



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

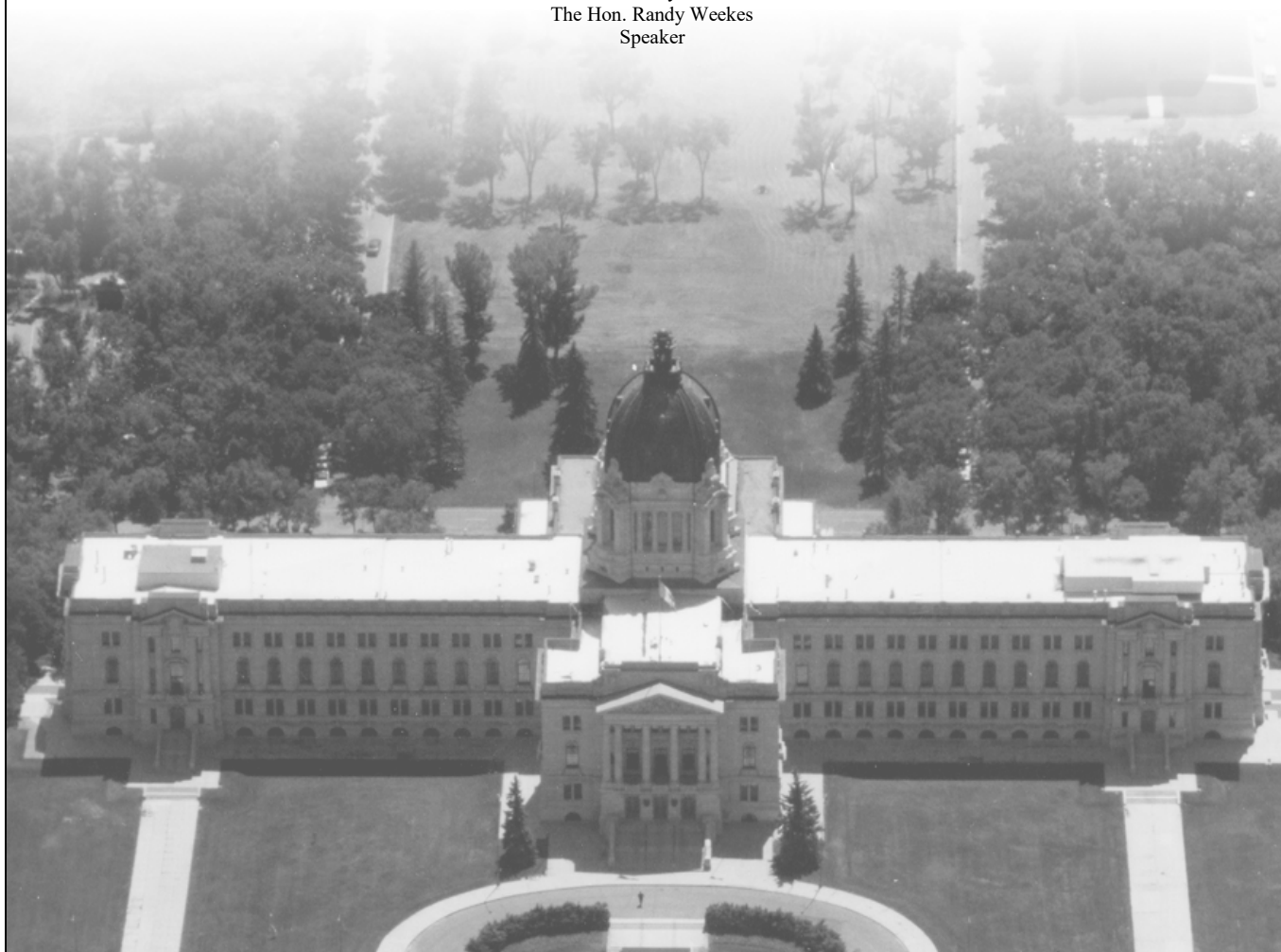
of the

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

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Belanger, Buckley — Athabasca (NDP)	Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)	Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)	McLeod, Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
Bradshaw, Hon. Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)	McMorris, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)	Meili, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan (SP)	Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)	Meyers, Derek — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Cockrill, Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)	Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)	Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Docherty, Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)	Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)	Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)	Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)	Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)	Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)	Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)	Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)	Skoropad, Dana — Arm River (SP)
Hargrave, Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Harbauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	Stewart, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
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Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)	Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)	Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)	Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)
Kaeding, Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)	Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)
Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	

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

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Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to present a petition calling for pay equity legislation. These citizens would wish to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan is one of only four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation; that Saskatchewan has one of the highest gender-wage gaps in Canada, which is the result of systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work that must be corrected with pay equity legislation; and that the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has recommended proactive and comprehensive pay equity legislation, which has not been pursued by the Government of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to read the prayer:

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

This particular petition is signed by individuals from Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Public Health Expert's Contributions to Province

Ms. Ritchie: — Dr. Nazeem Muhajarine is a professor of community health and epidemiology at the University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine and the co-director of Saskatchewan Population Health and Evaluation Research Unit.

He and his wife, Kathryn, settled in Saskatoon to raise their family and, despite many opportunities to move elsewhere, put down roots that are firmly planted in Saskatoon Nutana. Nazeem's father was a public health inspector in a Sri Lankan village where he grew up, and Nazeem chose to follow in his father's footsteps with a career in public health where he could focus on helping many people at once.

During the pandemic, Nazeem's expertise and knowledge has been greatly relied upon. Journalists seek his comments and policy-makers seek his advice. He has been vocal in the local media about the actions that should be taken to help curb the spread of COVID. He worked tirelessly on the Social Contours and COVID-19 survey, an essential project that provided recommendations to our public health officials on COVID-19.

I'm proud to call Nazeem my friend and ask that all members

join me in thanking him for everything he does to protect the health of Saskatchewan people, and recognizing his tremendous contributions to our province. Thank you.

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

Regina Air Traffic Control Tower Remains Open

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm immensely proud to stand in my place today to announce that the air traffic control tower at the Regina airport will remain open. Nav Canada has released a statement committing that there will be no site closures at air traffic control towers or flight service stations across the country.

Mr. Speaker, this was a team effort and there are many to thank. First I would like to recognize our Premier for raising this to the highest level, as well as our Minister of Highways who met with Nav Can and advocated on our behalf. I'd also like to thank Her Worship Mayor Sandra Masters of Regina, as well as the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Regina Airport Authority, James Bogusz, for their advocacy, and the many municipal leaders who joined in their call to keep the tower open. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the citizens of Regina who put their name on record to send a direct message to Nav Canada and our federal government.

This was a unifying concern for our city and our province. Mr. Speaker, the aviation industry will be a driving force in our economic recovery, and Nav Canada has made the right choice for Regina and Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

MacKenzie Art Gallery Appoints First Indigenous Person to Executive Position

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on World Art Day to recognize the historic announcement made by the MacKenzie Art Gallery just a few blocks from here in my constituency. In January, John G. Hampton was appointed as the new permanent executive director and CEO of this trail-blazing gallery, an important artistic institution.

John is a renowned curator, artist, and administrator who grew up in Regina and is well known throughout the Saskatchewan fine art community. Prior to studying and working throughout Canada, John studied visual arts at the U of R [University of Regina]. And in 2018 John joined the MacKenzie as director of programs and oversaw many innovative changes at the gallery. This work included new digital programs and activities, a Mitacs partnership with the U of R focused on decolonial curatorial practices, and the restructuring of the Indigenous advisory circle and the appointment of the gallery's first elder-in-residence, Betty McKenna.

John is the first Indigenous executive director and CEO of any public art gallery in Canada, a long overdue and substantial achievement. I call on all members to join me in congratulating John and the gallery on this historic accomplishment.

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

Second World War Veteran Plans Fundraising Walk for Children's Hospital

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to share a little bit from the real-life story of Frank Atchison, a Saskatoon resident born in Regina. Frank is a World War II veteran, retired business owner, and philanthropist. Frank volunteered to fight alongside his fellows for the freedom of others, and has carried on that tradition to this day. Mr. Speaker, alone we can accomplish a little, but together we can accomplish a lot.

As a 94-year-old, age has not wearied him, Mr. Speaker. And to continue his life of making a difference, Frank has set an ambitious goal to walk from Saskatoon to Regina by June 15th, his 95th birthday. Frank will be walking an average 5 kilometres per day and staying overnight in his motorhome. To celebrate his 95th birthday, Frank is inviting others to join him in supporting the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital. Frank has never been a man to just talk the talk, and now he is calling on others to join him as he walks the walk.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all members to join me in thanking Frank for his service to our country, and now his service to the children of our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Environment.

Melville Designated a Bioeconomy Development Opportunity Zone

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the city of Melville and Ecostrat were pleased to announce the issue of the first official bioeconomy development opportunity zone, the BDO zone. That's the first designation of this kind in North America. The A rating for wheat straw supply is expected to drive new market development for projects that can utilize Melville's over 300 000 tonnes of reliably produced wheat straw.

Ron McCullough, the city manager for the city of Melville, says they "... approached the BDO zone initiative because we are interested in attracting clean and green technology opportunities to Melville that can benefit from our abundant wheat straw, our efficient supply chain, and our existing and updated infrastructure."

The now-awarded A-rated BDO zone designation credibly signals to the world that Melville is a progressive community and investment ready. A BDO zone rating signals that the region has undergone rigorous and extensive due diligence using over a hundred standardized transparent and validated risk indicators based on the BSCR [biomass supply chain risk] standards for bio-based investment. A and AA BDO zone ratings identify areas in the country that are best positioned for low-risk bioeconomy project development.

Melville is once again uniquely positioned to attract any cleantech and ag tech opportunities that may come its way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatoon Tribal Council's sawēihtotān Project

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise in the House today to celebrate the government's continued partnership with Saskatoon Tribal Council on the sawēihtotān pilot project. The project began in fall of 2020 to help people who were displaced following the closure of City Centre Inn and Suites. sawēihtotān means "to bless each other through our show of respect for each other," and the project was formed to help people experiencing homelessness find stable and long-term housing.

During the first phase of the project, the team had nearly 500 interactions with people. They were offered daily health check-ins, meal delivery, and help securing transportation and housing. The sawēihtotān team also integrated support services offered through White Buffalo Youth Lodge and were able to find either short-term or long-term housing for over 75 people. This project team also helps reduce barriers to services such as detox.

Mr. Speaker, when the project first launched, we provided \$100,000 to the Saskatoon Tribal Council to support their work. I am proud to announce that we are building on this initial investment with an additional 350,000 to continue their great initiative. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the Saskatoon Tribal Council for their innovative and collaborative approach to helping people in need in downtown Saskatoon. I look forward to seeing the results of this continued partnership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Remembering Colby Cave

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in this Chamber to honour the anniversary of the sudden and tragic passing of Colby Cave last April 11th. Colby was a talented hockey player from The Battlefords who had just started what was expected to be a long NHL [National Hockey League] career. Prior to being drafted by the Boston Bruins, he played his junior hockey for the Swift Current Broncos. He joined the Edmonton Oilers in early 2019, which thrilled many Oilers fans in Saskatchewan. I believe our Premier is one of those Oilers fans.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, he suffered a brain bleed in April 2020 and died a few days later. Mr. Speaker, I remember last spring when his family returned to The Battlefords after losing Colby, and I remember how hundreds and hundreds of vehicles lined up along Highway 16 coming into North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, it was an amazing sign of unity and strength from a community to honour their hometown hero and his family.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of course out of tragedy often comes something good, and the Oilers and the Cave family have started the Colby Cave Memorial Fund which will be focused on community initiatives with an emphasis on mental health. I now ask all members to join me in honouring the memory of Colby Cave and extending condolences to his wife, Emily, and the

entire Gill and Cave families as they remember Colby. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on March the 4th, Saskatchewan physicians were presented with information showing that variants of concern were rising in the province and that that would lead to an increased number of cases, to unsustainable pressure on our health care system, to significant outbreaks. And they said that restrictions should not be relaxed. Mr. Speaker, on March the 9th, the Premier announced the restrictions would be relaxed, and he and the Health minister have defended that choice.

My question for the Premier is this: did he and the minister know this information, presented to doctors on March 4th, when they made that decision on the 9th of March?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was in early March where we did remove the restrictions on many parts of the province, Mr. Speaker. Through conversations that we had, we also realized that the variants at that point in time were highly concentrated in one area of the province, Mr. Speaker. And through the conversations that we had with Public Health, we continued to enact restrictions here in our capital city, in the city of Regina, where we had a higher proportion of those variants, much higher than anywhere else in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Over time, yes, the variant forms of COVID that are more contagious will be the predominant form in Saskatchewan, like they are in many other parts of Canada and around the world, save for maybe some places that are further ahead in their vaccination program.

Mr. Speaker, we most certainly, all throughout our response to this COVID pandemic, have enacted restrictions in various areas of the province when required, across the province when required, and most certainly are making every effort to ensure that we're going to find our way through this pandemic by providing the vaccines that we receive as quickly as possible to the people of this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier admits, he admits that he knew the variants were on the rise. And yet he reduced restrictions everywhere, including in Regina, Mr. Speaker. Why? Why, knowing how badly things went in November when he relaxed restrictions, when he didn't act, when he ignored the modelling in place in November? How many people needlessly died during the second wave? Why, when he knew what had happened in November, did he do the exact same thing in March?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Many differences between what we were working with in November versus what we are working with in March or even today, Mr. Speaker. In November, yes, variants are one of those differences, but in November we had no access to vaccines. In March we had some access to vaccines, and it was continuing to come on an increasing basis.

I would go back to when we started vaccinating here in this province. And I think the Minister of Health read this into the record yesterday, Mr. Speaker. It took us 89 days to deliver the first 100,000 doses of vaccines. That was after November, starting in mid- to late-December. The second 100,000 doses, to get us up to 200,000, only took us 19 days. So we went from 89 to 19 days to deliver 100,000 doses.

Mr. Speaker, we achieved 300,000 doses delivered in the province earlier this week. That would be our third 100,000 allotment of doses. That one took us 13 days. So we went from 89 days, 19 days, 13 days, Mr. Speaker, and we're just starting to set pace.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, how incredibly disappointing. This Premier can't take an ounce of responsibility. He won't show an ounce of remorse. Since that Premier made that decision on March the 19th, 7,000 people in this province have contracted COVID-19. Since that Premier made that decision, over 60 people have died of COVID-19 in this province. That's more than twice as many that died in the entire lead-up to November 1st.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of the families who have lost loved ones, on behalf of everyone who's going to be struggling for months ahead because of the decisions this Premier has made, will he finally take responsibility, admit that relaxing those restrictions on March the 9th was a mistake? Will he apologize? Would he still not change a single thing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would first and foremost offer my condolences to all of the families that have lost a loved one, in many cases far too soon here in the province, many of those to COVID. Many loved ones we've lost this past year have been to other illnesses, ailments, or other causes, Mr. Speaker. And we most certainly, this government, myself, offer our condolences to all of those, including those that are currently working their way through certain illnesses.

Mr. Speaker, as far as what we are going to do different from November, Mr. Speaker, we're doing that. We've vaccinated now over 300,000 people here in the province of Saskatchewan. We're leading the nation of Canada with our vaccination rollout, Mr. Speaker. And just recently, this morning I was looking at a report where Canada has markedly picked up their vaccination levels over the course of the last week or two, Mr. Speaker, to the point that Canada is now the second among G20 [Group of 20] countries, next to the United States of America, in the vaccine delivery over the course of the past week.

We all know that Saskatchewan is leading Canada. The people of this province can be very proud of the vaccine rollout that is occurring here, and that's thanks to the front-line health care workers across the province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so sick and tired of these stale, outdated talking points, always trying to change the topic, Mr. Speaker. The minister said that the variants threw them a curveball, Mr. Speaker. Well this isn't a curveball. And the curve isn't flat; it's rising exponentially.

And the Premier knew that that was coming. He saw the modelling. He had the information. This isn't a game, Mr. Speaker. These are real people's lives, real people's lives. Hundreds have died. Thousands more are sick and struggling. Our ICUs [intensive care unit] are packed. Our health care workers are burning out. Can the Premier finally admit that he got it wrong, or does he really have no shame whatsoever?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's a variant or whether it's the original COVID virus, Mr. Speaker, the vaccines that are offered, all four vaccines that are approved here in Canada, are all very, very effective at ensuring that we are protected, Mr. Speaker — not only those that get the vaccine but by extension those that are around those that received the vaccine.

That's why we have focused, that's why we have focused on ensuring that as we receive those vaccines, we provide them to the people of this province to the point now where in this province, Mr. Speaker, we have 82 per cent of those over 70 years of age have now received their vaccine in Saskatchewan. 71 per cent of those over 60 years of age, 56 per cent of those over 50.

In fact, if you go right down to 18, Mr. Speaker — understanding that we've done a number of our first responders and front-line health care workers — 18 and over, those that are eligible for the vaccine, Mr. Speaker, 29 per cent of Saskatchewan residents have now received their vaccine.

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

Staffing in Long-Term Care Facilities

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, last night in committee I had a chance to dig into this government's broken campaign promise to hire 300 continuing care aids. The Minister for Seniors confirmed what many people have been saying for years, and I'd like to quote him directly. He said, "... we know we need more health care workers in this province in general, regardless of whether there's a pandemic or not."

Mr. Speaker, how refreshing it is to finally hear some honesty, to get actual answers to good questions that Saskatchewan people care about. With reports that we've all heard of single care aids providing care to 27 residents at a time, with the fire department being called in to provide relief for overwhelmed front-line workers, if the minister knows that we need more health care

workers — he's literally the one at the table where these decisions are made — how does cutting \$12 million from this year's funding promise to hire these workers accomplish that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, in response to the member opposite's question, we do need more health care workers, and we've needed more health care workers for, you know, a number of years. We've been building upon that to the complement of health care staff in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the number of staff working in long-term care, for example, is an increase by 700 since 2007. That's an 11 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. In 2019-2020 we have more than 5,000 continuing care aids working in long-term care in this province. That's more than 370, Mr. Speaker, compared to 2007. More than 2,100 nurses of all designations, Mr. Speaker, that are working in this province, Mr. Speaker. That's an increase of 350 over 2007.

And the member opposite is correct. We do have a campaign commitment to hire an additional 300 continuing care aids as part of that election commitment. And we will be hiring the first 108 of those continuing care aids in this year's budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but here's what I don't understand: if the Sask Party thought we needed 300 care aids in October of this past year — not 2007; October, before the second wave of COVID ravaged our care homes — how do we need less now?

Here's what else we learned last night. The minister told us that continuing care aids promised on the campaign were there to backfill existing staff shortages, and that no staff were added in response to COVID-19. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable information coming from this government.

Other provinces chose to invest millions to staff up their long-term care facilities to give their seniors a fighting chance, but this government didn't invest one thin dime. Why?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's not what I said. If the member opposite would check the record, that's not what I said. What I said last night, Mr. Speaker, was in this election that we just came through, the Government of Saskatchewan committed to hiring an additional 300 continuing care aids. In this year's budget we have \$6 million committed to hiring the first 108 continuing care aids, Mr. Speaker.

But what I said in the estimates last night: the member opposite asked a question about vacancies. And then I answered that question, provided him with some information as to the current number of vacancies as far as our most recent statistics dating back to last fall, Mr. Speaker. Three hundred continuing care aids in our election commitment.

This has nothing to do with backfilling openings in continuing care aid positions in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have a need for more care aids in this province. We recognize that need. And this is a challenge that is faced by many provinces across this country, trying to recruit and retain health care workers. And it's a challenge that this government is up to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, happy to go further into the comments from last night. I asked the minister what specific steps were taken to increase staffing levels during the response to COVID-19. The minister talked about masking. He talked about temperature checks. He talked about staff cohorting.

These are all important things, but he could not point to a single thing that this government has done to increase staffing in response to COVID-19. No pandemic staff and a third of what was promised to backfill the short-staffed front lines. This is wrong and it betrays the hard-working staff who have put themselves on the line to protect others, many getting sick themselves in the line of duty.

Mr. Speaker, \$6 million this year does nothing. It doesn't even scratch the surface of what is needed to fix short-staffing. As a start today, will the minister commit to providing the full \$18.4 million promised in the campaign?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to begin by thanking all the health care workers in this province who have done a fantastic job throughout COVID-19, whether it's through testing, contact tracing, and today offering vaccinations at a record pace that we are seeing — a nation-leading pace that we are seeing, Mr. Speaker — with respect to the vaccinations in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to make investments into care and to long-term care and staffing in this province. Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, we have a commitment to hire 300 of the continuing care aids as part of our election commitment; 108 we are working on hiring this year. We'll hire the remaining continuing care aids as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this is a recruitment challenge across the country — health care workers in great demand right now. This is a global pandemic, Mr. Speaker, affecting nations across the globe. And here in Canada we're trying our very best here in Saskatchewan to make sure that we are staffed up as best possible and supporting our health care workers, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Education during COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. Beck: — Already in April, the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] website lists 37 schools with COVID-19 outbreaks, from Carnduff to Lloydminster. What makes this more alarming is that schools were closed for Easter for half of that time and

many more were on remote learning. Speaking of Easter, the government acknowledges their inaction has led to a spike in COVID transmission over the Easter break, and we're starting to see the repercussions.

Maybe hindsight is 20/20, Mr. Speaker, but without an iota of foresight, the Sask Party has no plan for COVID, for jobs, and for our schools. I'm hearing from working people, unions, and from the education sector that this government has failed them. When will this government go back to the drawing board, recognize the risk that our school staff and students are working in, and get staff the vaccines that they need?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, we certainly do have a plan in working with our school divisions to ensure that students, for as much as possible, can be safely in classrooms with their teachers, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's evident in the fact that 80 per cent of schools are at level 2 where students are in class each and every day, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, school exposures have resulted in the smallest proportion of contacts that then become a positive case. This means that public health measures in schools are working and have resulted in extremely low transmission in these settings.

Mr. Speaker, I also know I've received correspondence, in particular from teachers and from the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] and from school divisions as it relates to Regina, Mr. Speaker. I would just say that today, right now, 25 per cent of teachers and education staff are eligible for the vaccine, and I would encourage them to go get vaccinated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — The Minister of Education says that he's listening. Well on Monday, the Regina Catholic School Board passed a motion requesting that staff be vaccinated at the earliest possible time. Further it reads, "The Regina Catholic School Board will provide the necessary logistical support to the health region to facilitate staff vaccinations."

This school board is sounding the alarm to protect their staff, and this shouldn't come as a surprise to the minister. The board sent a letter saying as much to the SHA and the ministers of Health and Education. Surely this has come across that minister's desk. Mr. Speaker, will he listen to boards, or will he continue to ignore them?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the current rate of vaccination pace here in Regina, nearly 60 per cent of education staff in the Queen City will be eligible for vaccinations in likely less than a week, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, the eligibility age in Regina is going to drop to 46 tomorrow. I believe it's going to drop to 48 across the entire province. Mr. Speaker, this plan is the quickest plan in terms of

vaccinating the general population in all of Canada, and teachers and all education staff can benefit from that, Mr. Speaker. As I said, today in Regina 25 per cent of teachers and other education staff are eligible, and I would urge them, go out today and get vaccinated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, it's not just one school board either. More and more school boards are appealing to that minister. The self-congratulatory tone from this government while dozens of schools have outbreaks, is simply out of touch. Maybe some numbers will drive this point home: hundreds of schools with outbreaks to date; the 37 outbreaks in April affect over 15,000 people — 15,000 people working and learning directly in this chaos, never mind all the families and caregivers left in the lurch. School boards are bending over backwards to keep people safe.

Mr. Speaker, I am not asking that minister to bend over backwards; I'm asking him to stand up and do his job. Can the minister stop dusting off the tired, old Sask Party talking points and dust off some vaccines and some rapid tests instead?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, at the current rate of vaccination pace, 60 per cent within the next week, likely less than a week in Regina, will be eligible for vaccination, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the STF alone has 13,500 members. Where does the member opposite suppose that the Ministry of Health and the SHA get those vaccinations, Mr. Speaker? We have to take them from someone else, Mr. Speaker, which will delay the entire vaccination plan for the rest of the province, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that this pandemic has had an impact on the education sector, Mr. Speaker. It's had an impact on 1.1 million people living in this province, Mr. Speaker. And I thank our teachers and I thank our school divisions for the hard work that they are doing, Mr. Speaker. But I would quote from Tony Baldwin, from the director of education from Prairie South, who says:

It would be easier for me if we didn't have people with opposite opinions to the medical health folks — who are supporting school divisions out there — in the media making anxieties worse for parents and staff. It absolutely stirs up anxiety.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to do that.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I have so much to say to that minister's response, but let's start here. Let's start here. He might want to check in with those school boards and ask what medical advice they're getting, because I don't think he's listening, Mr. Speaker. And I suggest he dust off that letter and give it a read while he's talking about the autonomy of boards. This would be a good time to stand up and actually put those words into action.

Mr. Speaker, our schools have missed so many days in the classroom so far. There are only just over two months left. Does he really think we have another month to go for our staff in our schools? Mr. Speaker, that answer is simply not enough, and I suggest he actually start listening to those boards.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, 617 schools are currently at level 2 in the classroom, Mr. Speaker. That's nearly 80 per cent of schools where kids and teachers are in the classroom. Tony Baldwin went on to say that Prairie South and Holy Trinity Catholic met with two doctors from southern Saskatchewan, who were very confident that it is very safe to reopen schools, Mr. Speaker. He went on to say:

We're committed to making data-based decisions using the advice of the medical health officers and public health system in Saskatchewan and not worrying about the emotional piece . . . I know it's making it much more difficult for my staff, and I believe it's also making it quite a bit more difficult for parents.

Mr. Speaker, school divisions, and in fact the entire province, is having to make very difficult decisions in the midst of a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I believe that our kids are safe in the classroom, and that is demonstrated by the fact that 80 per cent of students today are in the classroom.

Procurement and Saskatchewan Companies

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of emotional, yesterday I asked about this government's dismal record of supporting local companies and workers when it comes to procurement. But instead of answers, I got tired, 14-year-old talking points from the Crowns minister about how things were back in the day.

I'd remind that minister that three short years after he was called to the bar, the most inept government in the history of this province took over, a government whose actions had a great deal to do with the choices made in the 1990s. And you know, I would be prepared for that conversation, Mr. Speaker, if those members are prepared to defend the Devine-era incompetence and culture of corruption which extends all the way to the GTH [Global Transportation Hub].

But, Mr. Speaker, I believe Saskatchewan people aren't interested in ancient history. They're interested in the here and now. So what is this government going to do to ensure that our workers and our companies are the ones who build our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again as the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] mentioned yesterday, we need to put this in perspective. In Crown corporations in the province, Mr. Speaker, 84 per cent of government contracts for procurement are awarded

to Saskatchewan companies. Mr. Speaker, in Highways it's over 90 per cent.

Of the stimulus packages, of the projects that have been awarded to date, about 95 per cent go to Saskatchewan companies, Mr. Speaker. And in some instances where it's not Saskatchewan companies, outside contractors still hire Saskatchewan subcontractors, Mr. Speaker, so many jobs are being created.

Mr. Speaker, I also want us to recognize the fact that there are many companies in Saskatchewan that do business outside our borders. Mr. Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] would have us lock down our borders, not honour trade agreements, Mr. Speaker. We have companies in this province that we respect, that do incredible work, and need access to other provinces, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, if they're so proud of their record, it's questionable why they won't just commit. Because, Mr. Speaker, an infrastructure plan without Sask-first procurement is an infrastructure plan for faraway companies in faraway lands. In Paris, in Montreal, C-suite executives are raising a toast to the Sask Party and saying merci beaucoup [Translation: thank you very much] for all that this government does to ignore Saskatchewan workers, and the jobs and taxpayer dollars just continue to flow out of province.

We've lost 23,000 jobs and there is no plan to get any of them back, and no plan to make sure our people are at the front of the line when these infrastructure dollars flow. So, Mr. Speaker, what if anything is the Sask Party going to do differently to ensure that these dollars boost the economy of the land of the living skies and don't sashay away to La Belle Province or gay Paree?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP says one thing and does another. Mr. Speaker, here's a document the NDP don't want you to see. The member opposite, the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Regina University, Mr. Speaker, she thinks that under no circumstance should government do business with any businesses or hire people outside the province, Mr. Speaker, even though we're all one country.

But guess what, Mr. Speaker? My campaign manager was a volunteer from Harris, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite from Regina University's campaign manager was a hired gun, Mr. Speaker, from Vancouver, BC [British Columbia]. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the GOTV [get out the vote] management was from Edmonton, Alberta. The Leader of the Opposition from Saskatoon Meewasin, the campaign manager, well you would assume it's a volunteer from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. No, no, it's a hired gun from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, the NDP does one thing, says another.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 30 — *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to move, at the conclusion of these remarks, second reading of *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*. The Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive, or STSI, was introduced in 2018 to offer a non-refundable 45 per cent tax credit to individuals, corporations, and venture capital funds that invest in eligible technology start-ups.

As Saskatchewan's economy continues to recover from the pandemic, our government is committed to creating a competitive business environment that stimulates growth and drives that recovery. The legislation we introduce today will support this objective by extending the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive for five years. It will increase investment in early-stage tech companies that brings new products to market and creates jobs in the province.

The amendments will also support the government's commitment to triple the growth of the province's technology sector by 2030. Over the last three years the STSI has been effective in addressing the funding gap that start-up companies experience when trying to attract investment. Access to capital is a significant barrier to growth in the tech sector, but when that growth happens, it can be rapid. By reducing these barriers to capital access, the STSI has enhanced the competitiveness of Saskatchewan companies and helped retain innovative start-ups who, prior to the launch of the program, were leaving Saskatchewan to seek capital elsewhere.

Since launching in 2018, \$22 million of private investment has been attracted. In other words, the program has leveraged \$3.40 of Saskatchewan investment for every dollar of tax credits approved. This investment, Mr. Speaker, has accelerated the growth of our tech companies, creating 144 new jobs among 62 eligible start-ups.

The program has also increased the size of the province's investor pool. One hundred and eighty-four investors have been approved under the STSI with the majority being new to angel investing. The response to the STSI pilot has been overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of industry stakeholders strongly supporting the continuation of the program. Not only did we create new jobs and enable companies to scale up, we also attracted new and hopefully repeat investors in the province that will be key to our long-term growth and prosperity.

It's clear the province's tech sector is gaining momentum. The Canadian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association reported that Saskatchewan companies received a record amount of investment in 2019, attracting \$114 million. Leading this investment shift was Vendasta, a software firm from Saskatoon who raised \$40 million in the largest tech sector investment recorded on the prairies. The company is committed to doubling

its workforce by the end of this year from 300 employees to over 600 employees.

In 2019 the sector also saw the launch of a \$30 million venture capital fund by Conexus, to support the province's next big tech start-ups. One company with this potential is Saskatoon-based SalonScale whose app is used by over seven thousand hair colourists all over the world. The company has created 14 new positions since raising \$1 million in 2019, a portion of which came from STSI investors.

Although the tech sector has experienced a slowdown in investment in 2020 due to the pandemic, the province continues to see the emergence of innovative tech firms despite these challenges. Eight early-stage start-ups completed significant seed grants over the last year, attracting over \$5.5 million in investment. 54e Dev Studios was one of these companies. The Regina-based start-up raised \$1.7 million in 2020 and has grown to 25 employees.

These are just a few examples of the many growing technology companies in our province. They represent the value of the sector and demonstrate that we can build strong and resilient tech companies here in Saskatchewan. A tech sector labour market and economic impact study from last summer confirms that the tech sector has experienced exceptional growth since 2010. The sector has become a significant economic driver in Saskatchewan, generating \$10.2 billion in revenue each year.

The study clearly highlights the Saskatchewan advantage: a competitive tax structure, a lower cost of living, and a robust tech sector embracing start-ups, small businesses, and large corporate players. It found that Saskatchewan is home to over 5,000 tech companies, and the sector is a large employer supporting over 52,000 workers in the province. With 75 per cent of newly hired tech workers coming from Saskatchewan, there's a lot of opportunity for people here and those who want to move here.

[14:15]

Furthermore, with the labour force peaking in the 25-to-39 age group, the sector is creating opportunities for young people to stay and build their future here in Saskatchewan. As industries across the province have increasingly turned to technology and innovation during the pandemic, Saskatchewan's tech sector will continue to play a pivotal role in our province's future prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's technology sector is expanding. We want to see this rapid growth continue. Prior to 2018, Saskatchewan was the only province without an investor tax credit program for technology-based start-ups. When we introduced the STSI, it was the most competitive tax credit of its type in the country. We remain committed to fostering an environment that will encourage the sector's expansion.

To do this, we are making several amendments to the STSI legislation in response to feedback from the sector. These changes will enhance the program's effectiveness. In addition to extending the program for five years, we are increasing the amount of capital a start-up can raise under the program from \$1 million to \$2 million. This will attract larger investments into the tech sector and support the growth of ag tech start-ups, which tend to be more capital intensive and require greater upfront

investment. This change will also increase the number of start-ups reaching later stages of financing and put them in a better position to scale their operations.

We're also extending the investment holding period from two to three years to encourage longer term investments. This will ensure the capital stays in companies long enough to have a meaningful impact on their ability to grow, thereby increasing their success rate. In keeping with the pace of investment, we're going to set the value of the annual tax credit cap at \$2.5 million. This is consistent with the funding levels in the STSI pilot. And for the purposes of tracking the program's return on investment, we are going to extend the annual return filing requirements from two to four years.

In under three years, the STSI has demonstrated its value in reducing the barriers to capital access and accelerating the growth of the province's most innovative firms. The program has the unanimous support of the tech sector, a sector that has become a cornerstone of our economic growth. We're confident that the program will support the province's economic recovery and create the conditions that allow tech companies to thrive.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 30 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join in on the second reading of Bill No. 30, *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*.

Initially I know many families in our province are struggling for finding good-paying jobs. And it's important any time we can have companies who want to either have the start-up . . . and here's a program where this amendment will extend a program. From the minister's comments he's hoping, and I know the province is hoping, that this bill will continue to help companies invest in technology, as he's talked about in some of his comments, and get some good-paying jobs for Saskatchewan people.

Especially with COVID, we know in the province the job numbers haven't been very positive, so that minister has been responsible for a lot of those jobs. And hopefully this is something that will help families get a good-paying job and be able to provide for their families.

And whether it's bringing newcomers or Saskatchewan residents to take training, we have many institutes who do great training. They can train staff to be ready to work with the industry, technology companies, and do whatever they need to do to make sure Saskatchewan people . . . And again I want to focus on a lot of that. Sometimes our First Nation, our Métis, our northern people need an opportunity too. And I think this is a good opportunity for them to look at an industry, if it's moving in a positive way and there's more incentives to be able to help companies, maybe there's some opportunity for Saskatchewan residents to have a good-paying job to provide for their families.

I know the critic and my colleagues will have more questions. I know there's going to be opportunity to ask questions and seeing how important, and who did they consult with, and is this something that's really working. And obviously we'll see the numbers and over time you'll tell. They're increasing some of the dollars, and some of the reporting requirements from two years to, I believe, four years if I heard the minister right.

So to me, I don't want to go on long. I know the critic will have more to say. My colleagues will. And we'll get a chance in committee to talk about this and see what kind of numbers. I've been very positive with this. And hopefully again companies come here and we give good-paying jobs to Saskatchewan residents who deserve to have a good living wage to provide for themselves because unfortunately sometimes the government hasn't been doing that, and many families in our province have been let down by this Sask Party government.

So I'm prepared, Mr. Speaker, to adjourn debate on Bill No. 30, *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 29 — *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act*

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And at the conclusion of my remarks I'll be moving second reading of Bill No. 29, *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act*.

Mr. Speaker, our government has been working with the business community very closely throughout the course of this pandemic. We know the economic challenges caused by COVID-19 restrictions have had a significant impact on businesses in the province. And because of that, we've introduced a number of programs to support businesses over the past year as they navigate these challenges, including the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment, the Re-Open Saskatchewan training subsidy, the strong recovery adaptation rebate, and the tourism sector support program, amongst others. Mr. Speaker, we also provided \$1 million to the Regina Chamber of Commerce to support their Together We Stand campaign to encourage Saskatchewan residents to support local small businesses.

We've taken further steps to support the restaurant sector specifically. On March 28th, an emergency order went into effect capping the amount food-delivery service providers can charge restaurants. The emergency order expires on April the 30th. Mr. Speaker, prior to the caps being introduced last month, rates for such delivery services were as high as 30 per cent, or even more in some cases. Normally restaurants would bear these costs because delivery makes a small percentage of sales, and they make this investment to ultimately get more people through the

door.

However, these are certainly not normal times. During the pandemic, restaurants have needed to pivot to increase, and sometimes exclusively offer, pick-up or delivery services to meet public health restrictions. This shift in delivery and pick-up sales has further eroded the profit margin on each sale in an environment where sales were already impacted. Other jurisdictions have implemented similar measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, as have some US [United States] states and cities.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we are introducing this legislation that extends the cap on food-delivery fees from May the 1st until August the 31st. Third-party ordering and delivery providers continue to offer a vital service to restaurants during the pandemic, but at a high cost to the restaurants' profits. This extension provides a longer period of support to restaurants who have had to shift much of their business to online delivery and pick-up orders.

The caps and legislation remain the same as those in the emergency order, and under these caps food-delivery service providers can charge a maximum of 18 per cent of the order price for services that include delivery. They can charge a maximum of 10 per cent when restaurants use a third-party ordering app but consumers pick up the order themselves or restaurants fulfill the delivery. This applies to delivery-service businesses that provide services to 50 or more restaurants.

These caps mean more money remains with restaurants. It acknowledges the major shift restaurants have had to make in response to public health restrictions and changing consumer preferences during the pandemic. And I would note as well the Minister Responsible for SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] made a significant announcement, I believe yesterday, that will allow for alcohol to be delivered as well with sales, which is a significant change.

The Act also provides further clarification to existing emergency order provisions. It clarifies that caps apply to pre-PST [provincial sales tax] order prices, and caps only apply for delivery services offered through restaurants that usually would offer dine-in eating facilities. Businesses such as grocery stores or virtual kitchens are not included in the cap. The legislation also establishes the authority for government to administer fines for businesses that do not comply with the cap through regulation.

Mr. Speaker, these remain challenging times for the hospitality sector. *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act* offers one more support that our government can extend to restaurants to help them through the pandemic. We will continue working with the hospitality sector and all businesses throughout the pandemic through this economic recovery.

And I want to personally thank Jim Bence, who's the CEO of Hospitality Saskatchewan, for the work that he has done and the advocacy on behalf of his members over the course of the entirety of the pandemic, but who I worked very, very closely with on the drafting of both the emergency order and this statute as well. And it's to them whom the credit goes.

I suspect the members opposite will take credit or seek to take credit. And that's fine. They're in opposition. They can. But the real credit belongs to Hospitality Saskatchewan, who raised this matter far in advance of any tweet from the members opposite. So, Mr. Speaker, to them I say thank you. We've appreciated working very much with Jim and his team.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 29, *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act*. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 29 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on Bill 29, *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act*. Initially I have some comments, but again I wish to say thank you to the minister for giving credit to the official opposition for working and getting this done. So I want to thank him for that. That was very good. And a positive thing, you know, he talked about the association's director or CEO helping him draft the legislation and working on behalf of . . . [inaudible] . . . I'd like to thank the gentleman as well for the good work for the restaurants.

We know these are challenging times for restaurants, and to make, you know . . . They have their employees and they have all the costs and expenses that are going on. And we on this side, I've heard some of my colleagues talk about exactly the issues that restaurants are sharing with them and the struggles. And you keep taking away dollars from them for cost. At some point it causes too much challenge for them, the cost, affordability.

So to have a cap on delivery services, I think in light of this, from May until August 31st I think is what the minister said, if I'm correct on what he said . . . I was trying to pay attention to his second reading to get information that I can, but I think it's very positive from this side as well as the government side, that it's a positive thing for the restaurants. It's taking care of them and we're hearing what they're saying. There's not many times I agree with the government, that it hears much of what Saskatchewan people are saying, but in this case I think we, as the minister said, you know, back and forth, we're kind of working on it. So again we'll do what we can do to support this.

Whether this is something that needs to be permanent, I don't know if they're going to look at that later on or amending it to give it a deadline, a date. Maybe later on it can be permanent. I don't know if that's something they're going to work on. But I know my colleagues on this side, I know the critic will have more to say about this, and there'll be a chance, any questions in committee as this bill goes through.

Again giving industry and reaching out to them, I hope we hear positive things. So if the industry out there, restaurant industry wants to share with the members opposite, that would be great. Get hold of us and give us your ideas, and if we want to, we can pass them on to the government. And again as the minister said, it seems like this opposition likes to work with constituents to help the government realize they're wrong, so we'll continue to do that as the minister has asked us to do, and we'll do our job as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to do that.

So really, I don't have much more to say about this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I'm prepared to adjourn debate on Bill 29, *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act*. At this time I adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Merriman that **Bill No. 3 — *The Massage Therapy Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What a lively and spirited Thursday it is here today. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 3, *The Massage Therapy Act*, on behalf of the official opposition.

And now before I begin, I'd like to just take a moment to recognize the RMTs [registered massage therapist] and workers in this sector who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 both due to the nature of their work, which of course involves prolonged close physical contact, putting themselves of course at increased health risk. And many of them have made the decision to close due to these risks or simply due to the fact that they have found themselves underemployed due to the nature of COVID-19. So I did want to just take a moment and recognize these hard-working entrepreneurs and professionals who are out there and struggling right now due to this unfortunate and ongoing pandemic.

To the legislation, Mr. Speaker, this legislation has been a long time in the making and the move to regulate the sector is certainly welcome. We do of course have some questions around what the consultation process looks like. There are, I believe, three different professional organizations associated with RMTs, and I know members of each of those organizations will of course have a diversity of opinions as well as a desire to be genuinely engaged and consulted on this legislation.

[14:30]

It has taken quite some time to get to this point so it is important that . . . I guess we're not getting it done quickly but we get it done right. Recognizing the diversity in the sector is incredibly important. As we all know, there are RMTs who work in environments that would be more closely related to spas and aesthetics and those who function essentially as paramedical professionals and work in a much more therapeutic field.

As we look at this legislation, it will be interesting going forward

to see how it lines up with what other provinces have done and how we can harmonize this with several frameworks. I do know as well that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has raised some concerns about this current bill and has proposed a number of changes to the Act that certainly he and we hope that the minister implements quickly.

So in regard to that, Mr. Speaker, again, I did just want to take a moment and recognize all of these entrepreneurs in the province who are finding themselves working at heightened risk, if working at all, and many finding themselves underemployed. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 3, *The Massage Therapy Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 4

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. McMorris that **Bill No. 4 — *The Construction Codes Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition to Bill No. 4, *The Construction Codes Act*. So with these amendments to *The Construction Codes Act*, we're going to see *The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act* repealed and replaced. And that, as I understand it, is going to allow the government to develop regulations specific to construction standards and building accessibility for persons with disabilities. That, Mr. Speaker, is something that I had some recent experience dealing with as I was establishing my office for my constituency in Saskatoon Nutana. And I'll have some comments about that in a moment.

The new Act also allows for independent judgments of construction codes. You know, there's some things there that we want to make sure we get the balance right on, particularly in cases where there is disagreements in interpretation of the Act, as I understand it, and some of those items coming forward from building owners and operators. And also this Act is going to modernize permitting and inspection programs for large industrial developments.

You know, obviously of course we support accessibility. We feel that this is a very timely piece of legislation that we would've liked to have seen earlier. And it's one that we've been doing consultation on ourselves, hearing from groups who are living with disabilities to understand what their needs and requirements are. And our critic for the area was able to meet with about 60 groups in that engagement and hear about their concerns.

And much of the specifics for which these accessibility standards will include in the regulations is something we won't see until after the bill has passed in the Assembly, so we're interested to

continue to ask questions on that going forward. And you know, we also know that this government is always looking to cut employment and labour standards, and so we want to make sure that with any of these so-called red tape reduction measures that we're not compromising the health and safety of Saskatchewan people.

And I was just remarking a moment ago that I had had the opportunity as I was establishing my office in Saskatoon Nutana . . . We wanted to identify a space that was going to be safe for my staff to work out of and were very happy to find a space on Broadway — it's called the Broadway Collective — and was very happy to move into this space which was going to ensure a collegial work environment, one where my staff person wouldn't be isolated.

But it's also a heritage building and so as a heritage building, of course, it doesn't conform to modern standards of accessibility. And that was, you know, a great concern to my office because we know we do have many elderly people who do like to visit our office, obviously, particularly when they have concerns about issues that concern provincial government. And you know, of course right now that's not the case. All of our meetings are virtual and people phone and make an appointment. And so the accessibility issue isn't sort of front and centre right now, but you know, once we resume sort of normal office hours and operation, obviously accessibility is an important consideration.

And you know, we were very happy to be able to consult with the disabilities council on what their recommendations were for ensuring accessibility to this heritage building office environment, and then work with the building owners to identify a resolution to the issue to provide access through the building of a wheelchair ramp and some other measures.

But I learned a lot from that process and, you know, it's I think really kind of helped me to be able to engage in the debate on this particular bill, to understand those needs of those who live with disabilities, and wanting to ensure that they do have barrier-free access and that it is offered in a way that ensures that they receive the same level of service as anybody else in our communities. And so I was very grateful for that opportunity to learn about, you know, the implications of these kinds of situations and ensure that we are working directly with the people who are affected by these sorts of issues to ensure that, you know, we were coming up with the solution that is going to meet the need and ensure fairness and accessibility to all.

So I just wanted to offer those comments to, you know, provide sort of a real-life example to how important this kind of legislation is. Of course I want to make sure that, you know, we get this legislation, get it right, and that it's being informed by consultation with people who live with disabilities to ensure that we're meeting their needs. I know that our critic for this bill will have much more to say as it goes into committee. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 4, *The Construction Codes Act*. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 12

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. L. Ross that **Bill No. 12 — *The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Amendment Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to enter into debate on Bill 12, *The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Amendment Act*. And I've got great news for everyone in the Assembly and for everyone watching from home. I've got nothing but positive things to say about this bill and about the great folks at Wanuskewin Heritage Park.

And I want to share just a couple of stories. The first one is from several years ago. You know, as a teacher who's currently on leave and serving here instead of in the classroom, I think it's about seven or eight years ago, Mr. Speaker, I did a trip to Wanuskewin. And lots of teachers go there and, you know, the teacher instinct in me wants to ask those in the room right now to raise your hands if you've been. I won't do that, but I will say if you haven't been there, you've got to go. And if you've been several years ago to Wanuskewin, go again because the changes, the improvements, the playground, they've done additions. And it's really a world-class space that we should all be very proud of that exists right here in Saskatchewan. It is just a phenomenal place.

But back to my field trip. I did lots of field trips there over the years, learning about Indigenous games, art, history, you know, the history of the First Peoples of Turtle Island — really powerful learning. But on this particular trip I want to tell you about, Mr. Speaker, it was an overnight trip and I had students, I think probably around 24 students with me that year. We stayed overnight in teepees; they have a teepee circle there. And the thing that made this particularly unique is that it was the middle of December and it was extremely cold, and the experience of that was profound. It was something that stuck with me.

In particular, I remember waking up at probably 3, 3:30 in the morning and our fire was out and we were all freezing. And you know, there was just a little ember of fire left and I managed . . . As all of the students in the teepee remained asleep, I was able to get the fire going and we made it through the night. Two of the teepees did have to go and sleep in the building, but we had chaperones along to make sure that was going to be okay. But you know, it was such a memorable time as a teacher to be there to take part in their teepee sleepover program.

The next field trip I want to talk about is when I returned to Wanuskewin just a few weeks ago. And I went there to consult on this bill. And I'm a real believer in experiential learning and place-based learning. And for teachers that means that if you really want to learn a lesson, if you want your students to really learn, you've got to go to the best place to learn that lesson. And so for me to learn about this bill as critic on this file, the best place for me to learn about it was at Wanuskewin.

And I was welcomed warmly, together with my CA [constituency assistant]. And we spent some time with the CEO, with their director of communications, and with their lead archaeologist there. And it was an amazing day. I did not cut my time short as they gave us a tour. And I was learning, just soaking it in like a sponge as they took us through all the updated displays. Lots of changes there that I wasn't aware of. And they also gave us a couple of really special experiences there. And one of them was to go out and see the bison, as they've brought bison back to the land. And that experience was even somewhat spiritual, Mr. Speaker, to be on the land, right where our First Peoples existed since time immemorial, and to see the return of the bison.

I know from many of my Indigenous friends this is a very meaningful thing, and to see that first-hand was profound. And as a settler on Treaty 6 territory, for me to experience that and to be, you know, shown some of the teachings and to be able to grow as a human being through that experience, it was just very profound, and it was just such an exceptional experience. And I really want to thank the staff at Wanuskewin for inviting me to do that, for opening up their facility in so many ways, to help me to learn and to grow even in this job that I have now as critic for Parks, Culture and Sport. Again, for all members here, I really encourage you to get out and visit Wanuskewin. It's such a great time. And take your families or your friends or your loved ones. It's a great experience.

Now on to this bill. I want to talk to just about a couple of things that I think myself and my colleagues in the NDP opposition really support. And the first one in this bill, it updates a change in language. And I think that's important because language matters and words matter, Mr. Speaker. And one of the things that's updated here is the use of the word "Indigenous" to replace other terminology that we don't use as much anymore. And so I think that's a really positive step, as we look at older pieces of legislation and we can update just simple language. And so the inclusion of the word "Indigenous" I think is meaningful.

[14:45]

The other thing that this bill does is it updates and kind of codifies into legislation Wanuskewin's mission as well as how board members are chosen, because some of the stakeholders at Wanuskewin, where their board members come from, those organizations no longer exist. So to update this legislation is really important to make sure that Wanuskewin has a fully operational board, and that it's folks there who have vested interest in seeing the place succeed.

And there's a big reason for that that I simply want us all to be aware of, because Wanuskewin has been on a path towards being designated as a World Heritage Site, and that's been a long process. And I think it's something that members from both sides of this Assembly can get behind. And I believe that they'll be successful, but there's still a long road ahead. But I'm looking forward to that day, Mr. Speaker, when members from both sides of this Assembly can hopefully gather there and to celebrate that designation. We believe in it, and I think that they'll get there with all the hard work that they're putting in. And one of the things we can do right now is to let this bill proceed to the next stage. And so it is my suggestion that we allow this bill to proceed to committee. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 12 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 12, *The Wanuskewin Heritage Park Amendment Act, 2020* be referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the standing committee on intergovernmental and justice committee.

Bill No. 13

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. L. Ross that **Bill No. 13 — *The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment and Repeal Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again it's my honour to enter into adjourned debate on Bill 13, an Act to amend and repeal the Doukhobors of Canada trust fund Act. And similar to my previous remarks on the previous bill, it is my honour to conclude remarks from the official opposition on this bill here today.

I want to point out just a couple of things here. And first of all, I think that this is something that we support. We've taken time to listen to my colleagues in opposition, to examine this, and to offer our support for this bill. I think that there's a couple things here that just make a lot of sense. And obviously, you know, I think that, as is indicated, that the costs and efforts of administering the Act for government and the Doukhobors of Canada trust fund board outweigh the annual benefits. It only makes sense that leaders in government have brought this bill to us and that we support this bill. Certainly there's a lot of common sense involved here and, you know, happy that we as an NDP caucus can support this and allow this bill to continue.

I think that there's a really interesting history here that we all have to learn from as far as the experiences and the history of the Doukhobors in Western Canada. And I'm also happy to know that this bill, this piece of legislation, has been brought forward by members of the board who represent the Doukhobor societies, that this is at their request. And obviously that's important that we co-operate in these matters. So with that, I'll conclude remarks from the opposition and suggest that Bill 13, *An Act to amend and repeal The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act* proceed to the next stage.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 13 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I designate that Bill No. 13, *The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment and Repeal Act, 2020* be referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Speaker: — The bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Bill No. 14

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 14 — *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill 14, *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*. So, Mr. Speaker, this is new legislation which the minister says is designed to protect those who fall victim to human trafficking by creating the tort of human trafficking, and it offers ability for individuals to sue for damages caused by human trafficking.

I think as maybe it's been mentioned by my fellow caucus members already, you know, some of our concerns do relate to understanding who was consulted on this bill and whether the ministry had done any work to reach out to survivors of human trafficking, sex workers, and if there's any risk that the legislation could potentially make work for sex workers more dangerous. I think that that's a very legitimate concern that we're raising.

You know, certainly we're always looking to ensure that there aren't any unintended consequences associated with legislation that's meant to protect people from crimes such as human trafficking. And so we're concerned about whether this actually creates new protections and remedies for human trafficking survivors or whether, you know, there may be similar protections that already exist and if indeed this is adding anything additional to what is presently available.

It's also unclear to us how this might be in fact reducing the risk of human trafficking. And as always, you know, our concern is that a number of the provisions that we're seeing in the bills before us here during this session are very reactionary in nature, and we're always looking for that balance between the proactive and the reactive.

And certainly with the issue of human trafficking, that's certainly something where people would be better served to have, you know, the root causes of human trafficking addressed at their source ensuring that young women and girls, and young men as

well, those who are LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning] are indeed protected from entering the human trafficking sector in the first place.

I do want to also just mention a few statistics here with regards to, you know, the extent of this issue here in Canada. These are some statistics that I've retrieved from the Hope Restored Canada website where they indicate that 93 per cent of sex trafficking in Canada involves Canadian citizens, with an overrepresentation of Indigenous women and girls. And so this is certainly a racialized issue.

And the average age of recruitment into the sex trade is 13- to 14-year-old young girls and women. This is young girls in puberty who, you know, can be in very vulnerable situations and can very easily fall prey to those that would wish to exploit them and put them in harm's way.

Out of 100 women in prostitution in Canada, 76 have been raped and physically assaulted while they've been in the industry. Victims are forced to earn on average \$280,000 per year for their trafficker. And 63 per cent of trafficked victims are between 15 and 24 years of age. They're often forced to perform sex acts 365 days per year and hand over almost all money to their traffickers.

RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigations reveal a victim can make up to \$2,000 in one day, and women and girls from Indigenous communities, immigrants, at-risk and runaway youth — especially those within the child welfare system — are especially vulnerable.

And I'm certain that we've all been aware of some rather horrific stories in the news in the past number of years of these situations where young women, some from, you know, other countries have been held against their will and are forced into the sex trade here in Saskatchewan. And so you know, I do think it's important that we have legislation that is addressing these issues and that it's ensuring the right balance and that there are other protections in place to both discourage those who attempt to traffic and also protect those who would fall prey and vulnerable to being victims of this practice.

I think, you know, in one case in particular, we have been quite critical of government cutting the funding to strategies intended to reduce gang activity here in the province over the last decade, and we feel that this has been quite detrimental in addressing this issue and would like to see more done in that area.

So as I say, we are looking for proactive strategies as well as the legislation that can help protect those who are victims of human trafficking after the fact. And you know, we do see this as an area, a growing problem, an area of growing concern, and certainly want to see it be addressed. We want to make sure that sex workers and others who are exposed to human trafficking are engaged and consulted in the development of this legislation. I know that my colleague and the critic for this area will have much to ask as this legislation does go to committee. And I think that's all I really want to say at this point.

You know, we're certainly looking for legislation that is always putting the needs and interests of Saskatchewan people first, ensuring that their rights are being protected and that they're particularly being protected from these kinds of harms and

criminal activity. So, Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 14, *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 15

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 15 — *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

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

[15:00]

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise here today and offer some additional comments on behalf of the official opposition. And my colleagues have previously spoken to this bill at length and noted some of the significant changes being made to *The Residential Tenancies Act* that will have a negative effect on tenants. And I believe my colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre spoke extensively on concerns related to whether or not this bill actually assists survivors of sexual assault.

And now I think I'd just like to reflect on the fact that, you know, Saskatchewan . . . You know, sitting here in my position both as somebody who's rented for a significant portion of my life but also as a landlord, Saskatchewan does have some of the weakest tenant protection laws in the country. As a young person, as the members opposite know, I lived in Quebec for a portion of my life and rented several apartments there while I was attending university. And Quebec has significantly stronger protections for tenants.

And as a student, I was very, very, very poor. But the first thing I always did was pay my rent even if it meant, you know, relying on the free kitchen on campus to feed myself during the week because having shelter and having a home is important.

So allowing people to have a bit more of a grace period if they are in economic duress, to ensure that they can pay their rent and provide them that protection, is important. And I would note, Mr. Speaker, especially here moving to that change from . . . seven days. Seven days is significantly less than the grace period that our Crown corporations allow people for nonpayment of bills. They give people over two weeks. And this legislation proposes to move from 15 days to 7 days, which really . . . You know, I understand the importance of helping people protect their property, but really this reads as punitive and it will only impact already the most vulnerable people who are already struggling.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about this change to the eviction notice, as well as previously indicated, some of the concerns around whether this legislation will in fact

help survivors of sexual assault. But with that, I will conclude my comments and move that we adjourn debate on Bill 15, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 17

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 17 — *The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and enter into debate on this, Bill No. 17, *The Traffic Safety (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act*. Reflecting over the last few days, listening to second reading speeches, you know, how interesting it is to hear how my colleagues bring different experiences and different lenses to this Assembly, but to their readings of bills. And I think that that's understandable, probably something that we all do and can be a benefit — a wide array of experiences and bringing those experiences and those lenses to look at legislation.

When I look at a bill . . . This is almost 20 pages of proposed changes to *The Traffic Safety Act*, which is in itself a very large bill. Mr. Speaker. When I'm looking at this and looking at a bill that's meant to improve safety on the roads, I think the first lens I put on is as a mom. And just reflecting, you know, when you send your kids off to the first day of school, that's a big deal. There's a lot of excitement and trepidation. When you see your child — we've got two drivers at home now — take off in their car for the first time with that new driver's licence, that's a whole other level. Maybe there is some excitement, but certainly a lot of trepidation.

So anything that we can do to ensure that our roads are safe and we keep people safely on the road — a province such as ours with so many kilometres of roads — I think that that is something that is very important. Most of these changes have been canvassed by my colleagues. There are a number of them. I'll read quickly through them if my glasses don't fog up here, Mr. Speaker.

One of the main changes, or one of the changes, is to authorize an administrator to suspend, cancel, or refuse a driver's licence where the holder of that driver's licence suffers from a medical condition that affects the safe operation of a vehicle and that driver fails to file a medical report. I know when you go to get your driver's licence now, you're asked a series of questions. It was always a question that I had: if you had a medical condition that came up between the time of licensing and the next year, what happens? And I think that there's some clarification there and that would be, I think, a very good change. There's also a requirement in this legislation, in the proposals, to require the holder of a driver's licence to self-report.

I think this is fairly straightforward and common sense, requiring motorcycle drivers to obtain registration and to carry that with them. I think that's something that we require of motor vehicles. That seems to make sense.

There's some provisions for garage keepers, for disposing of impounded vehicles, some changes or clarification to the time period for a court action to be brought under *The Automobile Accident Insurance Act* for pain and suffering, something that I think many of us probably deal with in our offices at various times. At one point I was the critic for SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], so that's something we saw quite a bit.

There are some updates to clarify and strengthen data safety, certainly I think something that all ministries and all organizations struggle with. In these days how do we ensure, with so much being online, how do we ensure that that data is safe and only being used for the purposes intended?

There are a number of changes along those lines, and I know that my colleagues have had some opportunity to canvass them. I know that there will be more and then there will be time in committee. But I think at this point, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to conclude my remarks and adjourn debate on this Bill No. 17.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 18

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 18 — *The All Terrain Vehicles Amendment Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To join in on Bill No. 18, *The All Terrain Vehicles Amendment Act, 2020*. Initially I was looking at the minister's comments about the changes, but I know that so many people like to use all-terrain vehicles, ATVs. Kids have a great time. We know a lot of residents use that. They go out as families. I've watched different ones using them back home, and they take the time and they actually spend time as a family. And they go out, you know, whether you'll see them along the highway, on the ditch, and they're going all over, or they'll take some of the old roads. And they have a blast out there. And you watch the kids and they do their thing.

The thing I think, like everything else, we want to make sure that our children, our residents are safe, and there's certain things that we ask people, you know, even our children. They're 15, 16. You want them to make sure they're safe.

So in this change, the minister talked about going from the highway traffic safety board to SGI. And just talking about clarifying, I think some of these, kind of like, are house-cleaning, where SGI was already doing some of the duties of the training courses, the safety courses, making sure certain provisions are in

there.

But what was interesting is I was noticing — and I just was wondering about it — it's like Saskatchewan Highway Traffic Board has the ability when a vehicle is seized, I guess if you'd have it, if for whatever reason maybe the police seized it and it's taken away because somebody underage doesn't have the requirements, whether they're having an adult with them there out there or they don't have the safety course or one of the requirements of them to operate the vehicle or, you know, the ATV. In there it was interesting to see that SGI will not be holding it in the compound. It's only the highway traffic safety that can return it once they've been seized or in their property, is my understanding.

So I was just looking at some of the notes the minister was referring to, and kind of interesting. And I'll mention it to my colleague to help in committee, to find out what exactly do you mean where they'll hold it, because I just didn't get it. So I was looking at that. But I do know that I know for my grandkids and many, many, you know, family members and all kinds of community members and friends just love using these vehicles and just having a great time. But we always want them to make sure they're safe because you want them to enjoy it.

And then you go from . . . [inaudible] . . . They talk about now we have ATVs that have the tracks, and I have seen many of them. You'll see them with the tracks, and it's amazing how they can go all over the place versus either the three-wheel vehicle or the four-wheel, but now we're going with tracks. This gives some provision in there to make sure that they're recognized both the same way. It's not one different to another is what I got from the minister's comments in here.

Now for me, I don't know, you know, what the difference is when they're saying if you have to have a driver's . . . and that's what we'll flesh out, and it looks like you don't have to have a driver's if you're older than 15. And then they refer to it, and I was just looking at some of the comments on it to get clarification. I think it was confusing and they're trying to, I guess housekeeping, making sure people understand from 15 to 16. So they make sure that the regulations are there, and they're trying to correct that. So SGI will be the one that's making sure that they adhere to that.

So having said that, you know, I don't have a lot more comments on this bill, other than like I said, we want to make sure people are safe. They provided some changes where it's now going to be SGI that will be looking after much of the regulating, the licensing, and taking care of the training, as I said.

So with that, I know my colleagues again too will have more questions and we'll have an opportunity to have more discussion about this and consult with individuals. You know, I haven't heard a lot of complaints yet, but there might be some people who want to get a hold of the opposition, the critic and ourselves, to say hey, I'm concerned about it. So if that happens, we're willing to take people's calls and concerns — emails, phone calls, whatever it is — to bring it forward to government's attention, to remind them, and again as I've said before, to do that.

I don't have a lot more, Mr. Speaker, on this bill, so I'm prepared to adjourn on Bill No. 18, *The All Terrain Vehicles Amendment*

Act, 2020. I'm prepared to adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 19

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 19 — *The Human Resources Profession Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to enter into adjourned debate on Bill No. 19, *The Human Resources Profession Act*. Just a few initial comments here, Mr. Speaker. You know, as I have taken time to review the bill and to review comments, there's one thing that jumps out initially, which is just the level of thoughtfulness that I see put into the many different areas of this bill.

Just to point out a few to say that, you know, there's obviously been a great deal of thinking put into areas such as discipline, how hearings will take place, you know, providing as much detail as is necessary for everyone to understand what the path forward will be when discipline is called for and needed. And again, the level of detail that I want to point out and show my appreciation to is also appeal processes, reviews, you know, just listing what's in this bill in front of me. You know, I think that it does show a great deal of thoughtfulness up to this point.

But my questions are . . . And this is also, I think, equally important. The thoughtfulness put into the bill has to do with the consultation that's taken place. And as with any bill, I think, Mr. Speaker, we want to be certain that when we are discussing bills at this stage in adjourned debate, as we move into committee and proceed forward, when we're ready to do that, we want to make sure that proper consultation has taken place.

And I know that I see that in the minister's own comments here, talking about stakeholder consultation and the work that goes into the degree of detail in a bill such as this, I think that really many of the comments that have come from my colleagues over here are just wanting to raise that question and to ensure that we don't see a government pushing anything through without doing all of that groundwork. And again I just want to affirm the great need for deep and thorough consultation before this proceeds.

[15:15]

And so that's really all that I have to say here. It has been an honour to look at the minister's statements and to review the statements made by many of my colleagues on this side that have entered into debate on this bill. And I'll just reiterate again that I'm still reserving, you know, for further debate here to ensure that that consultation process has been full with Bill 19, *The Human Resources Profession Act*. And with that I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 19.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Government orders, adjourned debates, item no. 9. Resume debate on the second reading motion for Bill No. 21, *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act, 2020*. Mr. Love.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — What bill number are we on? What bill?

An Hon. Member: — 20.

Ms. Ritchie: — 20.

An Hon. Member: — 21.

Deputy Clerk: — Sorry. Correction.

Bill No. 20

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Merriman that **Bill No. 20 — *The Publicly-funded Health Entity Public Interest Disclosure Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill 20, *The Publicly-funded Health Entity Public Interest Disclosure Act*.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to see this Act come forward. It is a bill that allows whistle-blowers to report concerning situations without fear of reprisals. It will apply to employees of the Saskatchewan Health Authority and Saskatchewan Cancer Agency with the option to include other organizations through regulations.

So I think that this is an important development. It builds on disclosure provisions that are also in place at the moment for other parts of government. We've seen many cases that illustrate that a chill has been sent to health care workers and the culture of fear around speaking out. And I think that's something that is really raised in prominence during this pandemic. Certainly I've heard from many of my constituents who work in the health care field and often feel that it's not safe for them to report on situations that they're observing. And it's going to be important that they have this protection in order to be able to bring their concerns forward.

My colleagues on the opposition side here have had an opportunity to raise some examples already of cases where folks like Peter Bowden, a care aid who lost his job for speaking out on the deplorable conditions in long-term care and, you know,

just how unnecessary that was. I mean I think particularly in fields such as health care where people serve for the greater good, they're there to protect the health of members of our society.

And when they do speak out, it's from a place, obviously — or one would hope it's obvious — of wanting to ensure that that care is provided in a safe environment, that deficiencies are corrected, that problems are removed. And it's never anything that's done out of malice or spite. It's really for the better good. And I can't imagine how stressful that must be as a health care worker to be in a situation where you see a problem and a concern, but don't feel that you can report it for fear of reprisal. And certainly that was the case for Peter Bowden.

We also saw that with the very highly publicized case that went before the Supreme Court of nurse Carolyn Brost Strom. And in the end, she was successful. Her punishment was overturned. She raised concerns about the treatment that her father was receiving in long-term care, and then was slapped down essentially by her professional association for what they considered to be speaking out of turn. And I think that provides some important case law on, you know, the rights to speak out in those kinds of cases.

You know, we've also been aware of a hush memo sent to physicians, warning them about what to say, you know, in public forums about their work. And you know, of course we do expect doctors, physicians, public health care workers to speak responsibly, speak accurately when they're sharing their concerns, that it doesn't involve slander or any, you know, unfounded information. Certainly of course there is that duty of care that professionals need to ensure that they're upholding, but I mean that shouldn't be used as a muzzle for them when they are seeing and experiencing real failures and shortcomings within our system and be able to speak out in those cases.

So we continue to get calls to this day about the need for increased protection for whistle-blowers. So we do believe that this is definitely a step in the right direction.

It does mirror existing public interest disclosure laws, which have been a source of concern due to a lack of reporting uptake by Saskatchewan public servants. And so we want to make sure that, once enacted, that these provisions are properly communicated to health care workers, ensuring that they understand their rights and obligations when it comes to reporting, so that they understand, you know, that they can make these cases known in those instances.

I know certainly as a working professional, both in the private sector and government, I always really appreciated when there were clear guidance put out to staff about how the whistle-blower protections were going to be implemented and enacted in ways that ensured that, if need be, their privacy was protected, that their job was protected, and that when they brought their concerns forward that it was done in a confidential manner, understanding where the information was going, whether it was to a third party, and that their identity would be protected through the process.

So those are certainly the things that we are looking for in this legislation. And I know that the critic for this area will have more questions around these items to ensure that those protections are indeed in place, that workers are assured of their rights and

protections when bringing forward their concerns, and again as with all things, that we are getting this right in its approach. And that, you know, where there are these concerns arising, that they can come forward and be brought to light and we can see that the shortcomings that they're identifying be properly addressed.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's really all I have to say. We do look forward to, you know, future opportunity to, you know, share our thoughts on the bill and ask some more questions when this does go to committee. And with that, I will adjourn debate on Bill 20, *The Publicly-funded Health Entity Public Interest Disclosure Act*. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 21

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Tell that **Bill No. 21 — *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Amendment Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure of rising again today and entering into second reading debate on Bill No. 21, *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. Mr. Speaker, this program, more commonly known as SCAN [safer communities and neighbourhoods], I do remember when this program was brought in, the legislation for this program in 2004. I believe there used to be a number of billboards up around in different communities.

There are some changes which I will canvass here. The critic's had the opportunity to meet with stakeholders and look through the proposed changes to this bill. I know that several other of my colleagues have had the opportunity to speak to it, and I will get some comments on the record.

While I was busy philosophizing about, you know, what to bring to second reading debates earlier, I'm going to do a little more of that. And I think the other thing that it's good to bring to this Assembly and good to bring to second reading debates is just a sense of curiosity. You know, many of my colleagues have talked about this. Why are we seeing this legislation in front of us? Who's asking for it? In the case of amended legislation, how well is that legislation working now? Why are we seeing proposed changes?

Sometimes it's very obvious, like in the case of, you know, updating language to be gender-neutral or reordering to reflect statutes that exist or a practice that exists. Sometimes it's hopefully, Mr. Speaker, to improve the legislation and have better impact, to have the intended effect be more readily achieved through changing legislation. And sometimes, as is in the case of this bill, there's other legislation that changes that necessitates change.

So that is one of the pieces here. We see changes in language about cannabis to reflect provincial and federal legislation. Of course that has been a significant change since 2004 when this Act was first enacted. That would've been an illegal and controlled substance. I suppose it is still controlled, but it would have been an illegal substance, Mr. Speaker, and the update to that section of the bill reflects the changed status of cannabis.

Another change — and I am very curious about this — is allowing people outside of a neighbourhood in question to make a complaint. I have questions about, you know, how many complaints are brought forward under the current SCAN provisions. What's the nature of those complaints? Which communities do we see accessing these provisions? Who is it? It's been a long time since I've seen the billboards, so I'm not sure the extent to which people in communities are aware that this legislation exists. But obviously there are some people who both make complaints under this and who find themselves on the receiving end of that complaint.

[15:30]

There are some different provisions that are provided for here. It changes the timing and process for required notice on safety orders. Some changes clarifying registered mail and the number of days that someone has to respond to that. It updates the powers and obligations of the director. And I'm just going to look at the explanatory notes here, Mr. Speaker, if I can quickly, just to read those into the record:

The proposed amendments to subsection 6(1) update the director's powers, on receiving a complaint, to clarify that the director may:

Serve a demand to vacate the subject property;

Represent a landlord before the Office of Residential Tenancies with respect to the subject property; and

Post a community . . . warning.

That's not something that I think I've ever seen, Mr. Speaker, a posted community warning under SCAN, so perhaps that is entirely new with this legislation.

There are also changes that allow the disclosure of information to other orders of government and law enforcement, and some changes to language about gangs and fine structure. And I will reiterate what some of my colleagues have said here, and that is about finding balance. I think curiosity, bringing your life experience to these readings, is important, but also seeking to find a balance.

Of course in many pieces of legislation there are competing interests. I think that's, you know, sort of the definition of politics, this competing for power by various entities. And one thing that we'll be looking into is the extent to which this does achieve balance here. You don't want to see the balance sway too far in one way or another. Of course you know, community safety is important to everyone, and ensuring that people's rights are respected is also something that's very important.

So I suspect that those will be some of the questions that my

colleague will have when this bill is moved to committee, but I'm not prepared to do that at this point. However I am prepared to conclude my remarks and adjourn debate on Bill No. 21.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 23

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 23 — *The Emergency Planning Amendment Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again it's my honour to enter into debate on Bill No. 23, *The Emergency Planning Amendment Act*. So I have taken time to review this piece of legislation, and I've got a few comments on it that I just want to make. And I think that, you know, of all the pieces in front of us, this one is particularly significant at this time as we're living in a historical moment that I think all of us will remember for the rest of our lives and our kids will remember for the rest of their lives.

You know, this bill makes several changes to *The Emergency Planning Act*, and most of those changes are in relation to public health orders. And so I just want to take this time and I want to thank, you know, all officials and medical experts that have contributed to the health orders that we've put in place. You know, many of us have taken time, whether it's on social media or what have you, to say thank you to Dr. Shahab.

But I also want to just go into a little bit here about the need for these public health orders at this time. You know we live in a very interesting time, Mr. Speaker, where the flow of information happens quickly, and so does the flow of misinformation. And so we've seen this, you know, unfortunate circumstance where misinformation leads to folks in Saskatchewan and, I think, all over the planet — you know, we're not immune to this — but folks everywhere believing misinformation and believing that they're doing the right thing by challenging public health orders, by attending anti-mask rallies, by speaking at anti-mask rallies. And you know, that's a big concern, and I think that that's something that I think about when I think about these public health orders.

We also have to think of how we get accurate information out, and what is the role of leaders in government to do that and to stand by that correct evidence-based information, to make sure that folks are doing what they can to be personally responsible. And you know, last week I spoke about the need to look out for your neighbour, to love your neighbour, to show your actions towards the better good for our communities. And I'm hopeful that this piece of legislation will be a move in that direction.

You know, a few other thoughts that I have here, Mr. Speaker, is just about the importance of following self-isolation orders. And

you know, we've heard stories of first responders who have had to self-isolate several times as they go into dangerous or, you know, unpredictable situations. And I think about my colleagues in the classroom who have also had to do that at times, to self-isolate because they've had a risk of exposure. So we're thinking about these folks in Saskatchewan, these essential workers as they put themselves in harm's way and then have to follow up and do the right thing. And it's good to see that we are thinking about that.

Just two comments to conclude my remarks here. You know, I want to note that when this bill was introduced, the Sask Party said that the intent of this bill was to strengthen enforcement measures for the current pandemic, and I've heard many of my colleagues in opposition raise this point in relation to this bill. And I think it is disappointing to us that it's taken so long, that we would have liked to have seen this pass through speedily. You know, we've learned in this Chamber that the Premier has indicated that the pandemic will be gone in just a few weeks, and so we wonder why this wasn't pushed through more quickly.

You know, the last thing that I want to comment on here, Mr. Speaker, is that if we've learned anything from this pandemic, I'm hoping that we have learned things that will help us in the future. And, Mr. Speaker, I've got three children at home. Etta, Tom, and Myles are there, and I want to make sure that when I go home, the next time that I see them and give them a hug that I can say, you know, we did some things here to help us now but also to help us to be more prepared.

You know, this is a moment in time, this pandemic. It is a long moment. It's been a long year. We all agree on that. But this is a moment in time that is historic, and we will study this in the future. People will study the things that we did. Those studies are already taking place on things we didn't do. And again, Mr. Speaker, this bill does give me some hope that we will be able to go home, hug our kids and our families when we're able to see them again and say, you know, we did do some things to put us in better position if something like this happens again.

And so with that, I will voice my initial support for this bill, but I'm also looking forward to continuing to hear more from my colleagues. And with that, I move to adjourn debate on Bill 23, *The Emergency Planning Amendment Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 24

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Morgan that **Bill No. 24 — *The Vehicles for Hire Amendment Act, 2020*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill 24,

The Vehicles for Hire Amendment Act, 2020. Okay, so this is an Act that will require transportation network companies, taxi services, or limousine services to follow requirements for driver licensing and criminal record checks.

I think we've seen how, you know, in the last 10 years, or maybe not quite that long but in the last five years or so, how there's been a lot of technology disruption in the transportation sector, in particular for taxi services, with companies like Uber coming on board and offering their services, and the need for vehicle-for-hire amendments to address, you know, the changing nature of this service sector in Saskatchewan. And you know, we're seeing it right across the globe. I understand that the legislation will make it an offence to operate a transportation network company in Saskatchewan if it is not properly insured, and it will make it an offence for a transportation network company to operate in a municipality without authorization from that municipality.

We also note that there is an immunity clause that has been included that will protect the Government of Saskatchewan and SGI from legal action related to actions made in good faith by either of those entities. We do have a number of questions and concerns about that clause and wonder why the government feels that this is the right thing to do and what types of legal action the government might be trying to protect themselves from. And those are certainly questions which we will be looking into, seek answers to when this goes to committee.

And of course, you know, we're always looking to ensure that there's a fair and level playing field for taxis and ride-shares and limos. Of course, you know, always want to make sure that it's striking the right balance, that the proper consultation has occurred with all of the relevant stakeholders to ensure that balance with the legislation.

I do want to maybe mention also at this time that, you know, I do find it rather disturbing, I suppose you could say, about the nature of the working conditions for those who are working in this field. They seem to work extremely long hours in a very sedentary kind of a work environment. And you know, I do have a lot of empathy for these drivers, who are always so courteous, providing such a friendly service, and really act as ambassadors to our communities. I know any time that I need to take a taxi somewhere, you know, they are always very pleasant and asking where I might be going and talk about current events and issues in the news. And I think that's always really important that, especially when people feel that they have a supportive work environment, like for a taxi driver, that allows them to be so friendly in their service.

And so I think when we're looking at legislation for this area, it's how do we ensure that these workers have the right protections in place for them to be able to do their jobs so well. And I really want to offer tribute to them. I do think it's a very difficult industry to work in.

One of my earlier colleagues talked about the precarious nature that, you know, that the gig economy that this kind of work is part of, there seems to be a lot of offloading onto the drivers in terms of the capital that they have to put forward in terms of their personal vehicles and their upkeep and then how they're compensated.

It's a very competitive industry too, and so one can appreciate that there are a lot of pressures to drive down cost, maybe cut corners. And those are the sorts of things that ultimately can protect the safety of drivers, of any other alternates, and indeed of course the riding public that's accessing these services. And I think that the riding public has, you know, made their intentions very clear in terms of a desire for this new type of service.

And lots of times, you know, it's really difficult. You can't stop progress, and nor should we, and we're seeing this kind of transformation occurring across the economy as we have new types of electronic tools that allow for services like this one to be transformed and provide better services. And of course alongside of that we do need legislation to keep pace with these changes, to ensure that we're protecting both the riding public and the people who are working in these industries.

[15:45]

I have a friend who I got to know quite well a couple years ago when we were doing some advocacy work together. He had been an employee with the local Saskatoon Co-op, and over the period of the strike that was happening, he had left his employment and then took up work ultimately as a taxi driver. And I just really felt quite sympathetic to his situation in terms of being on the night shift, driving a cab when there was very little, you know, demand for taxi services through the night period. I knew it was really difficult for him to be able to make ends meet. And indeed, you know, he was living in a basement suite, so a very, very low income that this kind of a position was offering him.

And you know, I know that this bill is about putting in place provisions that are ensuring, you know, safety of the vehicles and so that the right protections are in place for the riding public. But I do think it's really important that we're also highlighting and focusing on the workers that are in this industry and the fact that it has become, you know, so competitive to the point where it's made it extremely difficult for workers to earn a living wage, provide for themselves, provide for their families, and have a work environment that isn't going to be detrimental to their health. And I think that this is particularly an occupation that, if done for an extended period of time of many years, it would really, you know, lead to health complications for them, given its sedentary nature.

But all that being said, I do honour their work. I commend them. I commend the fact that they always do it with such a courteous and friendly nature and with a view towards providing a high level of service that meets the needs of their customers. And I would be remiss if I also failed to mention that, particularly now during the pandemic when we know they're sort of brought in closer proximity to their customers that, you know, this can be, you know, as an essential service, an occupation that does come with certain risks. Albeit, you know, they do also have Plexiglas installed now and other things to protect them, but certainly I do think that it's been an issue of concern for them when they're serving the public as taxi drivers.

And so that's really all I wanted to say about this particular piece of legislation. I thank you for this opportunity here today to offer these comments. I think that we'll have a lot more to say when this gets to committee with our critic who's been able to really delve into some of these questions and will be ensuring that the

legislation, again, will be able to strike that right balance and ensure that there aren't going to be any unintended consequences and that we understand the nature of that immunity clause better and see if there's . . . see what's behind that as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to move that we adjourn debate now on Bill 24, *The Vehicles for Hire Amendment Act, 2020*. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 26

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 26 — *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to enter into debate again on Bill 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021*. You know, this is I think a really important piece of legislation. I'll offer a few comments here that may echo some of the other concerns or questions and support as well that my colleagues have brought up.

But I just want to start with just a short anecdote and experience that I had during the campaign. So you know, obviously with a very close race in Saskatoon Eastview . . . You know, it took us a lot of time to get those final results in, Mr. Speaker. There were some anxious days there, waiting for the mail-ins. But you know, because it was a close race I did something that I think, you know, other members here do at election time, and I made a point to do something that maybe my campaign manager told me not to do. And that was to talk to folks where they had Sask Party signs on the lawn and engage in conversation. I wanted to make sure that I was there to represent everyone in my community. And you know, and that means that you got to listen to people who will tell you that they're not going to vote for you. I made time to do that.

And at this one house, you know, they had a Sask Party sign on the lawn, and I knock on the door and give some distance and introduce myself and had a really good discussion with this individual. And the discussion that came out there was that this individual was a member of the police force and talked about the challenges that he faces on the job. And he used this analogy. He said being a police officer is like being a Swiss Army knife. And he talked about the different services that he is called to provide. And during this conversation, I would say that I grew in my understanding and my admiration for his work.

And the reason I bring that up is because I want to commend the initial comments from the minister who provided the second reading of this piece, also discussed these challenges. And so I think that it's important to recognize that, you know, a fellow

member from Saskatoon brought those comments to this Assembly. And you know, I want to also recognize that I believe the police do play a critical role in our society and I think that we agree on that.

And something that we also agree on is the need for this legislation, that I think that this legislation does provide some important changes that, you know, I think have taken place in other jurisdictions, that we may be a little late to the table on this one. But better late than never. And that these changes include implementing a civilian-led team for the serious incident response team. And that these teams will investigate serious incidents involving police officers.

And I think that it's a really important change to see that there will be not only civilian-led teams, but also Indigenous representation. And you know, I think that again, it's better late than never. These are important changes to see brought forward. I will offer my, you know, initial support on this as I continue to listen to comments from my colleagues as they, you know, critique this legislation and engage in debate on it.

You know, I think with that I'll end my comments here, and I will continue to listen to the arguments brought forward by other members of the opposition as we, you know, move forward to hearing especially the critic on this file. And at that I will conclude my remarks and I will move that Bill 26, the police SIRT [serious incident response team] amendment Act, 2021, that debate be adjourned. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 27

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wyant that **Bill No. 27 — *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*.

So this particular bill is intended to make it easier to resolve traffic tickets with process improvements and a new online system. I note that in the minister's remarks he spoke to the fact that this was part of an ongoing e-justice initiative to provide greater access to justice and to modernize the system.

And I think that's, you know, an important objective to have and certainly, you know, taking some of the inefficiencies out of the system. I do kind of wonder and I'm questioning, you know, what this will mean for those in our society and who are having encounters with the justice system but potentially don't have access to e-services, and if there will be provisions to provide

access to devices so that they can take advantage of the provisions that are being proposed as part of the legislation. Because I mean certainly we do want to make sure, any time that we're modernizing processes, that it doesn't unintentionally create an unfair bias or impact particularly on those who are struggling to resolve summary offences. And my colleague for this bill, I'm sure, will be looking into these matters and asking these questions when the bill proceeds to committee.

On another point I would just say that we're glad to see the added ease of enrolling in the fine option program particularly considering that, you know, the Sask Party tried to axe this program a few years ago. It's an important program that provides alternative measures for those with summary offences to pay off their fines. And it helps community organizations too at the same time when people can work off their fines through that process. And you know, we certainly don't want to see that program go away.

Also of course, reducing court volumes is necessary. That's always an important issue. You know, we don't like to see backlogs in the courts, particularly when there's been challenges through the pandemic and in particular with remand facilities overflowing with unconvicted inmates waiting for justice.

But you know, I guess at the same time I think that, you know, that there's always pros and cons. And certainly on the benefit side of this legislation, again I do always like to try to, you know, relate a little bit of a personal experience as we're talking about these bills and something that's relatable and, you know, puts a bit more of a human touch on these various bills.

And I know that I had an encounter with a car break-in over the summer. And it, you know, was very convenient to be able to submit a report through the city of Saskatoon Police Service, to have the crime reported and then deal with it in a satisfactory manner. So you know, certainly I also see that the benefit in these modernization initiatives.

[16:00]

But it's also with a pang of concern when I think about, you know, there is always these broader issues. I mean we're trying to bring in legislation that deals with things at a very mechanical, transactional level. But the concern I always have is, you know, with either summary offences or with petty crimes, you know, how these can be indicators of the health of our society and how well we're doing as a province that, you know, we see more of these cases of summary offences coming forward.

And I do think that they speak to, you know, a level of stress that people are under that is leading to the incidents occurring in the first place, and how I think we're really failing Saskatchewan people and by not offering more services to support people that would avoid these issues from arising in the first place.

So while I appreciate the efforts to modernize, I think that we also have to consider, you know, what are the barriers to access for the services that are intended through the modernization? And also, are we addressing the root causes that are leading to these kinds of summary offences in the first place?

And you know, I do want to also put some emphasis on the

concerns we had with the number of individuals in our remand facilities and the greater risk of exposure that that placed them at. And so certainly I think it's important that we are doing everything we can to remove those backlogs, ensure that people aren't being housed in the system unnecessarily and, you know, making situations far, far worse than they have to be.

Again I want to make sure that in the development of this legislation, that there has been wide consultation to ensure that, you know, we get this piece of legislation right and we think about the people that it's impacting and ensuring that it's meeting the needs of Saskatchewan people. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 28

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. L. Ross that **Bill No. 28 — *The Active Families Benefit Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the bottom of the order here this afternoon, I'm happy to rise and enter into debate on Bill No. 28, *The Active Families Benefit Act* of 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to go behind the curtain and tell you a little bit of magic here. I want to say thanks to our team in our caucus office who put together, in conjunction with the critics, these binders for us. And I had to note when I was looking through, one of the sections that we have is, you know, you'll have the existing legislation or the proposed legislation and then the existing legislation and the explanatory notes. But of course here this says this is a new bill.

I laughed to myself, Mr. Speaker, because it is a new bill, but it's not really a new bill as I heard. I was in my car and listened to the minister give her second reading remarks, and then I heard the remarks by my colleague from Cumberland, who told us some good stories about pickpockets and giving with one hand and taking away with the other and then giving back, Mr. Speaker. And that is certainly what we've seen here. This is a benefit that was removed in 2016 and we're seeing reintroduced as a campaign promise in the most recent election.

On the totality of the minister's comments, Mr. Speaker, and I did listen to them, as I noted, I had . . . Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I'm distracted here. These guys on our side are a bit louder than when they're on the other side, Mr. Speaker. The benefit here . . . As I said, I was listening to the minister's comments. I think there's a lot to agree with here, you know, keeping kids active and in sports and arts activities, recreational activities, known benefits.

In a former life, I did some work as a children's counsellor and

with sociology, and certainly there's a lot of evidence to support that having children in activities is a benefit to them. In the immediate term it's a benefit to families, but it's a community benefit too, to have kids otherwise engaged. You know, we've been talking about things like SCAN and crime reduction. Well there's a huge correlation with kids who feel competent and belong within different sports. It allows them the ability to engage their time, to feel competent, to learn skills, and I think that we have agreement on both sides of the House that this is something that is very important.

I'm going to warn you though, Mr. Speaker, I did a little bit of napkin math here when I was looking at this. It struck my eye when I noted that the cut-off for this benefit is family income of \$60,000 a year and under. And I know that for many people, many people in this Assembly, that sounds like a fairly low threshold, and you know, having it income tested, you know, we could talk about that, but I think there's reasons to make that the case.

But you know, for a lot of families, even with this benefit, this isn't a full measure. There are still huge barriers to their children participating in sports and other activities. Right now, because of the fact that we have the lowest minimum wage in the country, a family — two income earners working full-time — make about \$37,000 before any deductions. And actually I was generous; I rounded that up to \$12 an hour. You know, that's not a lot of money and we know what rents have done. We all know what grocery bills have done over the last year, you know.

So to try to pull out even, you know, put some money aside to put your children in sport and wait for that tax rebate, is just simply out of reach for a lot of families. And then if you need child care, if you happen to work, you know, not alternating hours and you need child care at all, you know, the subsidy rates in this province, the thresholds haven't increased since the 1980s. So if you have your two-parent family or two-income family, the maximum that you can make to receive full subsidy is \$1,600 and a little bit. So even at that very low amount of household income of \$37,000 a year for two minimum wage earners, that nets you about \$3,000 a month before deductions, Mr. Speaker.

So after you reach that maximum subsidy, and I'm going to . . . I think a lot of people, when you don't have children and child care, you forget how expensive it is or you assume there's a subsidy. I just want to walk people through this, so bear with me.

For every dollar over that subsidy threshold, 25 cents is deducted for families. So that means the maximum subsidy, and I'm going to use the example of a two-income family with one child in kindergarten, the amount that your subsidy would be reduced by is \$360. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is over the threshold. The maximum subsidy for a child in kindergarten is 365. Well I guess you get a \$5 subsidy, Mr. Speaker. So when people talk about affordability, you know, this is one measure. And I think it's appreciated, but there are some very, very important measures that we're missing. Affordable child care is certainly one of them.

Next to mortgages and rent, this is usually, for families with small children, one of their biggest expenses. And this is a huge barrier to children participating in sports, recreation, arts activities in their community. So, you know, I think we will give credit where it's due. It's a good measure. It's appreciated that

it's retroactive. It's appreciated that it's expanded not just to sports but music and recreational activities.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of families for whom this simply is out of reach, even this benefit. And that's before we even get to the cost of child care, Mr. Speaker. So the median cost of child care for a preschooler in Regina . . . and I could only find data for Regina and Saskatoon in my little Google search and napkin math here. It's \$620 median cost in Regina. In Saskatoon that number jumps up to 740. So this is, again, Mr. Speaker, maybe a bit of an elephant in the room when we're talking about affordability and we're talking about affordability for parents with children.

You know, having kids involved is important; I fully support that. I had the opportunity to put our kids through sports with a lot of privilege. I recognize the benefit, both as a mom and as a social worker. But again, this is only a partial measure. And I would submit, I think as someone who is passionate about this, but also as the critic for Education, that a real investment here would require a real investment in our child care system that really has been, you know, beyond adding spaces, has been beleaguered for many, many years in this province, and something that's long overdue.

There's more that I could say I suppose, Mr. Speaker, but I think I've hit the main points. I'm just going to check my notes here and make sure that I haven't missed anything.

There's a provision that parents must retain receipts and provide to the minister on request. Cabinet has the ability to regulate prescribed activities, eligibility, and expenses, Mr. Speaker. The maximum benefit — we haven't talked about that — per child is \$150. You know, that is an amount of money . . . and I will give credit for an additional amount for children who qualify for a disability tax credit. I think that there's ample evidence that children participating in sports and recreation who have additional needs often incur extra costs, so I will say that that is a good measure, if somewhat inadequate.

I think that I feel a little bit like the last speaker before dinner at a wedding or something, Mr. Speaker. I can hear the mumbling going on in here. I think I've canvassed Bill No. 28 to the extent that I feel comfortable with. And with that, I will conclude my remarks and move to adjourn debate on *The Active Families Benefit Act, 2021*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To facilitate the work of committee, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved to adjourn the House. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. We shall adjourn till 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:14.]

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