

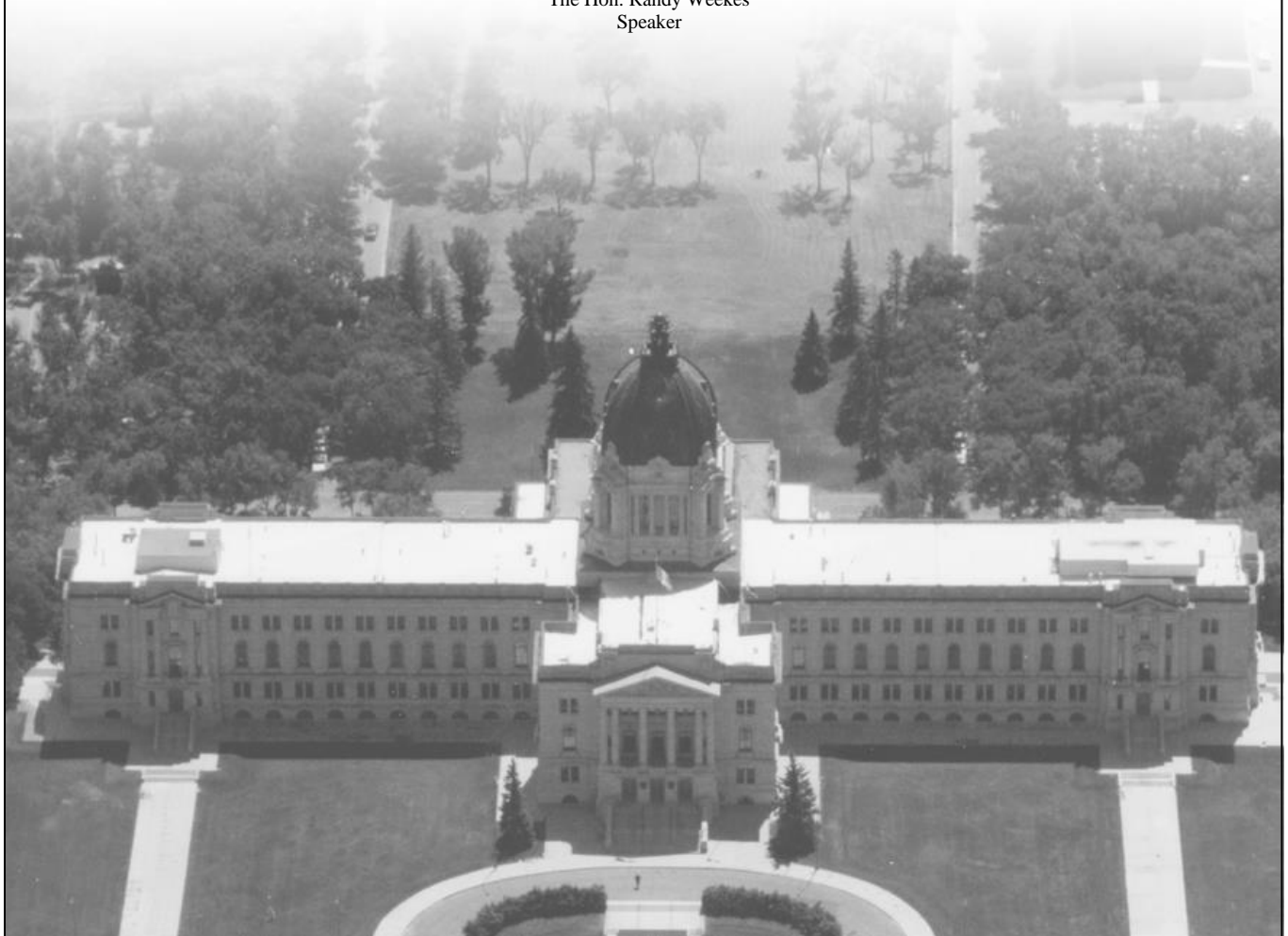
FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

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Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 13

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Principal Clerk — Iris Lang

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Today I table before the Legislative Assembly the Provincial Auditor's 2020 report volume 2, in accordance with the provisions of section 14.1 of *The Provincial Auditor Act*.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of concerned citizens that are calling for enhanced internet services in the tri-community area of La Ronge, Air Ronge, and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band. They go on to describe how inadequate the service currently is. They go on to describe how important high-speed internet access is to families, to a community, to an economy, and in allowing the community to certainly tend to economic opportunities, but also for just basic quality of life — basic safety, Mr. Speaker.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan take steps to ensure that high-speed internet is available and affordable for residents of La Ronge, Air Ronge, and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of La Ronge. I so submit.

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

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

I would like to read the prayer:

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

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

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present a petition for a private bill on behalf of the petitioners of the Saskatoon Community Foundation. The prayer of the petition

requests to amend an Act to incorporate the Saskatoon Community Foundation, to clarify the foundation's purpose and objectives, and update the Act to reflect current administrative practices.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Assembly may be pleased to amend *The Saskatoon Community Foundation Act*, being chapter 1 of the *Statutes of Saskatchewan, 1994* accordingly.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petition is signed by the volunteer board Chair, Curtis Kimpton; executive director, Carm Michalenko; and volunteer governance committee member, Ian Sutherland of the Saskatoon Community Foundation, and I am pleased to present it on their behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Initiative Helps Build a Strong Community

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize an initiative and people that build a very strong community. The new Neighbour 2 Neighbour program in Rosemont and Mount Royal demonstrates what it means to be a neighbour, strengthens community, and is making a difference for so many. This program has organized community people to help out neighbours. The help includes snow shovelling, isolation check-ins, grocery delivery, seasonal decorating, landfill runs, vehicle boosting, and so many other random acts of kindness.

This initiative has been led by the Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association executive member, Dan Riess, has been fully supported by this dedicated community association, and made possible by the legions of volunteers and helpers, as well as local businesses such as Paul's Mini Mart and Indian Masala, Crawford's No Frills, Juliana Pizza, Melbelle Designs, Hanger & Rack, and Scenter Stage Bath and Body.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative and these residents demonstrate the best values of Saskatchewan. And at a very challenging time for so many, they've stepped up in an incredibly caring and meaningful way. It's what community is all about. I couldn't be more proud or thankful as their MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

I'd like to ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in commending Dan Riess, the Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association, and all of the incredible volunteers, helpers, and local businesses that make this program happen. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mental Health First Aid in Schools

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week our

government made a further commitment towards mental health through a \$400,000 investment to provide mental health first aid training to at least one staff member in each Saskatchewan school by the end of 2021. This would make mental health first aid available to students when needed, similar to physical first aid.

Mr. Speaker, mental health first aid is a training program developed by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The in-person training is currently transitioned to be available online by 2021. This move to online will also increase the availability of these resources to remote communities. Mental health first aid can be provided to a person who is developing a mental health concern or who is in mental health crisis.

Mr. Speaker, the training teaches individuals to recognize the symptoms of mental health problems, how to provide initial help, and how to guide a person towards the appropriate professional help. Studies show that mental health first aid training results in improved mental health literacy and decreased stigmatism towards mental health concerns.

Since 2017-18 our government has provided up to \$9,000 in grants to each school division for training to build capacity in their staffs related to mental health and student safety. This new funding significantly builds on that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of this investment in mental health and are excited to see these resources support our school communities. Thank you.

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

Solidarity with Farmers in India

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in solidarity with farmers in India. We're a province rich in agricultural exports, Mr. Speaker. We know the importance of farmers in feeding their people and people beyond their borders. Farmers in India are protesting in Delhi and other cities across India. They're protesting peacefully, based on legislation in the Indian parliament. They're protesting for their livelihood, their land, and their heritage. They're protesting mass civilizations and corporate greed. They are demanding consultations on farm reform bills. And importantly, they are protesting peacefully.

But they have been met with violence by the Indian government — barricades, tear gas, water cannons, beating elderly people. These are not actions befitting peaceful protesters. Despite this senseless violence, the farmers have shown incredible generosity by continuing to provide food and water to police forces.

We stand with the protesting farmers in India and commit to standing up against governments using undemocratic means to stop peaceful protest from happening. I call on all members to join me in strongly urging the Indian government to begin a peaceful dialogue with farmers and listen to their people, not wealthy donors and big corporations. We stand with the farmers. It is their democratic right to protest farm reform bills and we need to stand in solidarity with them as they do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Walsh Acres.

Hockey Harvest Lottery Raises Funds for Player Scholarships

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Difficult times brought on by COVID-19 have been felt in every corner of our province. Saskatchewan is home to five of the best junior hockey clubs in the country, and they've been especially hard hit, not able to get on the ice in front of their dedicated fans, especially those fans here of the Regina Pats in the Queen City.

Now this absence from the rinks has also had an effect on the future education of hockey players on these teams. This year 354 WHL [Western Hockey League] graduate players, including 73 players from right here in Saskatchewan, are attending post-secondary institutions on full WHL scholarships. The University of Saskatchewan leading the way in those post-secondary institutions with 35 WHL graduates, and 18 former WHL players are registered at the University of Regina.

Saskatchewan's five WHL teams have come together to launch the first-ever Hockey Harvest Lottery in support of player scholarship funds. The Hockey Harvest Lottery has been launched not only to give fans in Saskatchewan a chance to take home some cash during a difficult time, but also help enhance the funds in each team's scholarship fund.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to please join me in supporting these five teams so these young men can continue their hockey and educational careers. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Spreading the Light of Hope

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, our government has increased its mental health and addictions support funding to 435 million. But, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day it's the families and communities who stand with their loved ones on the front line to battle the despair and darkness of anxiety and depression disorders, and of addictions.

With that in mind, two friends of mine, Mark Jago and Dr. Robert Steffen, they started a mental health support group which Laura Alexander, a local nurse, wife, and mother in our community attends. There Laura tells of hearing a statement that stuck: we can lose everything else, but if we lose hope we're in big trouble. Laura said of her work family:

We help bring life into the world, ease the suffering of those dying, but COVID-19 has really made the last eight months challenging, both personally and professionally. I found myself struggling, and I recognized the people I love to work with were struggling too.

So to do her part in spreading the light of hope, Laura stepped out on a hospital balcony one winter night to build and hang a light of hope banner. With three strings of Christmas lights, two pairs of wet-duty shoes, 12 zip ties, 10 numb fingers, and her husband David's missing pliers, Laura expressed to her workmates, her town, and to all of us what she has found, Mr. Speaker: hope brings light into darkness.

So thanks to Laura, Robert, Mark, and the countless others who are spreading hope through support groups to those in need across our great province. Viruses are contagious, Mr. Speaker, but so is hope. And hope still beats fear.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

29th Annual Moose Jaw Festival of Trees

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 21st, over 300 individuals across Saskatchewan, and even as far away as the Yukon, tuned in to the 29th annual Moose Jaw Festival of Trees in support of the Moose Jaw Health Foundation. This year the virtual event was held to fundraise for new state-of-the-art urology equipment for the Dr. F.H. Wigmore Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw Festival of Trees has become one of the largest and most popular fundraising events in our city. This annual gala is possible because of the support and generosity from so many in our community, and this year a little creativity and ingenuity on the part of the committee allowed the event to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, each year Christmas trees are beautifully decorated in their own unique themes and donated by various community organizations, and then auctioned off to the highest bidders. Though we had to forego the reception this year, many generous donations came from far and wide to support the hospital foundation.

Mr. Speaker, after all the donations from the auction were tallied, over \$117,000 was raised for the new urology equipment.

Please join me in congratulating the Moose Jaw Festival of Trees organizers, tree designers, and all the volunteers who made this year's gala another huge success. Thank you.

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

Community Rink Affordability Grant

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to announce the reinstatement of the community rink affordability grant to community facilities across Saskatchewan. Around the province, community rinks receive tremendous community support from volunteers at every level and are well used by families, youth, and seniors. Mr. Speaker, we also know that fundraising is an important part of the annual budget for community rinks, and everywhere has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[13:45]

The community rink affordability grant allows for indoor rink enhancements and upgrades, and contributes towards the long-term financial upkeep and facilities themselves. By restarting the community rink affordability grant program, nearly 400 communities and over 600 indoor curling and skating rinks can register for a \$2,500 grant to offset the cost of repairs, health and safety precautions including COVID-19-related expenditures for the facilities, as well as some operating costs.

Registration for the community rink affordability grant will open Monday, December 14th and run until March 12th, 2021. Beginning Monday, community rinks can register for this grant through Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association's website.

Thank you to Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association for partnering with the Government of Saskatchewan to keep skating and curling rinks as an integral part of our communities in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Homes

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we reached a sad and sobering milestone in this province's battle with COVID-19. Nine seniors lost their lives in two different health facilities in a single day. Nine more families are grieving today in Saskatchewan.

So to the Premier: does he agree that it's time to commit emergency funding to get the increasingly deadly situation in Saskatchewan long-term care under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the member opposite for the question. First and foremost I would offer my condolences to those families that have lost a family member over the course of the last few days or whether it's over the course of the entire time that we have been responding to the outbreak of COVID-19 here in Saskatchewan, across the nation, and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this pandemic we have acted on the public health advice that we receive from the very competent chief medical health officer here in the province, Dr. Shahab. That includes advice around a number of measures that were put into place very early with our long-term care facilities and our health care facilities, and those measures included the staffing in those facilities and how the staffing operated or moved or lack of movement between facilities. It included ensuring that we were providing personal protective equipment for those staff members as well as those that may be visiting the facilities, and it included significant measures with respect to visitation, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to work with all of our health care facilities — our long-term care facilities that are operated by the government and those that are operated by affiliates here in the province — to ensure that we are providing the safest environment possible. But, Mr. Speaker, up until recently that has proved to be very effective. Recently we have had a couple of outbreaks, Mr. Speaker, with the higher numbers that we have in community transmission. And we're going to continue to work with those facilities individually or as a group to ensure that we're providing the safest environments possible.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issues in long-term care are not new. This May, I stood with Dianne Morgan from here in Regina. Her parents were residents of Extencicare here in the city. They're now both deceased. But she raised the issues that they experienced of staff shortages, not enough nurses, of crowded conditions, four residents to a room sharing a single bathroom, a bathroom with no door. We called on this government then, as we have so many times, to fix the problems in long-term care to address these unacceptable conditions. They didn't act. This was predictable. This was preventable. But this government chose not to act. So will the Premier acknowledge today that we have a serious long-term problem in long-term care and that it's his job to fix it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I had indicated, we took action. We took action very early. We took the action based on the advice that was provided by Dr. Shahab with respect to our long-term care homes to ensure that the operating environment that we have is as safe as it can possibly be, Mr. Speaker. More historically we have taken action over the course of the last, now, 13 years to ensure that we are investing not only in health care generally but in the long-term care specifically, and more specifically in 50 new long-term care homes across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Throughout the COVID, in our response to COVID-19 this summer leading into this fall, as I said, we have been cohorting staff in our long-term care facilities, worked very closely with our organized labour leaders to ensure that that can occur so that staff are not moving between facilities here in the province. We have ensured that we had the funding in place to provide the proper and appropriate personal protective equipment for all of those involved.

And we've made some significant changes in the access that families have into those care homes, Mr. Speaker, into the . . . ultimately to see their family members. As we move forward, we're going to continue to prioritize those long-term care residents and the staff. They are first in line to receive the vaccine as that becomes available from the federal government. Mr. Speaker, we've taken action very early and we continue to take action as we start to distribute the vaccines here in the province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The situation in long-term care in this province has been unacceptable for years, but now for this government to continue to ignore it. Other governments have taken a different route. Quebec committed \$100 million for home care, \$133 million for added long-term care supports. Ontario committed half a billion dollars to protect seniors in the second wave alone. Even Alberta brought in \$170 million to support seniors. Saskatchewan, under this Premier, zero. Not a single extra dime.

Mr. Speaker, will this Premier commit to take action to bring forth that emergency funding to staff our long-term care homes, to reduce the maximum occupancy to two residents per room? Mr. Speaker, will he take this action? Or is he happy with simply defending the status quo that his party has defended so long despite the deadly consequences?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I recall some conversations I had with the Premier of Quebec, Premier Legault, when Quebec was going through some significant challenges with respect to COVID and the COVID rates that they had in many of their long-term care homes across Quebec. And I think that stands out again as an example of the consequences that occur when COVID-19 does get into areas of our community where the people are more vulnerable, namely into our long-term care homes.

As we look at the consequences that occurred in Quebec, we have put measures in place on Dr. Shahab's advice to take every precaution so that that doesn't occur here in the province. We do have a couple of recent outbreaks here, Mr. Speaker.

But to answer the Leader of the Opposition's question more specifically with respect to resources being provided to people that will be working in long-term care homes is, yes those resources have been committed through the most recent election campaign. We committed resources for hundreds of continuing care assistants to go into long-term care homes, to go into our home care service here in the province. We have expedited the hiring process for those individuals and they're actively being searched out as we speak and the funding has been provided.

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

Military Assistance with COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning, Saskatchewan's chief medical health officer announced that there would be further health service slowdowns of essential services because of the reduction in staff availability due to COVID demand and the number of people — hundreds of health care providers — who are isolating or testing positive, 43 of those at Parkside Extencicare alone.

Army reservists, we've also learned, are being trained to be deployed in Saskatchewan. The situation here in the province is clearly out of control. And this Premier is clearly in over his head. We have the second-highest number of active cases per capita in the entire country. We've got new outbreaks in long-term care and hospitals every day.

Does the Premier recognize he needs some help? And has he been reaching out to the federal government? Will there be military support for health care delivery here in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I guess just to broaden the answer to that, we have invested over the course of the last number of years and invested heavily in ensuring that we do have additional resources in our health care system, whether it be the 900 additional doctors, 4,000 additional nurses, Mr. Speaker, the additional infrastructure that we have across the province. So health care has been a priority for this government since we had the honour to form government in 2007.

With respect to our work with the federal government, through the Council of Federation table and individually as the

Government of Saskatchewan to the federal government, we . . . And I chaired a number of meetings in the lead-up to the Safe Restart funding that was provided, the \$19 billion, of which Saskatchewan received close to \$400 million, I believe, of that funding in personal protection equipment, funding for contact tracing and testing. In addition to those conversations, we have added to that agreement with funding for municipalities and funding for our education sector, which we flowed through to those entities.

Mr. Speaker, we have also reassigned a number of people in the Saskatchewan public service to help us with testing and contact tracing, as well have worked closely with the federal government to use some of the resources in people that they have here in the province — specifically I believe Statistics Canada, people that are employed with Statistics Canada — to help us with some of our contact tracing here as well.

My understanding with respect to the military is there is some conversation with respect to the community of Fond-du-Lac and there has been some conversation at the Council of Federation table with the military working with distributing the vaccine from the suppliers ultimately to the provinces.

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

Regina Schools Transition to Online Learning

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier references the numbers of health care providers. Well hundreds of those health care providers are right now isolating or positive with COVID-19. Hundreds of doctors, nurses, pharmacists spoke out, calling for more action to prevent the situation we're in today. This Premier didn't listen.

Hundreds of them spoke out also against this Premier's worst back-to-school plan in the entire country. We know that yesterday we heard the Regina Public Schools made the difficult choice to close schools and move to exclusively online learning, starting next week. We heard today that Regina Catholic made the same decision. These schools were forced to make this decision in order to keep schools safe because of the failures on COVID-19, to keep students safe, but also because they didn't have enough substitute teachers to be able to keep classes running.

It's unclear how many boards will have to follow suit. But what is clear is that between the worst back-to-school plan in the entire country, between the failure to get community transmission of COVID-19 under control, between all of these failures, now we have students wondering what happens next year. We have parents scrambling for child care, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier admit that this failure to give schools what they needed to stay open and support our families, that this is just one more indictment of his failure on COVID-19 across the board?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as he just did now, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition after question period in the rotunda in a scrum said, and I quote, "If you left this up to school divisions, don't have public health

departments, don't have the resources to deal with this, and they are having to make this up."

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members of the House and the public that school divisions have made these decisions with the full co-operation and collaboration of local public health officers. They have access to Dr. Shahab on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker. And school divisions are not, in his words, making it up.

Here's the Regina Catholic Schools' news release from this morning: "We are prepared for making this change. Our teachers and support staff are ready to provide learning throughout the regular school day."

Mr. Speaker, for the Leader of the Opposition to leave the impression for parents that were tuning in to the news last night, Mr. Speaker, that schools are not accessing the resources of public health in making these decisions or simply making it up, Mr. Speaker . . . The Leader of the Opposition is often wanting to be the police of misinformation. He's well advised to start with himself.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we have a great deal of respect for the role and the struggles that school boards have gone through. In fact in the last two days, Regina school boards have done something the Minister of Education has failed to do, and that's show leadership. Regina Public says they simply don't have the teachers and staff available to keep things running. There simply aren't enough substitute teachers to keep their doors open. And Regina Catholic has made the same move because of increased transmission and "fear and anxiety related to COVID."

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, months ago school divisions requested provincial funding for more substitute teachers, but that Sask Party government didn't provide the support. Will the minister admit that he's made a mistake? And will he ensure that schools have enough resources to safely reopen their doors in the new year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the member for her question. Mr. Speaker, I will remind the House that this budget included the highest funding in terms of operations for schools divisions in the province's history. And that was before this government allocated up to \$150 million for additional resources like adding additional staff, like adding additional teachers, like providing for technology for school divisions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a part of the best back-to-school plan that was presented across the country, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this provides the flexibility for times, during a global pandemic, when school divisions feel it is the best thing to do for their teachers and for their students to move to a different level, providing that flexibility, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, are members opposite suggesting that we mandate

this across the province? Or do they believe that it should be the decision of the local school divisions in using the resources that have been made available by the province to make those decisions?

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I know that that minister is new to his role, but I would suggest instead of spouting those old, tired, discredited lines that he's been handed, he get out in schools and understand the challenges that they are under. Mr. Speaker, that predated this pandemic. But we know, Mr. Speaker, in spite of all of this, that government is sitting on hundreds of millions of dollars in their contingency fund, while school boards are left to do the heavy lifting. The minister says that he has the best plan in the country. But folks on the ground, Mr. Speaker, teachers, the admin staff, and school boards, they know that that simply is not the case.

If the minister's plan was working, we wouldn't have boards being forced to go back into lockdown, leaving parents scrambling to find child care for their children. What is that minister's plan for parents who are trapped without child care now that schools have cancelled in-person classes? And what is his plan to make sure that parents aren't forced out of the workforce when schools shut down again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, there are so many inaccuracies that are coming from the members opposite in terms of the premise of the question. Or frankly what the Leader of the Opposition has to say when it comes time, either in the House or outside the House when he's speaking to the media, reports that parents will read and they'll see, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to be very clear. We have provided additional capacity in terms of funding of up to 100 . . . over \$150 million and, Mr. Speaker, we will be announcing in the coming days the next phase of that funding that will be allocated to school divisions, Mr. Speaker.

I've had an opportunity to talk to several board chairs, with the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], Mr. Speaker. And I think that they certainly appreciate the funding that has been provided by this provincial government in the midst of a global pandemic and the discretion as school divisions to make the decisions that are best for their schools, for their teachers, for their students, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's the way that we are going to continue to provide that support to school divisions during a time that is difficult for everybody, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, so much support that they have to close their doors on Monday due to lack of staff and due to a lack of support from this government and that minister.

The question was this, and I'm going to put it very simply. To

the minister: what is your plan for parents who are finding themselves having to scramble between their need to work and their need to supervise their children at home because that minister has given up and abdicated his duty to these school divisions?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we certainly appreciate the school divisions giving as much time as possible as they could to parents to notify them that for at least two weeks in the case of Regina — one week before the school break that is well known to everybody, that's going to already take place; and one week after the school break — that school is going to be transitioning to distance learning, Mr. Speaker. And so we expect that parents will be making those arrangements, Mr. Speaker, to be able to allow for their children to continue to participate in the school setting, Mr. Speaker.

But in terms of abdicating my responsibility, Mr. Speaker, I would just quote and I would say this: "People in Saskatchewan education support their local board's autonomy and know that decisions about . . . are better when they're locally made." Mr. Speaker, that was a year ago from the new member from Regina University, Mr. Speaker. I know there's not going to be a lot that we agree with in this House, but that's one area that we certainly can agree on.

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

COVID-19 Outbreaks in Correctional Facilities

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, things in our correctional facilities are getting more and more dire. Today's auditor's report is a reminder that dismal medical care and over capacity in our jails is a perennial issue. Over the course of 10 days, the number of staff and inmates at Saskatoon Correctional Centre with COVID-19 went from zero to 142 and climbing. I've just heard of a rise of inmate cases at Prince Albert corrections.

It's safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that COVID-19 is in nearly every jail in Saskatchewan. This doesn't just put inmates and staff at risk. It puts our entire health care system at risk if dozens of new patients get COVID-19 in our jails. How did the minister allow things to go so badly, and how does she have no interest at all in getting this problem under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing, and Public Safety.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, we too are concerned with the outbreak at Saskatoon and obviously our other correctional facilities throughout the province, and of course we are concerned with how COVID entered the facility. Our main focus is managing the spread and keeping our staff and offenders as safe as is possible. However we know that COVID-19 spreads by not following proper public health protocols. And sometimes, quite frankly, we really don't know how the virus moves and how it moves into spaces.

The measures we have in place, including mask wearing,

practising proper hand hygiene, and quarantining new arrivals, have been effective. It's only been since November that we had an outbreak with respect to the offenders. Our focus is working with public health officials to address the outbreak and ensure that the measures we have in place are being followed at our other institutions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's not just this side of the House that has serious questions about the capabilities of that minister. Now the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is calling on the minister to resign. I quote: "Minister Tell has fumbled the ball in her role as minister responsible to Saskatchewan's correctional facilities. People are now facing a death sentence."

Loved ones of inmates have picketed. Lawyers have called for action. Staff at Legal Aid are sounding the alarm. It's clear that this minister just isn't up to the job, and her failure is putting our entire health care system at risk. What does the minister have to say for those facing a death sentence due to her inaction?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections and Policing and Public Safety.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I repeat that we are deeply concerned with the outbreak at Saskatoon Correctional Centre and our other correctional facilities. Since the start of the pandemic, our focus has been on keeping the virus out of our correctional facilities and, quite frankly, the staff, ministry officials have been on the ground implementing procedures and processes that did keep the virus out of our facilities right across the province.

It's only when we have community spread and the increase in numbers, that is when the virus ended up in our correctional facilities. We have seen other provinces impacted by COVID-19 outbreaks within their correctional systems and have been focused on deploying the best efforts here in Saskatchewan. That is why we took strict measures very early on, Mr. Speaker, in consultation with public health officials and throughout the pandemic to protect both staff and offenders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, the fact that the government doesn't know how the virus got into our jails is one thing. But the Minister of Corrections and Policing doubled down last week and admitted not only that she doesn't know how but that she doesn't care to find out. Those were the minister's own words last week.

In her report today, the auditor points to ineffective primary medical care in corrections centres as a contributing factor to transmission, yet the minister in charge is seemingly clueless. How on earth is that acceptable, Mr. Speaker? Does this minister really think she's qualified to be a minister?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing, and Public Safety.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I understand and appreciate that corrections officers and offenders are extremely anxious. We know our facilities are crowded. Enhanced cleaning and mandatory masking are in place and have been for some time. Two on-site facilities will soon be operational which should alleviate some of the crowding issues. A remand centre is being designed and will be built in the very near future. Nursing staff are on site at our facilities, and enhanced cleaning and masking are in place. If more extensive medical care is required, we will ensure that the care is provided, no different than people living in our community accessing our health care system.

We had no COVID outbreaks at first until . . . the last time here in November. Staff and officials were all hands on deck, and I give them extraordinary credit for the work that they did to keep COVID out of our facilities. However the numbers increase in the community and, despite our best efforts, we see infections. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 5 — *The Business Corporations Act, 2020*

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 5, *The Business Corporations Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 5 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 6 — *The Business Corporations Consequential Amendments Act, 2020/Loi de 2020 corrélative de la loi intitulée The Business Corporations Act, 2020*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I move that Bill No. 6, *The Business Corporations Consequential Amendments Act, 2020*, a bilingual bill, be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 6 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

**Bill No. 7 — *The Marriage Act, 2020*
*Loi de 2020 sur le mariage***

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 7, *The Marriage Act, 2020*, a bilingual bill, be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 7 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 8 — *The Marriage Consequential Amendment Act, 2020*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 8, *The Marriage Consequential Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 8 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 9 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Appeal Provisions) Amendment Act, 2020*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 9, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Appeal Provisions) Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 9 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 10 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Appeal Provisions) Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2)/Loi corrective (dispositions d'appel) de 2020 (n° 2)*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 10, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Appeal Provisions) Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2)*, a bilingual bill, be now introduced and read a first time.

[14:15]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 10 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 11 — *The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2020 (No. 2)*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 11, *The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a

first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

**Bill No. 12 — *The Wanuskewin Heritage Park
Amendment Act, 2020***

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

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 12, *The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Amendment Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 12 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Parks.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

**Bill No. 13 — *The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust
Fund Amendment and Repeal Act, 2020***

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Parks.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 13, *The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment and Repeal Act, 2020* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 13 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Parks.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask leave to move a motion regarding the number of members on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move a motion regarding the number of members on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

Committee Membership

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

That notwithstanding rules 121 and 142(1), the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall consist of eight members including two opposition members for the duration of the 29th legislature.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved:

That notwithstanding rules 121 and 142(1), the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts shall consist of eight members including two opposition members for the duration of the 29th legislature.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Why is the Opposition House Leader on her feet?

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to move a motion regarding membership to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has requested leave to move a motion regarding membership to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That Aleana Young, member for Regina University, be added to the membership of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has moved:

That Aleana Young, the member for Regina University, be added to the membership of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to move a motion regarding membership to the Standing Committee on Privileges.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move a motion regarding membership to the Standing Committee on Privileges.

Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

That Colleen Young, member for Lloydminster, be added to the membership of the Standing Committee on Privileges.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved:

That Colleen Young, member for Lloydminster, be added to the membership of the Standing Committee on Privileges.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's a privilege to stand in this House. It is such a different feeling though, standing in this House this time as opposed to the twenty other speeches from the throne that I've responded to. No mask, of course. No Plexiglas. No seatmate. We're spread apart, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's all part of the pandemic and it's what we all have to go through.

There's only one thing of the way this House is set up that I always kind of hoped it would have happened back in the old format, is having government members on the opposition side. And we came very, very close a couple of elections. But this is the first time that we've actually managed members from the government party on the opposition side, even though we came very close the last couple of elections. And if it wasn't for a couple of eleventh-hour mail-in ballots, we might have even had more on that side, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to first of all congratulate you on being elected to that Chair. Of course we were both elected in 1999. That's a long time ago and you've seen a lot of goings on in this House, and I think you're very well equipped to take on that role. So congratulations to you as well as the member from Saskatchewan Rivers taking on that role. She'll do great in that role.

I also want to quickly thank the former Speaker, the member from Coronation Park, and the work that he did not only in the Speaker's Chair but even more importantly for our party in widening the tent of our party.

You know, I had the opportunity . . . Even though Indian Head was a targeted seat, I had the opportunity to get away a little bit from Indian Head-Milestone and do some door knocking in Coronation Park. And I would say that there's a lot of constituencies, when you go the door, you bring up the Premier or you bring up the party, and that sells that person as far as which way they're going to vote.

But I would say that there is one constituency that I've knocked in — and I've knocked in a few; even though I was in a targeted constituency, I was able to get away and knock in, for example, Coronation Park — and the member of our party, I think, had as much name recognition as the Premier and as the party. He drew as many votes because of the work that he did in the many minority communities, and I just think he really needs to be commended for that. Whether he's in the Speaker's Chair or in

his seat as the MLA for Coronation Park, he has done a great job, so I want to thank him for that.

I want to also congratulate all the new members. You know, for you new members, this is not new to you. Your first time in this House, you've been wearing a mask and the seats are set up this way and this is not new to you. This is the way it always has been. For us it's a little bit different. It takes a little getting used to. But congratulations to all the new members. I hope your time in here is, you know, is enjoyable and you serve your constituents well. I'm sure you will.

I want to congratulate all the returning members, of course. Any time you put your name on a ballot, you do put yourself up for scrutiny, and that's not always the easiest thing. And you know, I've been fortunate enough to be successful in six elections. But I just think, each election . . . I remember being interviewed early on and talking to the local newspaper and feeling nervous as to what the outcome would be. And you know, some people, a lot of people can say, oh you shouldn't have any problem. That isn't what I feel. That's not how I feel.

And I think it's a little evident when you look at most recently in some of the municipal elections, you know, the change in mayor's seat here in Regina, that came as a bit of a surprise. You know, Mayor Fougere I think has served the city well. But when your time is up and the voters have decided to go a different direction, you are quite often the one with your name on the ballot and feel very vulnerable. And that happened in a number of communities regarding the municipal election.

And it happened twice on our side; I know it happened a few times on that side. But you know, we're really going to miss Tina Beaudry-Mellor and Eric Olauson from our benches. You know, when you get elected and serve a term, for four years with members, you really become a family. You really do become connected. And for the members that are here for the first time, you know, this is really a different time because you don't have a seatmate. You would always be paired with a person. Whether you liked them or not, you were always paired with a person. And you really got to know that seatmate. I mean, I was with the member from Canora for a quite a few years and, whether you liked them or not, you were seatmates. You spent a lot of time together. And you really do become a family here.

And so number one, we're not as close together, which is unfortunate. We don't get to go . . . I mean, before the chairs were set up the way they were, there was this bar that went around and you would talk to somebody against the back wall. I think there's as many good constituency solutions determined behind the bar when you were talking with ministers or members. And unfortunately that isn't the case because the bar is gone, which would really be upsetting to the former member from Arm River when he was sitting in the Speaker's chair one time and people were bantering back and forth, and the Speaker said take it out behind the bar. But he was from Arm River and that's how they solved a few . . . is taking it out behind the bar. But this was a different way of settling it, and so we're going to miss that. And this will all change. This will all change and we'll get back to a more normal . . . it may be a different normal, but more of a normal.

But you know, the one thing that I think, and again this is just

knowledge for the new members and for any of the members that have been here for a while, the thing that I am going to be missing the most about this new set-up and the new COVID rules is Thursday afternoon when the member from Lloydminster would bring so much food into that back lounge. I can put up with the Plexiglas and I can put up with the separation, but I cannot put up with missing your Thursday morning/early afternoon lunches where we'd all drive home and have a hard time staying awake because we all ate too much there. So anyway, so it is a different time.

I am certainly thrilled to be back. I don't know if, you know, ever getting to come back to this place ever gets old. I hope it doesn't. It sure hasn't for me. Even though, you know, people will say, oh you shouldn't have any problem.

I had a candidate that ran against me, that ran a very strong campaign. He was very active before the writ was dropped and very active during the writ, Mr. Speaker. And I just remember, for the most part he stayed pretty much to the party lines, but he did go after me a couple times. And I found it interesting because what we're hearing on the doorsteps is, one of his attack points is, well when's the last time the member has been on your doorstep?

[14:30]

And I don't door knock in between elections. I door knock during the election. And I go to a ton of fowl suppers when there are fowl suppers and I go to a pile of sports days and parades. And that's how you engage with the constituents for the most part in Indian Head-Milestone. And he was kind of, you know, talking about well when is the last time a Sask Party member's been on your doorstep. And I really had to think. You know, it was '03 that I ran against Lorne Scott, and the NDP [New Democratic Party] really haven't put a candidate in that constituency for the last — what would that be? — 17 years. And he's going around saying when is the last time the Sask Party's been on your doorstep. The question is, when is the last time the NDP have been in the constituency, Mr. Speaker?

The other thing that was a bit of an attack point is he also was talking quite a bit about the length of time that I've been here. And I have been here for probably quite a while, as long as you, Mr. Speaker. And look at you, you're right up there on the dais, Mr. Speaker. But he was saying that 21 years is enough. It's time for a change. And every time that I heard that and saw it on a brochure, all I could think of was the member from Athabasca because if I've been here for 21, he's been here for 27 or 28 years, Mr. Speaker. And so if maybe it was I'm a little past my best-before date, what does that make the member from Athabasca? Way past his best-before date. But anyway that's enough about the election.

I do want to thank a number of people that made my entering back into this place a reality because again anybody that puts a name on a ballot realizes that you do not come into this House alone. You come into this House with a lot of people behind you. And it's a really humbling experience I found, each and every time. Whether it was the first time to this time, you just are quite amazed at how people stand behind you and the work that they'll put in and the effort they'll put in so that you can kind of reach your dream and your goal of representing that constituency. And

I'm very, very lucky to have a strong team. A lot of them have been with me for a number of elections.

I had a brand new campaign manager this time. Alicia Bay was my campaign manager from Pilot Butte. She was saying that it was nice to get out of the minister's office for a month or so. That's for the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy. But she was a great campaign manager, and I felt sorry for her. She's run a number of campaigns and she had an idea of the way the campaign would run, and I think her ideas were extremely solid. Her problem was that she kind of had an old dog for a candidate that didn't want to learn new tricks.

And so you know, the voter ID [identification], we had a pretty good idea but I just didn't do it quite the way that I think she had wanted me to. And it took us a little while to find our common ground, but we did it. She also had mentioned I should tweet quite often, and that was new to me. And I tried to tweet quite often, whether it was effective or not. But I want to thank Alicia for, you know, putting up with me but also broadening my idea of what it takes to get elected. And she did a great job.

A number of other people I need to thank is my business manager, who has been with me for five elections. Dwaine Entner does a great job as a business manager. And so it's always nice when you're going into a campaign and, you know, you've got to kind of fill these different roles, when some people return year after year it just kind of takes the pressure off because you know it was done very well in the past. And it was done very well this time again.

I had so many people that put up signs. That is one thing I will say is the opposition, the member that ran against me, was quite aggressive with his sign locations. He had a lot of signs out. And you know, that was all nice and dandy but what it made me do is . . . Normally we ordered an X amount of signs for every election. We always have. But when so many of our supporters saw orange signs on their neighbours' lawns, they wanted signs. We went through twice as many signs, thanks to the opposition, which is really kind of weird that you would say that, but it certainly increased our sign location. And all the people that put up those signs, whether it was from Jim Williams to Jeff Brown in Milestone, to Bruce Olson, and Duane Theaker. So many others that put up signs, and too many to mention, but I want to thank them all.

And finally I just want to thank my office manager, who is also my constituency assistant. Nicole Entner-McCullough just does an absolutely great job in my office but also does a great job running the campaign. Not running the campaign but keeping consistency in the campaign, and just does a great job. I can't say enough about Nicole. Not only is she an employer but she's a very good friend, and such a link within the constituency with her daughters growing up there and them running a business by McLean, Blair's ag services. Just a great person to be associated with and to help me with my campaign.

Finally — other people have mentioned it; I'm going to be very quick — I want to also thank my family. Cindy, who is a registered nurse, retired in June, Mr. Speaker, and then went back to work in August at the private surgery centre, Mr. Speaker. And I had quite a bit of free time right through the summer, and she had retired and she had quite a bit of free time. So then we

realized that wasn't going to work very good, so she went back to work, Mr. Speaker, just in case I wasn't successful during the election.

But I was, and so I want to thank her for the support, and our two sons who, you know, really are not very politically engaged, I guess you would say. I don't know if they would find it too extreme . . .

[The Assembly recessed from 14:35 until 16:14 due to a power outage.]

The Speaker: — We're going to resume debate and the special order. I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Just when you thought you'd seen everything in 2020, the lights go out. Hard to believe. It just fits. It seems to just fit. I think I was, in fact I know I was just quickly had talked about Cindy retiring and then getting back to work, and then I was talking about the boys and the lights went out. And that's not uncommon in our life with those two guys.

[16:15]

But Craig is in British Columbia and has been riding quite a bit and dealing with his sponsors, and Mark has been in a few different places, but it's really crimped their style. He has been over to Europe and he's been to Canada a couple times, but that 14-day quarantine just doesn't work in his life, so I'm not sure whether we'll ever see him again. It might be awhile.

So that's enough of the preamble to the Speech from the Throne. I do want to touch very quickly on the Speech from the Throne. It will be very quickly, because I'm going to just condense my time. There's others that need to speak and we have just lost probably an hour and a half.

Speech from the Throne — very, very positive. I can certainly understand why the opposition is not going to be voting for the motion. It does make sense, because when you look at the Speech from the Throne, it really is kind of a picture of where our province is at right now. It talks about COVID. It talks about our election promises. It talks about, you know, kind of the attitude and the issues around mental health. It talks about all of that, which is exactly where our province is at, is where the electorate is at. But it certainly isn't where the NDP is at, and that I think results in the election results that we have seen.

I'm not going to get into the whole issue around 10 per cent SaskPower and the ambulance fee deductions and the home improvement. Other members have talked about that and talked about it very well. I thought what I would do is just get right to the very end of my speech and get kind of a little political on the election.

You know, I think if a person was to come in here and watch question period today and had watched it a number of months ago, prior to the October 26th election, 2020, if you watched the Leader of the Opposition, you would swear absolutely nothing has changed from the last time he stood in this House to when he stood in the House and the questions that he asked today. It was exactly the same. And you'd swear nothing had happened from the last time he was in the House asking questions to what we

saw last week and this week.

But, Mr. Speaker, a lot has changed. We've gone through a provincial election. And it just makes me think back, and I'm going to get a little . . . talk about a number of elections before. The first time I sat in this House as a new member on the opposition side, Roy Romanow was the premier. He had a pretty strong group around him. Dwain Lingenfelter was the deputy premier. Janice MacKinnon was the Finance minister. Clay Serby, I think, was the Health minister. There was Pat Atkinson. There was John Nilson. There was an awful lot of strong NDP.

And we came into the House. There was three Liberals at the time and the NDP had a minority. Well they could coax the Liberals over to their side, the three Liberals. One became the Speaker. That was before we elected a Speaker. That's when the government party appointed the Speaker. So Ron Osika, one of the Liberals, became Speaker. And the other two Liberals, Jim Melenchuk and Jack Hillson, sat on their side so that they had a majority.

It's interesting to note, those were the last three Liberals ever elected in this province, you know. And you know, although it held them through a government through those four years and a little bit longer, you know, it reminded me of a . . . I never got into a lot of fights when I played hockey but every so often I did. And they always say, the worst thing that a hockey fighter can ever hear is, let him go. And you don't ever want to hear that when you get into a fight. You want the referees to break it up because you're probably going to take one on the chin.

Well I think the last thing the NDP ever want to hear is, two-party race. And that's what they have got themselves into is a two-party race. And if there's a two-party race in this province, I'd take our chances over their chances any day of the week, Mr. Speaker. And it was completely of their own making. It was completely of their own making.

But I do want to talk about, I remember coming into the House and how humble Roy Romanow was. He was the premier of our province. He'd just won a minority but soon-to-be majority with the Liberals, and he was so humble. And I compare that to the Leader of the Opposition today, who is the leader of the NDP party, that is a long ways away from a majority government. And Roy Romanow was far more humble than what we're seeing out of that leader today.

Mr. Speaker, and then I fast forward to 2003. And I remember in '99 our leader at the time, Elwin Hermanson, said, well we didn't win the prize but we sure surprised the winner. And that was so very, very true. And in '03 we were expected to be the government. The Sask Party was expected to be the government and we weren't. And I remember coming into the House after that '03 election and it was pretty much all rural, but we had a bit of a base set up in Saskatoon with two members from Saskatoon.

And we were humbled. We thought we were going to be the government in 2003. And I remember coming in here and the NDP won under Lorne Calvert, and you know, they were pretty happy and we were downtrodden. And for any of us — and, Mr. Speaker, you were there — for the next year or two we had some pretty harsh caucus meetings trying to hold our party together because we should have been government and we weren't.

We weren't nearly as confident as the baker's dozen over there, of the 13 that just kind of got their lunch handed to them, and they come in here like absolutely nothing has changed. Wouldn't you think you'd be a little retrospective and look at what just happened four weeks ago? But there's absolutely none of that.

Mr. Speaker, let's fast forward then from '03 where, you know, we had to make a change. We had a new leader, Premier Brad Wall, and we changed our policies a little bit. We changed our outlook because, you know, losing by two seats gets really old. And if we kept doing the same things like we've always done, we're probably going to lose by two seats again. And things changed for our party, and in 2007 we became government.

And I remember coming in here in 2007 and now the NDP is sitting on that side. And people like the member from Athabasca — I almost said his name — but people like Pat Atkinson and Judy Junor, that's what was left of that party. They couldn't believe they lost. They thought they were the natural governing party of this province. And I honestly believe today in 2020, after only getting 13 seats, they cannot believe they lost. Because they swear they're speaking for the majority, and they're speaking for a minority. And I hope they keep speaking strongly for that minority because there still remain 13 seats on that side. So it really has been an evolution. I'm surprised that the message is still the same. They haven't learned anything.

And just in closing, because I'm going to close here right away, is that when I look at the members opposite I would just say . . . and it's the saying that if you continue to do what you've always done, you're going to get the results that you got on October 26th, Mr. Speaker.

So I really do pray they continue to do what they've always done. And after hearing a number of the maiden speeches on the opposite side, I think they're even going further left which is perfectly fine, Mr. Speaker, which you know, will I think keep them on that side for a very long time which is, quite frankly, where the province wants to be, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley and will not be supporting the amendment put forward by the opposition.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote.

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. But first congratulations to you and to Madam Deputy Speaker on your election to your new roles. From what I know about both of you, you will perform your duties well and with respect and fairness.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to offer congratulations to the rest of the new and returning MLAs on both sides of the House for their hard work and success in this fall's election. And congratulations to our mayor, Greg Dionne, up in Prince Albert on being elected for his third term as mayor and also to our newly elected and re-elected city councillors.

Mr. Speaker, it's been very surreal being in this House, here in this beautiful historic building.

[Applause]

Ms. A. Ross: — Sorry. I am truly honoured and humbled to be here representing the people of Prince Albert Northcote in this, the twenty-ninth sitting of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

The election in Prince Albert Northcote was close and hard fought as always, and I would like to say thank you to our former member, Nicole Rancourt, for her service to her constituency and for all of the other candidates who were willing to let their names stand and worked hard for this election. All the candidates worked very hard and ran very respectful campaigns.

Mr. Speaker, as the elected member for Prince Albert Northcote, I will represent all of the people of our constituency, not just those who voted for me. I was elected by the citizens of Prince Albert Northcote to listen, to answer their questions, to address their concerns and work with them to make our community a safe and thriving place to live and raise our families.

Mr. Speaker, as members before me have so clearly stated, a campaign is not won by just one person. A campaign is the hard work and dedication of many. This was so true in my case, especially being that first-time candidate. I had a very strong and skilled core team who came together for my nomination and stayed together for the election.

My son Rob was the first and founding member of this team. Rob was convinced that this was my time to enter the political field. I must admit, though, we did have the occasional mother-son disagreement, but Rob remains steadfast in his support and his conviction that not only we could but we would win this election. Thank you, Rob, for your dedication and your unshakeable belief in me.

Evert was a rock on our team and a whirlwind. I don't know how else to describe him. I have never worked with anyone who was so committed and dedicated, and someone who could accomplish so much in such a short period of time. Evert, I can't thank you enough. And Brad, thank you for allowing me to consume so much of his time. I am sure you were so happy this election was over.

Pat is my friend and my business manager, door knocker, caller, and anything else that I needed her to be. Thank you, Pat. I know you had your challenges. Pat is a nurse like me but she's highly organized and very detail-oriented, both great qualities to have as a nurse and as a business manager. But at times these qualities created some challenges for her. You'd often hear her saying, I just have to get those boys on track, when she was referring to the rest of our team. Pat, you did an amazing job, especially for a first-time business manager.

I have known Troy, our campaign manager, for a number of years. He has a wealth of knowledge and experience in both the campaign and the political world. He provided us with strategy, a timeline, data, and creativity. He worked hard to keep us on track to meet these timelines. His biggest chore was probably helping me make that transition from just working really hard on a campaign to actually becoming a candidate. Oh, and I don't want to forget he also provided the team with Thor, who was our mascot, much to my son-in-law's, Andrew's, delight. Andrew

became known as the official campaign dog walker and he loved it.

Ron and Larry were our fundraising duo. The dedication of these two most senior members of our team was just stellar. They were frequently referred to as my saviours by Pat, our business manager. We would never have been able to run this campaign without all of the hard work that they did for us.

We had two Pats actually on our campaign. Patt with two t's, as we called her, is a graphic designer by trade, and she did a great job developing print material, postings, and did advertising for my nomination, and then she did for the campaign as well. But she also kept our office organized and kept it sanitized to comply with the COVID-19 guidelines.

We had Ben — amazing man. You'd get there in the morning and he'd be coming in and he'd be sitting and he'd already had his coffee. He just wanted to see what was going on. But he was the head of our sign guys, and when we'd come in he'd already been out and checked out all the signs. But he and his crew of Evert, Huseyin, Andrew, James, Mike, Bryce, and Jean spent endless hours constructing, repairing, replacing, and then removing, dismantling, and storing all the signs when it was all over. Thank you so much to these guys.

Nancy was, as Troy called her, our calling machine. She was great on the phones. And she helped Pat keep the office organized as well. There were days if I didn't have a door knocker she'd even come out and knock a few doors with me for a while. And thank you to the rest of the callers as well: Debbie T., Yvonne, Deb, Les, Ursula, Shelly, Giselle, and Jolene. Thank you so much.

Then we had our dedicated door knockers. And I'm sure some of them had to replace their shoes at the end of all of this. To Cole, Carter, Abby, Pat, Curtis, Chantal, Andrew, Tim, Saxon, JoAnne, Deanna, Tannis, Todd, Brent, the scat team, and all the MLAs and party supporters who came out to help us, thank you so much.

[16:30]

And I really want to give a special thank you to Tina Beaudry-Mellor and Eric Olauson. They aren't with us this time but were so generous to this newcomer with their time, support, and encouragement.

The party office crew was amazing. Pat, Dylan, and Tye, and the support staff there, I know we occupied a lot of your time and we gave you some challenges but thank you for not giving up on us.

I also want to extend a thank you to our Hon. Minister of Highways and his assistant Joy. Their encouragement, support, and advice has been invaluable. Joy has kept me posted along the ways as to which events I should be going to, just phoning me up and giving me some encouragement. I look forward to working with them along with our mayor and city council and the many organizations in Prince Albert as we continue to make our city a great place to live and raise our families in.

My family, Mr. Speaker, is really the highlight of my life. I have three sons actually. I have Rob, but I have Jason and Cody as well. And now I have their families — Andrew, Brandy, Fawn,

Gus, and Tana. Rob and Andrew, as you heard, were with me throughout this campaign and on election day. The plan was for my Alberta boys, as I call them, and their families to come out for the last week of my campaign, but COVID-19 had other plans and they weren't able to be with me for that. But thanks to today's technology they were able to join into our Zoom call, watch the election results come in, and of course cheer loudly from the comfort of their own living rooms. And I know my little grandson Gus, he got to stay up past his bedtime that night and was pretty happy about that.

I am very blessed to still have both of my parents in my life, living independently at their house in Shellbrook. I really thank my mom and dad for the values they instilled in my brother and I. They taught us to be honest and to work hard; to do our best regardless of the job that we had to do; to treat people with respect, with fairness, and with compassion; to be open to the opinion of others; to respect our seniors because we have benefited from their hardships and sacrifices; to always be grateful for what we have and to remember there are also those always less fortunate. I am very grateful that I've had parents who loved us enough to teach us these incredible lessons.

So, Mr. Speaker, a little about Northcote. Northcote has a very busy commercial and shopping area, attracting not only people from the city but also from surrounding areas and the North. Central Avenue boasts many picturesque, small, locally-owned businesses and shops, and it's the perfect place to pick up that unique made-in-Saskatchewan gift item.

Prince Albert also has four post-secondary centres, all which I am proud to say are in the Northcote area. The University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatchewan institute of Indian technology for Indigenous students, and the Gabriel Dumont Institute campuses offer programs in adult and basic education, degree and diploma programs. These campuses help students to obtain education while all the time being at home or closer to home.

Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert has a number of beautiful historical sites and a historical museum that tells the story of our settlement. We have two beautiful natural parks also within the boundaries of Prince Albert Northcote. A section of the award-winning Rotary Trail runs along the riverbank. It is a beautiful place to walk, cycle, or sit, enjoy the scenery, and meet the neighbours. Walking or biking the trails is one of my favourite ways to unwind after a long day. The Little Red River Park is a beautiful forest area just minutes out of Prince Albert. Here families and friends and neighbours can enjoy nature at its best while watching their children play, have a picnic, or go for a walk.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to acknowledge that Prince Albert Northcote lies in Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Dakota and Métis people. The shores of the North Saskatchewan River that run through our Northcote constituency were once known as the meeting place to our Indigenous people long before the settlement of Prince Albert was ever established. This summer the city of Prince Albert and its partners unveiled an interpretive walk along the trail. This signage tells the story and the history of the Indigenous routes of this area.

Mr. Speaker, Northcote is a very diverse community. We're diverse in culture, in age, and in socio-economic status. The city

of Prince Albert has one of the highest percentages of Indigenous and Métis people in our country, and many of those people live in our community in Northcote.

There are also people who have strong Ukrainian, German, and Francophone roots. We have new Canadians from Russia, the Ukraine, India, the Philippines, South America, and many others who don't identify with any of these main groups. The annual multicultural society's Tapestrama event, which is great to go and see, it showcases the cultural mosaic our city has become.

Mr. Speaker, Northcote is home to many seniors, to children and youth, the wealthy and the marginalized, the homeless, and people with mental health and addictions challenges. Our constituency is also an area that has seen an increase in crime rates over the past few years.

Our government recognizes and has recognizes the challenges in Northcote, Mr. Speaker, and has been responsive. In 2011 a project was funded to support child and youth mental health. The building of the Family Treatment Centre in 2013 provides mothers with addictions the opportunity for them and their children to live in a safe environment while mom is recovering. Removing the barrier of worrying about their children helps moms seek treatment. Here moms are also given training and support to learn new life skills and child care skills to support them when they go back to their home communities.

Our government responded to the opioid crisis in 2017 to try and save the lives of our citizens with these addictions by funding take-home naloxone kits and providing funding for harm-reduction supplies. The following year 15 new mental health beds were allocated to Prince Albert and funding was provided to find enhanced providers for child and youth mental health services. These are just a few of the examples of the support our government has been providing to support and keep the vulnerable population of our community well and safe.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number, a large number of not-for-profit agencies who are very dedicated to helping the disadvantaged in our community. Our election team had the opportunity to work with H.O.P., short for House of the Potter. H.O.P. focuses on working with at-risk children who come from disadvantaged families within our community. They are such a great group of kids. As a result of this support, these youngsters have been given hope — hope for their future.

I had the honour of becoming, you know, meeting some of them and getting acquainted quite well with them. You know, these kids talked to me about finishing high school and what their aspirations were. Some had already decided that they were going to go on and further their education and knew what they would be enrolling in. I was very happy to hear that a couple of them even wanted to be nurses, so I assured them it was a good career choice. Seeing and hearing the hope these kids have been given was an inspiring moment for me.

Mr. Speaker, Northcote has the only hospital in Prince Albert. The Victoria union hospital serves Prince Albert, the surrounding areas, and the North. Our hospital is aging and in need of updates. The population growth and social concerns and increase in mental health challenges and addictions has created pressures on the Victoria Hospital in all departments.

I had the privilege yesterday of standing here and sharing the announcement for the expansion of the new neonatal intensive care unit that will provide space so medically fragile babies can stay closer to home. This was an announcement very welcomed by families and staff. Currently our only option has been to send babies to Saskatoon, or even out of province, so they can receive the care they need. The worry of sending babies to another hospital was so stressful for these parents because they often had at least one or two more children at home and they needed to find care for them.

Mr. Speaker, in March of 2019 our government announced a commitment to the renewal and expansion of the Victoria Hospital. This expansion will not only increase capacity but will provide enhanced services to the people of Prince Albert and across northern Saskatchewan. The 12 First Nations of the Prince Albert Grand Council have been actively involved in this project, providing the insight to make this facility culturally inviting and a healing centre for all. \$15 million was allotted for this project this year to support planning, design, and procurement activities for the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have been elected as part of the government that has a mandate, a strong mandate, to build a strong Saskatchewan — a strong Saskatchewan for families, seniors, and young people.

Our government's top priorities this season will be to continue to work on the spread of COVID-19. I want to thank all of those providing essential services in the front lines, going to work, putting themselves at risk at times, to make sure the needs of the citizens of Saskatchewan are being met. And I would like to take just a moment to express my condolences to all of those people who have lost loved ones during this difficult time. Our government continues to follow the advice of Dr. Shahab and the public health directives, and we continue to do what is necessary for the safety of our citizens and to protect the livelihood of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made investments in our people and our province during these times, investments to make sure our front-line workers are safe, have appropriate PE [protective equipment], and investments to make sure our children can study safely. Investments have been made to enhance distance learning capacity and upgrade technology for students. Investments have also been made to support business and workers who have been impacted by the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech included commitments and promises that were made on the campaign trail that will improve the quality of life for people here in Saskatchewan. One of those commitments included changes to the insulin pump program. Diabetes is a very serious and can be a debilitating and life-threatening disease for patients and cause hardships for their families. My family has experienced this first-hand. After years of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, emotional turmoil, and financial stress, my husband lost his battle with this disease. New technology has made great improvements in the treatment of diabetes, and I am very proud of our government's plan to expand the insulin pump program. I personally know of two constituents who will benefit from this enhanced program.

Children under the age of 12 who have been diagnosed with

autism spectrum disorder will receive funding to cover the cost of therapeutic supports. This will be a welcome relief for families who have children with this diagnosis. I spoke to a family on the doorstep prior to this announcement who were very concerned about how they were going to be able to manage with these costs for their two children that they have with autism. This announcement will provide much needed relief for families such as this.

[16:45]

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that our government created a ministry to support our seniors in our province. Our government has promised an increase to the senior income benefit plan for seniors who qualify, and they will see their support increase to \$360 a month over the next three years from the \$270 a month it was currently at. In 2007, Mr. Speaker, the seniors' benefit was \$90 a month, and it had been at this level for 16 years. Since the announcement, I have received several phone calls from seniors in and outside my constituency seeking information on this program.

Mr. Speaker, in 2008 when I had the opportunity to return to Saskatchewan, I came back here to work in health care. I was shocked at what I saw. It was like I took a step back in time. The facility I was working in was old. It was rundown. The front lawn was so full of high grass and weeds that you could hardly walk through it. I heard numerous complaints from the public about the lack of upkeep and pride in our facility.

Wander guards, which for those of you who don't know, they help keep our long-term care clients with dementia safe because they alarm when they try to go out a door. Well they were either not working in most of our facilities or obsolete, and no one had taken the initiative to replace these wander guards. The long-term care wait-list just kept growing. And just in the area I worked in at that time, our long-term care wait-list was in excess of 100.

Mr. Speaker, our government has built 14 new long-term care facilities since coming into power, and a 15th is currently under way. Prince Albert, I am happy to say, was the recipient of one of these new long-term care facilities. More than 700 front-line workers have been hired since 2009, and our government has committed to hiring 300 more.

Our government has committed to increase supports for mental health and addictions, and has appointed a minister responsible for this portfolio. The Minister for Seniors and Rural and Remote Health has been given this responsibility. This year our government will invest a record \$435 million in mental health services. This is 7.5 per cent of the entire health care budget. Mr. Speaker, this government is implementing a program to train mental health first aid responders for each of our 744 schools in our province. This initiative will be introduced to align with the province's Pillars for Life suicide prevention plan, and provide much needed support to the students in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, our government's campaign promise to reduce electricity charges by 10 per cent to all Saskatchewan residents is now in place. Savings from this tax credit can be invested back into our economy. This will make a life in Saskatchewan, as well, much more affordable for all. The temporary reduction for small-business tax will be retroactive from October 1st of this

year and run until July of 2023, and will put \$189 million back into the Saskatchewan economy.

Locally owned businesses account for thousands of jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker, and they give back by supporting and sponsoring many events and projects in our local communities. This is why our government spent \$6 million in marketing campaigns to encourage our people in Saskatchewan to shop local and support local business. This was very welcomed by many of our small businesses in my community. On December 3rd, this government announced the Saskatchewan small-business emergency program as part of the COVID-19 response to support small businesses that closed or were significantly impacted due to the public health order.

Mr. Speaker, my Prince Albert and district local chamber of commerce responded to the Throne Speech like this: Monday's Throne Speech highlighted the importance of both protecting lives and livelihood of the people of Saskatchewan. We support the provincial government's efforts to both fight and control the pandemic and minimize its economic impact on our community. A temporary small-business tax cut and the Saskatchewan home renovation tax credit are tangible steps in the right direction that will assist in helping business now. These immediate supports and other priorities that are designed to protect lives boost the economy and are crucial for our economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech our government announced the intention to introduce two very important pieces of legislation in this session that will make a difference for the vulnerable of my city and this province. *The Residential Tenancies Act* will allow those who have been sexually assaulted in their rental accommodation to unilaterally break a long-term lease. The human trafficking Act will enable victims to obtain expedited protection orders that will allow for tough enforcement of the orders and provide civil remedies including the seizure of property, bank accounts, and the seizure of driver's licence.

I had the privilege to be in the A21 Walk to oppose human trafficking last October. And I learned at that walk how vulnerable the population of our city actually is, and what a high risk they are at to become victims of human trafficking. I am proud that our government has introduced these important pieces of legislation that will help to reduce this risk.

Mr. Speaker, between 1996 and 2007, 22,000 people left this province, and my family and I were part of that group. We were struggling to survive. We left our home, our family, our friends, not because we wanted to but because we had to. At that time there was no hope or promise for a future in Saskatchewan, and I don't ever want to see this happen again. Our government has a plan for a strong Saskatchewan, an affordable plan for families, seniors and young people, a plan for a strong recovery and a strong economy.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the Throne Speech that was passed by our member from Kindersley and I will not be supporting the amendment.

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

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my

colleagues for their warm welcome here today to this distinguished Assembly. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour and privilege for me to rise and address this Legislative Assembly of this great province and to be part of the legislative process. I rise today for the first time, humble that I have an opportunity to represent the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford.

At this time I would like to congratulate the Premier on his election in Shellbrook-Rosthern and on his choice of members of Cabinet. He has made an excellent choice and this government will follow through on its new mandate to serve the people of Saskatchewan and focus on our recovery. Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be the MLA for Cut Knife-Turtleford and to be part of a team that I know has Saskatchewan's best interests in mind and will do what's necessary to keep Saskatchewan strong.

I would also like to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate you on your election, as well as Madam Deputy Speaker on your acclamation for the positions and responsibility which you both now hold in this Assembly.

I would also like to congratulate all of the elected members on both sides of the House. We all know it is an honour to serve our representative constituencies, regardless of our political affirmation.

Mr. Speaker, in my first address I would like to acknowledge those who have supported and assisted me in my journey to be the MLA for the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I want to say a special thank you to my wife of 27 years, Noella. Since the fall of 2019, when I was successful in winning the nomination for the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency, she has assisted me and given 100 per cent of herself to the success of this endeavour. She has provided me with encouraging advice, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when I didn't even ask for it. That being said, I could not have done this without her support. For a woman who had very minimal interest in politics when I decided to put my name forward and proceed along this new path, she embraced it and became my biggest strength and my best asset.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my two sons Logan and Lyndon. Their support when I first contemplated this venture has been overwhelming and appreciated. I'll never forget the words: "If this is your dream, Dad, just do it." I believe it is only with your family's complete support and backing that lets one undertake this role and be confident that it will, in fact, be sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my profound debt of gratitude to my parents. My father and mother, Louis and Sharon, instilled upon me and my brother Lance a solid work ethic and moral values. I believe this is what has made me successful in my past career and believe it will assist me in the new one that I'm about to venture into.

I should also note that this may be a little déjà vu for my father, who once sat in this great Assembly 38 years ago representing the Humboldt constituency which is now so aptly represented by the Hon. Donna Harpauer. I specifically remember when he was in cabinet. Back then the province owned a couple of aircraft for transporting ministers and the premier to various destinations within or out of the province. My father, Louis, who was

Conservative, was just let's say very frugal, usually decided to drive to the destinations that he had speaking engagements, no matter how tight his schedule was. However as his oldest son, who had his driver's licence, I found that quite often I got rooked into being the unpaid chauffeur so that he was able to get some shut-eye in while we were on the road. Being a young teenager at the time who had recently obtained his driver's licence, I didn't complain much as I was just happy to be behind the wheel and on the road.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers who gave up their time to help along the way. Whether it was being my business or campaign manager, putting up signs, helping with phone canvassing, being a designated candidate representative, or just lending a hand introducing me into the various communities, none of this would have been possible without their assistance. Mr. Speaker, I think each one of us in the Assembly has to recognize that a candidate would never win an election and be able to be honoured with representing and serving their respective constituency without the assistance of our volunteers and our teams.

Speaking of volunteers, Mr. Speaker, it was quite by accident that when I was desperately seeking out volunteers in Wilkie that I started to call long-term Saskatchewan Party supporters to see if they would be willing to help. I came across this one gentlemen, Mr. Henry Gutting, who without hesitation said yes. When I went to drop him off his package for election night, he invited me into his house for a cup of coffee like most Saskatchewan folks do, and then advised me that I knew his sister. At first the name Annette Gutting didn't ring a bell, but then it came to me. She was my grade 1 teacher approximately 47 years ago. Henry indicated that as soon as she saw my ad in the paper during the campaign, she remembered me from teaching me in grade 1. At that point I wasn't sure if this would be a good or a bad thing.

I then told him to say hi to her the next time he sees her. He quickly grabbed the phone, dialed her number and said, here, you can say hi yourself. Well, Mr. Speaker, I spoke with her on the phone that day and it was encouraging how confident she was in my capabilities to be the next MLA for the constituency. I felt that she was one of my best advocates and supporters as she was quick to share with her friends our family history back in Humboldt. After the election my wife and I made a point of arranging to stop into Wilkie and have coffee with her and her brother.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank all of the people in the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency. Without their unbelievable support that they have given me, I would not be standing here addressing you today. It was very humbling on election day, Mr. Speaker, to be declared elected so early on into the evening and later finding out that I had received 77 per cent of the vote. Mr. Speaker, when I was declared elected I was in awe, to the point I still couldn't believe it when one of my campaign workers came over and congratulated me. I specifically remember saying, oh, I don't know; it's not over until it's over. It wasn't until I saw for myself that they had declared me elected on the news broadcast that it started to finally sink in that I had in fact won and would be serving as the MLA for the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency. Wow. Words cannot express the gratitude and appreciation I had for the people of Cut Knife-Turtleford in not only showing their support for me, but for the leader of our party and the provincial

government. The people have put their trust in me and the Saskatchewan Party to represent them, and I look forward to representing them in the days and years that lie ahead.

[17:00]

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our health care, emergency services, and front-line staff workers in the various communities throughout the province. Without these people who have been dedicated to their jobs throughout this pandemic, coping with COVID-19 would have been much more challenging.

Mr. Speaker, reflecting back, I remember being approached by several people and being asked the question of the day: why do you want to be a candidate and get into provincial politics, Ryan? The answer to me, Mr. Speaker, was very simple. I believe that with my experiences I can serve the people within my constituency and my province and contribute something that hopefully leaves us just a little better off than before. This would be my only goal and, if successful, would be very rewarding and satisfying.

It's a very unique occasion, Mr. Speaker, when a newly elected member first takes his turn to express his thoughts, his concerns, his position, as well as those of his constituents. There are many possible reasons that entice people to serve the public. I am a proud resident of this province. I was born and raised here, educated here, and I've spent my entire career in this province serving the people in my former employment as the chief administrative officer for the RM [rural municipality] of Mervin for over 26 years.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the council of the RM of Mervin. When I first sought out to be the representative for the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency, it was only with their support and encouragement that I decided to proceed with this endeavour, which has already proven to be a rewarding experience. I've met so many great people in this constituency, Mr. Speaker, and that would not have happened if I had not set out to represent them. And for that I am forever grateful.

I would be remiss if I did not mention and thank not only the present day council but previous councils that I served along the way. It was only with their support which allowed me to be a representative on various boards, committees, town council, and being the district and area coroner, which granted me the experiences and understanding that I've gained over the years, which I know will provide me with a better awareness and appreciation of constituents' concerns going forward.

Please allow me to recognize my predecessor, Mr. Speaker, our former MLA Larry Doke. Mr. Doke faithfully served his constituency and this province for nine years and was always willing to listen to your concerns and assist you if he could. I got to know Mr. Doke in my capacity as the chief administrative officer for the RM of Mervin as well as my position with the North West Heavy Oil municipalities committee. In each of these positions, each time I reached out to Mr. Doke with a concern that we had, he always ensured that it was addressed and was able to coordinate meetings with the appropriate ministries or minister to assist us. I know the people of the Cut Knife-Turtleford

constituency are appreciative for the work done by Mr. Doke, and on their behalf I would like to take this opportunity to officially thank him.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, I would also like to thank Mr. Doke who was very helpful in enabling me to have my constituency office up and running within two days after the election. In high hopes of anticipating being able to represent this constituency of which Mr. Doke's constituency assistant was retiring from, his office was instrumental in assisting me in finding a replacement that would be able to train under and replace his retiring CA [constituency assistant]. My new CA, Jackie Gallon, has already proven to be invaluable in the constituency office as she eagerly takes on new tasks with determination and enthusiasm.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about my constituency. Cut Knife-Turtleford is primarily a rural constituency and consists of agriculture, small businesses, industry, and tourism. While agriculture is predominating within the constituency, consisting of successful grain and cattle farmers, heavy oil development and the various service providers to the industry are also located through a large part of the constituency as well.

In recent years this heavy oil development has been decelerating in terms of drilling as the newer technology involving the construction of steam-assisted gravity drainage, otherwise known as SAGD [steam-assisted gravity drainage] plants, has been rising in the area. These SAGD plants provide improved recovery rates, greater energy efficiency, and lower operating costs, which enhances the economic viability of producing oil and will continue to be an advantage moving forward. These SAGD plants are an invaluable resource to this constituency as it provides employment, service industry spinoffs, and municipal taxation in the surrounding area, which helps ensure that our communities remain sustainable.

While we currently have seen some challenges with the oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker, which has resulted in a downturn for some of our businesses that are service providers, I know that this government will do everything it can to stand up for our oil and gas workers. Mr. Speaker, the first thing that comes to mind when I make this statement is our current challenge to the federal government's carbon tax and the effects it has within our province in terms of growing Saskatchewan's oil, gas, and natural resource economy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to recognize and acknowledge various contributions this government has made so far during its governance and how that has affected the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency, for example, the support of local governments to the revenue-sharing program. Just in the communities of Unity, Wilkie, and Maidstone alone, the increase in revenue sharing has amounted to just over 429,000 since 2007, which is approximately equal to an overall increase of 146 per cent. This support is vital to ensure that our local governments continue to have the financial resources to be able to serve the people at the local level with the services they require and which keep our communities sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, another example of supporting local government is the municipal economic enhancement program, otherwise know

as MEEP, which was part of this year's stimulus package which brought much-needed funds to local governments to support their investment in capital infrastructure.

Another investment that this government has made was in support of education. Mr. Speaker, with funding increases for the various school divisions that serve within our constituency, it was able to fund notable capital investments which occurred in the following schools: Edam, H. Hardcastle School, repairs to the roof, 93,000; Lashburn, J.H. Moore Elementary, HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning], 540,000; Turtleford School, repairs to the roof, 382,000; Hillmond School, gym replacement, 4.13 million.

Mr. Speaker, this government has provided the Saskatchewan Health Authority \$3.7 billion in this year's budget, an increase of 140.6 million or a 3.9 per cent increase as compared to last year. This has greatly assisted with needed renovations or repairs to the Maidstone hospital, the Riverside Health Complex in Turtleford, and the Unity and District Health Centre.

Speaking of health care, Mr. Speaker, I remember when recruiting physicians in rural Saskatchewan was next to impossible even if they were being recruited by the physician who was presently practising in your community. I will give you an example from personal experience. Mr. Speaker, around the year 2004 in my former position as the chief administrative officer for the RM of Mervin, we were approached by the doctor of the day, Dr. Mulder. He indicated that he was having difficulties trying to recruit physicians to our community in rural Saskatchewan.

After that conversation, my reeve and I called a meeting of 12 rural and urban municipalities surrounding the area. We pitched the idea of forming a municipal association which would contribute per capita funding and that each municipality would appoint one representative to the board that would provide for the overall governance, as well as establish any policies that they deem necessary. This would then enable us to hire an administrator to try to recruit physicians, provide incentives like signing bonuses if they stayed for a certain length of time, as well as provide them with a cell phone and car for their first six months which allowed them to establish a credit rating. Almost all of the municipalities in attendance agreed to the proposal and from there we hired an administrator and took over all clinic staff members in St. Walburg, Turtleford, and Edam.

The various communities came together and provided housing for the doctors that were recruited so that when they arrived, their housing, furniture, bedding, towels, utensils, plates, pots, pans, and household furniture were provided so that the only thing they required was their clothes and groceries.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this venture was successful and most of our physicians were recruited from South Africa. Although we had several times where we had to obtain locums to continue to provide emergency services, for the most part it was successful and allowed us to maintain emergency services for our surrounding communities.

It was not until 2007, Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party government formed government that they addressed the issue of the shortage of doctors in rural Saskatchewan. They created

Saskdocs, which was a provincial agency that recruited and provided financial incentives for physicians who agreed to specifically provide services in rural Saskatchewan, and that is when we finally had consistency in terms of maintaining physician continuity. This was a welcome change for a rural community that was struggling to keep their emergency services and acute care open.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the members here today that with the co-operation of the surrounding municipalities and the assistance from the provincial government through Saskdocs, that we presently serve four community clinics with four physicians, two nurse practitioners, and we continue to provide 24-hour emergency services. I believe that this was only possible through the forward thinking of a Saskatchewan Party provincial government that made it achievable to have sustainable health care services in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I must commend this government, which has provided additional funding for Saskatchewan highways; social services; parks, culture and sport; as well as SaskTel over the years to improve infrastructure and services within our constituencies and our communities. These are just a few of the examples of provincial investment, which helps ensure that our communities remain sustainable.

I am pleased to see in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, that we are committed to following through with our platform. Mr. Speaker, each one of the items that was mentioned will assist Saskatchewan people in our recovery.

When you look at the new tax credit for home renovations, this will not only assist residents with improvements, which may be long overdue for their primary residence, but will also give them the opportunity to make their home more energy efficient, thereby saving them money in annual heating costs. This, along with the one-year, 10 per cent power rebate, will support Saskatchewan's economic recovery plan and make life more affordable for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the two items I have just indicated not only assist our respective constituents but also helps our small businesses. This, along with the small-business tax reduction, will support and enhance the recovery of ensuring our small businesses stay viable.

Mr. Speaker, this government wants to ensure our families and communities continue to be sustainable in Saskatchewan. That is why this government is providing 750 new child care spaces over the next four years, and why this government is making children's sports more affordable by restarting the active families benefit to assist with sports, art, and cultural activities.

Mr. Speaker, this is why this government is restarting the community rink affordability grant, which will provide \$2,500 per ice surface per year. Mr. Speaker, as a former president of our curling club back home, which has artificial ice, I can speak from personal experience that any financial assistance provided to recreational facilities has a significant impact to the operational viability, which ensures affordable access to Saskatchewan families.

Mr. Speaker, further to the support that I've already mentioned, which will assist families in our communities, this government is also helping our graduates with their tuition costs by raising the Sask Advantage Scholarship program by 50 per cent to support our Saskatchewan students in making their post-secondary education more affordable and accessible.

This government also recognizes, Mr. Speaker, families and individuals that have challenges. That is why this government is providing additional funding to assist Saskatchewan residents who have a disability, autism, diabetes, or require Deaf-blind services as we work towards making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada for persons who have a disability.

Mr. Speaker, our seniors are the backbone of this province as they were the ones that endured many hardships, overcame many challenges, and worked hard to create and establish what we have here today. To ensure life is more affordable for our seniors, this government will be reducing their costs for ambulance calls by 50 per cent and providing more continuing care aids for both those seniors that are in long-term care homes as well as those that still have the capacity to live on their own with some assistance. This, along with our promise to increase the monthly benefit for low-income seniors, is another way that this government is providing more support for Saskatchewan seniors as part of our plan to make life more affordable for Saskatchewan residents.

Turning to our long-term goals, Mr. Speaker, this government is looking to make this province more sustainable for our future generations. This government has a plan which includes growing our province and keeping more young people at home, as well as increasing immigration to the province. We will maintain a competitive tax environment, and we intend to grow private investment, not government investment, and increase our Saskatchewan exports.

Mr. Speaker, this government plans to grow our agriculture economy by adding value and increasing Saskatchewan's base processing of the province's agricultural products, as well as securing access and expanding our international markets for Saskatchewan products. We will create opportunities, Mr. Speaker, by reducing interprovincial barriers to trade and expand Saskatchewan's export infrastructure.

[17:15]

We will support the transformation of our economy through innovation and technology and the growth of our technology sector. Mr. Speaker, this along with our government's plan to invest 7.5 billion over the next two years in capital infrastructure will help stimulate our economic recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted that this represents a \$2 billion increase over the existing capital plan which has previously been announced and assists in keeping our unemployment rate one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the items that this government will undertake over the next several years which will ensure we will keep Saskatchewan strong and maintain our plan to have a balanced budget in four years.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you for allowing me to take this opportunity to speak on the Throne Speech. I will be supporting the Throne Speech as presented, Mr. Speaker. I will not be supporting the proposed amendment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in and some comments. And before I do I of course . . . It's an honour to serve the people of Cumberland constituency and the North. And I just want to give a few congratulations out to yourself as being elected as Speaker. You know, we go through a process at election time and the people get to speak. And the community members decide, the public decide, the citizens decide who's going to govern.

And I'll be honest with you. I want to thank my team. I had a great team who helped me get re-elected a fourth term to this Assembly to represent them and to share and bring the issues that they are facing. And I'll get into some of the issues that they are facing and the challenges that we face, you know, as the Cumberland constituency with many northern people, many challenges, but also with many strengths our leaders have.

But I was going to talk a little bit more about thanking maybe individuals like my wife and my family. I want to thank them for the years and the time they put in, the dedication that my wife does taking care of our grandkids, you know, the challenges that are faced, many of us go through.

I also want to thank my team, my campaign manager, Jordan McPhail. I want to thank Jude Ratt. The team came together . . . business manager. It's not easy work. Everyone does their part. The advice we get on the doorsteps that we could talk to people when we had an opportunity, those people that you could talk to on the street just, you know, being safe. It's a different time. It was a different election. It has been. There were so many challenges.

But we got through to today and we're here, you know. We're responding to a Throne Speech. And, you know, I don't want to forget anyone, thanking them. There's such a list of people who do so much, you know, whether it's just advice from the elders, whether leaders give you advice.

And not only was it our election but many in the province went through municipal elections. And I want to congratulate those that put their name on a ballot, ran a good campaign, and were elected to mayor and councils throughout the whole province. And I just say to them, for your dedication to your citizens and your community, I thank you for that.

There are many challenges, Mr. Speaker. To the new members that have been elected into this Assembly, it is an honour to serve, but I also know there are challenges and it's not always easy. I don't want to get a lot into talking what's in the Throne Speech. Because I have to be honest, Mr. Speaker, I've listened to a number of new members, members that have been elected many times in here, and I think truly you have given yourself lots of pats on the back and you've given the Throne Speech about as much compliments that there probably is. So with that I will say there's not much I'm going to say about the Throne Speech.

But what I am going to say is there are many challenges out there, and my job is to bring forward the concerns from the constituents that I represent. And I will do that. I am one person, one MLA, one person, comes from the Cumberland constituency to represent the people, to be that voice, to bring that message to the government. And I will do that.

And there are many challenges. And I'm going to talk about some of the challenges we face back home and we face in the province. And I will talk about that. And when I share that, I think a little bit about governments, and they govern the whole province. And I watch individuals, maybe members opposite; maybe the Premier, you know, words that he expresses to media, words that he expresses to the citizens. And he shares stuff with them and he says what he believes.

He'll govern. He'll govern the whole province. And to hear him say it doesn't matter which party you supported, I'm going to govern, he's telling the Saskatchewan people: well you know, we're going to have a chance and the Saskatchewan people will get a chance as they express their concerns to the government, as I express the concerns of the constituents to the ministers that are here, that he has selected.

And I will share the concerns, whether it's about mental health and addictions. And we are going to talk a little bit about that because I just know the challenges that are out there that many families are facing. And it doesn't matter where you go in this province, COVID has put more pressures on our front-line workers, mental health workers. I give them credit for the work they're doing. They're burning out. There's challenges, more resources needed.

But I didn't get elected by the people to form government; the Sask Party did. You are the government. You will govern and you have the money, you have the policies. We can work with you. You're going to have an opportunity to deal with the real issues, and you will have to deal with the real issues. You've been elected a fourth term. And sometimes, you know, people will say, well you're going to get an opportunity to clean up your own mess, some of the mess of the previous ministers that were here. The previous government made decisions when it comes to our finances, policies that were not helpful. We've criticized those. We said it wasn't right what's been done. There was better ways to do things, better ways to spend taxpayers' dollars. But those decisions went ahead anyway.

You will have a chance; new members, cabinet ministers, the government will have a chance to deal with many issues. But you have issues that the government has created too. Don't forget that. It's okay to pat yourselves on the back, but remember you made those decisions. You allowed those areas with funding and things that happened — projects, policy that impacted people — you had an opportunity in that and many of you played a part in that. So with that, I will say, you have a job to do. We'll monitor that, and I know the good people of our province will do that.

Now I talked about the challenges, Mr. Speaker, when I think about addictions. And I think about those that are losing their life to addictions, opium crisis. And you look at the challenge with drug addiction, overdoses. You look at the suicide rates. You look at all the challenges that so many families are facing. You know, we get phone calls. And I'll tell you, when you have

family calling you, they've lost their loved one to an overdose — and I just got one recently, as of today — it hits you. It hits you so hard for those families. There are so many challenges out there, families are trying to do . . . [inaudible]. But at the end of the day, the government is going to have to do some serious action. And we're going to watch the file. We're going to see how the minister does, how the government does.

You definitely have a crisis going on with addictions, mental health, suicides. And I think about the young man, Tristen Durocher, who sat on the lawn. Forty-four days he fasted, and what did he get? You know what he got? He got the government, the Premier to come to see him? No. He got two ministers to tell him to get off the lawn, took him to court. And what happened? Interesting, here's somebody who just wanted to bring attention to the government about the suicides, the alarming numbers. And unfortunately how was he met with his government? By taking him to court.

And what did this young man do? This young man, who has Indian blood in him, what did he do? He won. He was successful. That is something to be proud of. And I watch that and think to myself, here's a young man, and what he did to bring a message to a government. So when I think about that, Mr. Speaker, I think about the challenges. We see many challenges when it comes to First Nations, Métis, those of us with Indian blood in us. I am proud. We have many challenges, but we have many strengths.

I'm going to encourage my northern leaders. I was elected to come here and hear their issues and share them with the government. So the government can't say, oh we didn't know about those issues. We didn't know about the airport in Pelican Narrows, the condition. We didn't know about Southend's airport. We didn't know about the road, the highway, the all-weather road to Wollaston Lake. We didn't know about long-term care — it's a crisis in the North — that you need long-term care.

There are issues when it comes to the land, the trees, and the duty to consult and accommodate. I think about our Métis leaders. I think about our First Nations leaders, chief and councils, municipal leaders. I think about the organization, New North. And I can say I'm here alone as one person elected to represent the Cumberland constituency, but I will reach out to those leaders whether they're First Nations, Métis, municipal leaders. I will ask them, let's work together. Let's send letters to the Premier. Let's send letters to the ministers. Let's meet with them. Let's share the issues so our government can't say, well we didn't know about those issues. So I want to make it very clear, I'll work hard. I'll do the role that I've been given, and I take it as an honour to bring those concerns.

But I want to remind members opposite there are many challenges, and it's not just in the North and it's not just in Indigenous communities. But they have something I have learned from young Tristen Durocher. Our First Nations, our Métis, our municipal leaders, they have something. If they can't get the government to agree, there is courts. There is the courts. When you cannot win, Tristen showed that you can still be strong and you can use the court system when it comes to the duty to consult and accommodate. When you attack our trappers, when you take and harvest their trees without consulting, without making sure they know that there are some stands that can be had, there are

things they can do. We're not helpless. We're a strong people and we'll say what we need to say. We'll try to be respectful. We're a proud people.

But it's time for the government to listen. And I'd encourage . . . And I say this. I'm going to wind down because I don't want to go on long, Mr. Speaker. But I'm going to encourage anyone out there — work with the government, but hold them accountable.

When it comes to mental health, the suicides, the addiction, affordability, about families surviving, hold government accountable. Don't be scared to speak your mind to them, to the ministers, to the Premier. I know I will. I will gladly make sure the Premier knows when I'm talking to his ministers. As he has made it very clear, his word is he's going to govern all the province, all the people. So I will ensure I do my job as letting him know when there's issues that need to be addressed. I will let him know of his word that he gave to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have a whole lot more to say other than leaders are elected, whether it's municipal leaders, First Nations, Métis leaders. As a Métis person, and I am a very proud Métis person, I will work hard to make sure that we have Métis leaders that will represent the Métis people and hold government accountable, and do that through the courts, do that too with the federal government. Because I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of federal money that pours into this province of Saskatchewan for the government to use to take care of the Indigenous people, to take care of Saskatchewan residents.

And when you're not going to take care of them, then maybe the federal government . . . Because I've watched this government criticize the federal government. And I'm not here to stick up for the federal government, but you criticize them, but you sure take the money. You sure use the money and sometimes you spend it. Sometimes you keep it. We have heard different things, where you use it in different ways. But I will make sure that the federal government, all I can do, understands that the people that they're sending that money for may not be getting it the way it's supposed to be.

So with that I will say, Mr. Speaker, there are many challenges. I'll go back home, work with my leaders, try to be a strong voice for the North with them, do all I can to advocate with them when it comes to the challenge that many of our Indigenous people are facing. Whether they're northern, there are many challenges. But I'll do all I can, work with the opposition. And I thank my members on this side for the passion they have, for the speeches they've given, and the work they will do for the people that we represent to hold this government accountable.

[17:30]

But with that, I think this government has given themselves enough pats on the back, and it's time to get to work and take care of all of the province. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting, and I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying what a great honour it is to have this opportunity to address this Assembly today. And I want to acknowledge that I do so on Treaty 4 territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis people. I would also like to join my colleagues in congratulating you on your new role, Mr. Speaker. And similarly I want to congratulate the member from Saskatchewan Rivers in her new capacity as Madam Deputy Speaker. I have every confidence that you will both serve this Assembly well.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand before you today, I am challenged, but I am also honoured and excited. Obviously as a new member to this Assembly I am faced with several challenges associated with the learning curve that this new role offers. But my most immediate challenge is the fact that my experience of delivering speeches like this one has generally occurred in courts of law in front of judges who, not unlike yourself, Mr. Speaker, preside over those chambers from a dais and hear all matters before them with the utmost professionalism and wisdom.

However you see my challenge is that in court I was rarely, if ever, able to hold the attention of my audience for 20 uninterrupted minutes. So while I hope I can get through this, my maiden speech, without continual interruptions, perhaps my fellow members will give me the same looks of confusion and disinterest that I have become accustomed to when I speak in these types of settings, and that might help to make me feel a little more comfortable today.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured because the people of Moose Jaw North have entrusted me with the responsibility of representing them in this Chamber. That is not a responsibility I take lightly. And I want to put on the record very early in this, my first address, how much I truly appreciate the support of those fine people. My sincere thanks goes out to them all. I am humbled and I am grateful and I will do my very best to ensure that the interests of Moose Jaw North are advanced and clearly articulated here. It is my privilege to be here on their behalf.

Finally, I am excited, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited because once again I got to come to work today in this beautiful, historic building, to work with a diverse collection of talented colleagues on behalf of the truly amazing people of Saskatchewan. And make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are nothing short of amazing. I hope to identify a few of those people throughout this address.

But before I do, I want to begin by saying, when I think about how amazing the people of Saskatchewan are, I think about the resilience that all the people of this province have demonstrated time and time again, but most recently through the COVID-19 pandemic. And that brings to mind the words of Rocky Balboa when he said, it's not about how hard you hit; it's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, our province, along with the rest of the world, has been hit hard by COVID-19. Without question this virus has knocked the wind out of us all. But Saskatchewan has taken that hit and continued to move forward better than most. As recognized in the Speech from the Throne, the people of Saskatchewan are tough and resilient. They are steadfast and determined, compassionate and generous, inclined to hope, and optimistic by nature. The Throne Speech reminds us that we have

overcome adversity before, Mr. Speaker, and we will prevail again.

If I could take a moment now, I'd like to name a few of those closest to me who fit squarely into the category of amazing Saskatchewan people. Firstly, I need to recognize my wife, Tenielle. She is already the most amazing person I know, but she continues to raise the bar on an almost daily basis. Returning to my Rocky Balboa reference for a moment, I would have to admit that I am punching above my weight class being married to Tenielle. She has been the best partner and friend I could ever have dreamed of and there is no question I would not be where I am today without her by my side.

I'm sure my colleagues would agree that our spouses and partners are often left picking up the slack at home so that we can be here representing everyone else in our communities. And those efforts are often in addition to their own full-time work. So I want to thank Tenielle and all the rest of our significant others for those sacrifices that they make every day so that we can be here doing the work we do.

Next I want to acknowledge and thank my children, Presley, Kingston, and Lauchlan. Mr. Speaker, I did not always want to be in politics. I guess you could say my kids made me do it, not because they told me to, but because they inspired me to. In fact they are the inspiration for nearly everything I do.

My daughter Presley is a voracious reader and a young author. She's also an incredibly talented singer and stage performer. She is not quite 14 years old, but she already possesses the maturity and insightfulness of someone twice her age. She is able to visit with me over a cup of tea and challenge my thoughts or views as well as any friend or colleague can and I love it when she does.

My son Kingston is 11 years old and has a truly competitive spirit. He may only be the size of the Minister of Advanced Education's left arm, but I think the two of them would get along well because they both share the belief that competition makes everything better. Kingston's playful nature and competitive drive remind me to have a little fun no matter what I'm doing but still strive to do my best.

And my youngest is Lauchlan. Lauchlan has a stubborn determination that my own mother claims she's seen once before, although she won't tell me where. But he is equally loving and thoughtful. He is the first to stand up for a friend in need and the first one to throw his arms around me at the end of a long day. He is also the best cuddle-buddy on family movie night. Lauchlan is my daily reminder to always show kindness to others because we often don't know what they are going through.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize my brothers, both of whom still reside in my hometown of Martensville. They are two of the people I admire most and I need to thank them for being important role models in my life. My older brother Ben is without question the hardest working person I know. No matter what he's doing, the quality of Ben's work is the closest thing to perfection you're going to find. That combination of effort and quality of work sets a standard that I can only hope to duplicate. And my younger brother Peter is quite possibly the best communicator I've ever met. He can explain absolutely anything to me in a way that makes me understand it. Both my brothers possess qualities

that I respect and admire, and I want to recognize and thank them for that, Mr. Speaker.

And of course I also need to recognize and thank my parents, Mike and Shirley, for their endless love, support, and guidance. I can't imagine more shining examples of the balance between service and leadership, compassion and strength, and independence and faith. My parents both devoted their careers to the education system in our province and have positively shaped thousands of lives, including my brothers' and my own. They have been my greatest cheerleaders, no matter what endeavour I have pursued in my life; and I thank them for their continued support in this latest one.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many examples of amazing Saskatchewan people, and a few more that I need to recognize include my colleagues, David and Tim, and all the staff and lawyers at Chow McLeod in Moose Jaw.

My legal assistant, Jacqui, who has graciously agreed to now become my constituency assistant. Jacqui has been more than just an employee. She has been a loyal friend and a teammate through this process. And I look forward to continuing to work together as we both learn our new roles.

Mr. Speaker, I was blessed to have an abundance of volunteers through my campaign, and I can't possibly name them all here today. But I do want to recognize a few who went above and beyond, giving countless hours and even days out of their lives to support me.

To David and Lee, I thank them both for their hard work behind the scenes. Their expertise was invaluable, particularly for a first-time candidate like me.

Jodie, she was the first to agree to join my campaign team and likely the first to regret doing so. But she carried much more than the duties she signed on for, and I greatly appreciate that.

Eric was an absolute workhorse, and he motivated me to keep knocking doors, rain or shine, wind or snow. Eric was the only member of my campaign team who actually knocked more doors than I did.

Ron, Ron, and Roy, who took charge of my signs and billboards with military precision and efficiency. This was a piece of my campaign that I knew I never had to worry about because these gentlemen had it covered.

Cory and Dana, who were both already two of the busiest people I know, yet they both took on critical roles in my campaign. Neither had any idea what they were signing up for when they agreed to help, but they both knocked it out of the park. And both continue to be trusted friends who I know I can count on moving forward. I can't thank them enough.

Laurie and Shelley each brought much-needed experience and wisdom to the team, so I want to thank them for that.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I thank my predecessor, Warren Michelson, and his wife, Debbie. They both provided advice, encouragement, and countless hours of door knocking and support. I can't thank them enough, Mr. Speaker.

There are so many wonderful folks who helped out, and although I can't name them all, I do want to quickly mention Anshumann, Jack, Kathy, Tammie, Parker, Marla, and Rod. These volunteers were often out knocking doors and I didn't even know it. They are yet a few more examples of amazing Saskatchewan people.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues in this Assembly for the warm welcome that I have received thus far. As mentioned earlier, there is so much to learn when you first arrive here. But the more experienced members have been quick to offer assistance and been generous in their helpful tips and advice. For example, Mr. Speaker, the member from Melfort was kind enough to point out that there is an ideal parking spot very near my office at the back of the building. He assured me that I'm welcome to park in it anytime the black suburban that normally occupies that spot isn't there. Alas, Mr. Speaker, I haven't had the opportunity to do so yet because whoever that black suburban belongs to obviously works much longer hours than I do. It's always here when I arrive in the morning and still here when I leave at the end of the day. Nonetheless, I thought that was a very thoughtful piece of advice from the member for Melfort. I think he's going to be a good friend.

In all sincerity, Mr. Speaker, the welcome the new members have received thus far from both sides of the House has been great. I know that in the months and years ahead we will have many debates in this Chamber and those battles will frequently become impassioned. But it is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that they will remain respectful and dignified. Because we so often speak of the privilege and honour we feel to be a part of this Assembly, so I hope we never lose sight of that as we zealously represent those who sent us here. A place as grand and majestic as this calls for an Assembly of dignity and integrity, but also humility. I am so thankful for the opportunity to be here, Mr. Speaker, and I pray that I possess the strength of character to demonstrate each and every day that I belong here.

Turning more specifically now to the Speech from the Throne, there are a few pieces I want to address. I'd like to begin by echoing the thanks in the speech directed at all those working on the front lines of this pandemic. We often speak of those heroes in our community in rather broad and generic terms, Mr. Speaker. But when I speak of heroes on the front line, I think specifically of my childhood best friend, Rick. Rick works at the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon and he, like so many others, faces COVID up close and personal every day. And every day he puts all of our health and safety ahead of his own.

[17:45]

And we all know someone like Rick, Mr. Speaker. Maybe they're a doctor or a nurse or maybe they're one of the many brave members of the police service, fire department, or EMS [emergency medical services]. And quite possibly they are your child or your neighbour, or maybe they're your best friend. They all put themselves at risk so that the rest of us can stay safe. And we can't possibly thank them enough, Mr. Speaker, but we need to try in whatever ways we can. And I appreciate that this Throne Speech encourages us to do so.

I also appreciate and echo the acknowledgement and thanks that this Throne Speech aims at our teachers and staff in the education sector across the province. They have demonstrated remarkable

adaptability and resilience by adjusting from their normal practices in order to keep our children and communities safe, all while continuing to deliver some of the finest education in the world.

Mr. Speaker, we have somewhere in the neighbourhood of 180,000 students attending our 744 schools across this province every day, and yet you can count on your fingers the number of in-school transmissions of COVID-19 that have occurred since school started in September. That is absolutely remarkable, Mr. Speaker. The flexibility of the teachers to deliver lessons in an environment filled with COVID restrictions, and the additional efforts from non-instructional staff to ensure that those facilities remain safe and clean are worthy of our highest praise, Mr. Speaker.

This Speech from the Throne also recognizes the commitments of our government to continue building a strong Saskatchewan by supporting the economic recovery and ensuring that life in our province remains affordable for everyone. As the member from Melfort noted in his reply to the Throne Speech last week, there is always more fence than paint, Mr. Speaker, and that is true. We can always find a need for more resources no matter where we look.

There is no shortage of ways to spend money but there are only so many dollars to go around. Yet that's one of the remarkable things about Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. We understand that even though our resources may have a limit, our resourcefulness does not. And that resourcefulness is clearly demonstrated in the Speech from the Throne, where it points to a variety of ways that this government is protecting both lives and livelihoods of Saskatchewan families.

To name just a few examples: this government is protecting lives by investing \$435 million in mental health and addictions services, and by hiring 300 new continuing care aids, and by covering the cost of insulin pumps for everyone under the age of 25 who may need one, and also by covering the cost of continuous glucose monitoring for children and youth under the age of 18 living with diabetes. Mr. Speaker, my dear friends, Dustin and Aly can attest to the significant value of those continuous glucose monitors, one of which has without a doubt saved the life of their precious daughter Hartley. These commitments by our government will continue to save countless more lives for families across Saskatchewan moving forward.

But our government is also saving livelihoods, Mr. Speaker, by investing millions of dollars to support locally owned and operated small businesses affected by the pandemic; and by cutting the small-business tax rate; and further still, by making life more affordable for families through a 10 per cent reduction in everyone's power bill; increasing the seniors' income plan and lowering the cost of their ambulance rides; by increasing the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship; and by providing funding to families with an annual income under \$60,000 so that their children can participate in sports, arts, and cultural activities. And let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that this government remains on track to return to a balanced budget by 2024.

We are only one week into the first session of this legislature and this government has already delivered on a number of those items that were promised in the recent election campaign. Promises

made, promises kept, Mr. Speaker. During the recent election campaign, this government also spoke frequently about strength. Those were not just words, Mr. Speaker. Here in Saskatchewan we have incredible strength. As I said before, that strength is demonstrated in how well we can take a hit and keep moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter whether that hit is a straight jab from the downturn in the oil and gas industry, or a slap in the face from an ineffective, federally imposed carbon tax, or a solid body blow from the COVID-19 pandemic. The amazing people of this province can take that hit and we will continue to move forward, because we don't just talk about strength, Mr. Speaker. We show it.

And that is what I take away from this Throne Speech, which is why I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Riversdale. And I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Hon. Speaker, miigwech and congratulations. It is my distinct pleasure to rise today to provide my response to the Speech from the Throne.

I begin by recognizing the chiefs, elders, trailblazers, and the matriarchs that we stand shoulder to shoulder with. One of them that I carry in my heart is my great-grandfather, Chief Kinistin, who in 1876 was a signatory to the adhesion of Treaty 4. It is with great pride that I stand here today as the first Indigenous woman in Saskatchewan to be elected to represent an urban riding for my party.

With that, I'd like to acknowledge that we stand here on Treaty 4 territory. May we honour the spirit of the treaty with respect and recognition of those who came before us, as well as those that will follow.

I feel so fortunate to join a caucus that features two Indigenous trailblazers, my colleagues the member from Athabasca and the member from Cumberland. The member from Athabasca, first elected in 1995, being the longest serving MLA of this twenty-ninth sitting, and the member from Cumberland who has been vocal in supporting me. These two leaders are a source of great inspiration, and I look forward to working with them in our caucus and learning from the two most spirited, committed, and Indigenous MLAs in this Saskatchewan legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I value the concept of a representative democracy, a democracy where elected representatives mirror the people that we serve. To me, it is important to not only represent the values and voices of our constituents, but it is also important that the people of Saskatchewan can see themselves in this legislature. It is essential that our increasingly diverse province is well reflected in this House. Saskatchewan's motto, "from many peoples, strength," in a nutshell captures the spirit and the importance of a democracy that is truly representative.

Mr. Speaker, I did not imagine myself among a caucus with such a diverse representation of the people of Saskatchewan, having

the responsibility to be a strong voice and to hold this government to account. To have a majority female caucus is so exciting. For too long in politics, women's voices have been under-represented or ignored entirely. As women, we are the keepers of our home fires and nurture and pass on cultural traditions, because we think not just of the next generation but of the next seven generations. I embrace the responsibility as an elected representative with all the dedication and gravity I learned from the principles of servant leadership. My parents were both traditional healers and served communities through custom, practices, and ceremonies.

Mr. Speaker, good leaders bring out the best in those they lead. And they do it not just by standing in front and telling others what needs to be done. They do it by rolling up their sleeves, getting down in the dirt, and working alongside everyone else. True leadership requires respect, Mr. Speaker. Firstly and most importantly, a leader must earn the respect from those they lead. All of us here have been trusted to represent our constituents, and we must earn their respect each and every day through hard work and dedication to public service.

As leaders in high-profile positions, we must always maintain a respectful discourse. Though tensions will sometimes be high as we debate the issues of the day, it is important to remember that we have many young people watching how we act in this House. Mr. Speaker, what message do we send the next generation when we resort to heckling, talking loudly, and having side conversations when a member is speaking? These types of behaviours do not exemplify respectful debate and act only as a disservice to the people we are here to represent.

It is my hope that respect will be shown too towards the treaties within Saskatchewan. I am disheartened treaties was not part of the MLA orientation. While treaty education has improved slowly over the last number of years, many people are still unaware of the various treaties, what they mean, or even the fact that they live in treaty territory. We are all treaty people, Mr. Speaker.

Some may brush treaties aside, believing that they are nothing more than centuries-old agreements written on now withered pieces of paper. However the parliamentary system that our legislature derives from is far older than the numbered treaties found in Saskatchewan. The respect shown towards our parliamentary system and practices must also be shown towards the agreements signed between Canada and its Indigenous peoples. Our democratic institutions and treaties go hand in hand, Mr. Speaker.

I am grounded by the many people I have to thank for helping me get here. First of all I'd like to thank the people of Saskatoon Centre for the confidence they have in me to represent them as their MLA. Many thanks to David Forbes for his guidance and friendship and many years of service to his constituents and the province.

To my campaign team and nominators: Shane Partridge, Kathie Cram, Sheri Benson, Jaris Swidrovich, Donna Rederburg, Mitchell Anderson, Carla Smith, Theresa MacKinnon, Marty Scott, Kim Scott, Vanessa Campeau, Christine Freethy, Stephanie Sydiaha, and Kinistin Saulteaux Nation — I thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know it is not always easy to be the spouse, child, or a grandchild of an MLA. Whether we are out door knocking, attending meetings, or reading countless pages of reports, we are away from our families a great deal. I know this takes a toll on my family and I am grateful for their understanding and unwavering support. My husband's love and support have been a consistent and stable source of strength for me. Thank you, Ivan.

I know that my grandkids don't get to see their Tutu as often as they are used to, but they are in my mind at all times. My seven grandchildren serve as a guiding light, and I will work each day to make them proud.

I dare say that Saskatoon Centre is one of the most diverse and dynamic constituencies in our province. It is a constituency with a high number of Indigenous residents. It's a vibrant community with new Canadians, post-secondary students, professionals, public servants, families, and seniors. They span all income levels, social classes, ethnicities, ages, and gender and sexual identities. And I'm proud to have the honour of representing each and every one of them.

Saskatoon Centre has numerous senior housing complexes, places of worship, elementary schools, as well as two high schools. It is a place where many choose to start their families, while others choose to settle into retirement. In Saskatoon Centre there's no hiding from the fact there are many in need. Every day our residents see people who are unhoused or inadequately housed, who are struggling with mental health and addictions, emotional trauma, or who are simply caught in the economic turmoil caused by the global pandemic.

[18:00]

We see advocacy from members of sexually and gender-diverse communities that are waiting to get increased access to gender-affirming health care. After having lived and worked in the heart of Saskatoon for over 34 years, I have seen this government talk about their promises and then dither around when it comes to delivery. Meaningful representation and real implementation to address these issues is why I ran for office.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 20-plus years I have had the opportunity to work with countless community groups and organizations who embrace the philosophy of servant leadership and take on the challenging work of supporting many marginalized communities. I am constantly amazed by the number of dedicated people I have met who roll up their sleeves day after day to do whatever they can to help meet these needs. There are far too many of them to name, but I look forward to the opportunity to introduce some of them in this House in the future when it is safe to do so.

These organizations are out there fighting homelessness and promoting harm reduction. They're offering safe spaces, meals, bathroom and laundry facilities for homeless youth and adults. They're offering affordable, accessible health and mental health supports, and providing assistance with navigating government programs and more.

Yet the Throne Speech fails to relate how it will support the community-based organizations that are supporting our most

marginalized community members, even amidst the challenges presented by COVID-19. Having worked in the health sector for over 20-plus years, I am disappointed and not surprised by the failure of this government to follow the recommended health orders we have seen that reduce the spread of COVID-19 in other jurisdictions.

Throughout my constituency, there are many dedicated small businesses. I will continue to work with partners and all levels of government to remove barriers to their success and help them access any support or tools to help them thrive. Most if not all of these small businesses have faced extreme adversity due to COVID-19. They have persevered and gone above and beyond to provide their customers with a safe environment through extensive COVID-19 protocols. I look forward to getting to know these small-business owners even better as their MLA and I thank them for their contributions to Saskatchewan's economy.

Mr. Speaker, I have lived experience of gender-based violence and racism within our province. People I love have been murdered, harmed, discriminated against, and marginalized. I carry all of this with me. It guides my work in service to my communities. I listened intently when the Throne Speech briefly touched on the introduction of the protection from human trafficking Act. It is my hope that Indigenous communities, elders, helping organizations, and survivors of human trafficking are included in the consultation process before passing this important legislation. These are the voices that must be heard.

I am grateful I have been assigned the role of critic for First Nation and Métis relations, Mr. Speaker. This is a role I'm very passionate about and I look forward to the work involved with this portfolio. I believe my skill set and experience will be an asset when it comes to this work as I hold a master's degree in political studies and an honours degree in Aboriginal public administration. The academic education I bring is supported by my lived experience as a First Nations woman and a residential school survivor.

While we as legislators must look to the future, we cannot forge ahead without the knowledge and understanding of what lay behind. My past informs my present and I can confidently say that I am a strong, resilient, and smart Indigenous woman. And I am ready to bring that strength, that resilience, and my voice to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan.

In last week's Throne Speech, we heard about the Sask government's agenda and vision for the province. This vision apparently does not include Saskatchewan's First Nation and Métis people as there was not a single mention of them or the issues that they continue to face.

The Throne Speech mentioned that population growth remains a key focus of this government. Well Indigenous people are one of the fastest growing demographics in Canada, and that is certainly true in Saskatchewan. I will remind this House that as of the 2016 census, there were 175,015 Indigenous people in Saskatchewan making up 16.3 per cent of the population. To neglect to even mention such a large segment of the population is disappointing and disheartening. At the same time it is perpetuating the systemic racism that is thriving in Saskatchewan.

This government promised a strong Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker,

we have to ask ourselves who they include in that vision. People are waiting. They are waiting for meaningful action on suicide prevention. They are waiting for a mental health strategy. They are waiting for increased harm reduction support. They are waiting for action on urgent housing supports. They are waiting. And unfortunately, based on what we heard in the Throne Speech, they will continue to wait.

Mr. Speaker, Canada and indeed Saskatchewan have lost too many daughters, sisters, mothers, and grandmothers. Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls hurts all of us. Too many families grapple with the sadness and despair brought on by the disappearance of or death of their loved ones. The government must take the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls seriously. We must protect and strengthen our communities. We must bring our girls home, Mr. Speaker.

While the Throne Speech was silent on reconciliation, it is one of the great challenges of this generation. In my role as a First Nation and Métis Relations critic, I will ensure that the Calls To Action are taken into account and the spirit of truth and reconciliation is honoured as we move towards a better working relationship between Indigenous people and all levels of government.

This government continues to undermine good relations with Indigenous communities. The most recent and shocking example is this government's move to auction off nine parcels of Crown land last week. Mr. Speaker, that's 1,822 acres in total. Since coming to power in 2007 this government has privatized over 1.1 million acres of Crown land in clear violation of treaty. This land not only belongs to future generations, it is the last connection that Indigenous communities have to their traditional land.

The Throne Speech described our economy as strong and resilient. These two words can also be used to describe Saskatchewan First Nation and Métis peoples. They have shown strength and resilience for centuries and continue to do so throughout the COVID-19 health crisis because frankly, Mr. Speaker, they have had to do so with minimal support and engagement from the Sask Party government. It is important and imperative that Indigenous voices are welcomed, meaningfully engaged, heard, and respected when critical decisions that affect them are being made.

Over the past 13 years I have witnessed the Sask Party government fail to address a myriad of intergovernmental concerns brought by the Indigenous leaders throughout Saskatchewan. While we grapple with the challenges of the present, we must always ensure that our future is secure. I will continue to be a strong voice for the needs and responsibilities that the government has to its people.

Mr. Speaker, while I take immense pride in the fact that I am a visible Indigenous woman who practices her Saulteaux and Cree customs, traditions, and ceremonies, I want to be clear that I am more than just a mark on a diversity checklist. I am here because I have the qualifications, knowledge, and experience to make a difference and to contribute in this Assembly.

I have lived in both worlds — mainstream and Indigenous. I have struggled and I have persevered, and I am excited to bring my perspective and experience to the Saskatchewan Legislative

Assembly. It is a privilege to work alongside my colleagues in opposition as we hold this government to account for the many issues facing the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, as a strong opposition we will not stand idly by as the Sask Party government continues its destructive record of cuts, scandals, and inaction. I will fight for this government to do better. That's why I can't in good conscience support this government's Throne Speech. Therefore I will be supporting the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of this historic, strong, diverse, and highly capable caucus, a caucus that features three Indigenous MLAs including myself, a caucus that is composed of a majority of women. I would like for the members opposite to know that I will always stand up for what I believe in while being a voice for my constituency and for my people.

However, I am also a collaborator and a bridge-builder. I am always willing to work in whatever capacity to find solutions that better Saskatchewan. I will work in good faith with anyone who shares these goals. While debate and disagreements are critical to the health of our democracy, we must remember that all of us are here to serve the people of Saskatchewan. I pledge to take on the difficult jobs and to work with integrity with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure that we do work in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan.

Miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that this Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:14.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Dustin Duncan
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Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
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Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
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