



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

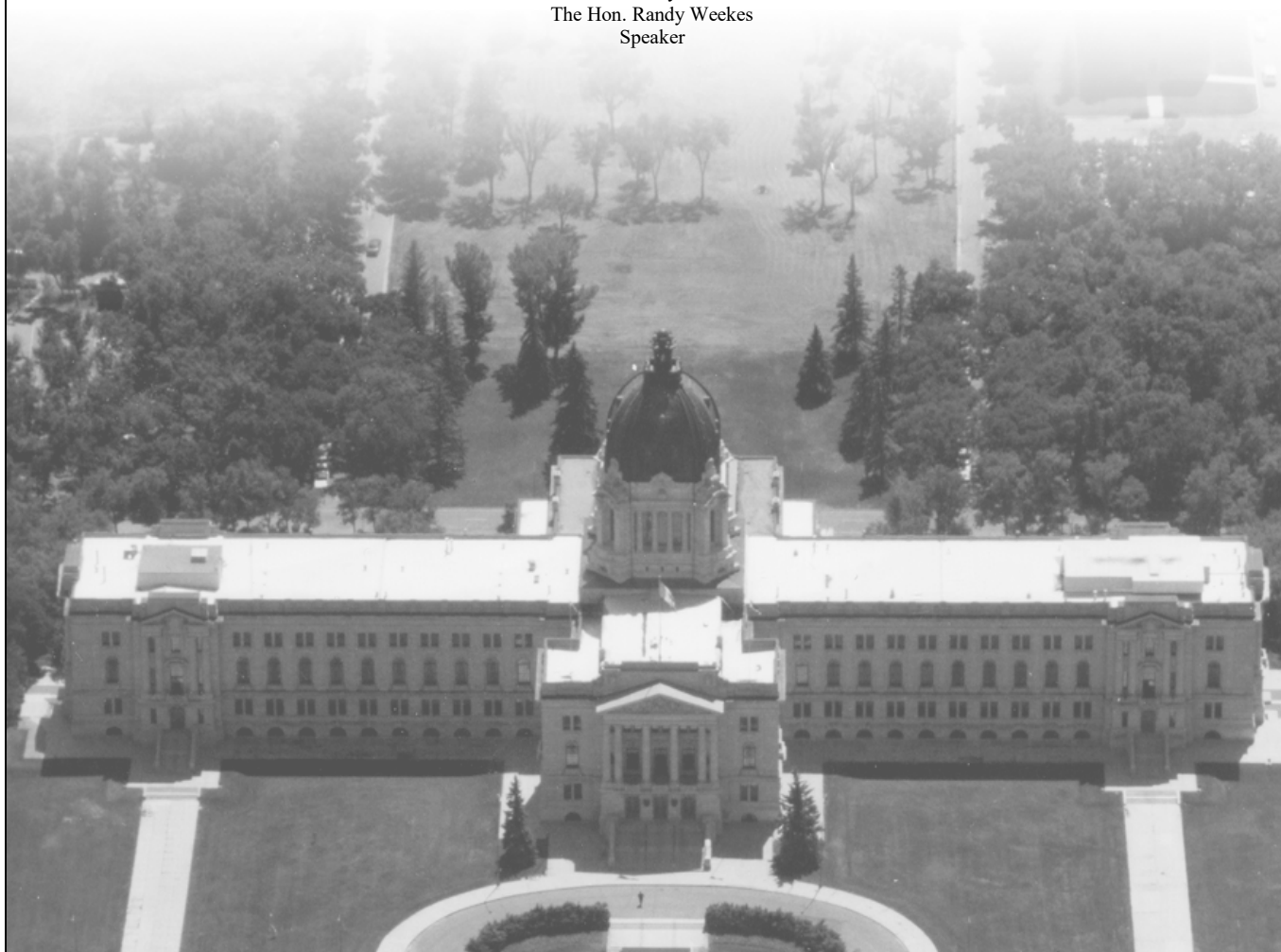
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

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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.

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

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Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

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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: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan regarding Hemlibra coverage. Justin and Vanessa Lockhart are advocating on behalf of their nine-year-old son, Jayden. They along with families in Hemophilia Saskatchewan would like to bring to our attention that Hemlibra is a new medication that offers significant opportunity for their family and others living with hemophilia A; and that Hemlibra is more effective, easier to administer, and treatment is required less often. Current treatments with factor VIII are administered by IV [intravenous] infusions two to seven times per week, while Hemlibra is given once per week by subcutaneous injection. This makes administration easier, especially in infants and younger children.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Minister of Health to work with the federal government to seek rapid approval of Hemlibra, so that all people with severe hemophilia A can have access to this therapy immediately.

This petition today is signed by individuals from Saskatoon and Humboldt, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present our petition calling for pay equity legislation once again today. My colleagues and I have been presenting this petition each day of this session, and we've got lots of signatures lined up to keep at it.

Mr. Speaker, one reason that pay inequity persists is that traditional women's work is undervalued and pays less than traditional men's work. The majority of women workers are employed in lower wage occupations and industries. More women also work part-time than men. This is often due to a lack of affordable child care and family leave policies, along with social pressure for women to carry the bulk of unpaid domestic responsibilities.

I'm starting to feel a little bit like a broken record up here, Mr. Speaker, but if that's what it takes to see the women of Saskatchewan achieve pay equity legislation, then that's what it takes.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by people from Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to present a petition to save the Lighthouse for The Battlefords and provide core funding to emergency homelessness shelters across the country.

The Lighthouse serving The Battlefords was opened in 2015 to fill a need in the community for people facing homelessness, addictions, mental health challenges, and it faced a 90 per cent cut to its core funding from the Government of Saskatchewan only one year after opening. That funding has never been restored, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada that still uses a per diem funding model, where emergency shelters for a person facing homelessness is provided only for a social assistance recipient per bed per night. And of course this leads to a whole host of problems, Mr. Speaker.

I had the great pleasure of visiting the Lighthouse for The Battlefords back in March, and it was wonderful to see the outpouring of the community. People were honking. People were bringing food, coffee, and expressing their messages of support.

And so I will 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 immediately provide stable, guaranteed core funding to the Lighthouse serving The Battlefords and to expand supports for emergency shelters across Saskatchewan by moving to a core funding model.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition reside in North Battleford. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Athlete Plays Record Number of NHL Games

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Growing up on a grain and cattle operation near Aneroid, Saskatchewan, Patrick Marleau idolized Saskatchewan players like Gordie Howe, dreaming that he could one day play in the NHL [National Hockey League]. Well, Mr. Speaker, that dream came true for Patrick, and he has done far more than just make it to the show.

On Monday night, Patrick laced up his skates for his 1,768th game, passing Gordie Howe's record for all-time games played in the NHL. Now, Mr. Speaker, this was more than just a record

to him. It was a testament to his love he has for the game of hockey. And it's even more fitting, Mr. Speaker, that another Saskatchewan boy has broken Gordie Howe's record. Gordie Howe had a huge impact on young Patrick Marleau, and we know that there are now thousands of young hockey players looking up to Patrick, hoping that one day they can be just as successful as he was.

He debuted in the NHL as the youngest player to do so in a half a century, 16 days after he turned 18, and he never looked back, Mr. Speaker. We know Saskatchewan produces more professional hockey players per capita than anywhere else, but I don't think any of them have carried the prairie grit and determination with them like Patrick Marleau has.

I now ask all members to join me in congratulating Patrick Marleau on his 1,678th NHL career game. Thank you.

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

Saskatchewan Construction Week Showcases Local Companies

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Saskatchewan Construction Week. And this year's theme is SaskBuilt, with a focus on showcasing local companies, their success stories, and examples of construction excellence in the province.

And now more than ever, we need to ensure that our capital stimulus investments are in fact, Sask built. With more than 23,000 people out of work in the province, we need to make sure that when we're building our schools, our roads, our hospitals, that they're being built by one of more than the 8,000 Saskatchewan-based companies, and by one of the more than 50,000 Saskatchewan workers employed in the construction sector.

Now we know that the Sask Party government's short-sighted decision to add PST [provincial sales tax] to new construction labour resulted in a screeching halt to the industry. This led to layoffs and construction workers leaving our cities and our province to find work, even to this day.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in recognizing Construction Week and celebrating the social and economic impact that construction has on the quality of life of Saskatchewan people.

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

New Animal Hospital in Regina

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to recognize the new Careport Animal Hospital in my constituency, formerly known as Airport Animal Hospital, still family-owned and -operated since 1989. This new state-of-art facility is a full-service veterinary hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this project was designed from the ground up, keeping in mind the well-being of animals, clients, and staff. The excellent design of this hospital, from separate waiting and exam

rooms, in-floor heating, calm music, and even having compassionate rooms. The vision this hospital mandated itself is being fulfilled, and that vision is one of the best, the most caring veterinary hospital in Canada.

Despite the considerable investment to the new facility, the hospital still gives back to the community, namely to the Humane Society of Regina: "Each month they provide a number of in-kind spay/neuter surgery to our shelter pets." This monthly initiative helps control the pet population and lessen the strain on the shelter resources. It is a business like this that showcases our province's growth and its dedication to its people.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all the members to join me in congratulating the Careport Animal Hospital on its community initiative, and to the continued success of its facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Recognizing a Remarkable Saskatoon Air Force Veteran

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a genuine World War II Royal Canadian Air Force bomber command hero living in my constituency of Saskatoon Nutana. Reginald Harrison is 98 years old and lives at Luther Riverside Terrace. I was contacted earlier this year by Dan Middleton, who came across Reginald while researching his own father's biography.

Reginald survived three plane crashes with numerous injuries over the course of his service. He was injured in a training crash in 1944 and spent around 10 weeks in the hospital. Around the same time, his best friend, Buddy, was killed in a separate training crash. Buddy was engaged to his girlfriend Jean at the time, and Reginald wrote to her to tell her how sorry he was.

After his second crash, Reginald was nicknamed Crash. After his third crash, Reginald returned to Canada and stopped in Ottawa to meet Jean. Fate stepped in. They fell in love, married in December 1946, and spent the next 43 years together.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have heroes like Reginald living in my constituency. It's these stories that make the job of being an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] so meaningful.

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

Inauguration of Chief of Piapot First Nation

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this time to recognize the inauguration of my friend, Chief of Piapot, Mark Fox. I had the honour, alongside my colleagues the Minister of Justice and the Minister of the Environment, to join in inaugurating Mark Fox as Chief of Piapot First Nation. This inauguration took place on Treaty 4 territory at the powwow grounds at Piapot First Nation. We all look forward to powwow season recommencing.

On that day, Mark had identified his priorities going forward:

We want to move forward with our economic development. We want to get more infrastructure on our First Nation and work toward our youth facilities.

I witnessed, not only that day but over the years of working with Chief Fox, his determination to help in his community. Whether it was through his work at Foxvalley Counselling or opening Gloria Jean's, a supportive living facility here in Regina, Chief Fox has continued to help those most vulnerable in the community. Now his work has been focused on keeping the elders and community members of Piapot safe from COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me to thank and congratulate Chief Fox for his continued commitment to uplifting our community and supporting individuals and families in need. Thank you. hay-hay.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Entrepreneur Finds Success with Saskatchewan-Shaped Cushions

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to highlight the special achievements of a relatively new entrepreneur in my hometown of Eatonia, Saskatchewan. Catherine Higginbotham's mom was from Cabri, Saskatchewan but moved to the UK [United Kingdom] in the 1970s, where Catherine was born. Her mom's prairie heart never let them forget their rural roots, and Catherine's love for small communities grew even stronger after she moved to Saskatchewan in 2007.

In 2016 she came up with a clever idea and started making her Saskatchewancushions to allow others to share and spread their hometown pride. The shape of our province makes it the perfect pillow candidate, and buyers can custom order their pillow with their favourite towns' names highlighted with a large bolded map dot.

In 2017 Saskatchewancushion was the winner of the SaskTel Small Business Spotlight award. In 2019 her product made it on *The Ellen Degeneres Show*, and later that year won \$12,000 in the Seeds for Dreams pitch contest.

Most recently Catherine was chosen as an ambassador of the Women Entrepreneurs Saskatchewan. Catherine has hand-sewn over 2,000 cushions, one of which is proudly displayed in my constituency office. She has also expanded new products into neighbouring provinces and territories because, and I quote, "We all can't be lucky enough to be from Saskatchewan."

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in wishing Catherine continued success in promoting our great province with easy-to-sew but hard-to-say Saskatchewancushions.

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

Funding Supports the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February of this year, our government announced 15 million in new funding to further support the world-class work being done by the Vaccine

and Infectious Disease Organization, or VIDO, at the University of Saskatchewan. This funding commitment was contingent on the Government of Canada committing and ensuring dollars flowed to the project. In yesterday's federal budget, there was great news for VIDO as the Government of Canada announced 59.2 million in funding for VIDO over the next three years.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, we would like to thank Minister Champagne for his support in this project. With collaboration from all three levels of government as well as private donors, VIDO has now the resources to continue its world-class work right here in Saskatchewan. This funding will support the development of VIDO's COVID-19 vaccine candidates as well as the expansion of its research facilities, including a national centre for pandemic research.

This means that VIDO will be able to upgrade to level 4 containment facilities. This upgrade will significantly increase Canada's capacity for research and vaccine development for all infectious diseases, as currently the only level 4 facility in Canada is the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg. We look forward to all the great work that VIDO does now and in the years to come. 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. At the beginning of the second wave in November, the Premier refused to act with a short-term circuit breaker. Instead hundreds have died, thousands more have been infected, and thousands more have lost their jobs as we've been stuck with this interminable slow-motion lockdown that has neither controlled the virus nor protected our economy.

Despite seeing variants surge, he decided to relax restrictions in March. And even though the Premier doesn't want to admit it, doesn't want to see it with his own eyes, we're leading the country in hospitalizations, leading the country in ICU [intensive care unit] admissions. Those numbers are growing, and sadly when they drop it's too often because people are leaving the hospital through the wrong door.

Mr. Speaker, we see test positivity rates of 15 per cent in Regina — 15 per cent. Meanwhile the Premier is on the radio musing about lifting restrictions. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. So to the Premier: has he learned a single lesson this year? Will he at the very least commit to making sure that he will be guided, not by an arbitrary number of first doses delivered, but by cases and hospitalizations to make sure we get this virus under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition had walked back through a number of months there, and I just make special note that post some of the recommendations that we had in November, in early December

we had increased the measures across this province significantly. Mr. Speaker, those measures remain in place today in virtually every part of the province and have been increased even further in the weeks most recent . . . or over the course of the past month here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we most certainly have always said that we are carefully watching our health care capacity province-wide here to ensure that we have the capacity to provide care, not just for COVID patients but for others as well. And we're also making every effort to ensure that we are unrolling the most robust vaccine plan here in the province as well. First, as we said yesterday, prioritizing those most at risk of serious health outcomes, those over 40. We know 84 per cent of those have been our hospitalizations, as well as the fatalities that we have experienced in this province. Again 96 per cent of our fatalities have been people over the age of 40.

As we move forward here today, we are changing course to some degree, Mr. Speaker, and prioritizing a number of people under 40 that are in high-risk workplaces, high-risk areas where they may actually contract COVID. And I'll have more to say on that in a minute, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again this Premier fails to acknowledge the impact of his inaction. We hear about vaccines. Vaccines are extremely important. The drive-throughs are closed, and the Education minister said yesterday that we don't have any vaccines left. He can blame the federal government. He can blame the federal government; he can blame the pharmaceutical companies; he can blame whoever he wants. But the fact is he's in charge. This is happening under his watch.

The Premier knew the vaccine delays would happen. We knew that vaccine delays would happen, and yet where is the plan B? Has he ever come up with any other plan except letting the virus run rampant, killing hundreds of people, and pointing the finger at anyone else and never taking responsibility, never showing an ounce of remorse, Mr. Speaker? People don't want to hear the blame game from this Premier while their loved one is lying intubated in our ICUs, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier tell us, were there any discussions at all? Was there ever a thought of a plan B for what happens if vaccines are delayed? Was there ever any idea of how else we could protect Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. That's why we implemented significant restrictions in the middle of December. That's why they remain in effect until today. That's why we increased the restrictions in the Regina area, due to the high concentration of variants that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I can just tell the people of this province that vaccines most assuredly do matter. I was on the phone the last number of days with the governor of North Dakota, talking about the opportunity to vaccinate south of the border some of our Canadian transport drivers that are providing the essential services, and have throughout this pandemic, to Saskatchewan

residents, Mr. Speaker, and putting together the second stage of a pilot program that was started today south of the Pembina border, Mr. Speaker.

But in North Dakota they peaked at about 350 folks in the hospitals there, over 2,000 cases per day. Mr. Speaker, they're approaching 50 per cent vaccination rate in their state. They now have about 35 people in the hospital. There's less people in the hospital because they have had a broad-based access to vaccines. They have enough vaccines now that they're able to work with surrounding jurisdictions like Saskatchewan and Manitoba on vaccinating Canadians south of the border, Mr. Speaker.

They most certainly are effective. We're at 33 per cent here today, and we continue to increase each and every day.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think the Premier understands his job. I don't think he understands what government needs to do, what leadership is all about, Mr. Speaker. Every step of the way, every step of the way he could have acted, and every step of the way it's been a complete and total abdication of duty and responsibility.

He could have acted. He could have acted to prevent the second and third waves. Instead he let them run wild, Mr. Speaker. He could have prioritized vaccinating front-line workers. He could have introduced paid sick leave to protect those front-line workers and keep the vaccine out of our workplaces. He could have deployed rapid tests instead of leaving them sitting on the shelf for months and months, Mr. Speaker. He could have introduced the necessary public health measures to get things under control when he saw the variants rising.

He didn't. He lifted restrictions, Mr. Premier. He's done none of these things, and the people of Saskatchewan are paying the price. Mr. Speaker, how many people, how many more people have to die before this Premier will actually start helping Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to what has occurred here in the province under the previous Health minister and the current Health minister providing leadership with Dr. Shahab and our public health department, as well as the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the Ministry of Health, this province was the very first province in the nation to introduce a self-isolation support program to provide people with some funding while they're self-isolating. First province in the nation, Mr. Speaker.

Under the previous Health minister and this Health minister, Mr. Speaker, the current Health minister, we have enacted some very significant measures across this province that still, as I say, remain in effect today. And under this Health minister we most certainly are unrolling the most robust vaccination program in the nation of Canada. We're leading the nation, continue to lead the nation, Mr. Speaker.

In fact just today . . . or yesterday, pardon me, we achieved 51 per cent of those people in Saskatchewan that are 40 years of age

and over. In the days ahead, Mr. Speaker, in fact later this week, we're going to continue to lower the — in spite of a challenging vaccine supply — we're going to continue to lower the age that people can make appointments through the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] as well through our pharmacies in the province to 44, and by mid next week, we're going to go down to 40.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to talk about leading the nation. But he never mentions that we're leading the nation in hospitalizations, never mentions the third wave at all, never mentions that we're leading the nation in ICU admissions. Eight more patients in our ICU today than yesterday; 47 patients in Regina in the ICU between COVID and non-COVID. That's nearly double what they're usually able to manage, Mr. Speaker. Double-bunking in our ICUs, leading the nation in hospitalizations — this is this Premier's record.

And his only competition for those leading numbers are the premiers of Alberta and Ontario, his buddies who show us that when premiers put money ahead of people's lives, you end up losing both, Mr. Speaker.

And that's what we've seen in Saskatchewan, the worst of both worlds: hundreds of people dead, thousands more infected, and the worst jobs record in the entire country. This Premier's callous calculations — constantly putting politics ahead of people — they've failed Saskatchewan.

And people are done. People are done with hollow condolences. People are done with empty promises, done with talking points, done with a Premier who doesn't listen and doesn't care. Mr. Speaker, with the death toll rising and job numbers falling, will this Premier finally admit that he didn't get it all right?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the hospitalizations here in the province, I've acknowledged many times that our hospitalization rates are most certainly higher than we would like to see them. Mr. Speaker, the way through that is to provide vaccines to the people of the province.

But our hospitalizations are a lagging indicator of the case numbers that have been there. Now it's too early to say that there's a trend, but most certainly we did peak with our seven-day case average last Thursday at about 284, admittedly too high, Mr. Speaker. We all want to see that case number lower. Today we're at a seven-day rolling average of 247 cases, Mr. Speaker. That's a decrease of about 13 per cent. Again too early to say whether or not that's a trend, but it is a move most certainly in the short term in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, this government, as I said, yes, has the most robust vaccination plan in the nation, but we've also had significant measures that have been put in place, measures recommended by public health and our chief medical health officer here in this province who's consulting with his colleagues.

We've seen other areas that also have challenging numbers, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned a few. Many

of those areas, I would say, also experienced the so-called short-term circuit breakers that have other impacts in our provinces and in our communities, Mr. Speaker. Most certainly when you look across Western Canada, it's been, I think, this government and likely John Horgan's NDP [New Democratic Party] government in British Columbia that have made every effort to keep everything open that we possibly can and still keep the people of the province safe.

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

COVID-19 Data and Vaccines for First Nations and Métis People

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. Back in December, I asked this government how many First Nations people living off-reserve have become sick with COVID-19. The minister didn't have an answer. We have lost far too many of our community leaders to COVID-19, leaders like Victor Thunderchild.

In other provinces, the provincial government keeps track of the number of First Nations people off-reserve who are getting sick with COVID-19. But the Government of Saskatchewan does not track this. Why not?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And to answer the question, we do track everything through health cards, but there have been some changes on the health card which I'm not sure if that member is aware of. The old health cards had an R status on them. We've worked with FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] to be able to remove that because I was told it was discriminatory, Mr. Speaker. So we're working with the FSIN to do that.

So no, we track it just by their health card just like we do with everybody else in this province, Mr. Speaker. But what I can say is that on our vaccine allocation, we are working with Indigenous Services Canada and the First Nation communities across our province to make sure that they get their allocation of the vaccine, so they could administer those vaccines on- and off-reserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just to note that I was the one that pointed out the R was discriminatory, so thank you for acknowledging that. The question about First Nations off-reserve, this is that question: why can't the government keep track of how many of us have caught COVID-19 and how many of us have died from COVID? How is it that the government can't track this information for off-reserve?

We sent a freedom of information request over the winter looking for answers and the government said, "The Ministry of Health does not have/track this information, nor do we have a way to find out." Of course they can track us, Mr. Speaker, when they're counting us in the numbers for health transfers. Will the minister

ask his officials to get an answer, or does he just not care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And absolutely I do care, because I've been working with Indigenous communities long before I was a member in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon and community area when I was at the Food Bank and continued that role when I was an MLA and enhancing that when I was the minister of Social Services and continuing to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I was just on the phone on the weekend with Chief Darcy Bear talking about the immunization program and what we can do to be able to enhance it and what we can do to support him that are doing . . . people that are Indigenous and non-Indigenous that are working out at Dakota Whitecap. Mr. Speaker, this is just one little microcosm of what we're doing across the board to be able to make sure that we are vaccinating everybody.

And again, Mr. Speaker, we're allocating what Indigenous Services Canada has asked us — what we agreed to and the First Nation communities — to make sure that they can get those vaccines on- and off-reserve, Mr. Speaker. And I will tell you no matter what your race, religion, creed, or anything, it is absolutely . . . This is the path through COVID, is through these vaccine clinics no matter where they're located. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, it blows my mind that this government has not kept track of this information. The Manitoba government has an online dashboard. You can see how many First Nations people on- and off-reserve are sick, how many are in ICU, how many have been tested, and how many have died.

In Saskatchewan under this government, Mr. Speaker, tracking off-reserve COVID cases appears to be a big secret, or something the government doesn't even care to find out. If the government really can't figure this out, will they at least start keeping track now, so we can see the full picture of how COVID is impacting First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. And I'll reiterate my answer earlier. Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to work with our First Nations and our Métis partners across the province to make sure that they are vaccinated, that they have the same access to vaccines. That's why when we got our first shipment of Moderna it went into the North and the far North to be able to make sure that we were vaccinating those. We were flying vaccines to the far North, up to Black Lake, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that they had the opportunity to do that. And now we're continuing that rollout throughout the rest of the province.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that everybody in this province understands that if they have the opportunity to go in and get

vaccinated that they should do that immediately. Again that's why we just lowered the age in the North to be able to work with those Indigenous communities to be able to get them down to that 40 age, so they can get vaccinated. And we'll continue to do that throughout the vaccine program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Job Creation Plan and Child Care Strategy

Ms. A. Young: — Why thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, yesterday the federal budget included significant funding in child care. And now I'll admit even still I was a bit surprised to see the Sask Party brush off this much-needed investment because, Mr. Speaker, much of Saskatchewan remains a child care desert. The demand for infant and pre-school spaces is huge, and meanwhile the subsidy rate hasn't changed since 1984.

We need to create jobs in this province, and child care has to be an essential part of any economic recovery. So now does our renowned worst-in-the-nation jobs minister recognize that creating new spaces and lowering fees is going to be key in getting the 11,000 women who have lost their jobs under his watch back to work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly look forward to having discussions with the federal minister and the federal officials that are beginning, I believe today, with respect to what this might mean for Saskatchewan in terms of being able to enhance the child care opportunities that we do have in the province, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, while we work towards a new agreement with the federal government and look to see what types of resources will be available through this announcement, we are continuing to develop 176 new licensed home care spaces, as well as 51 new centre spaces. Mr. Speaker, I can also go into the other enhancements that we made as a part of this provincial budget in terms of helping to start up new spaces in the province and to support the existing ones that continue.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having a discussion with the federal minister in the coming days and discussing with him how this may benefit what we're doing here in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, they say if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen. It looks like the jobs minister has given up trying to defend his worst-in-the-nation numbers.

But speaking of numbers, Mr. Speaker, here's what we know about a return on investment: "It is estimated that \$1 invested in high-quality early years program can result in a return of 4 to \$9 over the lifespan of that child." Now, Mr. Speaker, that's from this government's own early years plan that expired last year. And while other jurisdictions have recognized that access to

quality, affordable child care is essential, it took a full year for this government to roll out federal child care dollars to the sector.

And now we know, Mr. Speaker, that this government has a record of leaving federal dollars on the table. So again to the jobs minister: will he guarantee that none of the new child care dollars will be left on the table? And does he realize that fixing our broken child care system is essential to creating jobs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has done significant work over the last number of years to increase the number of child care spaces in the province. Mr. Speaker, we've seen a more than 7,100 increase in actual spaces, 77 per cent increase in spaces.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the day of sitting here in the Assembly and hearing Pat Atkinson talking about how her biggest regret in all the time that she spent in government is how the NDP didn't focus enough on child care. Mr. Speaker, we're working hard to correct that record, correct the legacy of the NDP. And we . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well that's what Pat Atkinson said, so I'll just take her word for it, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly be communicating with the federal minister to see what this allocation might look like, what an agreement may look like with the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and see how that may help to enhance the services here in the province. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the worst jobs numbers in the country and the worst child care numbers in the country, and it's almost like they're related, almost like decades of empirical research demonstrate there is a link.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, that rhetoric simply does not match the reality for parents across this province having to choose between a career and raising a family. And it's an impossible choice for Saskatchewan people, mostly Saskatchewan women, are being forced to make because this government has not stepped up with a plan that supports them in doing both.

Instead this government has flatlined budget funding to child care and the two-person Status of Women office, and we've lost 23,000 jobs since the pandemic started. And we will never get them back without a real jobs plan, one that includes a child care plan. Does the minister get it? Does the jobs minister realize that a jobs plan without a child care plan is simply no plan at all?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand on my feet and talk about the commitment that this government has made through the last provincial election campaign that made a commitment of 750 more licensed child care spaces in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we want to support families where they're at in terms of the decisions that they need to make. And we think that

one of the ways that we can do that for those that are looking for child care is to provide additional funding, both to support the child care centres that are already operating, in terms of their nutrition grant which we increased. Kept that campaign commitment already in this budget. The equipment basket of funding, we increased that as a part of that campaign commitment. That's being completed as a part of this budget, Mr. Speaker, as well as the start-up grant. We increased that by, I believe, \$500 and have kept that campaign commitment as well.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I think, in my first answer, we also aim to create 176 new spaces, and that's without even talking yet with the minister as it relates to this budget that the federal government came out with. And so I look forward to having those discussions with the federal minister.

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

Vaccination of Education Staff

Ms. Beck: — Yesterday the minister doubled down, telling the Assembly that schools are essentially COVID-free. Quote, there is no evidence in large-scale in-school transmission, end quote, the minister said. That's curious, considering both Regina school divisions wrote to parents today, extending temporary remote learning for another week. They said, "We would have preferred to have students return to their school desks to resume in-class learning [sooner]." Mr. Speaker, they went on to say, "... returning to schools now would not be the safest course." And we know that they're getting this advice from the health experts as we heard last night. It's no wonder.

Last night we also learned that 76 schools in our province are over capacity, additional 12 are over 120 per cent capacity. That means there's not enough room for kids during normal times and definitely not enough to keep kids separated during a pandemic. Does the minister still stand by his plan to leave teachers and school staff out of the vaccine queue, or will he do the right thing and get vaccines into our overcrowded classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not even sure where to begin, and I'll have to talk fast because there was a lot packed into that question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the information in terms of no evidence of large chain transmission within schools comes directly from the Saskatchewan Health Authority. In fact as a part of a document that I believe that they shared with physicians across the province recently, Mr. Speaker, one of the slide deck says, "Schools continue to be a top setting for contact tracing investigations, but the setting where a contact is least likely to become a case." Of all the different settings that they evaluate as a part of contact tracing, schools are the lowest setting in terms of a contact becoming a positive case.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to get people vaccinated in this province so long as the federal government holds up their end of the bargain and produces vaccines and delivers them to the province of Saskatchewan. As of today 40 per cent, as I've said before, of staff in Regina are eligible for vaccination. And as the

Premier's indicated, when we reach 40 years of age, teachers and in-class educational assistants and other in-class workers will be added to the eligibility list. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 32 — *The Vapour Products Tax Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 32, *The Vapour Products Tax Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 32 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 33 — *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 33, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 33 be now introduced and read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 34 — *The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 34, the fuel tax exemption Act, 2021 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It's been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 34 be now introduced and read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 35 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2021*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 35, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 35 be now introduced and read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

[14:15]

Bill No. 36 — *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 36 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Next sitting of the Assembly.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 601 — *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021*

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I move Bill 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021*, be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Cumberland that Bill No. 601 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — At the next sitting of the Assembly.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — State your point of order, please.

POINT OF ORDER

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, during question period the Minister of Education was specifically referring to and quoting a document. We request that that document be tabled in accordance with rule no. 52, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Will the minister table the document? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the minister was referring to briefing notes which of course are privileged and not necessary to be tabled.

The Speaker: — I will take it under advisement.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 31 — *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks, I'll be moving a motion regarding second reading of *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*, but it is my pleasure to stand today and move this bill forward.

Innovation Saskatchewan was established in 2009 by my colleague actually, from Thunder Creek, with the mandate to advance the Government of Saskatchewan's innovation agenda.

It does this by providing recommendations and advice on research, development, science, and technology. It works collaboratively with industry and stakeholders to fund research and development in several areas, including mining, oil and gas, biotechnology, nuclear medicine, global food security, and more.

Innovation Saskatchewan also supports the commercialization of new technologies important to Saskatchewan's growth, and it is building and supporting a community of diverse and successful technology entrepreneurs and start-ups through a number of different programs.

The purpose of *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021* is to provide explicit authority to undertake several objectives to ensure Saskatchewan's technology and research sector stays strong during the next decade.

These changes to Innovation Saskatchewan's Act will enable the agency to make venture capital investments in agricultural technology, ag tech, and support the growth of the sector in the province. \$15 million, 3 million per year over five years, will be invested into a Saskatchewan-based fund, and these proposed changes provide the authority to do so. Ag tech is the application of emerging digital technologies and solving challenges in the ag sector.

The Royal Bank of Canada forecast that by accelerating investments in technology, agriculture has the potential to add \$11 billion to Canada's GDP [gross domestic product] by 2030. Analysts predict that the agri-foods industry may surpass the economic contribution of any other industry in Canada within 20 years. Our ability to develop and harness new technologies for the ag sector will be critical in capturing this opportunity.

Knowledge and innovation will play an important part in Saskatchewan's future economic success, and the province is uniquely positioned to be a leader in this area. We have the agricultural expertise and the global reputation, strong academic research and infrastructure, and strong partners in a motivated tech sector that will get us there. Innovation Saskatchewan has existing programs, such as the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive, STSI; the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund, SAIF; and the Agtech Growth Fund to support early-stage ag tech start-ups.

However these programs do not support companies that need venture capital to scale up their growth, which is why these changes to the Act are necessary. Companies that are growing and looking to finance that growth of venture capital investments, companies that are developing and investing in game-changing farm gate technologies such as autonomous vehicles, real-time soil analysis, and tracking harvest data to maximize yields.

This truly is a crucial time for the ag tech sector. Many of the ag tech start-ups in the province were founded by individuals who grew up on farms and understand the challenges that the sector faces. They're developing technologies that are relevant and impactful to the ag industry. Our \$15 million will be invested exclusively in Saskatchewan-based ag tech companies. The selected fund manager, also Saskatchewan-based, proposes to strengthen the local ag tech and investment ecosystem. These deals will leverage millions more in private investment dollars and will provide the means to support early-stage ag tech

start-ups, create healthy investment deal flow into tech start-ups, and additional investment capital to the province.

Our province is facing both enormous opportunities and challenges during this unprecedented time of change. This investment is an opportunity for Saskatchewan to build on existing strengths, to become an ag tech leader, and to reap the benefits of creating and owning these innovations. The technology sector has come a long way, and the Government of Saskatchewan's investments through Innovation Saskatchewan have been paying off. The sector generates over \$10 billion in revenue each year and represents 5.6 per cent of Saskatchewan's total GDP. Companies outside of Saskatchewan and Canada recognize the opportunities in the province and are keen on setting up operations right here.

A recent example is NRGene, an advanced biotechnology company based in Israel who relocated to the province last year because of a successful trade mission. NRGene provides some of the largest ag-based companies in the world with the computational tools they require through improved breeding of crop plants and farm animals, thus increasing food production from every acre of agricultural land. They have successfully collaborated with the University of Saskatchewan, the Global Institute for Food Security, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and additional local commercial companies.

This shows that we are developing an ag tech ecosystem in the province, and a key ingredient to its success is investment. As more companies locate and are built here, more will come. Where funding and collaboration opportunities exist, jobs are created and more ideas are generated. Those ideas lead to more early-stage tech companies.

Innovations initiated from Saskatchewan have shaped and continue to shape our province and beyond. Existing programs like the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund, Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive, and now the Agtech Growth Fund will provide structured support to early-stage ag tech start-ups. This will help them test their products and get them to a stage where they can grow.

Ultimately the province's ability to invest in innovation translates to more economic opportunities, prosperity, and improved quality of life for the people of our province. With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 31 now be 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 on Bill 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*.

Like every, I guess, entrepreneur, business people in our province, the men and women of our province who are working to try to feed their families and try to provide a good income, we know that jobs in our province right now, as my colleague the critic for . . . you know, has commented a number of different times about the economy and about jobs — 23,000 jobs — concerning that we see a trend going on in the province and

people leaving the province.

So when you have a bill that's coming forward and it's going to help ag tech, it's going to help the industry, it's going to help entrepreneurs, it's going to help business, it's going to create an opportunity for our food suppliers as the minister referred to, there is an opportunity to support that.

And initially when you're looking at, listening to some of the comments the minister was referring to, we of course always want to support where you have industry moving forward. And that is so important, Mr. Speaker, that we show support and not cause more grief. And sometimes government's decision hasn't helped some of the areas that need their attention.

I'm hoping this bill will do that. It will deal with the jobs we're losing. It will deal with the industry. And I'm hoping at the end of the day, I know for myself, I'd love to see more people working in our province to provide for their families. They help pay for our roads. They pay for the things that our province needs. They pay for the most vulnerable.

So any time we can help and government is doing it in a positive way, and making sure they consult . . . Like they make sure that, you know, they've consulted with industry. You've got to get this right. Like we're in serious problems in our province. We know that. We've been saying that from here. We've been hearing that. We've been seeing the job numbers, so it's very concerning. So to have, you know, the minister make his comments . . . And that's good that it's all positive. We are hoping it is positive. We do.

Who was consulted, as I said, that's so important to make sure. And if it's ag tech, the companies that are out there are doing the good work, to make sure they are meaningful partners, and making sure people have been consulted, whether it's First Nations or Métis or municipalities, industry, our farms, you know, producers out there. Let's make sure that they have their advice, and have them consult in meaningful . . .

So really I don't have a lot more on this bill. Let's hope it's positive, people have good paying jobs and provides that and, you know, seeing some of the numbers the minister talks about. So at this point, I'm prepared to adjourn debate on Bill No. 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan 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: — Agreed. 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 Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill 3, *The Massage Therapy Act*, 2020. Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that has been a long time in coming, and we're very happy to see it after a long period of consultation. This is a bill that will create a new regulatory body for the province's massage therapists by establishing the College of Massage Therapy of Saskatchewan as the regulator and governing body of massage therapists in the province. I note that this is a stand-alone regulatory body separate from any of the three existing member associations that have operated here in the province.

And I know that a number of my colleagues here on the opposition side have had a chance to speak to this bill, and I'm pleased to have this opportunity to sort of touch on some of the comments and share some of my own as it relates to this piece of legislation. It's important that massage therapists have a recognizable body that ensures that there is a standard of practice for the services that they're providing and that it's done in the interest of protecting the public, ensuring that when they're accessing these sorts of services, of course, that they know that they are using the services of professionals who are credentialed, that they're overseen by a governing body, and that the therapists themselves also have title protection. We want to make sure that this legislation of course gets the right balance between ensuring, you know, that massage therapists and their profession is protected and that the public is protected as well.

[14:30]

And as I'm sure many here in the House can attest to, you know, when we're accessing these kinds of services, oftentimes it's with a lot of uncertainty around, well is this a registered massage therapist, and will I be able to submit my receipts for reimbursement by my employer? Can I ensure that I'm getting good services? And I hope that this legislation will allow for that certainty that the public is looking for when seeking out the services of a massage therapist.

And I note that there were some issues that came about looking at the grandfathering provisions of the Act and the use of restricted licences to address that issue. And we'll have many questions during committee for the minister in terms of how that provision came about and whether or not it's the appropriate one. Certainly, as I've mentioned before in the House, as a professional who is part of a regulated profession, certainly I'm familiar with that sort of a provision and its intent. And we want to make sure that those who are being grandfathered in under the legislation that there is appropriate oversight, that there is appropriate scrutiny to ensure that those who are going to be receiving a restricted licence are indeed eligible for it, and at the same time that their credentials and their experience is being recognized. That's also extremely important.

I do note that there are 1,600 professionals who apparently, you know, operate here in the province as massage therapists. And I think one of the concerns we also had was the fact that there is no working definition as part of the legislation. That's been left to the bylaws to define. And certainly I want to make sure that, and my counterpart will be asking many questions about that

issue in committee to understand, if we're leaving things to the bylaws, what sort of processes and considerations will be taken in the definition, which obviously is a very crucial part of this legislation, and that we're not leaving anything up to chance.

Also I do want to acknowledge that massage therapists and other paramedical health care providers in Saskatchewan have been operating and offering service under very trying circumstances for the past year and a bit. And you know, the safety of these workers and their clientele is something that certainly has been put at risk with the ongoing pandemic. And certainly, you know, as we've said many times in the House here that we feel that this could have been avoided, that if stricter measures had been brought in, had remained in place, that workers like massage therapists would be able to be plying their craft and servicing their clients, and we wouldn't be in such a horrible mess that we're in now with the state of the pandemic.

So I do want to acknowledge the good work of these professionals and agree that it's high time that they had, you know, governing legislation to protect the public as well as these professionals. And we will have many more questions as this bill goes to committee, ensuring that we do strike the right balance, that it's based on good best practice and meets the needs of the public.

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 Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour to enter debate on Bill No. 4, *The Construction Codes Act*. And I'm also happy to let the Assembly know that I will be concluding remarks on behalf of the official opposition, and at the conclusion of my comments, I will be suggesting that this bill proceed to the next stage in committee.

Before I do that, I'd just like to make a few remarks on the bill. As many of my colleagues in opposition have noted, this bill takes significant strides and replaces a previous piece of legislation, *The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Act*, with the new one, *The Construction Codes Act*. Some of the highlights here are that this allows government to develop regulations specific to construction standards and building accessibility for persons with disabilities. More on that later. We also see that the new Act allows for independent judgments of construction codes where there are disagreements in interpretation, and modernizes the permitting and inspection

process. I think that we as opposition see these as all positive things.

I'd like to dig into just a few more of the details here. I am pleased to see that there were a number of groups considered as this legislation was developed, and I'm also hoping to see that stakeholders were thoroughly consulted in each one of these groups that were highlighted by the Minister of Government Relations in his comments. The first group that he notes that has been considered here is homeowners, or property owners I should say, not just residents of homes. And I think about the process as a young man purchasing my first home. And you know, I see and hear there's consideration, there's a correlation drawn to purchasing a vehicle.

And then we have situations in place in this province, as all do, that somebody purchasing a vehicle can be made aware of a registry of liens, previous accidents. We want to make sure we're not buying a car that there's not something under the hood that we're unaware of. I certainly am not somebody who's able to crack open the hood of a vehicle and tell you if everything's in working order. And so we have legislation to protect buyers.

And so it's nice to see the similar kind of thinking was afforded here to people purchasing property, to be made aware of any outstanding deficiencies that might not be obvious. Now of course when you buy a home, you typically pay for a thorough home inspection, or you know, if you're purchasing an industrial property, I'm sure that there's similar processes there.

But you know, as a new homeowner, I'm thinking back to the first home that I purchased. I think I was 25 years old and I was engaged and I purchased a home to raise a family in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. And you know, that was a big step. And so it's nice to know that there's, you know, for somebody who's going to be in that situation in the future, that there will be a registry and that there will be a way to look at some of the history of the properties and that there's a safety net involved in that.

The second group that's also been considered here, according to the minister's comments, would be local authorities. And the thing that stood out to me is the consideration to allow smaller local authorities that maybe don't have the number of resources to use default building bylaws that would be more workable for smaller local authorities, and that there's consideration here to make it easier for local authorities to work together, neighbouring municipalities, what have you, Mr. Speaker. But you know, there's a consideration that, you know, smaller centres in particular would be able to work together in developing bylaws and practices that work in their regions, and that co-operation is part of the path forward.

The third group that I will conclude my comments here with that has been considered here is persons with disabilities. And so we know that New Democrats support accessibility and that we want to see construction codes that are developed in consultation with people with disabilities and with their advocacy groups to make sure that life is better, and that there's more accessibility for people living with disabilities, and their modes of mobility in getting around are things that do not preclude them from taking part or from entering a building or being able to access all parts of that building.

You know, as far as some of the specifics of what these standards look like, in reality we know that there's going to have to be a bit of a wait-and-see approach, but I think that we're going to have to wait until after this bill is passed to see exactly what that looks like. But overall, you know, I just want to reiterate what many of my colleagues have said, that as New Democrats we support any improvement to the accessibility for persons with disabilities, and we see that as a very positive thing here.

I also note that there was some inclusion in this legislation of updating construction codes to fit new environmental standards. Again I think that's something that we'll continue to examine as this bill moves forward. And obviously again, updating older legislation to fit new practices in the sector, I think, is vital, but also as we prepare for the future of the sector and we know that construction methods are changing. And when I think of that first house that I purchased that was, you know, nearly 100 years old, you know, the methods there to build that were in a different world than how we're building structures today. So it's good to see that those codes are being updated.

And you know, with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and conclude remarks on behalf of the official opposition and suggest that Bill 4, *The Construction Codes Act* proceed to committee. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 4 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

The Speaker: — This 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 University.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition with respect to Bill 14, *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*. This is brand new legislation which the government says is designated to protect those who are subjected to human trafficking by creating civil remedies for survivors of human trafficking. With this bill comes the ability for a person to sue for damages caused by human trafficking.

As the minister noted, human trafficking involves "... the recruitment, transportation, harbouring, and/or exercising control over the movements of a person in order to exploit that person." This exploitation typically takes the form of sexual exploitation or forced labour. Human trafficking is surely one of the most demeaning and dehumanizing acts that can be committed against another human being, so it is crucial that this is addressed. No question there.

Mr. Speaker, along with my colleagues who have already spoken to this bill, I would very much like to know if the proper consultations were conducted. I'm particularly interested to know if the ministry made an effort to consult with survivors of human trafficking themselves or with sex workers. I would also like to know if this bill may potentially make work more dangerous for sex workers, which is a concern that we have. I'd like to know if this bill creates new protections and remedies for human trafficking survivors or whether similar protections are already in existence.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just not clear quite how this bill might tangibly reduce the risk of human trafficking itself. This is where the government should be focusing its attention. For instance, this government has cut funding to successful gang reduction strategies over the past decade, which certainly can't be helping the situation with human trafficking. We know that the implementation of gang reduction strategies are shown to lower the levels of human trafficking, so this is a very important step for the government to focus on.

Our Justice critic will have many more detailed questions to ask the minister when this bill is reviewed in committee. And so, Mr. Speaker, I 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?

[14:45]

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 Saskatoon University.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition with respect to Bill 15, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020*. Mr. Speaker, this bill allows for a tenant to terminate a lease if that tenant is subjected to a sexual assault in their home. This is of course a good step. It extends the lease termination eligibility from covering survivors of domestic violence to also include survivors of sexual assault.

We do have some questions, Mr. Speaker, about how this provision will function and whether or not it will actually assist survivors. This government could be more effective at protecting survivors of sexual assault by properly funding sexual assault centres in our province. We know that the wait-lists to speak with a counsellor through these centres are extremely high, with wait-lists in Regina sitting between six months and a year.

This government could also adopt the Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan's sexual violence action plan. This plan contains many recommendations for government to act on this issue. Mr. Speaker, I am supportive of any measures that will support survivors of sexual violence, but it is crucial that those measures are undertaken correctly and in consultation with survivors and those on the front lines.

Another amendment to this bill, Mr. Speaker, which the minister seemed to gloss over and downplay in his remarks is one that will allow landlords to serve nonpayment-related eviction notices after seven days. This threshold has been lowered from 15 days and I certainly object to this amendment wholeheartedly. Obviously this change will have a decidedly negative impact on tenants, particularly so in the middle of a pandemic, Mr. Speaker, which is simply outrageous.

My colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has already noted that it does not appear tenants were widely consulted on this amendment. This is something that is very much needed. Our Justice critic again will have much more to say about this new bill at such time that it is reviewed in committee. And so, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 15, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2020*.

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 University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and bring some remarks on Bill No. 17, the traffic safety amendment Act. And as has been well canvassed by my colleagues thus far, there are some fairly comprehensive changes that have been made to traffic safety here in Saskatchewan. And of course we on this side of the house are supportive of any and all measures to keep people safe on the roads.

We want to make sure of course that these amendments are fair, that they benefit people, particularly the amendments that change rules for disposing impounded vehicles and electronic definitions regarding personal information. I do want to highlight that in committee we will have some more questions and feedback to

bring specifically around some of these items related to data and personal information management.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, this has been fairly well canvassed to date by my colleagues, so at this point I am happy to conclude my remarks and allow Bill 17 to proceed to the next stage.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 17 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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 Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased again to rise and bring some last comments here in regards to Bill 18, *The All Terrain Vehicles Amendment Act*. Again this is a bill today which has been quite well canvassed by my colleagues. And I really did enjoy listening to and reading some of their comments on this bill, especially those by my colleague from Saskatoon University, who I will shake down to find the location of that secret lake near Ted's Lake.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when perusing this bill and looking at some of the proposed changes around allowing those over 12 to operate an all-terrain vehicle really made me wish that . . . You know, actually I don't know if ATVs [all-terrain vehicle] were a thing at that point or if my parents were just smart enough to keep us away from them as small children with — speaking for myself — a reckless sense of personal safety. For the members who don't know, I actually grew up in the forest on a lake and spent the majority of my childhood scampering up and down a massive hill in order to go for swims and climb trees and do all of those kind of idyllic Canadian things. And boy, Mr. Speaker, would having an ATV have made those trips back up to the house a whole lot more efficient. And I know my parents would have been hard pressed to keep me off it even before the age of 12.

But random personal anecdotes aside, Mr. Speaker, we will of course . . . I'll have some more comments to bring to this in committee. You know, we're happy to ensure that there's a

regulatory framework in place to ensure that all people in Saskatchewan are safe, especially children. But of course, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that it's effective regulation and not just more red tape. And, Mr. Speaker, on this bill, I am happy to conclude my remarks here and allow it to proceed to its next stage.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 18 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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 Centre.

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer my initial comments on behalf of the official opposition regarding Bill No. 19, *The Human Resources Profession Act*.

I understand this is a new bill that's being presented. So I was doing some reading and I thought, oh, this is very good for establishing *The Human Resources Profession Act*. The Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Saskatchewan is establishing this and of course looking at the rules for the meetings, appointing board, bylaws, and of course discipline, etc. So I was reading this and I thought, you know, this is really good. I'm surprised there isn't one already in place. On the other hand, you know, I'm glad that this is something that's being presented. I just hope that in doing so, that meaningful consultations to those that are going to be impacted by this are consulted.

So I was thinking of the Indigenous groups. There's many of my . . . people that I've worked with in the Indigenous community that do a lot of human resource work, and many of them are trained through the certified human resources professional, CHRP. And so over the years of my employment, working, I've met a lot of HR [human resources] people and I've actually worked in HR myself. So I just wondered, and it is my hope that an environmental scan was conducted across jurisdictions and that Indigenous human resource professionals have been meaningfully engaged in this process.

And I was just looking here about how people are being

appointed to the board. And I've seen this over the years where appointments of boards . . . I certainly hope that in bringing this forward, that really a fair process is done when appointing the board, that there is a good representation of the community that is being served in the human resource profession, and also that Indigenous people are also included in that. Not just one, but more than one.

And this kind of brings me back to when I was young in the '90s. And this is great that there's going to be some Act in place here, because certainly when I was young and looking for work, I was a single mom and I knew a human resource person that was the head of a Crown corporation. And I went and chatted because I worked before with that organization. And I said look, I need a job; single parent. And that HR professional said okay, here's what we can offer you as temporary employment. And off I went. And I got that job based on my merit. You know, I didn't get it because somebody gave it to me.

However, when I was working in this place, the person that I was dealing with that was my boss told me, he said, the only reason you're getting this job is because of the partnership we have with the tribal council. And I was like, whoa, I didn't get this job because of the partnership; I got this out of my merit. And as a young person, I didn't know at that time that was there any recourse for me to take. And as a young person I didn't know, so I just carried on with life. Do you know, if there was something here, perhaps I could have had that opportunity to raise this.

So I know there's a lot of people that are impacted and I certainly hope that they would be consulted in a meaningful way, not in a tokenistic — and also via email, via website — that they'll actually be consulted, that people, individuals, they will reach out to them.

So having offered that, my thoughts on this, I know that my colleagues will also have additional questions to ask on this, so for now I'll conclude my remarks on this. So, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 19, *The Human Resources Profession 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. 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 Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour again to enter adjourned debate, this time on Bill No. 20, *The Publicly-funded Health Entity Public Interest Disclosure Act*. You know, I think by and large, Mr. Speaker, as I've listened to the comments from my colleagues in the official opposition, I

think that this is certainly a case of something that we have been pleading for for a long time, and there's good reasons for that.

And I think that as this pandemic has done many things, it's exposed some of the shortcomings throughout government ministries and agencies. And I think that this is one of those things that just has provided further evidence of why this is a good idea. And I'll be focusing many of my comments on that here, Mr. Speaker.

We know that this bill, the focus of it is to allow whistle-blowers to report concerning situations without fear of reprisal. And this bill also indicates that that would be in all areas of a publicly funded health entity, including the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and Saskatchewan Health Authority. You know, there's a lot of cases historically that point to why this is needed. And we've heard this from my colleagues, but I think it's important to note this again.

[15:00]

First and foremost, you know, I think of the case of Peter Bowden. Peter Bowden was a care aid who lost his job for speaking out about deplorable conditions in long-term care. And let's be clear. The conditions that he was speaking out about continue to this day. He lost his job, and we know that through that process the office of the former premier was also implicated in this.

Now what was he speaking out about? He was speaking out about being left to care for 30 individuals at a given time. One person, as phenomenal as our continuing care aids are, cannot be expected to provide care for 30 individuals. The result of Mr. Bowden speaking out was that he lost his job. He was shamed publicly. And that's the situation that obviously this legislation indicates is unacceptable in the province of Saskatchewan, and that whistle-blowers and the brave people who come forward need to be protected.

I'll come back to that again in a second here. I also want to point out nurse Carolyn Brost Strom who, through a long battle, was able to overturn her punishment for raising concerns as a nurse about a relative's care. And she took that all the way to the Supreme Court where she was successful. This legislation also proves that that battle was unnecessary and that she should have been protected in coming forward. And of course we're also mindful of the hush memo sent to physicians warning them what to include in publicly available health information.

So these are three prime examples. But you know, Mr. Speaker, as critic for seniors, I have a couple others that I think are concerning. And over the last number of months I've had a number of people contact me with their concerns of the status of long-term care, home care, and other levels of care provided to senior citizens and older adults.

And so I definitely have learned the value because many people as they share their stories with me are concerned about making this public. Sometimes that concern comes from family and loved ones. And I know that this bill specifically is looking at, you know, employee whistle-blowers. But again, I think that the concern is one that I'd like to note and put on the record, that people are concerned. And when they share their stories there's

often many reasons for them to hold back in making that public. Maybe they're still in the middle of the traumatic experience. Maybe they're still grieving the loss or illness or poor care being provided. And so they're reticent to speak out, and I understand that. I accept that wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker. But again I come back to the importance for this legislation to provide some protection.

Now I have two big questions when it comes to protecting whistle-blowers in publicly funded health entities. And when it comes to long-term care, the two that come to mind are two providers of for-profit health care for seniors, for-profit long-term care. So I'd like to know what this legislation does for those who provide long-term care in Extendicare facilities. As this is publicly funded, I am working off the assumption that they are also protected.

But we have another unique situation in Saskatchewan due to the moving of individuals out of Regina Pioneer Village. Many of those individuals are residing in a private facility that is not regulated by the SHA, and that is the Brightwater retirement home. Now there's about 100 individuals who were moved out of Regina Pioneer Village. I believe, if my numbers are correct, 40 of them went to Emmanuel Villa and 60 went to Brightwater.

And so Brightwater is a private facility that is privately run and they generate private profits. This is a retirement home. It's not governed by the SHA. I just wonder a little bit if those staff members, who are not regulated in any way by the SHA . . . The SHA has indicated that they conduct inspections there, that the level of care is commensurate with what would be expected in a long-term care facility. But it's just very specific and unique. It's a bit of a pilot project that's been going on now for two years, funded at about \$2.3 million annually.

And I just have to be curious. I'd like to get it on the record, and something that we can continue to investigate as our critic asks questions when this gets to the stage of committee. Is that whistle-blower protection afforded to those facilities as well?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks on Bill No. 20, *The Publicly-funded Health Entity Public Interest Disclosure Act*, and I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 20. 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. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the discussion with the Minister of Education arising from the point of order in question period, he reviewed his notes. And I had said that it was a briefing note. He looked and it was a public document from a presentation. So with that, Mr. Speaker, we will table that document right now.

The Speaker: — I'd like to thank the Government House Leader for tabling the document on behalf of the Minister of Education, and I consider the matter closed.

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 Saskatoon Centre.

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to offer some of my comments on behalf of the official opposition. I understand that this is an amendment. And I heard about this a few years ago, the SCAN [safer communities and neighbourhoods]. And I heard about it a few years ago because a lot of my work has been working with community associations.

And I was at one community association where we had representatives from the safer communities neighbourhood at the SCAN folks come out and present to the community association that I was working with. And that was the first time I heard about it. And they talked about the focus on being gangs, prostitution, children. And one of the challenges that they were having, they talked about the challenges.

And my question is, because I am Indigenous and I do a lot of work with Indigenous communities, I asked about how are they out there out in the community? How are they addressing gangs out in the First Nation communities? And one of the things that did come up for me and I've heard resoundingly was that the capacity . . . They didn't have the capacity to go to the communities because there were three members that did the whole . . . I don't know if it was for the whole province or just the half of the province.

So I thought, wow. And so they shared with us some of the challenges that they've had, and when I think about this, you know, I thought well, how's this going to impact people? And how do we balance this, you know? Housing is a huge issue all over, regardless of where you live, you know, affordable housing. And many homes that are available that are run by slum landlords. I guess nobody's there, right, to monitor or care to upkeep their homes and allow anyone to move in there.

And I know in the community that I serve in Saskatoon Centre, we've had increased violence in the community, you know. When I was out talking to members, I had a discussion with a constituent. And both the husband and wife lived across the street from a house where some activity was going on. And they contacted SCAN to come and put up a video system and really, like, the capacity to do the work of communicating with different, like the police and . . . was limited, you know. And it left the homeowners across the street feeling just hopeless. It's like what can we do, you know? How do we . . . I want to be, I want to stay in this area because I love this area, but I also see a lot of stuff that goes on here that makes it unsafe for me.

I also recognize that there are people that can't afford to live in fancy homes, right? You get what you pay for. And so when I think about many . . . I think about those living in poverty that have no choice but to live in these areas, in these places. And so if they have somebody that's . . . and I'll just say it. I'm Indigenous. I have lots of Indigenous family. Some of them are

up to no good. Right? And like, not that they come around to my house, but when I was younger and I didn't have the voice to ask them to leave, they would come.

You know, how many of these individuals that live in these homes have that ability to tell their loved one who's up to no good to get out, you know? So when I think . . . and it puts them at risk. You know, they may have a visitor coming in there, doing who knows what, and it puts them at risk. So we have to balance this. You know, we have to ask and do that consultation beforehand.

And the other thing I just want to say is I know that the individuals that are working with safer communities and neighbourhoods, they're at overcapacity. When I talk to First Nation communities, I ask them, do you know about this? I said, why are you not accessing the service? Why are you not accessing them to control the gang activity, control the drug activity in your communities?

Well first of all they didn't know about it. And this is a common theme of when we present and bring things together, make legislation, we often ignore those on-reserve, you know. So I would ask that more consultations and reaching out to First Nations. It's very easy to contact First Nation chief and councils and ask them to be on the agenda to speak about this because they would be very interested in that.

Having said all of that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for listening to me, and so I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 21. Yes, thank you so much.

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. 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 Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and offer some last comments here on Bill No. 24, *The Vehicles for Hire Amendment Act, 2020*. We've had some thoughtful discussion from my colleagues thus far on this bill and of course, you know, I would reiterate what has been said around the need to ensure a level playing field, certainly as we see changes to the transportation sector through companies like ride-sharing companies.

And I really want to take a minute and talk about this one part of this bill that I think is incredibly important, and that's around criminal record checks. And this was something, I'll be honest, I assumed was just standard operating procedure, perhaps naively. Certainly as a young person before I had my driver's licence, I relied heavily on transportation services and suppose vehicles for

hire. And this is something I think that I assumed was in place and that I took for granted, and I think that's something a lot of people take for granted. And it is wonderful to see it being included here because, Mr. Speaker, this is something that is very, very real for people in the province and certainly very, very real for women.

[15:15]

I think specifically of a friend and constituent of mine, Carla Harris, who was sexually assaulted by a driver. She's a member of the disability community and due to the nature of her disability, she can't drive, and in an attempt to get home and get safe she was unfortunately subject to sexual violence at the hands of a driver.

And this is something that I know has been profoundly impactful on Carla, and she has done remarkable, remarkable advocacy work on behalf of other people, women, and members of the disability community in ensuring that this does not happen again and that we have safeguards in place such as criminal record checks to do our best as a society and as legislators to ensure that people can be kept safe when they're simply trying to get home.

You know and, Mr. Speaker, this is as I said, just such an important component and something I am really quite pleased to see in here because it is a very real fear that people live with and certainly that women live with every day. And unfortunately too often it is people who are already vulnerable due to a lack of transportation who live with this fear.

Mr. Speaker, as has been stated, we do have some concerns and questions about the new immunity clause and what type of legal actions the government is trying to protect itself from, and these will be questions that I will be raising in committee. And of course, as New Democrats, we're committed to working with taxi drivers and taxi company operators to ensure that this legislation does strike the right balance and doesn't have any unintended consequences. But I did just want to speak personally to that one piece that I feel is so important and look forward to addressing it further in committee.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 24 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this bill be committed?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — To the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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 Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into debate today on Bill No. 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021*. As the minister mentioned in his second reading speech, the significant incident response team is set up to investigate cases of sexual assault, serious injury, death, or spousal violence arising from police actions.

This bill proposes to implement that a civilian-led team will investigate serious incidents involving police officers and would ensure that the SIRT [serious incident response team] has Indigenous representation with appointments of a First Nations or Métis community liaison, that the SIRT director would report to the Public Complaints Commission, and it's expected to be operational in the fall of 2021.

I think as we think about this, Mr. Speaker, a few things come to mind for me. Certainly, you know, we want to thank everyone who is serving in our municipal police forces and also in the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] in the province. You know, these folks are on the front lines of many challenges across our province, and we want to thank them for their work.

And at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we know that . . . quite timely when we talk about the Black Lives Matter movement. I wanted to talk about this a little bit. This past summer there were rallies that took place in Saskatoon, and I know a number of colleagues participated there and wanted to hear what folks had to say. And you know, there's been a certain heightened awareness and sensitivity toward serious incidents that involve police officers. And so there have been a number of calls . . . I know in the Black Lives Matter rallies that happened in Saskatoon there was also a profound acknowledgment that Indigenous lives matter.

And this goes back to a number of our . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I don't really know if this is the time for heckling, Mr. Speaker. This goes back to, you know, some of our history in this province that we're not proud of. And I think of the starlight tours in Saskatoon, and I know that our police force has come such a long way since then and has been working on reconciliation. And you know, I certainly credit the leadership that they've had for taking those steps. I know it hasn't been easy. But these are some of the very big issues of our time.

And I also think about the trial of Derek Chauvin which, only moments ago now, the jury reached a verdict and Derek Chauvin was convicted of the murder of George Floyd. And I know this is something that people are watching very closely across North America and further, Mr. Speaker. But you know, it speaks to the gravity of these moments. It speaks to the fact that there is a heightened demand for oversight, civilian oversight, of police and the importance of these moments and how we're all being held accountable for these actions.

So it's certainly important that we see this bill bringing in some civilian oversight. It's certainly called for. And I think the question just remains . . . because we shouldn't have police policing police in these significant incidents. The question just remains, what the rest of this body will look like. So it's great to see that the Chair is a civilian, but we have questions about what the rest of the body will look like. And we know that these are important issues and these are important times. So we need to make sure that we get this right and deal with these issues appropriately.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know that many of my colleagues will have additional comments on this bill, but I will move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 26 for today.

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. 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 Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to enter debate on Bill No. 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*. You know, I think as many of my colleagues have already remarked, this seems to be a lot of positive movement with the introduction of this bill that makes it easier to resolve traffic tickets and with process improvements with the new online system.

I think, just to reflect a little bit on some of those lessons that we've learned during the pandemic and we've created a new way of doing things to keep each other safe, you know, changing meetings and appointments. You know, we can now meet with our physician online, over the phone. We've changed the way we gather in groups and we've changed the way of doing things. And many of those changes will continue when the pandemic is gone and life is back to, you know, what will be a new normal.

And I think this is one of those things, you know, I think that we've learned in the last year that some meetings can be Zoom meetings and some Zoom meetings can be emailed and some emails can be text messages and sometimes text messages can become a GIF. And we've learned how to be more efficient in our way of doing things, and I think that's reflected in some of the changes brought about here in Bill No. 27.

I'd like to point out just a few of those. I'm happy to see that the minister and fellow member from Saskatoon also highlighted many of these changes when he spoke to this bill. One of those changes would be, you know, changing the way that early resolution discussions take place. You know, recognizing that in the past many of these initial meetings were a chance to, you

know, an individual charged with a summary offence who had simply needed to ask questions of a prosecutor, find out what their options were, and that these extra meetings could have been done more efficiently. And so there's changes being made to allow that to happen, and that's absolutely positive and I know my colleagues agree with that.

Another thing that this bill makes allowances for is looking at, you know, providing easier registration for the fine-options program. And while we know that this government tried to hit this program in the past, it provides an opportunity for folks who, for whatever reason they may choose that, you know, paying a fine may be too challenging for them due to their financial circumstances, life circumstances, they may choose to go other routes to work with community organizations who need the help and who can benefit from that. And this bill allows that process to work more easily and that registration for the program, you know, is more inviting for folks. And you know, again I think that's a positive change. And as we learn to do things more efficiently due to the pandemic, we can continue doing those things outside of the pandemic.

Maybe the last thing, the last couple things that I'll get to here, Mr. Speaker, is that overall I think that my colleagues have spoken to a number of things here as far as what this bill will do to reduce court volumes, ease strain on the system, get rid of some of these unnecessary costs that, you know, eventually are incurred by different levels of government as courts are tied up with summary offences that could be addressed through many of the online measures brought about through this new bill.

One of the things that I do want to point out is that, you know, reducing court volumes is absolutely necessary, especially as we look at, you know, the backlog courts that have resulted from the pandemic and also from before the pandemic, as this government has closed several courthouses around the province over the last number of years.

So certainly I think that I stand in agreement with the comments made by my colleagues in opposition, and we'll continue to listen to all members as they rise in the Assembly to share their thoughts about Bill 27. But at this time I will move to adjourn debate on Bill 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment 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. 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 Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill 28, *The Active*

Families Benefit Act, 2021. And to start my remarks, I'll just note that this is a bill that will provide eligible families up to \$150 per eligible child and up to \$200 per eligible child for a disability tax credit that can be put towards sports and music and other recreation programs.

It's been a bit of a curious bill to see introduced. We do know that there was a similar benefit that was in fact removed back in 2016, and now this one has been introduced. And you know, I guess we're a little bit concerned by the sort of flip-flop nature of the benefit and question why it would be taken away, only to be reintroduced five years later. You know, oftentimes in the business and industry community, we talk about the need for business certainty. Well you know, news flash, that's also what Saskatchewan families are looking for as well is predictability, stability, and certainty. So while it is a somewhat welcome turn of events, certainly the flip-flop nature is not one that is appreciated.

[15:30]

But I guess, you know, also building on some of the comments of my previous colleagues on this side of the House, you know, really this is something that's only just playing around the edges of what we'd like to see. And I must admit that I do feel rather skeptical about the overall benefit that this will provide. I do note that, you know, it is income tested for families earning less than \$60,000 a year. In the news release that I referenced, it did indicate that it was estimated there'd be 20,500 families that would likely be eligible for this benefit, amounting to \$4 million per year.

My concern however relates to, you know, the uptake that will actually be seen. You know, certainly families who are struggling to get by have some very difficult choices that they need to make about where they put very limited dollars. And while it's nice that there are funds like these provided, I think for a lot of families, this will be beyond their reach.

You know, what we're really looking to see is supports that will ensure that, you know, all families have access to a fair living wage. The absolute bare minimum for that is \$15 an hour, and of course it should be much higher than that. It's something that we've been calling for, for a very long time. And I remain highly skeptical about how much benefit this piece of legislation will actually amount to.

You know, I think also there's other kinds of barriers we have to keep in mind when we're offering these kinds of incentives. You know, lots of families face difficulties with the preparation of tax returns and, you know, even just the awareness that these kinds of tax incentives are available to them. And I think what we . . . You know, it's I think a very typical kind of approach from a conservative government to look to providing, you know, these direct incentives to individuals. It plays well in, you know, political terms. But I question, you know, where is the evidence that actually supports that this is a good public policy?

And these are the kinds of questions of course that our critic will be carrying forward into committee to see the evidence that shows that this does indeed result in, you know, tangible benefits to those target income groups that it's intended to support. And what are the other alternatives? And could those be in areas that

provide direct funding to sporting groups and other organizations so that they can directly offer these kinds of programs, particularly to the families and communities that are really struggling to get by?

You know, I can just say, speaking from my own personal experience, you know, coming from a family that for a time was on very limited means, and you know, quite frankly, investing in sports and music and other kinds of programs like that was not in the cards. It just simply wasn't. And it was those publicly accessible programs where I could see the most benefit — the things that were, you know, offered through my school and by the community that didn't have these kind of financial barriers that prevented access for families.

And I just ask that the government take these considerations, you know, into consideration seriously. You know, are we striking the right balance? And are we indeed helping those families who really struggle on the margins to provide for their families, whether indeed this is the kind of incentive that is really going to give them the supports they need? Or based on the evidence, what are we seeing out there in terms of providing true benefits?

That's really all I wanted to say about this particular bill, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 28, *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.

Bill No. 30

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. J. Harrison that **Bill No. 30 — *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honoured again to enter debate, this time on Bill No. 30, *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*. You know, I have taken time to review the legislation, review the comments from the minister, listened to some of my colleagues who have spoken to this piece and I think that overall, you know, I think that there's lots to agree with here. A few questions but certainly I think as New Democrats we support extending the incentive to ensure that our tech industry is given the best shot to build jobs here in Saskatchewan, to invite investment, and to grow the Saskatchewan tech industry to be a leader in our country.

You know, we'll continue to look closely to ensure that other small changes to this legislation about shareholding are appropriate. And there's a few other things that I'll continue to look closely at. But I want to talk for a minute just about, you know, why this particular incentive is important. And I want to do that through the lens of somebody who, for most of my career until very recently, has worked with young people. And you

know, they reflect on the young leaders that I worked with in the classroom as a public school teacher. Many of them are looking to further their education. Many of them are currently furthering their education in post-secondary and areas of business, computer science, to go into development. And you know, I'm kind of inspired by their ingenuity and their creativity, and how they're using their skills — certainly skills that I don't have now and did not have at their age, you know — to do some really cool things.

And two highlights come to mind. A young man named Landon, I was his football coach in high school. And he's been in the news several times as he's developed AI software, artificial intelligence. And he's done this as a student who transferred from business into computer science. I knew him when he was in high school. I taught him in grade 9 and not somebody who I really saw as really being somebody who spent a lot of time in the computer lab or doing things like that. But after he graduated high school, he found a passion and he's developed some really amazing software that, amongst his peers in university, is cutting edge. And he's been featured in the news many times.

And so you know, incentives like this give me hope that someone like Landon will be able to stay in Saskatchewan, maybe grow a business. Maybe be somebody who employs others and who invites investment to our province and to our tech sector.

Also mindful of another young man who I connected with during the campaign when I knocked on his door. I hadn't seen him in years. But we had a short conversation and that was good. And then I saw him in the news a few weeks later. Saw him in the news. He had also developed a new start-up as a business student.

I think this one's really cool. He developed a kind of a technology-intensive workplace refrigerator. You know, during the pandemic when we're in a workplace where we share a fridge and there's some, you know, hygiene or cleanliness questions that come with that as we are understanding how this virus works. Well, his was already in the works before this, something to be used in business or in communal living places like a dormitory. And it's a fridge that has individualized lockers within it to keep your food cold and safe when your friends and roommates in the dorm can also keep theirs. And it uses smartphone technology to set the temperature, to unlock it, to make sure that, you know, no one is stealing your ice cream in the middle of the night. So you know, this incentive gives me some hope that these two young individuals will find a home for their business here in the province and that they'll be supported in doing so.

You know, I did take some time to review the comments from the minister on this, who indicated that previous investment is credited with creating 144 new jobs and 62 eligible start-ups. As New Democrats we absolutely celebrate each and every job in this province. And it's why we're so concerned about the 23,000 people who are out of work. And we hope that this government looks at more options that will continue to stop people from moving out of our province and find good-paying, quality jobs right here in Saskatchewan.

Well with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on this bill, and I will move that Bill No. 30, *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act*, that we adjourn debate on the bill. 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. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. The House now stands adjourned till 1:30 tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:42.]

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