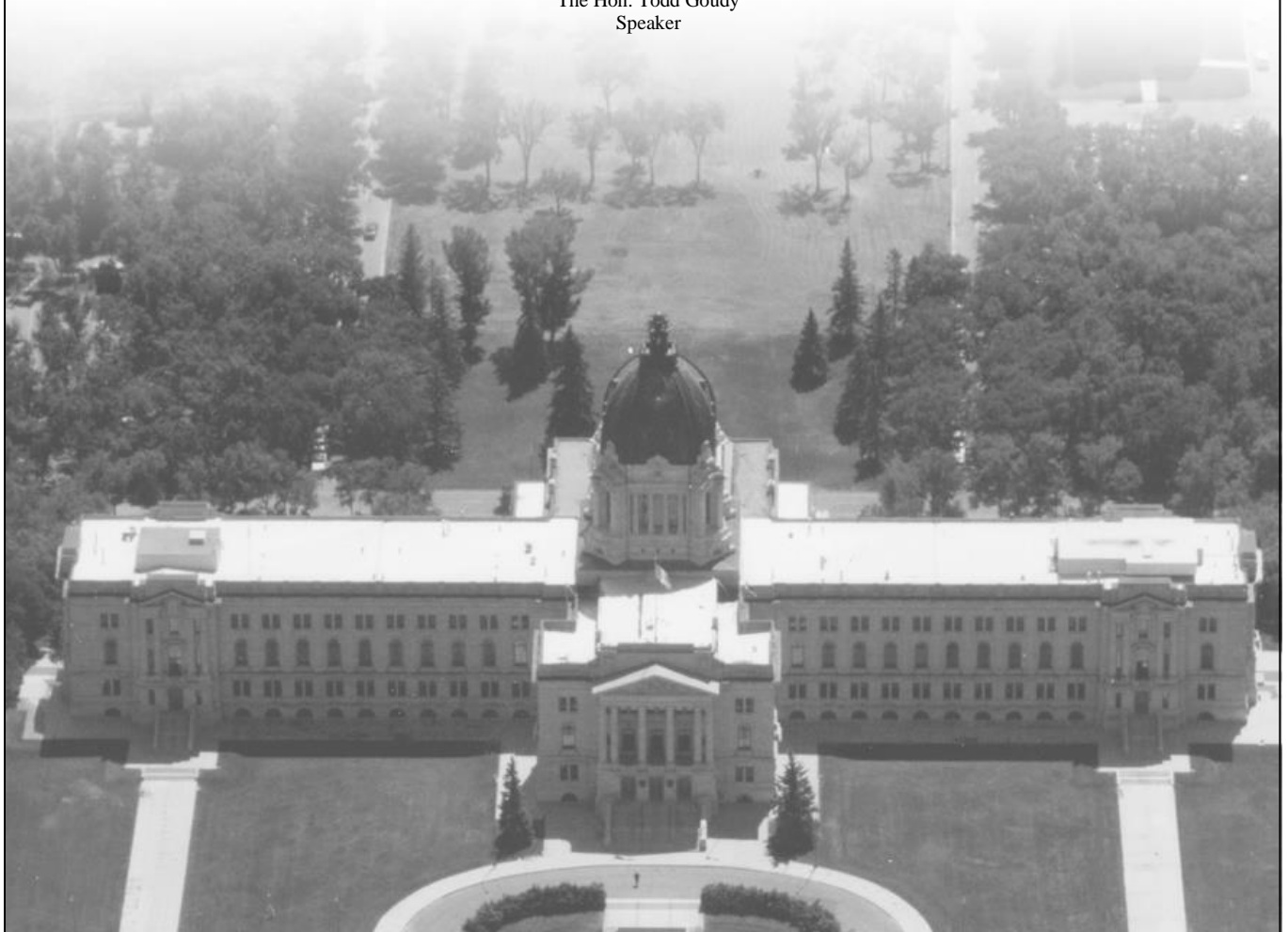
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Todd Goudy
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 30th Legislature

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Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Mount Royal (NDP)
Young, Aleana — Regina South Albert (NDP)
Young, Hon. Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 34; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 27

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

Speaker Goudy: — Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today and welcome and thank a number of people who are sitting both in the Speaker's gallery and in the east gallery. Mr. Speaker, with us today are a number of volunteers who helped out on the most recent provincial election. I will be recognizing them further in a member's statement, but I just want to acknowledge them here now. We have with us today Crystal Palmer, Gerry Craswell, Jessie Oberik, Rosalee Longmoore, Ashantay McKenzie-Missens, Larry Raynard, and Fritz Wyssen.

I also see with us today a proud dad and frequent guest to our Assembly. Don Young is with us here today, as well as Chaplain Fred Hill. I wish, on behalf of all of the members of the official opposition, to welcome these guests today to their Legislative Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Meara Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to be on my feet today to present a petition calling on the government to fix the crisis in our health care system. The signatories of this petition point out that there have been over 951 health care closures across rural Saskatchewan just between August of 2019 and July of 2023. Now today that number is much higher. 407 closures were in Saskatchewan emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker.

The signatories of this petition wish to bring to our attention that women have to travel often out of province for basic health care and that Saskatchewan has the longest hip and knee replacement wait times in the country. One of the things that I was very shocked to learn about recently, Mr. Speaker, is the lack of interventionist radiologists right here in Regina, the tertiary care centre, the trauma care hub for all of southern Saskatchewan. It is truly terrifying.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, there are challenges in health care across Canada. But here in Saskatchewan we have some of the worst outcomes, worst hip and knee surgery wait times, worst emergency wait times, worst retention of health care workers.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will move on to the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately address the short-staffing crisis in health care and work with health care

workers on solutions to improve patient care.

The signatories of this petition reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Erika Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly to address the affordability crisis. People across Saskatchewan are struggling with the cost of groceries, especially in the North where groceries often need to be transported over long distances. And as a result doctors in the La Ronge region have already diagnosed or treated 27 cases of scurvy in the past six months. And we shouldn't be talking about scurvy in 2024 in Saskatchewan of all places.

The Sask Party government needs to stop piling on the costs and start providing cost-of-living relief like what the Manitoba government is doing. The cost of fuel is a huge factor and the government can provide some relief by suspending the provincial gas tax. The government should also remove the PST [provincial sales tax] on groceries. Groceries aren't a luxury.

We, as the official opposition, have been urging the Sask Party government to take immediate action to make life more affordable. While other provinces have acted, the Sask Party continues to ignore our calls.

And with that, I'll read the prayer:

We respectfully request the Legislative Assembly call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately address the affordability crisis in Saskatchewan.

I do so present.

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

Matt Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've presented this petition many times — it's an honour to do so today with so many new colleagues in the Assembly — this petition of course calling for adequate funding for education in Saskatchewan. The folks who signed this petition join the thousands that we met on their doorstep in this most recent election and for years leading up to this, who know that our students and our teachers deserve better than last-in-the-country per-student funding.

Ten years ago Saskatchewan was first in Canada when it comes to how we fund our classrooms on a per-student basis. And with the most recent data that we have, we are in last place in the country. Our teachers deserve better, Mr. Speaker. But most importantly, our students deserve better.

And with that, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to provide adequate, sustainable, and predictable operating funds for our 27 public and separate school divisions to ensure that schools,

teachers, and other caring professionals are able to meet the needs of every student in Saskatchewan.

Today's petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon. I do so present.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents of Saskatchewan as it relates to the very high cost of living and the fact that the government has done nothing meaningful to alleviate those pressures, but only piled on with more costs and more taxes. They're calling on this government to suspend the fuel tax as other provinces have, such as Alberta and Manitoba — our neighbours to the west and the east — and other provinces in the country, such as Newfoundland and Ontario.

This is a government that looked a once-in-a-generation cost-of-living challenge in the face and instead stuck Saskatchewan people with more costs, increasing the PST and taxes on so many fronts.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to suspend the collection of the provincial fuel tax from gasoline and diesel for a period of six months to help families struggling with the high cost of living.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Prince Albert, Regina, and Sedley. I so submit.

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

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present the following petition. The folks who signed this petition wish to bring to your attention the following: Saskatchewan needs legislation to ensure provincial duty-to-consult is fulfilled and is carried out with the honour of the Crown. The Sask Party government did not follow its own guidelines on consulting with inherent and treaty rights holders while drafting the current duty-to-consult policy. Inherent and treaty rights holders need to be informed through a relational approach to an understanding before the duty is triggered, therefore proponents must engage with applicable inherent and treaty rights holders before the duty is triggered.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to enshrine duty-to-consult into law by enacting the meaningful duty-to-consult legislation.

The folks who signed this petition reside in Prince Albert. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Blairmore.

Recruitment of Physicians at Provincial Cancer Centres

Hon. Jamie Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to share some exciting news for cancer patients in Saskatchewan. Through focused recruitment efforts by Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, supported by government's health human resources action plan, nine new physicians will soon join or have joined our cancer teams in Regina and Saskatoon.

At the Allan Blair Cancer Centre in Regina, two gynecologic oncologists began in October and November. Four hematologists will join, with the first arriving in November and the other in early 2025. And one clinical associate began in November.

At the Saskatoon Cancer Centre, a medical oncologist is set to join in December and one clinical associate started in November. These clinical associates and physicians with international training are practising under ministerial licence and working closely with oncologists to deliver patients care.

Our health human resources plan is attracting skilled professionals to strengthen our health care teams in Saskatchewan. We have a proud legacy of delivering quality cancer care, and I am confident that these new hires will contribute significantly to that tradition.

Please join me in welcoming new members and in recognizing all who dedicate themselves to serving cancer patients in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Campaign Volunteers Essential to Electoral Success

Carla Beck: — On behalf of my colleagues, the members for Regina South Albert and Regina Pasqua, and our entire campaign teams, it's my honour to rise today to recognize volunteers who are with us who worked so hard during the 2024 election in our three constituencies.

The hard work and commitment of these volunteers, and so many others who aren't able to join us today, were essential to our success in this election. Like so many volunteers right across the province, they spent time on the important activities that go into running a local campaign: door knocking, baking, acting as scrutineers, entering data, answering phones, and we can't forget the sign crew.

None of us here serve alone, and none of us would be here without those who step forward to participate in this way in the democratic process. All of this work matters, making constituents feel involved, heard, and valued. All Saskatchewan people should know that their vote counts and that they can be part of choosing their local representative.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank each of those volunteers, and volunteers right across this province, who volunteered in the last election. Our team made incredible strides

in this election, and this is due in no small part to the efforts of those who join us and so many others across the province. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Government Support for International Education

David Chan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year over 14,400 international students from over 145 countries studied in Saskatchewan. International education plays a significant role in enriching our communities, meeting our labour force needs, and supporting our government's growth plan goals.

Mr. Speaker, these students contribute significantly to our communities and economy. In 2022 alone, international students spent nearly 461 million in Saskatchewan, contributing over 441 million to our GDP [gross domestic product].

We are pleased to celebrate these students and their contributions. That's why we proclaimed November 18 to 22 International Education Week. We also celebrate Saskatchewan students studying abroad. Our government recognizes the contribution of these students who bring home important knowledge that stimulates innovation and research. Last year we had nearly 550 students study abroad in 47 countries.

Our post-secondary institutions also play a key role by fostering important research and academic partnerships. Mr. Speaker, our government supports and is committed to increasing our global competitiveness in the education sector, and to increasing international opportunities to advance and commercialize research in areas where our institutions are global leaders. We will continue to support international education and work closely with our post-secondary institutions to strengthen our province's international brand. Thank you.

[13:45]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Prince Albert Grand Council Honours Indigenous Veterans

Leroy Laliberte: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to bring acknowledgement for a sacred service commemorating our veterans hosted in Prince Albert on November 9th by the Prince Albert Grand Council, who represent some of the First Nations within the Athabasca constituency. I was invited to join the service and share some greetings with the veterans, families, and community members in attendance. Mr. Speaker, this is an annual event that the PAGC [Prince Albert Grand Council] continues to host that commemorates the bravest who made the ultimate sacrifice to ensure the safety and security of all of us.

It is made more important that PAGC continues to host this service as November 8th is the day in which we commemorate the Indigenous veterans who joined the Canadian Armed Forces to protect our First Nations, Métis communities, and treaties.

I invite all members to join me, and I am sure I speak on behalf of all of us in the Assembly when I say we honour our veterans and the sacrifices that they made to protect us. To our veterans:

we honour you, we celebrate you, and we thank you for your service.

Merci. tēniki. Miyo kīsiikan'si.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Lumsden-Morse.

Canadian Western Agribition Showcases Agricultural Excellence

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, true to form, the opening of the Canadian Western Agribition here in Regina has brought with it the cold and the snow, but that did not stop the ceremonial burning of the brand on Monday which kicked off what is the biggest livestock show in Canada. For 53 years Agribition has showcased livestock and agribusiness that represent the very best of the industry.

It has become an international hub of agriculture excellence, featuring a trade show with over 350 exhibitors last year and visitors representing 69 countries. It continues to grow, Mr. Speaker, with over 400 exhibitors this year.

The reason for this continued success is that the ranchers and farmers at Agribition are leaders in the industry — not just provincial leaders but global leaders. The world they've helped to feed for generations is looking to them more and more to keep shaping the future of this industry and this province.

Mr. Speaker, a recent study by Praxis Consulting has shown that in 2023 Agribition added an astounding 116 million to Saskatchewan's economy. Attendance at last year's event was nearly 143,000 people, the highest in 18 years. Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone to add to that number this year by attending what has been called the best beef show in North America. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Western Agribition kicked off yesterday here in Regina for its 53rd year. For more than half a century, livestock producers from across Canada and around the world have converged on Regina. They come to learn from and do business with our remarkable livestock producers and agricultural manufacturers, innovators, and industry leaders.

Agribition proudly showcases Saskatchewan as a world leader in farming practices, technology, breeding, and genetics. And as a livestock competition and sale the show is iconic. Agribition is the best beef show on the continent. The show delivers invaluable education, programming for students that are connecting with agriculture, and is home to the renowned Maple Leaf finals pro rodeo where incredible athletes compete. I can't wait to get over to the show along with my colleagues.

I want to thank CEO [chief executive officer] Shaun Kindopp and the whole team at the CWA [Canadian Western Agribition] for the incredible work that they put into this show that celebrates

some of the best of Saskatchewan. I ask all members to join with me in thanking the organizers, the volunteers, and the participants for making it such a success and something that we're all so very proud of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Bengough.

Saskatchewan Manufacturing Sector Contributes to Economic Strength

Michael Weger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is Manufacturing Week, and our government wants to thank the nearly 2,000 manufacturers operating in the province for their significant contributions to our economy, over 90 per cent of which are small businesses.

The Ministry of Trade and Export Development recently revealed their overview of the manufacturing sector report, highlighting the strength of our province's growing economy. In 2023 total manufacturing sales were valued at \$24.4 billion, the second-highest year on record.

The Saskatchewan manufacturing sector's real GDP increased 6 per cent from 4.7 billion in 2022 to \$5 billion in 2023, ranking first in percentage change among the provinces. Private capital investment is expected to reach \$14.2 billion in 2024, an increase of 14.4 per cent — again the highest anticipated increase in the country.

With the support of our nine international trade offices, we are expanding opportunities for Saskatchewan's world-class manufacturers to access global markets. Our government is committed to increasing the value of the province's manufacturing exports by 50 per cent by 2030 as part of Saskatchewan's Growth Plan. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to report that this goal was surpassed in 2023 for the second year in a row.

Our record shows that we are committed to creating more opportunities for local businesses and jobs for Saskatchewan people. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Provincial Fuel Tax and Affordability Measures

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are still facing all the same challenges today that they were before the election. They're struggling to find health care in a system that is still in crisis, and they're still struggling to pay their bills. And despite talk of lessons learned, the Speech from the Throne still offers nothing to get cost-of-living relief to Saskatchewan families today.

Now very soon we're going to be putting forth a motion proposing to cut the gas tax. Will the Premier show that he finally gets it? Will he vote with us to offer that cost-of-living relief to Saskatchewan families today?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as the Leader of the Opposition had referenced, there was a provincial campaign that occurred here, Mr. Speaker. Largely the campaign platform that the Saskatchewan Party had put in front of Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan people was affordability focused, lowering the taxes that families and students and seniors are paying across this province, Mr. Speaker.

As we enter this legislative sitting, starting with the Speech from the Throne yesterday, we are going to focus, yes, on continuing to ensure that Saskatchewan is the most affordable province in the nation of Canada to live. We're going to also ensure that we are delivering on what we heard during that campaign when it comes to delivering on health care services in Saskatchewan communities, regardless of where you live, to Saskatchewan families; in delivering on our K to 3 [kindergarten to grade 3] outcomes, investing in our students who are our kids and our grandkids, Mr. Speaker; all the while continuing to focus on the fact that we need to ensure that the communities where we live are safe, Mr. Speaker.

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

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier says that he's heard the message from voters, but his choices speak for themselves. His answer tells us that we can expect more of the same from this government.

People cannot afford to wait until tax time to have some cost-of-living relief. They need help now. Now we could offer this relief now if the Premier would just say yes to our motion later today.

Will he do that, Mr. Speaker, or will this out-of-touch Sask Party still continue to block our efforts to introduce that relief for Saskatchewan people when they need it? That's today.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, what we are going to deliver is on the campaign platform that we had put before Saskatchewan residents over the course of the most recent provincial campaign that we had in the province. Mr. Speaker, included in that campaign are a number of tax incentives, tax reductions for Saskatchewan families, which are going to ensure that Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place in the nation to live, Mr. Speaker.

Those tax reductions are not only affordable for the province, Mr. Speaker, but they are permanent. They are not temporary, Mr. Speaker. They are permanent. They are going to be there for years to come. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan families can count on the fact that those tax reductions are going to allow us who live in this province to continue to enjoy some of the lowest inflation rates and the lowest cost-of-living indexes across the nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

They include benefits that are being experienced this past year. And with the passing of legislation in this House, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to ensure that the carbon tax is not charged on how we heat our homes, whether that be gas or electricity here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We are going deliver with this session, Mr. Speaker, with the largest tax reduction that Saskatchewan families have seen since 2008, removing another additional 55,000 people from the provincial tax rolls altogether in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

These are the measures, and many others, that we committed to Saskatchewan people in the most recent campaign, and these are the measures that we're going to deliver on in this session.

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

Nutrition in the North and Affordability Measures

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it's clear that that Premier and that out-of-touch Sask Party simply doesn't get it. We're going to expect more of the same from this government. I don't . . .

Speaker Goudy: — Just wanted to remind you that it's the Sask Party government. I don't know if I'm wrong in that, but I think you're supposed to refer to them as the government. Sorry. Thank you.

Carla Beck: — Mr. Speaker, we see in those answers that they don't get it. How well are things going for people in this province? Let's look at La Ronge. La Ronge, where 27 people have been diagnosed with scurvy because they don't have access to healthy food. Mr. Speaker, it's unacceptable — scurvy in a province as rich as Saskatchewan.

How does this out-of-touch Sask Party government justify the fact that people in this province today are developing scurvy?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I had the honour to visit a number of northern communities, rural, remote, and northern communities over the course of the past year. Most recently, I believe we were in Fond-du-Lac here a couple of months ago, Mr. Speaker. We toured the grocery store.

And the Leader of the Opposition is correct, Mr. Speaker. The prices in rural, remote, hard-to-reach communities are far too high, Mr. Speaker. And we need to continue to do more working with local governments but also working with the federal government on some of what are the root causes of inflation here in the province of Saskatchewan and, I would say, more broadly across Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And there's opportunities for us, and we've done this before in months gone by, to work together across the floor of this Assembly. Work together across the floor of this Assembly to call on the federal Liberal minority government that's propped up by the NDP [New Democratic Party] to not only reject the carbon tax increase that is coming this spring — which will be taking a 17 cent tax today to 21 cents this spring, Mr. Speaker — not only cancelling that increase, but cancelling the carbon tax on everything for everyone.

If we want to impact inflation in Canada and Saskatchewan for all families, including those in the North, this would be a good place for us to start: across the aisle in this Legislative Assembly, working together on behalf of all Saskatchewan families.

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

Carla Beck: — Well the Premier knows that we don't support the carbon tax. And we know that more of the same from this government has people in this province developing scurvy.

Mr. Speaker, this is a rich province full of opportunity, and with this government too much of that opportunity is being left on the table. People can't afford to pay their bills, and people living in our province today, again, Mr. Speaker, are developing scurvy.

Now the Premier wants to talk about delivering change, but there is not a single thing in that Throne Speech that is going to deliver the change that Saskatchewan people need. Why should Saskatchewan people expect things to change under this out-of-touch Sask Party government when people in this province are developing scurvy with more of the same from that government?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Scott Moe: — Mr. Speaker, this session, and from our campaign that we had put before the people of Saskatchewan, families in Saskatchewan are going to experience the largest income tax reduction since 2008. That's change, Mr. Speaker. That's change in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We are going to remove, again, the carbon tax on how we heat our homes. That's change from the rest of the people that live in Canada, Mr. Speaker. They're paying carbon tax on how they heat their homes. And I would suggest this is correcting an error that the federal government had moved forward on in their policy development.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, we're creating the home renovation tax credit. That's change in this province, Mr. Speaker, and it is going to help. It is going to help families, Mr. Speaker, across this province. We're increasing the first-time homebuyers tax credit. That's change, Mr. Speaker, and that's change in a positive way for those young career-oriented people, our kids, our students that are entering the workforce to make the choice to live right here in Saskatchewan. And we have the economy to employ them most certainly, Mr. Speaker.

We're increasing the disability tax credit, the disabilities tax credit supplement, as well as the caregiver tax credit by some 25 per cent, all change to support Saskatchewan families, support Saskatchewan residents. Mr. Speaker, change that was campaigned on by these members and change that we were elected on, and it's now change that we're going to deliver on.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 27 people in my community have been diagnosed with scurvy. This is unacceptable. It's happening because of this out-of-touch Sask Party government. Food prices in the North are sky-high, and the Sask Party government still refuses to cut the fuel tax.

What does this Saskatchewan Party government have to say to people in my riding who are getting sick with scurvy because they can't afford the nutritious food that they need to stay

healthy?

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

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. The Premier has addressed the cost of living and the carbon tax, and how that could reduce the cost of groceries for people right across Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, with a view from a health perspective, we know that this is something that's treatable. So that's why the Saskatchewan Health Authority is working with Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, otherwise known as NITHA, in doing additional health promotion and nutrition awareness training, not only in La Ronge but elsewhere in the North. NITHA is comprised of Prince Albert Grand Council, Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

Mr. Speaker, these efforts are in addition to existing initiatives, including the Northern Healthy Communities Partnership and its healthy eating team, which is supported by both the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] and NITHA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Jordan McPhail: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, northern people have been forgotten by this out-of-touch Sask Party government.

When the Saskatchewan Party government ignores those of us who live in the North, it means that the issues that impact northern people are forgotten. Scurvy in my hometown and in other northern communities, \$20 for grapes, \$18 for milk — these are the results of a Saskatchewan Party government's choices.

Why won't the Saskatchewan Party government cut the fuel tax to bring down food prices for people in Saskatchewan?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, that simply isn't the case. This government has not ignored northern Saskatchewan. There's been many, many investments by this government in northern Saskatchewan.

On the issue of affordability, Mr. Speaker, as we look across the country we realize that affordability is a major issue in this country, including in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, this is the most affordable province in the country. Mr. Speaker, the Premier went through a number of the affordability issues that we're dealing with, including the changes coming to *The Income Tax Act* which we campaigned on during the election, Mr. Speaker, to keep more money in people's own pockets because they know best how to provide for themselves.

So as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the members opposite what contributes a great deal to inflation in this province, Mr. Speaker, is the carbon tax. I would suggest the Leader of the Opposition gets on the phone to her federal leader

and advocates strongly for him to remove the carbon tax across the country, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the minister from Regina Mount Royal.

Provincial Fuel Tax and Affordability Measures

Trent Wotherspoon: — More of the same, Mr. Speaker, more tired lines from that minister. Of course this leader and this opposition don't support the carbon tax, but that out-of-touch Sask Party government is failing with the cost of living. In fact they're making things worse. Their record is actually hiking taxes and costs and making life more expensive, all while families are breaking the bank just to fill the tank. The cost of living is causing serious hardship for many. The time to act is now to offer people some relief.

When I bring a motion to cut the gas tax later today, will the Sask Party government finally get on board and save families some money as they head into a holiday season?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite says more of the same. Just because the questions are the same, Mr. Speaker, does he think the answer is going to change? Of course not, Mr. Speaker. It's ridiculous. Mr. Speaker, he talks about them not supporting the carbon tax. Their federal leader supports the carbon tax. Why are they not advocating with their federal leader to stop supporting the carbon tax? It's causing the inflationary pressures across the country, Mr. Speaker.

And as far as his question on the gas tax, no absolutely we will not be supporting that, Mr. Speaker. It's temporary. Our changes are going to be permanent. They're going to continue to help people across the province. And the member brought this up so many times last spring in session, Mr. Speaker. He never answers the question, which is simply this: all that gas tax plus goes towards the highways budget. Is he going to cut the highways budget?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Mount Royal.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Well a smug response from that tired minister. But no, we wouldn't cut the highways budget. We'd cut the mismanagement, scandal, and waste of that Sask Party government.

You know, it's clear those folks over there, they just don't get it. Families need to drive to activities, to work, into town for errands. They can't choose just to drive less. Before the election, the Sask Party government used their majority to block our motion for fuel tax relief. And now they've been saying that they got a message in that election, that they've changed, and that they're ready to listen to Saskatchewan people. Well later today, they'll have a chance to prove it.

Will the Sask Party finally say yes to cutting the fuel tax? Or will they show that nothing's changed and that they're the same old out-of-touch Sask Party government?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Jim Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, the member's going to complain again. He's going to say, they keep giving the same answer. It was the same question, Mr. Speaker.

No, we are not going to support the gas tax cut, Mr. Speaker, because it's temporary. Long-term, permanent cuts to income tax will let people keep more money in their own pocket to choose what they do with their own money, Mr. Speaker. We think that's the way to move forward on this.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the next question from the member opposite.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Contract for Tire Recycling

Aleana Young: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Here in Saskatchewan too many workers are being handed pink slips instead of paycheques. Take Shercom Industries for example, a local success story now gutted after that government handed a contract to an out-of-province company from California. And that decision, Mr. Speaker, shipped 79 good-paying jobs across the border, leaving Saskatchewan families in the dust. And now that company has filed a \$10 million lawsuit against the province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on December 2nd, 79 more people are going to lose their jobs under this Premier's watch. What are they going to do to save those jobs?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Travis Keisig: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very excited that I have the opportunity to answer this question with so many new members in the Chamber.

It's important that we inform each and every member on how the Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan operates. It's an independent, industry-led, industry-driven, and industry-ran organization that manages tire recycling in the province. TSS [Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan] operates under a product stewardship program approved by the Ministry of Environment.

And I'm sure, about the layoffs, Mr. Speaker, in any workplace the rapid response team is deployed to support the workers who are impacted.

I cannot comment any more, Mr. Speaker, as this matter is now before the courts. But I thank the member opposite for the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina South Albert.

Aleana Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I walked that shop floor. I shook hands with those workers who are going to be fired before Christmas. Good, hard-working Saskatchewan people, refugees from Ukraine working in that factory.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a Saskatchewan company that received a promise from that Premier, a promise that they claim was broken. And now they're suing this government for \$10 million. And what do we see from this Sask Party government? Well we see the same old same old doubling down on their failures and refusing to listen. This is the Premier's broken promise.

December 2nd is in six days, and the clock is ticking. What is this government going to do to save those jobs and help those 79 Saskatchewan families?

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure as the member opposite understands, we can't speak to the independent operation or decisions made by corporations who are privately operated. As the minister responsible has indicated, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter that's presently before the courts. And it would be inappropriate to be discussing it on the floor of this Assembly, as the members opposite ought to know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Provision of Care for Mental Health and Addictions

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Miigwech, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Mental Health Association released a report on the state of mental health and addictions in Saskatchewan. Once again, Saskatchewan is last in the nation in some of the most tragic indicators in this report.

On suicide, Mr. Speaker, we have the highest rates among the provinces. And the rates get worse for Indigenous girls, who are seven times more likely to die by suicide than non-Indigenous girls. What does the Sask Party government say to the countless families that have lost loved ones to suicide?

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

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, every loss of life due to suicide is a tragedy. Every loss of life due to overdose is a tragedy. And I extend all my condolences to those who have lost a loved one under such difficult circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, we have several different resources available for those who may be struggling. One I would like to highlight is our Pillars for Life, the Saskatchewan suicide prevention plan. This plan guides Saskatchewan's activities in this area. Government and its partners are building on it to improve delivery of suicide prevention programs in the province.

Roots of Hope suicide prevention is a community-led initiative in northern Saskatchewan. It is grounded in the knowledge and experience of local leaders to develop, build on, and implement sustainable, culturally appropriate components. Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada to fund this program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, not only do we have the highest rates of suicide among the provinces, we have the highest rates of self-harm. This is especially the case for our youth, Mr. Speaker. The CMHA [Canadian Mental Health Association] says we have a crisis number of youth who aren't getting the mental health, addictions, and substance use help they need.

This isn't new. We've seen report after report after report all saying the same thing. Will the Sask Party government finally admit that their plan isn't working? When will we see a real plan for improved mental health and addictions supports?

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

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And once again I do thank the member opposite for the question. This government takes the issue of mental health issues in the province very, very seriously, and we have programs and services out there that are available for all citizens right across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, one of the services that I would like to highlight that we have is the 811 health line. This is a number that's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The line is staffed by experienced and specially trained registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, and registered social workers. Mr. Speaker, this is a confidential line, so those who do choose to call can be assured that what they want to share is in confidence.

As I mentioned, the line is staffed by professionals, and their goal is to give advice and help manage the situation and get the connection to supports or resources that an individual may need. It would go without saying that if there's any immediate danger, that those individuals or loved ones should call 911.

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

Betty Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan are struggling more than anywhere else in Canada. We have more people dying here due to opiate toxicity compared to most provinces. Our hospitals treat more people here due to the overconsumption of alcohol.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the highest rates of substance use disorder in Canada. We see it in our communities. We see it in our families. Will the Sask Party government accept the CMHA's recommendations and properly fund mental health and addictions supports that save lives?

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

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every loss of life due to an overdose is a tragedy. And again I extend my condolences to those who have felt the impact of overdoses.

Mr. Speaker, no illicit drugs are safe, and there are no illicit drugs use that is safe, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are focused on getting more people the treatment they need to overcome addictions and live healthy, safe lives in recovery. And this is happening through a recovery-oriented system of care. Mr.

Speaker, on top of the beds that we already have, we are adding 500 additional treatment spaces that are available or will be available soon to individuals. And there are other resources that are available to these individuals.

And they're not limited to this, whether it be our overdose outreach teams, testing, alerts, naloxone kits including nasal naloxone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Provision of Shelter Spaces

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two massive snowstorms hit our province in the last week. Winter is here, and so is the extreme cold that comes with it. We need a cold-weather strategy. We can't wait for the first freezing death of the year to act, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, along with my colleagues from Saskatoon Centre and Saskatoon Westview, I wrote to the Minister of Social Services calling for action. Will the minister open further emergency shelter space to provide safe refuge for people who are without a home over these winter months?

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

Hon. Terry Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Social Services continues to work alongside community-based organizations and as well as other levels of government to keep people safe year-round, including additional supports during the winter months.

This winter the Ministry of Social Services is providing \$750,000 to support the cities of Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert in providing warming spaces for those in need. Additionally there are services available in communities across Saskatchewan, even in areas without formal cold-weather strategies. These strategies are led by local communities, and our government works in collaboration with them to confirm the availability of space, food, and other supports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — Why is the member on his feet?

Trent Wotherspoon: — To seek leave to move a motion under rule 61.

Speaker Goudy: — That's out of orders for the day, so I think we'll keep . . . You can bring that up in a bit.

So ministerial statements. Introduction of bills.

Why is the member on his feet, again?

MOTION UNDER RULE 61

Suspension of Collection of Provincial Fuel Tax

Trent Wotherspoon: — To seek leave to move a motion under rule 61.

Speaker Goudy: — The member from Regina Mount Royal has

requested leave to move without notice a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 61. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Speaker Goudy: — Leave is not granted, sorry.

Still got my training wheels on. We're going to back that up and I'm going to ask you, will the member briefly state the purpose of the motion and read the text of the motion.

Trent Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an important motion that I hope we can all be united on and support to deliver cost-of-living relief to people at a time when so many are just getting by. It reads:

That this Assembly calls on the government to immediately suspend the collection of the provincial fuel tax from gasoline and diesel for a period of six months in order to help families struggling with the high cost of living.

Speaker Goudy: — The member from Regina Mount Royal has requested leave to move without notice a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 61. Is leave now granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Speaker Goudy: — Leave has not been granted. Next item of business.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Speaker Goudy: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to rule 44, it is your duty at this time to elect a member to serve as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly. I now ask the Clerk to initiate proceedings.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

Clerk: — Pursuant to the procedure specified under rule 43(1) and 46(4), the following member has declared his intention to stand as candidate for election as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly: Blaine McLeod, the Hon. Member of the Legislative Assembly for Lumsden-Morse.

Speaker Goudy: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to inform you that Blaine McLeod, the Hon. Member of the Legislative Assembly from Lumsden-Morse, has been elected by acclamation as your Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

I recognize the member from Lumsden-Morse.

Blaine McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to join you as Deputy Speaker for this Assembly, and we appreciate the vote of confidence given on behalf of those on the floor here. Just a few words in terms of my acceptance of this role. I recently had the opportunity . . . Let me just back that up just a moment.

You spoke of being a referee, and I don't think the stripes suit you really that great, but I think of it more as one who is a guard over what is really an esteemed and hallowed place that we sit in. And so I know in the past that when I've seen referee stripes, I have had occasions to remark to those that were within earshot that I wasn't really pleased with those kinds of remarks. But I look forward to you being the custodian of this Chamber, and I'm pleased to serve with you in that regard.

Recently I had the occasion to hear remarks relayed to me from an esteemed philosopher and teacher Rabbi Jonathan Sacks as I attended an event at Beth Jacob Synagogue. And Jonathan Sacks posed three questions that a thinking person must ask, and it's made an impact on my life in terms of how I approach the role as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. Who am I? — question 1. Why am I here? And how then shall I be?

So who am I? Well I'm the MLA from Lumsden-Morse. I'm a son. I'm a brother. I'm a husband. I'm a father, a grandfather, and a second-generation dairy farmer and a proud member of the family of Bob and Ruth McLeod. And why am I here? I want to help lead our province so that every member of the province, Mr. Speaker, can not only survive but thrive in this beautiful province.

And how then shall I be? I will be respectful of each and every one I come in contact with and to always be mindful of the fact that each person who sits in this esteemed House has gained the trust and respect of their constituents. And together I join with the words of the Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition in stating that I will serve the good people of Saskatchewan.

So practically, what does that mean? Number one, I believe that having constructive debate that delivers better decisions as an outcome. Good constructive debate brings that kind of conclusion. And I believe that our debate must always be focused on policy, never on personal attacks. And we will disagree; absolutely we will disagree. But let's agree to disagree with decorum and honour — both sides of the House.

And what does it mean to have a sense of decorum in this Chamber? For me, it means that correct and proper behaviour that shows respect and good manners. We spend a lot of time together, likely more time in the next two weeks than we will spend with our families. And at times we may get under each other's skin. I can actually guarantee that, that it will happen. And when it does happen, taking a moment, counting to three, and taking a deep breath will allow us to make a responsible response, all of us.

So I commit to adjudicating fairly and supporting our Speaker in this House and facilitating wholesome debate and decorum that honours all who sit in this Chamber. May God bless us all. Thank you.

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

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to move a motion to appoint the Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — The Government House Leader has

requested leave to move a motion to appoint a Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

Appointment of Deputy Chair of Committees

Hon. Tim McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That Mr. Chris Beaudry, member for the constituency of Kelvington-Wadena, be appointed to preside as Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

Speaker Goudy: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

That Mr. Chris Beaudry, member for the constituency of Kelvington-Wadena, be appointed to preside as Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Kindersley-Biggar.

Kim Gartner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by congratulating both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker on your elections. You have been given an important role, and I know you will rule with consistent fairness and uphold the rules that govern this House.

Mr. Speaker, at a special time such as this there are some very important people who are at the forefront of my mind — my family. Firstly my four children: Dustin, Chantelle, Kimberley, and Jessica. As a parent I've watched them grow into the adults they have become, from holding their hand as they went to their first day of school to cheering them on as they participated in many sporting activities, watching them graduate, get married, and have children. They are each unique and equally strong in character, but it is their compassion for others that I am most proud of. They teach me lessons every day about what it means to be a caring and loving parent, and I am confident they will accept the lessons from their own children as they grow.

I want to also recognize my wife, Colleen, my high school sweetheart and lifelong partner. It's been quite a journey from teen pregnancy to 36 years of married life. I could not have asked for anyone else to be by my side. When my son was born, my wife was in grade 11. With the support of friends and family, she finished high school and worked in jobs in the service industry while I finished my post-secondary education. As our family grew, she decided to work two jobs, while at the same time raising our four children and supporting me in my many roles. She has been an inspiration, a confidante, a cheerleader, and a role model. With her quick wit and quirky sense of humour, she successfully reminds me when I begin to take myself too seriously. On her behalf, I want to recognize the spouses, partners, and significant others for all 61 MLAs. It is now our turn to be role models.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention a few individuals that willingly assisted and volunteered tirelessly through my nomination and election process. I believe these individuals represent the very foundation of this province.

Teri and Joel Gartner, third- and fourth-generation farmers. I feel so much pride when I speak of the family farm, how they have adapted to the ever-changing business case that is farming. The farm provides me with hope and a belief that there is a place for the entrepreneurial spirit that is Saskatchewan.

Neil Burwash, a professional chartered accountant and part-time grain marketer. Neil demonstrates every day that it's possible to operate a successful business and at the same time use your professional skills for the betterment of your community. Assisting with the local food bank, providing free tax services for seniors, and organizing community events, all done without a desire for recognition.

Robin and Lori Cosh, entrepreneurs and business owners that are also volunteers extraordinaire. These two individuals have operated and assisted in the establishment of many businesses. It was following a conversation about the challenges of operating a lumber supply business in Saskatchewan when just 1 kilometre west a provincial sales tax does not exist, it was then they chose to assist in my campaign.

Lastly Eric Scherger and Rod Perkins: business owners, community volunteers, and long-time members of their respective municipal councils, contributing their time and energy towards community projects while realizing that local governance sometimes includes personal criticism. I admire them for their dedication and desire to improve their individual communities.

These individuals are representative of the many volunteers, too numerous to list, that contributed in so many ways. I will always be grateful. It was truly a community effort.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to acknowledge outgoing Kindersley constituency MLA Ken Francis for all the words of encouragement and guidance that he provided since I was elected. I want to thank him for his time as a member of this legislature, and for his dedication supporting all his constituents.

As I look around this Assembly today, what do I see? I see 61

colleagues all on a personal journey. I would like to tell you a bit about my own personal journey to this point in time. I grew up on the family farm just east of the community of Macklin, born the 7th of 10 children. My father was a second-generation farmer on the family homestead. He would always joke that he got half of his grade 6. The truth was he failed grade 6, so he quit and began to assume many of the responsibilities of the farm operation when his own father became ill.

My mother, well, my mother was a teacher. She not only taught our father how to read and write, but she taught her children that education and learning were the keys to success. I grew up in an environment where every day was a learning experience, and within our large family it was no doubt a very competitive learning environment. I now realize that I had a culture of learning when I grew up, and that is how I approach every challenge within my life. This legislature is, and should always be, operated in a culture of learning. We all have a responsibility to observe, learn, and debate in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

My siblings are spread across two continents. Those that chose to pursue a life outside of Saskatchewan return frequently to regain the feeling of family. They express gratitude for small-town life, for the opportunity to explore an education in their chosen field, for the wide-open spaces, and for the ability to return at a moment's notice to be greeted by friendly, smiling faces.

Mr. Speaker, it was my father who encouraged me to pursue a career in municipal government. He was the reeve of our local rural municipality and thought my personal strengths would be a good fit for an administrative role. Through the past 36 years I have had the distinct pleasure to learn from some of the most dedicated elected municipal officials, both locally and provincially. I would be lying if I said that I agreed with every decision or that I fully supported every proposed project, but I could never question their desire to improve their community and pursue a better quality of life for their residents.

This province is vast in its size, sparsely populated in many areas. But within each and every community, regardless of size, there are champions. Champions that desire sustainable communities and a sustainable province. Champions that each and every day go to work, operate a business, volunteer their time, invest in the social fabric of their communities, and tirelessly dedicate time towards making this province a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

I am so proud to now say that I represent the newly formed constituency of Kindersley-Biggar, located in the west central area of this province. We are anchored in both agriculture and the resource sectors. These economic drivers have allowed the development of our business community, provided employment for our families, and made necessary the provision of health, education, and other community services. The community infrastructure that we enjoy has been supported in large part by these two sectors of our economy. Although cyclical in nature, these two anchors are there and have been there, ready to contribute and invest in our communities. There are individuals that believe economic growth and prosperity only occurs in our largest centres. I challenge anyone of this mindset to visit any one of my communities in west central Saskatchewan.

I love Saskatchewan, its people, its energy, and its complete sense of community. Saskatchewan residents know all too well the difference between needs and wants. The needs are those items and services that we desire and deserve to be provided as a resident of this province. The wants are what we strive for, the areas of improvement, and the desire to have something of the best. Comparing ourselves to each other — whether locally, provincially, across Canada, and around the world — is a natural driving force towards improvement. Asking ourselves why can't we do this or why can't we do that in our community or in our province pushes us all to do and be better. Complacency drives mediocrity, so let's not be complacent.

Mr. Speaker, I was born premature, somewhere around eight weeks early, and I spent the first few weeks of my life in an incubator. Now imagine, small-town Saskatchewan in 1965 with a fully functioning hospital that just so happened to have a functioning incubator. That hospital remained fully operational until it was closed unceremoniously in 1993 without a plan for the provision of health services to that community. I recognize, and I hope everyone in this Chamber recognizes, that when decisions are made to address an immediate concern, the ripple effect can be generational. That decision was generational.

And that is why a methodic process towards decision making is essential, decisions like the opening of your first urgent care centre in Regina, and a further commitment from this government to open additional centres. Further, this government is setting a goal that every Saskatchewan person will have access to a primary health care provider by the end of 2028. There are difficult conversations ahead, but difficult conversations are required to find common ground and arrive at common-sense decisions.

In this Chamber we are entrusted with three simple tasks: learn from the past, support the present, and plan for the future. We have all travelled different paths to this point in time. We have all had different educational and learning experiences. For me, this is a new learning environment, a new community of learning. Let's share our experiences and use our God-given talents to represent our constituents and make Saskatchewan the very best place to be.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to return to the family farm one last time. My father believed that there was only one colour of farm equipment. Whenever he would encounter something that wasn't operating quite right or required some repair, he would work through the problem. And when he was satisfied with the repair, he would walk over to the counter, grab that can of John Deere spray paint, and proudly announce, "Now to make it last, let's paint it green."

I am proud to have had this opportunity to speak in favour of this government's Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move the following motion, seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers:

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

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

May it please Your Honour:

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

I so move.

[14:45]

Speaker Goudy: — It's been moved by the member from Kindersley-Biggar, seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers:

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

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

May it please Your Honour:

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

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Hon. Eric Schmalz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to describe the feeling of standing here today. I'm humbled, proud, and to be honest, I'm still in awe. It's a bit of a journey from the fields I farmed in Saskatchewan Rivers to the floor of this Legislative Assembly, but in many ways it feels like coming home. That's because this place belongs to the people, the hard-working, resilient, and great people who make Saskatchewan what it is.

I want to start by saying thank you to the people of Saskatchewan Rivers for putting their trust in me. Representing you here is the honour of my life. I'll work hard every day to ensure your voices are heard and the trust you've placed in me guides me in the work that I do.

Mr. Speaker, I need to take a moment to thank someone who without her, I wouldn't be here. To my wife, Lesley, where do I even start? You've been the rock through everything. I'll never forget the night we sat down and decided I'd run. You always believed in me, sometimes before I even believed in myself. I know for our family this will continue to be an incredible sacrifice. The true strength lies in you and your ability to keep our family strong.

If the floor may excuse me for a moment, sometimes I get a little emotional when I talk about my children. Freya and Erik, my kids, you've been so patient through all this. I can't thank you enough. You remind me every day why this work matters. I know that as I dedicate so much of my time to serving the people of Saskatchewan, it means I'm giving up time with you. That

sacrifice is not lost on me. But above all, I'm doing this with you in mind. For the future, as you grow up in the province I did, I want you to grow up with opportunities, safety, and pride in the beautiful place we call home. You are my greatest inspiration, and everything I do here is with you in mind.

Every member in this room knows the sacrifices our families make so that we can serve. I want to thank not just my own family, but all the families out there holding things together behind the scenes. You are the unsung heroes behind this work. And I know that I am not alone when I say that I am deeply grateful for the role our family support plays.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the role of family support, I also need to thank my mom and dad. You've both been my guiding lights, teaching me the value of hard work, perseverance, and staying true to my word. My dad showed me what it means to be dedicated and dependable. You've always led by example. And my mom, well let's just say she had her hands full with four kids, three of which were boys, tempered only by one girl. But she did it with love and patience. Thank you both for everything you've done to shape me into the person I am today. I wouldn't be standing here without you.

In a lot of ways, public service is not new to me. Before I got into politics, I served as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. That time in that venerable organization taught me a lot about honesty, integrity, professionalism, compassion, accountability, and respect. It also taught me about community and the strength that comes when people work together.

Some of the strongest communities I've seen were in small towns and rural areas, where folks pulled together in both the good and the hard times. Those experiences shaped how I see the world and what I believe government should do: support the people where they are, and help them to build and maintain strong and vibrant communities.

And while I've had many roles throughout my life, nothing has taught me patience quite like farming has. It's a job where you quickly learn that no matter how much you plan, some things will always be beyond your control. Farming teaches you to adapt, work hard, and keep pushing forward, even when times get tough. And those lessons are something I'll carry with me always. I've come to understand the true meaning of perseverance, and just as importantly, hope. Because much like every new season brings fresh opportunity, so does the opening of a new session right here in this remarkable place.

Mr. Speaker, we are at the start of a new chapter for Saskatchewan, and I am inspired by the theme of this year's Throne Speech — A New Beginning. As I look around this Chamber, I see so many new faces. Thirty-one of us are stepping into this role for the very first time. With that comes a tremendous opportunity and privilege to focus on what matters to the people of Saskatchewan. Priorities like improving health care, supporting children in classrooms, and helping families make ends meet.

These are not just words. They are the realities that hit home for so many, especially in Saskatchewan Rivers, from things like health care in our rural communities. Access to health care means the difference between staying or leaving. We need to make sure

people can get the care they need as close to home as possible.

In education, every child deserves a chance to succeed no matter where they live. Teachers do incredible work, and we need to make sure they have the support to keep doing it.

On affordability, I'm glad to be part of a government that has priorities aimed at reducing cost and easing financial pressures. This won't just provide much needed relief to families who are feeling the strain right now, but will also help create a stronger foundation for communities, allowing families to focus on building their bright futures. These aren't just ideas. They're necessities for the people I represent, the people that we all represent.

One of the things I'm most passionate about is making sure people can live and work in the small towns and rural communities. This would be someone's hometown or a new start for people that want the opportunity to raise their family and make a life in a wholesome environment rural Saskatchewan can provide.

We shouldn't have to send our kids away to find opportunities. Whether it's farming, forestry, mining, or small business, Saskatchewan Rivers is full of industries that drive our province forward. And I will make sure I advocate for them so that they continue to see their hard work pay off. We need to support these industries, not just to grow the economy but to make sure our communities stay strong. When people can stay close to their families, their roots, and their way of life, we all win.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to acknowledge several people. First, I need to thank Nadine Wilson, from whom I take the responsibility of representing Saskatchewan Rivers. Nadine wasn't just an MLA. She's a mother, a grandmother, a rancher who has dedicated many years to serving this constituency. Public service is never easy and her commitment to Saskatchewan Rivers and its people is truly admirable. I extend my gratitude for all that she has done.

I also want to thank someone whose constituency neighbours my own and who has tirelessly worked for the people of Saskatchewan — Premier Scott Moe. His dedication, not only to our party but to this province, is evident. And I'm honoured to serve alongside him as we work toward a stronger Saskatchewan.

To my campaign team and constituency board: your support, guidance, and countless volunteer hours have brought me to this place today, and I am deeply thankful. A special thank you to my friend and campaign manager, Ralph Boychuk. Ralph, you dedicated countless hours on the road with me, travelling from end to end of the constituency. You gave up time with your own family, which included a new grandchild, to help me see this journey through and I'll never forget that.

No campaign can function without the instrumental role played by their financial agent. Upon hearing of my intention to run provincially my dear friend, Rochelle Neff, stepped forward immediately. Rochelle, your service to our campaign while continuing to perform your daily role of municipal administration and governance is appreciated beyond words. Your dedicated friendship has meant so much to me and my family in both my former and current role.

Mr. Speaker, my friend and constituency vice-president, Colin Fraser, was one of the earliest voices who encouraged me to run. His exuberance and zeal was a welcome element to both our board and our campaign. Colin's willingness to step away from his business with little to no notice and help me on the campaign trail is something for which I will forever be thankful. Colin, I hope you know how much you and your wife, Lisa, are both valued and appreciated. Thank you.

To my constituency president, Scott Sexsmith: Scott, your tireless dedication to the constituency board and to me personally, through both the nomination process as well as the pre- and post-writ campaign, is undeniable. Your unwavering support of our party and me personally has left me humbled to my core. Thank you a thousand times.

I would also like to thank Mr. Josh Evanishen. Josh was responsible for not only our robust but highly prolific sign installation program. Josh persevered through some very harsh weather, hard frozen ground, as well as the personal whims of the candidate. Despite all of this, Josh still managed to construct and install virtually indestructible framing for our campaign signage. While the competition's signs were subject to the powerful Saskatchewan wind and were often sent flying down the ditch to parts unknown, ours stayed fast, a true testament to the craftsman. Josh, I thank you.

To my constituency treasurer, Christina Biermann. Christina, I cannot thank you enough for stepping into the role on short notice and exceeding all expectations. Not only are you a solid and capable individual, you are one heck of a graphic decal installer, which helped our campaign immensely.

To my membership Chair, Daryl Cartier. Daryl, your willingness to dive headfirst into the unknown by taking on such an integral role is most admirable. And the willingness of your wife, Gayle, as well as the rest of your family to step up and work alongside you is a true testament to you as a husband and father.

To my constituency secretary, Kia Makari: Kia, thank you for putting your name forward as well as your time into our board. For a fellow who has never been in the forefront of politics, I cannot tell you how much I appreciate you taking those first steps with me.

To our provincial council Chair, Patty Hughes: Patty, you have been involved in politics in our province at all levels but also in the business community. You have served honourably on many boards and your guidance, support, knowledge, and advice has been greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank those members who kept the Saskatchewan Rivers board intact through some very trying times: Norm and Nancy Hill, Linda Clavelle, Teresa Hanson. Thank you for keeping our board strong and providing us with the foundation upon which to build a successful campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to acknowledge two more individuals who helped steer the Saskatchewan Rivers board through those times. Now both of these individuals told me that once I had been nominated they were going to take a step away from the board executive to allow new perspectives and new people to take up the cause. Well

thankfully their decision to step away only lasted a few months as they both later agreed to help on our campaign.

[15:00]

To Cora and Gaetan Malenfant: merci du fond de mon cœur [Translation: thank you from the bottom of my heart]. You are more like family than friends. Your dedication to supporting the community and those whom you believe in is humbling to those who are blessed to receive it.

To my friends in the business community: I cannot overstate what your support has meant to me. The business and entrepreneur community is what keeps the economic engine of our great province moving forward. I would not be able to name them in the time we have here today, but I have thanked them in person and they know who they are.

To the rest of my family, volunteers, friends, and the people of Saskatchewan Rivers: I could not have done this without you. Your hard work, dedication, and belief in me made it all possible, and I am forever grateful.

Mr. Speaker, this building is a special place. It's not just where decisions are made. It's a symbol of trust from the people of Saskatchewan. Every time we walk through those doors we do so on behalf of our constituencies and their constituents, carrying their hopes and voices with us. It is a responsibility that deserves our unwavering respect and purpose.

To the people of Saskatchewan Rivers: thank you for trusting me to be your voice. I won't let you down. I'll work hard every day to ensure your concerns, aspirations, and needs are represented in this Assembly. God bless this place, and God bless Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to second the motion in support of the Speech from the Throne.

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

Jared Clarke: — To start, I just want to simply say thank you. Thank you to the amazing people of Regina Walsh Acres for the trust and confidence you have placed in me to be your MLA again, this time for four years instead of just one.

Over the course of the election and the months leading up to it, it was a pleasure and a privilege to continue to connect with so many of you on the doorstep as we chatted about what you want to see in this province that we call home. Please know that those conversations that we had, whether you voted for me or not, were very much appreciated and incredibly meaningful, and they will continue to shape the issues and concerns that I bring forward in this Assembly. And I hope and plan to continue to build on those conversations and connections over the next few years. It is truly an honour to be your Member of the Legislative Assembly, and I will continue to work hard to connect with you into the future and continue to be an MLA that shows up.

I would like to also take a moment to thank the folks who helped me get re-elected. As you know, things are very different in a full-on provincial campaign compared to a by-election, but my

team in Regina Walsh Acres continued to be a mighty force. And I'm so thankful to every single person who helped with every aspect of the campaign, from literature drops, door knocking, fundraising, scrutineering, and so much more. It really truly is a team effort, and I am so very thankful.

I do want to say a special thank you to some key people on my campaign, including Leslie and Eric Parsons, Jannet Shanks, Ramona Clarke, Randy Martin, Ren Smith, and Andrea Crellin. These folks showed up for me every day and I am so grateful for their efforts.

Lastly I want to thank my family for their strength and help during the campaign. This was a very challenging election for my family. And I want to put some words on the record today about what transpired in regards to my family.

In the early afternoon of Wednesday, October 16th, 2024, the day of the televised leaders' debate, a story was posted online that targeted two 12-year-old grade 7 trans kids for using the change room at their school that matched their gender. At the same moment, the story was also posted on social media, which was shared widely. Later that evening the photo and identity of my two daughters, my wife, and I were subsequently posted on social media linking us to the story.

The next morning the Premier held a press conference to talk about the story. This was from a CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news article published on October 17th, 2024, describing the press conference:

[The leader of the Saskatchewan Party] said Thursday that his "first order of business" if re-elected this month would be to establish a policy restricting students' use of change rooms in the province's schools to their sex assigned at birth.

The Premier made the announcement while surrounded by a cheering crowd of party supporters and candidates at a campaign office in Regina.

Now interestingly this first order of business hadn't shown up in the Sask Party's full platform document that had been released on Saturday, the Saturday prior, five days earlier. And no mention of this first order of business was made the night before during the leaders' debate. But about 20 hours after the story of two trans kids was posted online, the Premier had pivoted and this was now his number one priority: elementary school change rooms.

The Premier put a target on the backs of my two 12-year-old kids. He held a press conference to stoke fear and outrage about two kids at an elementary school, while my children's picture was circulating on social media, identifying them, while unimaginable hate was raging down on my family.

Mr. Speaker, what do you think would be going through a 12-year-old's mind when they hear the premier of their province targeting them? What if this was any other child of any other MLA in this Chamber? Would this be acceptable? And yet the Premier didn't even hesitate. This is the Premier's legacy. When people look at the portrait downstairs in the Saskatchewan Gallery, this is what many people will think of.

Yesterday the Premier talked about how we need to be honourable. Would he call going after trans kids during the campaign honourable? I'd like to know. I have sat in this Chamber as an MLA since October of last year, and this is the second time that this Premier in one year has decided to attack trans kids, some of the most vulnerable people in our province, all presumably because he thought it was a good political strategy. The first was of course Bill 137.

Really the fact that these are my kids is frankly irrelevant, but what I will say is when people show you who they are, believe them. Now just to be clear, we have heard from two sources in the Sask Party that they have been sitting on this information about my kids since last year in the by-election. The Premier owes my children an apology. He owes all transgender people in this province, especially kids, an apology for how he has made them feel so unsafe over the last year.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot tell you how proud I am of my children. They are kind, smart, adventurous, loving. They are musically talented. One plays the guitar and clarinet; the other plays the violin and trumpet. They love Taylor Swift and airplanes. They like to play badminton, golf, and volleyball. And they have the incredible strength to live as their authentic selves.

Transgender kids are not scary. Transgender people are not scary. They are not people that we should be afraid of. They are people who deserve to be treated with respect and dignity and love.

As a parent you want the best for your children. Would I choose a path for my kids where they were told by strangers that they shouldn't exist? Would I choose a path where they regularly fear for their safety? Would I choose for them a path where the Premier of Saskatchewan goes after them during a campaign? No, I wouldn't.

But as a parent of a transgender child, you are presented with a stark choice: to outright reject the feelings and words of your child when they tell you who they are, or to choose to embrace your child and love them with all your heart. My wife and I decided to love our kids with all our hearts. And I won't pretend that it was an easy road to start down. It meant doing a lot of learning for us as adults — a lot of reading, a lot of talking, a lot of thinking.

We learned the majority of transgender youth who live in unsupportive houses run away by the age of 16; that suicide is the leading cause of death among young people in Canada, and that transgender youth are seven times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers who identify with their assigned gender. The stakes are high for transgender youth, and I was reminded of that at the Transgender Day of Remembrance vigil just last week on November 20th here in Regina.

My wife and I want our children to become adults who are part of our lives long past age 16. That is why we have approached this all with love and support for two amazing kids.

Last year during the debate around Bill 137, the pronoun policy, I remember hearing the former member of Weyburn, Dustin Duncan, on *The Morning Edition*. When he was asked, what would you do if your child was transgender, he responded by saying, and I quote, "I would love them."

That is exactly what my wife and I have done. And I don't expect everyone to understand the journey that we have been on as a family, but I hope that my words today can be heard by those who have an open heart and a willingness to learn about the different lived experience than perhaps their own. I hope something good can come from this terrible experience.

And I am so very thankful for the good people in our circle who are supportive and caring — our family and friends, the people on this team sitting with me here, and even strangers. I want to say thank you to the many people who have reached out with words of love and support for my kids and my family when they were outed. Your words meant the world to them, and it helped show my kids how many people do support them. And I want to say thank you to the staff at my children's school who work so hard to make all kids feel safe every day. And a special thank you to the principal and vice-principal and their classroom teacher.

To all the transgender youth out there in Saskatchewan and across this country, as well as their parents and loved ones, and the rest of the 2SLGBTQ+ [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning plus] community, I want to say, we on this side of the Chamber see you, we love you, and we support you. We want you to be safe, happy people in this province so that you can live your best life. And we will always fight for your rights to be you.

I want to say to my constituents that I heard loud and clear from you over the course of the election campaign that elementary school change rooms were not your number one issue, that you want solutions when it comes to the crisis in our health care system, that you want better funding for education in Saskatchewan schools, that you want cost-of-living relief today. That is what our team will be focused on, as will I. And I want to say thank you again for standing with me.

As I come to a close here, I look to the entirety of the Sask Party government team at this point. Attacking trans kids is your legacy too. Either you were here in October last year and voted in favour of a policy that they clearly knew put queer kids at risk, and/or they were part of a team who fanned the flames of hate in the middle of an election campaign that took aim at two 12-year-old trans kids. What did they do when they learned that their leader and their party were punching down on some of the most vulnerable people and kids in this province? What did they say to their team? What did they say to their leader? What did they say to their loved ones?

[15:15]

I'm proud to say that my team never went after any of their kids. I'm proud to say that my team never attacked trans kids to hold on to power. I'm proud to say that my team never suggested that we use the notwithstanding clause to take away the rights of children.

Mr. Speaker, their legacy is attacking vulnerable kids. Prove me wrong. I hope you prove me wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Throne Speech, and I will be moving an amendment, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

I'll move the following:

That the Assembly does not support the agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne because it fails to include adequate measures to urgently address the challenges Saskatchewan people face regarding health care, education, and the cost of living; and further,

That the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — It's been moved by the member for Regina Walsh Acres, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Fairview, that the motion be amended by adding:

The Assembly does not support the agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne because it fails to include adequate measures to urgently address the challenges Saskatchewan people face regarding health care, education, and the cost of living; and further,

That the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thoughts are certainly with my colleague and his family. It's going to be hard to follow here, but I also want to weigh in on some of the points that were made in the Throne Speech and the proposed vision for our province moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as always, I am honoured to rise in this space to take the opportunity to provide my response to the Speech from the Throne. In particular I want to start with a few thank yous. First of all to the people of Saskatoon Fairview who have continued to place their trust in me by re-electing me as their MLA, Mr. Speaker. As well as my campaign team and volunteers, my constituency assistant, Twyla Harris Naciri, who continues to do the hard work and has been with me almost since day one in 2017, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank the caucus staff who do an amazing job in making it look like we all know what we're doing in this space. As well as my family, in particular my partner, Grayson, who has taken on significant personal sacrifice throughout my time as an MLA, but also before that when I was running. It does take a huge amount of personal sacrifice from family to do this work. I think we all know that, regardless of what side of the House we're on.

And I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for her steadfast presence, guidance to this team, for setting such a strong example to all of us, always maintaining a professional demeanour, and for emanating strength and empathy and consistency for her service to the people of Saskatchewan. She's humble, but she's led this team to a position where we've nearly doubled the seats that we occupy in this legislature. And it's thanks to her leadership and this amazing team of colleagues around me for that.

And I want to welcome my new colleagues. They come from

diverse backgrounds, diverse areas of the province. They have experiences that make our caucus table stronger. And despite these differences, there are some common threads that bind us together. This group of people is also humble, strong, hard-working, and here for the right reasons. And I'm honoured to serve with all of you.

And I want to welcome my returning colleagues. You've been at this for a while now. You're no longer the rookies and are guiding a lot of the new members. Thank you for taking on that role and for continuing this work and this sacrifice.

And to the members opposite: it takes a monumental personal sacrifice to do this work. None of us do it alone. And thank you for sacrificing your personal and family time to serve the people of Saskatchewan. I look forward to meeting all of you.

I want to make some general remarks about the Throne Speech to start. Every year we see people piled into this room on the day of the Throne Speech, some of them travelling across the province to hear a speech from a government with a vision. Instead this year we got a Throne Speech of a tired government that is clear . . . it's clear they no longer have a vision for how to make life better for Saskatchewan people.

We've seen no new solutions on critical issues like affordability and health care, and we see a plan that will continue to see devastating cuts to health care and education, Mr. Speaker. And I think it's rich to hear from the government to have claimed to have heard voters' concerns yet refuse to change course, refuse to alter course to see significant change in these areas of affordability and health care, Mr. Speaker.

What we know right now is that people are facing significant affordability issues. They can't pay their rent. They can't buy groceries. They can't buy meat. They can't drive; they can't afford fuel, Mr. Speaker. And to see no new affordability measures until next year for those who are actually eligible, Mr. Speaker, shows a government that's out of touch.

And no significant changes to the failed health care plan that we've talked about time after time in this Assembly while we have 200,000 people without access to a family doctor, a Regina Urgent Care Centre that isn't open 24-7, that hasn't ironed out its kinks. To see cuts to education funding that will not get Saskatchewan schools out of last place, Mr. Speaker, when we know that Saskatchewan falls last in Canada on per-student funding, that we have the highest emergency room wait times in Canada, longest surgical wait times, Mr. Speaker. We need significant change in these areas. We need a government that is willing to make these changes.

Today we brought forward an emergency motion to immediately cut the gas tax. It's a cost-saving measure that would be implemented in time for Wednesday morning's commute, but again this government voted against it. They voted against it before they even knew what the motion was, Mr. Speaker. And yet what do we see in response? We see no plan to address any affordability issues until next year, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I took on the Health portfolio for the opposition back in 2018, and so it's been a little while of doing this work, of meeting the folks who are involved in this field, of

learning the complexity of a really complex file. Now the new Health minister is the fourth minister that I've had the opportunity to shadow in this role in the past six years.

I'm honoured to continue to serve in the role as shadow minister of Health for the opposition, but I'm also incredibly disappointed on behalf of stakeholders who once again have to get another new Health minister up to speed on the issues. And this is a concern I've heard consistently since the cabinet was announced, Mr. Speaker, that it's a file that has a revolving door, and there's extra concern from stakeholders about that. And this time, Mr. Speaker, the minister that has been selected to run the Health file is facing two separate conflict-of-interest charges, investigations, and lost the respect of teachers, students, and parents in his former role as the Education minister. So there are significant concerns about this file moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll be taking a few minutes to put a keen interest on Health. For those who are following along at home, Mr. Speaker, on the Throne Speech, it's pages 4 through 6 of the Throne Speech.

And I want to talk about how people are feeling right now and how we don't see this reflected by this Sask Party government's Throne Speech. Now we've been travelling all over the province hearing concerns from Saskatchewan people. In fact I've engaged with health care-focused tours over the years since 2018, but I've also met with community leadership. I've heard about local issues. You're there to listen. You hear about the challenges that people face. It's not necessarily going to be linked to one ministry or another. These ministries are neatly packaged, but real life is messy, Mr. Speaker.

So we hear issues across the board. People are frustrated that they can't get access to health care when and where they need it. Now that's not a surprise to anyone who's sitting in this Assembly. Every single day of the campaign I talked to someone who didn't have a family doctor or nurse practitioner. Every single day. And I tell you, it's not my opening question. I heard from people who had chronic diseases that were going unmanaged, that were worried about their parents or children not getting the care they needed, that were tired of relying on maxed-out emergency rooms to fill in the gaps.

This government can say that they want everyone in Saskatchewan to have access to a primary care provider. It's in the speech. It's in the Throne Speech. We've heard a few people talk about it, a commitment by 2028 that we will certainly be holding them to, Mr. Speaker. But they have done absolutely nothing to make this happen over the past several years. In fact, instead of making it easier to get a family doctor or nurse practitioner, they've made things worse. That is their legacy, Mr. Speaker.

There used to be a website of doctors' offices accepting new patients, but this government didn't like the way it looked once it started to slow down and to show very bad things happening in Saskatchewan with access to health care, so they took it down. Instead of creating a plan to attract more family physicians and nurse practitioners at that time, they simply took down the website, a complete avoidance of transparency that has left people in the dust, completely left them on their own to find a family doctor or nurse practitioner. In fact this Throne Speech is the first time I've heard them acknowledge the problem. It's the

first time they've ever made any kind of commitment like this.

Dr. Tomi Mitchell joined us to say that she had to close her practice because of overhead costs as a family physician. This was two and a half years ago in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. This government dragged their feet in updating the compensation model for doctors after other provinces were acting quickly on providing relief. We've raised those issues in this legislature, Mr. Speaker.

On top of all this, in May we heard from doctors that the new billing system was a disaster, clawing back provincial payments and putting family practices at risk. And those doctors that were paid on contracts, Mr. Speaker, also saw significant pay issues with the botched and costly AIMS [administrative information management system] rollout this past summer. This is no way to retain doctors and it's no way to retain health care workers.

They speak about the number of new doctors working in Saskatchewan without discussing those who have left, Mr. Speaker. That's the Sask Party math that we need to remember every time they report their numbers. In reality it's remained stagnant as the population continues to grow.

This government has no plan for how to increase the number of family doctors or nurse practitioners, so I wholeheartedly agree that this needs to be a priority. In fact it appeared in our election campaign platform. That's how much I agree with it, Mr. Speaker, and we're happy to provide the Sask Party government with some good information about what needs to be changed, Mr. Speaker. And we would also be happy to give them some advice and work in a bipartisan way about how to make this happen, considering this is the first time that they've ever presented this information. Happy to give them some ideas, Mr. Speaker.

A big part of the Throne Speech announcements centre on more urgent care centres, and it's alarming, to say the least, that this is their plan to fix health care in Saskatchewan. To start with, no health care practitioners that I've ever spoken with have really endorsed these centres. They have a belief that they'll build the facilities. This government, they believe they'll build the facilities and just hope that health care workers apply for the jobs.

And I can't believe they haven't learned their lesson on this front yet. We've seen this happen with Sask Hospital North Battleford, which remains understaffed; with the children's hospital, JPCH [Jim Pattison Children's Hospital], which remains understaffed, which is lacking key pediatric specialists, Mr. Speaker; and in the urgent care centre in Regina that still can't open 24-7 and is relying on paying emergency room physicians overtime to staff the facility. It's well behind schedule. And the Saskatoon facility is even further behind, with no opening date in sight at the moment. It's really hard to fathom how this government thinks that they will staff these facilities without competing with our bursting-at-the-seams emergency rooms for staff.

[15:30]

One of the most consistent themes we heard in Saskatoon and Regina was that ER [emergency room] wait times were far too long. These hospitals serve patients from across Saskatchewan, and we need adequate patient flow through the hospital. So many people in emergency rooms are waiting for a bed on the ward in

the hospital. We need access to long-term care beds to free up space in the hospital. We need enough ER staff to treat patients with dignity in hospital beds rather than in hospital waiting rooms. We need EMS [emergency medical services] reform to ensure that when you call 911, a paramedic will be there to assist you in an emergency, and they aren't tied up at the emergency room waiting with a patient for a bed.

This government wants to keep ramping up the number of surgeries, and we've consistently pointed out that our knee and hip surgery wait times are the worst in Canada. We need to do this work. Something that needs to be factored in is that people need hospital beds when they're recovering from surgery, Mr. Speaker. Patient flow in the hospitals is critical to surgeries taking place in this province.

This is the big picture that this government has completely ignored. People want real solutions for health care. They want health care that's there when they need it, and this Throne Speech simply fails to address these system-wide issues.

And of course I'm happy to see a government finally commit to a nursing task force. It's something we've called on for a year and a half, two years, have echoed calls from the nurses on this front, Mr. Speaker. But it's been years of asking for this, and it's an essential component to nursing retention.

We need to keep the nursing staff we have. We need to keep the health care staff we have. And we need to be asking questions about why people are leaving, why people are burning out, why they are not staying in this work. Until we ask those questions, we will never get this health human resources crisis under control.

But there is skepticism from health care professionals about the nursing task force. The way the former minister of Health announced this on Facebook during the campaign, without even so much as a press release coming from government, and also tried to pit health care worker unions against each other in the announcement, Mr. Speaker, it all raises a lot of questions.

We will be watching to ensure that this is a collaborative process that brings people together, that includes meaningful consultation, and that it leads to real actions on behalf of this government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about what's happening in my own riding. On top of these health care issues that we have talked about, Mr. Speaker, I had a lot of opportunity to spend time with the folks in my riding over the past year, and there are several concerns that have remained unaddressed by this government.

Our main role in the provincial election is to connect with everyone in our constituencies as candidates regardless of their political stripe, and to hear from folks about what matters to them. This past summer I heard a lot of concerns about cost-of-living challenges, health and education, and also about crime and homelessness in my riding of Saskatoon Fairview.

We have people living on our streets with no place to go. In Saskatoon we have more encampments, more pressure on emergency services and emergency shelters, and no cold-weather

strategy. We're facing record homelessness in this province, increasing crime, and concerns about community safety. This is especially true in my riding of Saskatoon Fairview, where the STC [Saskatoon Tribal Council] wellness centre has completely changed the landscape of our community.

Now I've repeatedly written to the former minister of Social Services asking to meet with him to discuss these issues, asking for real resolutions. But this government has offered no consultation with people in the community, nothing to alleviate their concerns, and had nothing to say to people on the doorsteps about a path forward or decreasing the amount of beds in the facility or working to reduce crime in the community.

People need a place to live. And of course we need emergency shelters but we also need to consult on where these facilities are built. A 106-bed emergency shelter facility in the middle of a residential neighbourhood just does not make sense.

People are looking for the government to take leadership on this file. And instead they have shirked responsibility and left municipalities to try to manage things. We need smaller, purpose-built facilities throughout the community. We need to address crime and the root causes of crime. And we need to get people into supportive housing and addictions treatments where appropriate. People are looking for this government to step up.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's evident here as my time comes to a close, that this government is out of ideas and out of touch with the Saskatchewan people. People came here in a large crowd this week, Mr. Speaker, looking for a fresh vision from this government. People are eager for a fresh meal, and they have been served up leftovers, Mr. Speaker.

Now this isn't the Premier's first Throne Speech. It's not even his first term as Premier. He's been through this before. And, Mr. Speaker, I think overall I'm disappointed and concerned. I'm concerned for the people of this province. We need to see a government that's going to do so much better. And with that I cannot support the main motion. I'm proud to second the amendment by the member from Regina Walsh Acres. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — So I just have a concern. The member from Saskatoon Fairview, I had overlooked some things earlier but I mentioned yesterday that I would be fairly firm on anything where it would be casting aspersions or some things about the character of individuals, all honourable in this Chamber. And there were a few comments, one concerning our Minister of Health that, you know, things that are being looked into currently, to cast aspersions in that way.

And also again, the comment was made that the intent of a minister was to pit groups against one another. So I appreciate your perspective and things, but when we start saying the intents and casting aspersions at one another, I'm going to stand up and ask you to apologize and withdraw. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Vicki Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize.

Speaker Goudy: — Thank you. I recognize the member from

White City-Qu'Appelle.

Brad Crassweller: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be here today to address this Assembly and our guests, although I'm a little hesitant to address you, Mr. Speaker, as one of the last times I talked to you beside me here, you were dragged from your seat. So I apologize if I had anything to do with that. In all seriousness, in my mind we could not have chosen a better Speaker. Your integrity, your character, your desire to serve others is inspiring. So thank you for being willing to serve in this capacity. I also say, congratulations on this new role for you. I know you'll do well.

I also want to congratulate the member from Lumsden-Morse on his new role of Deputy Speaker. I'm very grateful for the opportunity that I've been given to be a part of this government and grateful to the people of White City-Qu'Appelle for placing their trust in me.

Mr. Speaker, every one of us in this room and ultimately in this province has a story to tell. Life is story. As parents we begin to read to our children at an early age, and many of us can still probably recite many of those stories verbatim as our children soon grow to enjoy their favourite story. A couple of my favourites growing up were *I Wish that I Had Duck Feet* and *The Digging-est Dog* in town, even though I'm not sure "digging-est" is a word. It was in that book.

You know, the incredible teachers in this province read stories to their classes on a daily basis. And I've met some of those incredible teachers in my constituency, and I look forward to meeting many more.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we all love a good story. We read them. We watch them on TV and on the big screen. We all likely have our favourite movies. I know that my family does. And many times in conversation my kids will throw out a line from their favourite movie — classic movies, at least classic to my family, like *Remember the Titans*, *Top Gun*, *Wild Hogs*, and *The Princess Bride*. The list could go on.

But I believe we go to movies and read books because we love great stories. We love the storyline. We love the challenges. We love the suspense. We love the highs and lows of the different characters in those stories. We love stories about underdogs. We love stories that involve heroes and villains. And for the most part, we all love happy endings.

In movies, in books, in life, every story is made up of some incredible chapters. And sometimes those chapters are heartbreaking. Mr. Speaker. Sometimes those chapters are full of victory. And when combined, those chapters ultimately tell and make incredible stories. My life is no different. It's made up of many chapters, some very exciting chapters and some very heartbreaking chapters and everything in between.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you some of my story. I was born and raised in BC [British Columbia] for the first 18 years of my life, and I'm the youngest of four kids. My father was a tugboat captain in Vancouver, and my mother in her early years was a nurse. She stopped nursing to raise her four children and our foster brother, who had severe cerebral palsy.

The earliest chapters of my story and the memories of those chapters were of an incredible childhood. I grew up in a home, Mr. Speaker, where I was loved, where I was encouraged. And as the youngest of four, I was the typical little brother, always well-behaved and rarely did I get into trouble. At least that's how I remember the story. I remember our family times. I remember camping and fishing. I remember learning to water-ski at an incredibly young age. Water sports were a huge part of our family's life.

I also learned early in life that many times chapters come your way that are unexpected, even unwanted. That first chapter in my life unfolded in grade 4. I remember it vividly. I came home from school and my parents sat me down on the couch, and for a minute I thought I was in trouble. But they tried to explain to their nine-year-old son that his mom was sick and the doctors have given her two weeks to live.

That was a chapter that I'd like to forget. That was a chapter that I wish had never been written in the story of my life because it was a very challenging chapter for our family. It was a chapter in which the doctors were initially wrong. They had given my mom two weeks to live, but my mom was a fighter. She was an incredible lady and somehow she hung on for another two years. But when I was in grade 6, she passed away from cancer.

And it was that chapter in my life, Mr. Speaker, as a young boy, that I was fortunate to have some great people around me — my siblings, my father, my grandmother, my aunt and uncle, my coaches, my teachers. And every one of them helped me through that chapter of grief and despair and heartache. My story. And I trust your story is one in which I hope you're surrounded by great people as I was, because we need others in our story, because little did I know that my story would continue to have some very tough chapters.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I have to take a minute to thank my parents, Bill and Shirley Crassweller, for the incredible parents they were. As I said, my mom passed away when I was 11 and my father passed away when I was 38 years old. But in that short time they both left an incredible mark on my life. I've also had the privilege of having a stepmother, Lynne, who played a pivotal role in filling the gap as my stepmom. And so to her I say, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, my in-laws, Ron and Jo-Ann Fessant, have also been very instrumental in my life. I couldn't have asked for more encouraging or supportive in-laws. My father-in-law was born in Edgeley in 1936, and my mother-in-law was born not too far away just outside of Indian Head in 1939. And although my father-in-law passed away in 2023, I'm proud to say that he worked for SaskPower for 32 years. Mr. Speaker, he started in the mailroom, and he retired in 1985 as the senior manager of information services. I know he'd be very proud that I get the privilege of representing his hometown of Edgeley. My mother-in-law, who was the epitome of love and support, is currently in a care home here in Regina suffering from dementia.

I also want to thank my siblings for the incredible chapters they have helped write in my life. My oldest sister Sherri, my big brother Bill, and I like to call her my big little sister because she's older than me, have all played a crucial role in my life. I want to thank their incredible spouses, Dave and Brent and Debbie; my

incredible brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Ron and Colleen, my wife's older sister and her husband.

[15:45]

I also have some incredible nieces and nephews, Mr. Speaker — 20 of them to be exact — and another 16 great-nieces and -nephews, many of whom live in Saskatchewan. And so our family has definitely helped to grow our province. We're taking that 1.4 million people in our province by 2030 seriously and doing our part.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, there have come a few more chapters in my story that will contain tragedy and heartbreak. During my second year of college, I lost one of my close friends in a tragic motor vehicle accident in the mountains in BC on his very way back to school here in Regina.

In our marriage my wife and I have experienced incredible pain and loss. We've lost two children — Morgan due to a miscarriage, and our little girl, Paige, was stillborn in 2006.

Mr. Speaker, if I may take a moment and pause and challenge us all to think about every person we meet in life, everyone we talk to on a daily basis. All of the people in our constituencies have a story to tell, and many times those stories are filled with chapters of tragedy and heartbreak. So, Mr. Speaker, may we be quick to listen.

There's many more chapters to my story. There's been some incredibly positive times, some exciting times, some great chapters of incredible milestones in my life. There's a chapter of going on a blind date, Mr. Speaker, and meeting the love of my life, my wife, Sandy. Turned out to be a pretty good decision on my part. We've been married for 34 years.

She is an incredible person — loving, smart, fiercely loyal. We call her the backstop as she's always there for all of us when we need her. She's always supported me in anything and everything I've done, no matter how crazy the idea seemed, and I've had a few crazy ones. She's an incredible mother and grandmother to our grandsons. And together we've written some awesome chapters in life, and I look forward to writing many more.

There's the chapter of all my children, and that doesn't refer to watching soap operas. That's my actual children, of which I have four on this earth. Our son Taylor and his wife, Stephanie, they've given us a little boy, our second grandson, who is three and a half months old, named Grayson. My daughter Chelsea and her husband, Marty, gave us our first grandson, Brooks, who's just turned one a few days ago. And my daughter Shaylee and her husband, Ellis, gave us our third grandson, who's also three and a half months old. They're two days apart. His name is William. Some incredible chapters.

And last but not least, my youngest daughter, Ashlyn, who graduated from Campbell this last spring and works in the family business. She's our fireball, an incredible young lady of whom one of my mentors once took me aside and said, you don't need to put her in assertiveness training classes; she has that figured out. And the day you meet her, you will see.

But all of my kids and now my grandchildren have added

incredible chapters to my story, chapters of love, grace, kindness, forgiveness, laughter, and memories that I will cherish forever. I'm so proud of all my children and the spouses they've chosen. And eventually we look forward to the spouse that Ashlyn will choose, although from the outset, Mr. Speaker — and as a father of daughters you'll get this — that young man will stand a pretty challenging time, as he doesn't just have to get past a father; he's got to get past a brother, and now two brothers-in-law. And I hope that boy has some good chapters of perseverance in his life because he's going to need it.

There's many chapters to my story, Mr. Speaker. Chapters of my sports accomplishments, chapters of school and college, and even back to grade 8 there was a breakdancing chapter. My faith chapter, Mr. Speaker, is woven throughout my story, and I like to think of it as the ABC's. You see we all had to learn the ABC's to help us read and communicate. The ABC's are foundational things that we teach early in life, and they help us function in life.

And the ABC's of my faith are no different. My faith helps me with my attitudes and my actions. My faith helps me with my beliefs. My faith helps me and shows me what my character should be like. My faith helps me with decisions that I face in life. Mr. Speaker, I won't bore you but I could go through the whole alphabet. My faith chapter is woven throughout the entirety of my life. And it's been foundational to who I am and how I live my life and how I've been able to survive some very tough times in life.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, what I find incredible today is that we're in a room filled with stories. My fellow hon. members of this Assembly have great stories that they too are continuing to write.

But there's something else I love about stories. It's when they're all combined they make up an even bigger story. And when I look around this room and when I think about the stories I heard on the doorsteps in White City-Qu'Appelle and when I think about the many more stories I'll hear throughout the province over these next four years, I'm reminded that combined we're all writing a story, the story of Saskatchewan.

I'm honoured and I'm excited to be a part of the party that's going to continue to write some great chapters for the people of Saskatchewan. It's a privilege and not one that I nor my colleagues take lightly. Mr. Speaker, I believe that together we're going to write some incredible chapters for this province as the fifth majority Sask Party government.

I'm not even 25 days into serving my constituents, but I can't help but think and want to thank Don McMorris for serving and taking 25 years of his life and spending them writing some great chapters for our constituency and for our province. So thank you, Don, and thank you to his lovely wife, Cindy, and to his sons Mark and Craig who allowed him to serve faithfully for 25 years. I won't tell you how old I will be when I serve 25 years as Don did. Big shoes to fill.

Mr. Speaker, I also had an incredible campaign team that did a ton of work door knocking and phone calls and emails. We all know what that's like. But I need to mention a few. Jeff MacPherson, my good friend, my financial agent, my key advisor. I like to call him the thinkubator. He's an incredible man,

an incredible team player. Scott Pettigrew, my campaign Chair, did a fantastic job of all that's required of a campaign manager and more. And even right here in this building, Shelby Lockie. Shelby knocked a lot of doors with me and was the best at getting lawn signs. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what she said as far as lawn signs go, but she left the rest of us in the dust always getting lawn sign after lawn sign. So thank you, Shelby.

And then there's Nicole Entner-McCullough for keeping us all on track, keeping the campaign office running smoothly. Your organizational skills and your heart for this constituency are second to none. So thank you, Nicole. Nicole served as Don's CA [constituency assistant] for 17 years and, Nicole, you were involved in writing some great chapters with Don. And I'm thankful that this is not the end of the story for you as a CA, but rather, it's the end of one chapter and the beginning of a new chapter, as together, as a team we continue to write the story of White City-Qu'Appelle.

I want to thank Nicole's husband, Curtis, and her daughters Ashlyn and Madison as well. The job of a CA is a busy one, with many times some unconventional hours and responsibilities in which their families make certain sacrifices with regard to their time. So thank you to all the great people around me who worked so hard on our campaign. Thank you as well to my constituency board — incredible people.

Mr. Speaker, my fellow colleagues, everyone in this room and everyone listening, I want to tell you that I believe with all my heart there's more chapters to write in the story of Saskatchewan. And I believe I'm a part of a great team. A team that will put Saskatchewan first. A team that will put our people first. A team that will seek to do what is best for the people of this province, as evidenced in the Throne Speech, "A New Beginning."

Voters clearly identified things that matter most to them: improved access to health care, better support for our children in their classrooms, better represent the people in this province by being more responsive to their concerns. Mr. Speaker, I believe we'll do these very things, and by so doing, we'll write some of the best chapters yet for our constituency and for this province.

As we heard very clearly in the Throne Speech, we'll write a new chapter concerning health care ensuring 450,000 surgeries over the next four years; reducing surgical wait times to no more than three months; investing billions into health care infrastructure; a goal of every person in Saskatchewan having a personal health care provider by the end of 2028; and one of my favourites, Mr. Speaker, engaging nurses throughout the province with a patient-focused nursing task force; increasing funding for cancer care and research, something that has touched my family deeply. What a chapter that's beginning to be written. A new beginning indeed.

A new chapter in education and child care expanding the specialized support classroom pilot to more than 200 schools, Mr. Speaker. A focus on improving reading levels in kindergarten to grade 3, the single biggest predictor of future academic success. I'm so proud to hear our government saying it's increasing funding to school divisions and adding more teachers and support staff, Mr. Speaker, an exciting chapter that will help us make sure that we're equipping our children to be able to write some incredible stories of their own.

A new chapter concerning affordability, and that's exciting as well. It's about to be written. A new chapter concerning safer communities. Adding 500 more police officers and 500 more addiction recovery spaces will help us write a new chapter to keep our communities and our neighbourhoods safer.

These are just a few chapters that we'll write in the story of Saskatchewan. We'll write many chapters together, and as MLAs we'll write new chapters for our constituencies. Mr. Speaker, I plan on writing some new chapters for White City-Qu'Appelle.

And as I serve the people of my constituency, there'll be certain things that are foundational to those new chapters. And some of those foundational pieces for me, Mr. Speaker, began with a campaign promise to my constituents: that I will listen, and I will learn, and I will lead. And as I do that, together we'll write some great new chapters. Because again, the great story that is Saskatchewan is not over yet. We're just turning the page.

And I believe with our Premier and with the cabinet he's chosen and the great men and women in this Assembly that we'll continue to write some great chapters in the story of Saskatchewan. Maybe even some of the best chapters yet. But we can't do it alone. We need to come together. Mr. Speaker, we need to believe in one another and put the needs of others before our own.

During our campaign, I talked a lot about the fact that I would listen and learn and lead. Mr. Speaker, when I was door knocking I listened, and I learned a lot from people who had visited this Assembly for a variety of reasons. And what I heard from them when referring to the Assembly were some words that were a little bit scary. They used words like "shocked," "horrified," "disgusted," and "appalled" at the conduct they witnessed. I've also heard a few times during this campaign, Mr. Speaker, that it's time for change. I listened, I learned, and now it's time to lead.

So hon. members of the government and the opposition, we need to lead and write a new chapter in this House so that the people of this province, who this House belongs to, will say they saw honest and open dialogue. They'll say that they saw honourable and respectful dialogue, behaviour that honours one another, Mr. Speaker, that honours those we serve and honours this incredible institution.

Mr. Speaker, there's many things in my life that I've learned I can't control. But there are two things that I can control: my attitude and my actions. And, Mr. Speaker, I commit to you, to this Assembly, to my constituents, that I plan on writing a new chapter, of living up to the title bestowed upon me as the MLA for White City-Qu'Appelle and how I conduct myself in this most sacred and honourable institution. And how I conduct myself outside of these walls.

So in closing, Mr. Speaker, a key chapter in my story has been the chapter of perseverance, to work through all the things that life has thrown at me and to be determined to do my best in whatever I do and to serve those I'm doing it for. And I believe if we all do that, we'll write some amazing chapters over this next four years.

You see the thing, Mr. Speaker, about great stories is that they

involve great people. They involve great challenges. They involve people working together with leaders who lead, with leaders who are passionate, with leaders who will serve. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe with all my heart right now I'm surrounded by those very leaders.

A new beginning, new chapters are about to be written. So I am humbled and honoured to be the MLA for White City-Qu'Appelle, and I look forward to serving all of my constituents on a daily basis as together we write some new chapters.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this time to address you. God bless you and God bless Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the original motion brought forward by the member from Kindersley-Biggar and seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, and I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. Thank you.

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

Jacqueline Roy: — Monsieur le Président et monsieur le Vice-Président, mes félicitations les plus sincères. In my mother language, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Deputy Speaker, my sincerest congratulations.

C'est un honneur d'être ici parmi vous et parmi les autres députés élus.

[Translation: It is an honour to be here with you and with the other elected members.]

Mr. Speaker, it is a profound privilege to stand here today in this esteemed Chamber representing the resilient and diverse community of Regina Northeast. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the constituents of Regina Northeast. Without their trust and without their support I would not be here today.

[16:00]

But gratitude, Mr. Speaker, is not just a formality; it is a duty. I think of the young mother who, despite the late hour, bundled up her baby to vote because she deeply cares about her child's education; the gentleman who, despite his skepticism towards politics, gave us four years and voted this time; the grieving spouse who, in the midst of personal loss, still believed in a better future and took the time to share his hopes and have a conversation on the doorsteps only a week after he had lost his wife.

I am also moved by those who displayed lawn signs, made calls, and engaged their neighbours. I know those weren't easy things to do, and you sometimes didn't know what the reception would be. And those might have been difficult conversations to have, but thank you.

To those who opened their doors on cold evenings and spoke candidly about their struggles, their hopes, their fears, thank you. Your trust is the cornerstone of everything I will do in this role, and I promise to not let you down.

Mr. Speaker, my commitment to the people of Regina Northeast

is not limited to those who supported me at the ballot box. Representation, Mr. Speaker, transcends elections. It is about serving every individual in our community regardless of who they voted for, whether they're eligible to vote, or where they came from.

Leadership, Mr. Speaker, is not about division. It is about inclusion. It is about ensuring that every voice, especially those that are often marginalized or overlooked, is heard and valued in our collective legislature. This is their home too. That is a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, that I hold with the deepest seriousness.

The decision to run for office was not made lightly. I was reading *Four Thousand Weeks* by Oliver Burkeman, a book that perhaps some of you are familiar with. It challenges us to confront the brevity of life. Four thousand weeks, the average human lifespan, felt insultingly short. Realizing that at 40 I had statistically lived half my life, I was compelled to ask myself, Mr. Speaker, have I lived my life with courage? Have I done all I can to help others? The book did come with some hard truths: that hesitation and fear can actually close doors, not only for yourself but for the people and the communities that we are all meant to serve. That reflection was pivotal.

In May 2023 I chose to act. Without children of my own, Mr. Speaker, I feel a profound responsibility to contribute to the future of others for me to feel well. Mr. Speaker, before entering politics I had the privilege of serving as a teacher for 17 years and as an STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] councillor for about a dozen. To the hundreds of students I had the honour of teaching during this time, thank you. You taught me the true meaning of diversity, inclusion, and of justice. Your voices, your stories, and your resilience shaped the educator and now the representative that I am today.

The last decade of my teaching career, however, Mr. Speaker, was marked with a profound and troubling decline. Year in year, funding was stripped away from education, making it increasingly difficult to provide the quality learning experiences all students deserve. Education was strained to a breaking point. At that time the unwillingness to genuinely engage with front-line workers and with teachers and value their perspectives was of deep, deep concern. Many felt dismissed and unheard, to put it mildly, quite frankly.

Mr. Speaker, to respond to that dismissive and condescending "what are you going to do about it" and "you don't matter" position that teachers felt during those difficult times, I offer this: I decided to step forward; I decided to take action; and I decided to come forward and be part of the solution. Now as a politician I am here to ensure that the voices of educators, students, and families are heard. Let's find a solution together.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen first-hand the transformative power of properly funded education. I saw what a difference it makes when schools have educational psychologists, speech and language pathologists, and educational assistants; when class sizes were manageable; when school nutrition programs were accessible to every child in need; when students with autism, with intellectual disabilities, or with ADHD [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder] receive the resources and support they require to thrive.

These investments, Mr. Speaker, didn't just set up students for success. These strengthened the very foundation of our province. Our teachers felt valued, our children flourished, and our economy prospered as a result.

But we saw the cracks. I watched as resources dwindled and the fabric of our education system began to fray. What started as a slow decline turned into an avalanche, one that these past four years has left students, teachers, and families grappling with the consequences of chronic underfunding and of neglect.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of this that I am here today. I will continue to fight for the dignity of our teachers, the potential of our students, and the future of a strong and equitable Saskatchewan.

Monsieur le Président, mon arrière-arrière-grand-père était membre de l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba. Je prends le droit de parler français très au sérieux.

[Translation: Mr. Speaker, my great-great-grandfather was a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. I take the right to speak French very seriously.]

I am deeply proud of my heritage as a member of the Fransaskois community. Mr. Speaker, I started learning English formally one hour a week in grade 4, Mr. Speaker. French is my first language and it remains the language in which I do feel most at ease.

Je tiens à remercier la communauté fransaskoise, qui représente une grande partie de ma culture, de mon identité, et de ma passion pour le service public. Je m'engage également de défendre le droit à une éducation de haute qualité pour le Conseil des écoles fransaskoises et de veiller à ce que le gouvernement garde ses promesses de nouvelles écoles, et n'oublie pas qu'il nous faut d'autres ressources. Il faut respecter l'article 23.

La langue est bien plus qu'un moyen de communication. Elle est une identité. Elle est une culture et une connection à nos racines. Je m'engage à travailler pour que la diversité linguistique et la fierté culturelle soient préservées et célébrées en Saskatchewan, non seulement pour aujourd'hui mais aussi pour les générations futures. Nous avons beaucoup de travail à faire, monsieur le Président, mais on va s'y rendre. On va y arriver.

[Translation: I would like to thank the Fransaskois community, which represents a large part of my culture, my identity, and my passion for public service. I also commit to work towards defending the right to high-quality education for the Conseil des écoles fransaskoises and ensure that the government keeps its promises of new schools and does not forget that we need other resources. Article 23 must be respected.]

Language is much more than a means of communication. It is an identity. It is a culture and a connection to our roots. I am committing to working for linguistic diversity and cultural pride being preserved and celebrated in Saskatchewan, not just for today but also for future generations. We have lots of work to do, Mr. Speaker, but we will get there. We are going to get there.]

I am committed to ensuring that Fransaskois voices — and indeed all cultural voices — are respected and represented here in this legislature because language is more than communication.

Language is identity. Language is heritage. Language is connection. I will work to ensure that linguistic diversity and cultural pride are preserved and celebrated in Saskatchewan not just today but for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, my journey here is deeply rooted in the values instilled by my parents. My father also served as the head of the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] Veterans' Association. My mother was one of the first female professor emeriti at the U of R [University of Regina].

Drs. Joan and Robert Roy were also psychologists, however, and they were at the forefront of advocating for Pride during a time when such stances were neither popular nor were they convenient. They witnessed first-hand the devastating consequences of intolerance, including self-harm and suicide, and they were determined to ensure that my brother and I made sure that society never regressed to the prejudices of the early 1980s, Mr. Speaker. Their unwavering commitment to the dignity, equality, and justice of everyone has profoundly shaped my world view. It taught me that standing up for what is right is not optional; it is essential. And their lessons remain as relevant today as ever, Mr. Speaker.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I do not take this opportunity to thank those who supported me on this journey. To Brett, my husband of 18 years: your unwavering patience, help, and encouragement have kept me going even on the hardest of days. To my in-laws and to my brother Laurent and my sister-in-law Vicki and my dear niece and nephew Gabrielle and Cédric: merci pour votre amour et merci pour votre soutien [Translation: thank you for your love and thank you for your support].

And to my late father-in-law, who passed away just over 10 years ago: I'm sorry you couldn't see this, Dad, but I know you'd be proud of me for standing up for what is right. And I miss you.

To my close friend and steadfast supporter, Yens Pedersen, former MLA in our riding, who sits behind us here on the floor: your wisdom and calm guidance kept me focused when the road felt uncertain. Thank you. I hope I can honour your work.

To Jen, to Cathy, to Shane, who along with Yens' former riding association: thank you. To my campaign managers Steven Lloyd and Rick Pollard: your strategic insight and tireless dedication are something I can never repay. To our team which included Tanner and Dylan and Patrick and so many others, Mr. Speaker: thank you. To Deron and Tamara: thanks for the endless supply of motivational campaign buttons when I needed a lift, and for your encouragement and friendship. And to the countless volunteers, donors, and staff: you're the heart and soul of this campaign. You are. From knocking on doors to making calls, your belief in a cause makes the difference.

To the Girl Guides of Canada, les Guides du Canada, and the University of Regina Debate Society, thanks for teaching me how to speak up for what matters most, how to stand on my feet, and how to listen to both sides of the debate and understand both sides of the debate before asking for a change. Mr. Speaker, we all here win through collective effort. And I am here because of the unwavering commitment, trust, and support of so many who believed in me and our vision for a better province.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply, deeply honoured to serve as shadow minister for human rights. We are at a pivotal moment in history, a time when rights are under scrutiny and in some cases under attack. *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms are not mere documents, Mr. Speaker. They are solemn promises, commitments to uphold the dignity, equality, and humanity of every individual. And we must defend them with vigilance and courage. All of us.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am deeply committed to serving the people of Regina Northeast with transparency, integrity, and unwavering dedication no matter how they voted. It is my job to listen and to serve. I will work tirelessly to ensure that your voices are heard.

I would like to close with a poem that has long inspired me and encapsulates the spirit of perseverance and of individual impact. It is titled "Stubborn Ounces," and is written by somebody that you, Mr. Speaker, or others might know. His name is Tommy Douglas.

You say the little efforts that I make will do no good; they'll never prevail to tip the hovering scale where justice hangs in balance. I don't think I ever thought they would, but I am prejudiced beyond debate in favor of my right to choose which side shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight.

Mr. Speaker, I have a copy of this poem framed and it's the first thing you see when you walk into my office here at the legislature. That's not by mistake. I hope it can offer hope to anybody feeling tired, discouraged, or in need of a reminder of the power of small persistent efforts. Merci, thank you, and let us work together to build a more just and compassionate Saskatchewan.

I will be supporting the amendment as moved, Mr. Speaker. I will not be supporting the motion. Ensemble on y arrivera. Merci. [Translation: Together we will get there. Thank you.]

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Estevan-Big Muddy.

Hon. Lori Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my true pleasure and honour to be able to stand here today and give my reply to the 2024 Speech from the Throne, "A New Beginning." As we all take the time to look around this amazing Assembly, we can clearly see all of the new faces, and that this truly is a new beginning. We have all earned the right to be here by earning the trust and support of our constituents.

Before I get into the meat and potatoes of the Throne Speech, I want to take the time to thank all of those who have supported me in my journey. First and foremost my family, and of course Bart, for always being there for me. Thank you to all of them. To my committee and volunteers for helping me organize, door knock, prepare, or whatever support it was I needed, they did it. Thank you to all of them. And last but not least, to my constituents who have put their faith in me, I can assure them all that I will continue to work every day to bring their needs and their concerns forward. Thank you for giving me the opportunity for a third term.

Our government continues to invest in key priorities for

Saskatchewan people, including addictions treatments; mental care; seniors' care; health care for rural, regional, and northern communities.

[16:15]

But first, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the commitment my government has for all industries in our province. Mr. Speaker, we have a growth plan that looks out to 2030. Within that plan we talk about our goals for the oil and gas sector. It talks about our goals for agriculture as well as energy and power production. So while our government works on all we have spoke of in the Throne Speech, that does not negate the work that we will still be doing alongside attaining the goals in our growth plan. It is because of the growth in these industries that we have a growth that gives us a strong economy, growth that provides opportunities for new businesses and more jobs.

It is through this growth in our economy that will help pay for all of what we talk about in the Throne Speech. For my constituency over the past few months, there have been several commitments and conversations around power production. Our government has made it clear that when and if approval is given for us to move forward with small modular reactors, that Estevan will be the first location. Our government has committed and is committed to power production in the Estevan area. And just because we don't talk about power production in the Throne Speech does not mean that at the same time we will not continue to work on our commitment to power production in Estevan. We are committed.

So now I would like to talk about some of the highlights, some of the great work that has already been done as well as some of what you can expect to see in the future. Investing in addictions treatment services so that we can help more people overcome addictions and live healthy, safe lives in recovery is a high priority for our government. That is why our government has put forward a new action plan for mental health and addictions last fall with three pillars.

First, building capacity. We are adding 500 addiction treatment spaces across the province to double the capacity for addiction treatment. Secondly, improving the system itself. We are working to implement a central intake system to make treatment easier to access for people who need it. And third, moving to a recovery-oriented system of care so that the focus is on getting people the treatment they need to overcome addictions and live healthy, safe lives in recovery.

To date 215 addiction treatment spaces have been announced, exceeding our original commitment to adding 150 more spaces this year: 15 withdrawal management spaces at Onion Lake, 15 in-patient treatment spaces at Muskwa Lake near Pinehouse, 14 in-patient treatment spaces through Poundmaker's Lodge in North Battleford, 17 in-patient treatment spaces at Thorpe Recovery Centre near Lloydminster, 32 intensive out-patient treatment spaces through Possibilities Recovery Center in Saskatoon, 26 post-treatment spaces at St. Joseph's Addiction Recovery Centre in Estevan, 36 intensive virtual treatment spaces through EHN Canada, and 60 spaces through EHN Canada in Lumsden near Regina.

Our new action plan includes numerous initiatives supported by

a total of \$49.4 million in funding when fully implemented in the fifth year of the plan. Now I know these are a lot of numbers and figures, statistics, but it's important as I go through all of what we've done and what we'll be doing in the future to know that these spaces, these programs that we're offering, are for all people in Saskatchewan from one corner right to the other. We'll also have an additional million dollars that will support and develop a central intake system that patients can contact directly to self-refer for addictions treatment. And 1 million will support the development of a new province-wide program to provide rapid access to legitimate addiction medications. This brings our total annual investment to addictions care and services to \$102 million, 177 per cent increase since we were first elected.

Mr. Speaker, our vision is for a full continuum of services across the province, including withdrawal management, treatment, recovery living, and peer supports in a broader community. By helping people overcome addictions and by supporting recovery we can save lives, heal families, and strengthen our communities.

For mental health care we continue to make record investments: 472 million in total funding with new investments this year, including new funding for expanding the mental health capacity building in schools initiative for five more schools for a total of 15 in this program; new funding for the BridgePoint Center for eating disorders supports virtual treatment programs available to patients across the province; new funding for Sanctum Care Group supports prenatal outreach teams to support the health of at-risk expectant mothers and their babies; 2.4 million in enhancing psychiatric services in Saskatoon and Prince Albert with additional staff support so that they can see more patients.

Mental health is a priority for our government, and as I mentioned earlier, we have more than doubled funding since taking office for a total of 472 million in this budget year. New programs and services continue to be added each year, including under the new action plan for mental health and addictions.

We are investing in urgent care centres. The urgent care centre in Regina is now open and providing mental health and addictions cares with registered psychiatric nurses who are on staff. In addition to the Saskatoon urgent care centre that is already under way, we will also establish urgent care centres in Prince Albert, North Battleford, and Moose Jaw.

We're also investing in in-patient treatment. Nearly 240 dedicated mental health in-patient beds are available in hospitals across Saskatchewan for patients with intensive mental issues. Over 75 transitional mental health beds were added in previous budgets to help patients with intensive mental health issues transition out of the hospital. Other additional resources include rapid-access counselling for children, youth, and adults. This service is available in a number of communities across Saskatchewan, with more being added. HealthLine 811 — this resource is available to patients any time for mental health supports.

We're also investing in police and crisis teams. Police and crisis teams pair mental health professionals with police officers to better respond to people who are experiencing mental health crisis. These teams are now in place in seven communities across the province, including Estevan, Moose Jaw, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, and Yorkton.

As well, supporting seniors' independence, affordability, and access to high-quality care has been and continues to be a high priority for our government. We are committed to addressing these issues for seniors and continuing to supporting their well-being.

To support independence and the ability of seniors to age in place, we are reintroducing the Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit and making it permanent to help make home renovations more affordable for seniors. In addition to the \$4,000 in eligible expenses that all homeowners will be able to claim, seniors will be able to claim an additional \$1,000 more.

We are further increasing the personal care home benefit by \$1,000 for a new maximum, up to \$3,500 a month. This will help more seniors access personal care home services as an option for their care. We're providing no-cost coverage for blood glucose monitoring systems and supplies for seniors who use insulin to manage their diabetes. This will benefit approximately 9,000 seniors across our province.

We're providing \$222 million in annual funding for home care for seniors, a 70 per cent increase over what the NDP provided when they were in government. Additionally home care individualized funding program receives 5.1 million funding boost to offer more seniors an alternative option to home care services through the Saskatchewan Health Authority.

We are increasing both the personal income tax exemptions for the seniors' supplemental tax exemption by \$500 each year for the next four years. This will save a senior couple a total of \$2,100 in income taxes. With indexation of income tax benefits, the same senior couple will also save an additional \$1,071. Not a one-time benefit, Mr. Speaker, these benefits are for them each year, every year. They don't go away.

We are investing in long-term care to ensure that seniors continue to have access to high-quality care. We're investing funding in the Grenfell long-term care facility, the La Ronge long-term care facility, Estevan long-term care project, as well as the Watson long-term care project.

Many new affordability measures for seniors have been put in place and we will continue to build on them. We kept our promise from the 2020 election to reduce ambulance fees for seniors by half and to eliminate ambulance fees for inter-facility transfers. We kept our promise from the 2016 election to introduce the seniors' education property tax deferral program, which gives seniors the ability to defer paying education property tax until they sell their home.

We have quadrupled the seniors' income plan to \$360 per month for single seniors and up to \$650 per month for married couples, in contrast to the NDP when they held the seniors' income plan for over 16 years at \$90 a year. We stopped collecting the carbon tax on home heating, saving a family of four approximately \$400 in 2024, with seniors who live in their homes also realizing a savings as a result of this change. And as you can see, we're committed to continuing with that. The Saskatchewan Party has made and will continue to make significant investments in the health and well-being of our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, stabilizing and strengthening health care services in

rural, regional, and northern communities will continue to be a priority for our government. We introduced the health human resources action plan in the fall of 2022 to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain health care professionals. Over 300 million has since been invested to support numerous action items under the four pillars of our HHR plan, health human resources plan.

Over 1,700 health care professionals of various designations have been successfully hired in rural, regional, and northern communities. 372 hard-to-recruit positions have been filled as a direct result of the rural and remote recruitment incentive of up to \$50,000 depending on the position. 247 of 250 new positions that we created to enhance staffing levels in rural, regional, and northern communities have been successfully hired. 11 of the 27 new nurse practitioner positions that we have created this year in rural and regional and northern communities have been successfully hired.

We have also added 870 training seats across 33 health care training programs so that we can continue to build our workforce into the future. The Saskatchewan Health Authority has hired more than 1,400 recent nursing graduates from in and out of the province and nearly 400 internationally educated nurses have arrived from the Philippines. We now have over 5,000 more nurses in the province since 2007.

Saskatchewan has seen impressive recruitment results since September 2022, with 218 physicians being recruited to Saskatchewan from outside the province and 35 physicians from outside the country. These efforts resulted in 87 family physicians and 131 specialists establishing their practice in our province. We now have over 1,000 more physicians in our province than we did in 2007.

We know that there is more work to be done to further strengthen health care services and are committed and continuing to work on that improvement. I know that the Minister of Health will be talking more about the goals that we've set in this plan, so I will leave that with him to do.

And before I conclude I would like to touch on the topic of education. As some of you may know, I am a proud grandmother of five. They range in age from six to two. One of those is in grade 1 with the next one entering the public school system next year. So I get very excited to see the improvements we are trying to achieve for students entering the school system. As well, I have two daughters and a son-in-law who teach right here in Saskatchewan. So needless to say I want to see them set up for success in their classrooms.

[16:30]

Last year we started a pilot project with specialized support classrooms. This project is showing positive results so we will be working with school divisions to expand this program to 200 more schools throughout the province. In this Throne Speech we talked directly about the correlation between a child's ability to read at grade level by grade 3 as being the greatest predictor of future academic success. We know that at this level a student goes from learning to read, to reading to learn.

Mr. Speaker, as Deputy House Leader I will do my best to try

and help ensure that it is a more respectable Assembly. I will strive to improve the decorum and tone of this Assembly, to disagree without being disagreeable, and to remember that every member share the same desire to make Saskatchewan a better place.

In conclusion, the Saskatchewan people voted for a strong economy and a bright future, and they voted for a government that will change with a changing province. Our government has heard both messages and our government will deliver on both messages. I think we can all clearly see from the vision that this Throne Speech has that our government has been committed and will continue to be committed to doing what is best for our great province and the amazing people who call Saskatchewan home.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that I will be supporting the motion brought forward by the member from Kindersley-Biggar and I will not be supporting the amendment brought forward by the opposition. Mr. Speaker, to a new beginning. God bless Saskatchewan, God bless Canada, and God save the King.

Speaker Goudy: — Sorry, just wanted to mention one thing again. Just a small thing, but I want to appreciate the NDP, when I asked you to not use "Sask Party" and you added "Sask Party government." It would be fair for the NDP to be either "NDP opposition" or "when the NDP was in government." Maybe that would be . . . So I just ask to remember that in our speeches.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon University-Sutherland.

Tajinder Grewal: — Mr. Speaker, hon. members, and fellow citizens of Saskatchewan, I am honoured and humbled to represent Saskatoon University-Sutherland. Thanks to the people of my constituency for putting their trust in me to advocate on their behalf. Special thanks to all the volunteers, our campaign staff, central campaign team who worked really hard in the successful campaign.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our former MLA, Jennifer Bowes, who did an amazing job representing Saskatoon University for the last four years. Jennifer was a fantastic MLA. Thank you, Jennifer, for your services.

Saskatoon University-Sutherland is a very diverse constituency. People from different parts of the world, all kinds of professionals live in this constituency. The University of Saskatchewan is part of this riding. U of S [University of Saskatchewan] is the heart of Saskatoon and this province. U of S trains all kinds of professionals. The university campus has world-class facilities like the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, Canadian Light Source, Global Institute for Water Security, Global Institute for Food Security, just to name a few.

The U of S is a known . . . world-class in many fields: research and development, science and innovations. People from all over the world come to the university. The university trains them, educates them. These professionals serve this province and serve this country. I am one of them.

I fondly remember when I first came to Saskatoon on November the 12th, 1999 — 25 years, 14 days ago — for an interview at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Graham Scoles, head of the Department of Plant Sciences at that time, picked me up from the

airport and he started my interview during the car ride. It was Friday. Three days later he called me into his office and said, "I offer you this position. Would you like to accept it?" I had no idea that that offer and my decision to accept it will impact my life and my family's life.

It was challenging and exciting to start a new life, a new job, a new career, in a wonderful new city in a province in the country. Starting from nothing, literally starting from nothing in a new country was very challenging. My wife, Ravinder Grewal, and I took this challenge to establish our careers and new life here in Saskatchewan. Our son was four and a half years old at that time.

As many other immigrants to this country, we came here full of dreams. At the very beginning, I realized that this 8-to-5 job will not be enough to fulfill my dreams. To improve my communication and leadership skills, I joined Toastmasters International in 2001 as a chartered member of Campus Howlers Toastmasters Club at the U of S. Toastmasters really helped me to improve my English and also my public-speaking skills.

I won the humorous speech contest in 2003 at the club, area, and division levels. And I had also served as president of the Campus Howlers Toastmasters Club. And I was awarded District 42 Division E President of the Year for the years 2003 and 2004. So as a result of my Toastmasters experience, I can stand in front of 10, 100, or 1,000 people and can say what I want to say. And I'm very proud to say that I won many awards in speaking contests against people who were born and raised here with English is their first language. English is my third language.

My next stop was to apply my communication and leadership skills that would benefit my community. I played a significant role to establish Punjabi Cultural Association of Saskatchewan in 2004, served on several executive positions, and was its president from 2010 to 2012. We organized cultural shows for 12 years, and almost more than 100 people performed on those shows and over 1,000 people attended those shows every year. I was able to inspire people to participate and promote and preserve Punjabi language, cultural arts, and traditions. And I also participated and collaborated with other cultural organizations to promote multiculturalism in Canada.

In 2003 we established Saskatoon Field Hockey Club. The purpose was to introduce field hockey to Saskatoon, to have a healthy lifestyle, and to have fun. And I was a president of the club from 2003 to 2020.

I also had a dream to be financially successful because I was growing up . . . I've seen the poverty in the first-hand when growing up in Punjab, India, and I wanted to provide the opportunity to my son which was not given to me while growing up. So I joined a part-time financial business in 2007 to learn about the financial education and learn how to become financially successful. It took us several years to achieve that goal, but we're able to provide the best education to our son and at one of the best law schools in the country. My wife, Ravinder Grewal, has played an integral role in achieving all those goals and dreams and leading in some cases.

We are not the only people to achieve this goal. There are so many other wonderful people who helped us through our journey. Toastmasters, Punjabi Association, Field Hockey Club, and the

financial business introduced us to many like-minded people who helped us to achieve this goal and also achieve theirs. It's not only satisfying to achieve your dreams and goals, but to also see other people fulfill their dreams doubles the reward.

During all this period I was a scientist, a full-time scientist. I worked for the University of Saskatchewan for 12 and a half years in the barley and oat breeding program. Then I worked for four and a half years for Saskatchewan Research Council and the Saskatchewan government. For the last eight years I'm working in the private sector for a multinational company named SGS, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. SGS hired me eight years ago to start a brand new lab. When they hired me, they showed two empty rooms and said, at the end of this year, lab.

Within nine months, we start serving the agriculture industry. In three years, we are 4,000 square feet, state-of-the-art lab providing GMO [genetically modified organism] testing, wheat and barley breed identification, and many other genomics testing services to the agriculture industry. And this lab is one of a kind. This is the only lab in Canada providing GMO testing for all kinds of grains, food, and feed products. I'm very proud to say that I started this lab from scratch and now this is one of a kind serving the agriculture industry.

My active role in the Punjabi association, many sports and culture organizations, eventually led me to politics when in 2014, Mr. Cam Broten, the leader of Saskatchewan Party, asked me to run for the party. My journey in politics is very challenging, to say the least. In 2016 I ran for Saskatoon Willowgrove. We increased the NDP vote significantly but unable to succeed. In 2020 I ran for Saskatoon Silverspring Sutherland. We increased the NDP vote by 27 per cent but fell short of winning. Finally, finally this time we were able to cross the finish line. Third time is the charm.

I got my nomination last year in September and we started door knocking right away. During the last 13 months while door knocking, the main issues I have heard at the doorsteps were health care, education, and affordability. Are we going to focus on these issues as per my constituents told me — affordability, health care, and education?

So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, starting my journey from nothing 25 years ago and reaching this place is a very humbling experience. So many people helped me, helped us throughout this journey. I'm very thankful to the people of Saskatoon University for giving me this opportunity to serve. I also thank to all the volunteers, donors, campaign staff, and central campaign team who work really hard. I love this province. I love this country from my heart. I'm looking forward to working with you all and the provincial government to make this place even better for everyone in the future. We are stronger together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will add that I will be supporting the amendment as moved, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be supporting the motion. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Dakota-Arm River.

Barret Kropf: — Mr. Speaker, for a rookie MLA like me, it's an honour to be here today standing on Treaty 4 territory and

traditional home of the Métis people. I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment to the seat of the Speaker. And I know that the renewal of standards here in the Chamber will be established under your strong leadership, and I thank you in advance for that.

For the last three decades, I've spent my days and nights giving motivational pre-game speeches as a professional coach in the world of hockey, encouraging my athletes to push for excellence in everything that they do. The anchor for my coaching philosophy is a phrase I share boldly and often: win all day, every day. I strive to wake up each day to live a life that reflects me pushing towards that edge of excellence in everything I do with my family, my friends, and at work, so that I can honour my Lord. And by the grace of God I hope to be able to win all day, every day, as an MLA.

In the summer of 1991, I was able to secure the number one overall draft pick and marry my high school sweetheart, Bridget Brandt. We had our wedding photos taken right here, on the steps of this very legislature. And we've been blessed with three servant-hearted sons.

[16:45]

As a cancer survivor, Bridget is my constant life partner. She has been the one that's covered my blind side, which makes me stronger every day. She is an inspiration to other mothers and grandmothers because she is a lifelong learner. And in the second half of her century of living, she has gone back to school, and she will finish up in June of next year, where she will be able to take advantage of the graduate retention program that our government has an increase of 20 per cent in this Throne Speech.

Our oldest son, Jalen, he earned a degree in international studies, which included an internship and employment on Parliament Hill. He's also served this province with his efforts on staff in the Government of Saskatchewan and is now on his way to serving our nation as he enters into the armed forces. He is a man of strength and character making an impact on this great province of ours.

My middle son Joshua and his wife Katti have given us the joy of a granddaughter, Hazy Kay. Their story reflects the dreams of many young families planting their flag in Saskatchewan, supported by the affordability measures in this Throne Speech. Joshua was forced to retire from professional cycling due to an injury, and he is now studying computer science. He and his wife Katti look forward to raising Hazy here in Saskatchewan because it has so many opportunities for a young family like theirs.

This Saskatchewan affordability Act, the priority of this government, will allow Josh and Katti to pay less income taxes, save more money, and to take advantage of the first-time homebuyer tax credit. Their story is similar across my riding and across this province. They are humble, hard-working people that need our commitment to make life more affordable so they can have a great, bright future ahead.

Our youngest son Jacob is an adventure-seeking maniac. He has a deep care for people and their outcomes in life. He graduated university with honours in the field of finance and is now working for CIBC Wood Gundy in Vancouver. He climbs

mountains on weekends and strategically builds wealth for clients during the weekdays. It would be my hope one day, Mr. Speaker, that he would come back to the promised land of Saskatchewan, but unless a mountain range pops up along Highway 11 between Regina and Saskatoon, I don't think that will be possible. So for now, Mr. Speaker, we will just bless BC with the greatest export from Saskatchewan, my youngest son Jacob.

Mr. Speaker, I just need to talk a little bit more about my granddaughter. Seeing her grow up reminds me of many incredible proud moments as parents and grandparents in the Dakota-Arm River riding who are choosing to start and raise their families can be supported everywhere that they turn. With our government's commitment to fund 12,000 additional new child care spaces, that is programming that makes life affordable for young families.

My Miss Hazy, she comes running up to me and grabs my hand and says, "Poppa, let's read books." So I read to her her favourite stories because I know how critical this early learning stage is in her life. Her parents do a great job of raising her, and our government, Mr. Speaker, has a renewed mandate on helping them with early learning outcomes. It is why in this Throne Speech we have placed a focus on reading levels for grades K to 3 across the province, assuring that Hazy and all her peers across the province will be set up for educational success.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here today because the people of Dakota-Arm River saw fit to elect me as their MLA, and I'm honoured to be here in this role.

I had a strong team during the election, and I want to thank them for standing shoulder to shoulder with me over the last year. So a huge shout-out to my co-campaign Chairs, Jalen Kropf and a former Member of Parliament and an MLA of this Chamber, Mr. Allan Kerpan. Special thanks to my financial agent, Randy Jesse, and all my campaign volunteers, such as Kamal Saini, Mike Erlandson, Daryl Nordstrom, the Grozells, the Lees, and so many more. I also want to thank my supporters and donors along with my constituency executive of John, Ron, Patrick, Darren, Bree, and Dawn. I appreciate you all greatly.

I also want to thank outgoing MLA and the former best-dressed MLA in Canada, Mr. Dana Skoropad, for his leadership in my constituency and for his wisdom in hiring and passing along to me his CA and now mine, the legendary Lavonne Lyke. So many people have their fingerprints in shaping my life: coaches, teachers, friends, and family alike. To them I say, thank you for investing in me, believing in me, and encouraging me throughout my life. You know who you are, and I can never thank you enough.

Mr. Speaker, on my first day in this position as I walked up to this majestic building, I felt the weight of responsibility, a weight that I bear with strength and courage of my forefathers. You see, my family and that of my wife's has deep pioneering roots here in Saskatchewan. My riding of Dakota-Arm River is less than a 90-minute drive from where in 1929 my grandparents, August and Josefa Kropf, pioneered farm land near the town of Wilkie. It was on the farm that they raised eight children, the youngest of whom was my father, Robert John.

After earning his Red Seal industrial mechanic papers, my father moved to Estevan, and it was there he met my mother, Wendy Lynn Burgess, and raised my incredibly talented sister and I. My dad spent 43 years with SaskPower making sure that the Boundary plant, Shand, and Coronach power stations kept the lights and power on for Saskatchewan. My mother, Wendy, is an entrepreneur and business leader with an interior design career that has spanned across Western Canada. Her maiden name is Burgess, and, Mr. Speaker, if the name Burgess is familiar to those who enjoy the outdoors, it's because her great-great-grandfather, Joseph Burgess, homesteaded an area near Arcola in 1898. And today his homestead is recognized by being on the shores of his namesake, Burgess Lake, in the Moose Mountain Provincial Park.

As for my wife's heritage, her parents, Keith and Judy Brandt, took over a third-generation farm in Cavell to make sure the homesteaded land of her family was farmed for over a century. The Kropf, Burgess, Brandt, and Walsh families have such deep agriculture and business roots here in Saskatchewan, and I'm honoured to carry on the traditions that they have established.

Mom and Rowe, dad and Dianne, Keith and Judy, I love you.

Mr. Speaker, so as you can see the weight of walking up to the people's legislature each day carries the weight of responsibility from my ancestors, to make sure their courage and their pioneering spirit continues on in me and through me.

It also carries the weight of responsibility for my riding and the brilliant folks who call Dakota-Arm River home. We have the strength of the potash industry in the south end of the riding in Bethune, the entrepreneurial spirit of Whitecap First Nation on the north end of the riding, and in the heartland of this riding is a strong agricultural sector filled with legacy producers who strive for excellence in their operations, and benefit from a growing value-add agriculture sector to be able to process more of what they produce. This business sector is absolutely thrilled with our commitment to keeping the small-business tax at 1 per cent.

I'm almost done my pre-game speech here, Mr. Speaker, so allow me to share a few stories on how they relate to the excitement outlined in the Throne Speech.

We know that sports build character, the kind of character modelled by coaches across our province. We want to make sure they can continue to develop character as they coach and lead at ice arenas across this province. I'm excited that our government has doubled the arena grant program to \$5,000, plus the doubling of active families benefit, and the commitment to millions of dollars in playground equipment each year for communities, because, Mr. Speaker, active youth and active families are healthier and stronger for our province.

One of the pit stops in my coaching career was coaching Team Saskatchewan, the U18 [under 18] female team at the national championships, which had a significant speedy winger on the squad that I coached that year. She went on to great things in her playing career, but of course we also know that Jessica Campbell is one of the best coaching exports to ever come from Saskatchewan. She is now the first-ever female coach in the National Hockey League. What a tremendous accomplishment for Ms. Campbell, to shatter the glass ceiling and pave the way

for so many others.

I'm excited that Minister Ross has the portfolio not only for sport and culture but also for the Status of Women. Mr. Speaker, it is to you and through you that I'd like to indicate to Minister Ross that I am committed to help her develop more Jessica Campbells from Saskatchewan, and I will stand shoulder to shoulder with her to make that happen.

My two-year-old granddaughter Hazy Kay, she now has a powerful role model in Ms. Campbell. So Hazy can chase her hopes and dreams here in Saskatchewan, enabled by all the funding announcements that are in this Throne Speech. So I'm here for you, Minister Ross. Together, along with initiatives from this Throne Speech, we can make a difference for the next Ms. Campbell.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many motivational stories at Dakota-Arm River, similar to the one of Ms. Campbell. In the town of Aylesbury, Barry and Kathy and their ownership group have made an impact in their community. They own the Elephant Bar in town and in nine months into ownership, their hard work and entrepreneurial spirit has allowed the restaurant to become profitable in record fashion.

South of Saskatoon, Lee and Chelsea Norheim have grown their ag business, Norheim Ranching, to become multiple locations and are currently the largest occupier of trade show space in Regina this week at the Western Agribition. They are also giving back to the community this week with their boot shine fundraiser going on at Agribition, which I encourage others to take part in.

In the community of Dilke, the establishment known to locals for incredible baking and fresh home-cooked meals, The Cheerful Woodpecker, is the inspirational work of Davor and Marina and has customers driving hundreds of kilometres to take in their expertise.

Rick Letts and Les McTavish have taken the Elbow golf and country club and returned it into a world-class golf destination, spearheading resurgence in their community of Elbow.

Southern Meats in Kenaston, J.M.R. Meats in Davidson, and Babco Meats in Bethune are three new, thriving food establishments in my riding who are actively creating farm-to-table products by processing more of what our great farmers produce.

I could go on and on about many more great stories in my riding, Mr. Speaker, but in quick summary what I hear from every single one of them is thank you. Thank you for keeping the small-business tax at 1 per cent. This measure by our government, Mr. Speaker, is not only allowing entrepreneurs to thrive in Saskatchewan but is building jobs, which attracts families and enhances the economies of every community that they're in.

I have one more story to brag about in my riding, Mr. Speaker. It's a truly unique one in all the world. The Dieno family in Davidson, led by their patriarch, Terry, have been business leaders for many decades in the province. You've likely purchased a coffee from them at the rest stop, or possibly a snowmobile or utility trailer, maybe even a hamburger and a milkshake. But while many people know of their businesses on

the east side of Highway 11 in Davidson, very few know about their greatest pride and joy.

You see, Mr. Speaker, our government has such strong affordability measures in place, it's allowed Mr. Dieno to set up a one-of-a-kind aviation factory in town. Yes, Saskatchewan has an aviation factory. It's the only place in the world manufacturing from the ground up 1944 P-51 Mustangs. This single-seat, long-range fighter bomber that was a staple in World War II for the Allies is being built from the ground up in Davidson and sold to hobbyists around the world.

Mr. Dieno himself is a self-described aviation nut. He has dazzled in the skies above Saskatchewan with his daredevil acrobatics and flying prowess. However, Mr. Speaker, this winged business leader had a major setback a year ago. Terry suffered a devastating stroke that took him out of the cockpit that he so dearly loved. If he was here today, Mr. Speaker, he would tell this story specifically about the team of doctors and nurses in Saskatoon. Mr. Dieno says those health care providers are the reason he is alive today. They treated his stroke with haste, delivered the care he needed to be able to survive and now thrive once again in his business.

We have an incredible health care staff in Saskatchewan doing remarkable work. I myself am walking proof of that, Mr. Speaker. After a recent . . . requiring emergency surgery to replace my hip, I too experienced an incredible team of doctors and nurses who cared for me with precision and pride. Mr. Dieno and myself, along with many others in Saskatchewan, have experienced world-class health care providers in our province. And I know that there is yet more work to do in this area, but I do know that we have an incredible foundation of people in our health care system. And now with measures outlined in our Throne Speech, we will be able make a significant impact in the health and well-being of Saskatchewan residents moving forward.

Dakota-Arm River is filled with pioneers and leaders and caring individuals who want the best for their families and their neighbours. And as their government and as their MLA, we'll make sure that their economic activities remain robust and their family values remain protected. My game plan as the MLA for Dakota-Arm River is to represent my family with strong, deep Saskatchewan heritage with excellence, to serve my riding with a deep level of care and listening, and to create opportunities for them to excel in a growing economy, so that together with hard work, faith, and commitment to excellence, we will build a stronger future together.

Mr. Speaker, I support the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley-Biggar and seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers with my full approval, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — Great timing there. The member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote, our Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport and Status of Women — we just have to remember even though we'd like to use their name, we can't use their names in the building, so next time . . . But it being 5 o'clock, this Assembly stands recessed until 7 o'clock. Thank you.

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

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Advanced Education

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill
Minister of Health

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Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
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Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

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Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for
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