



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

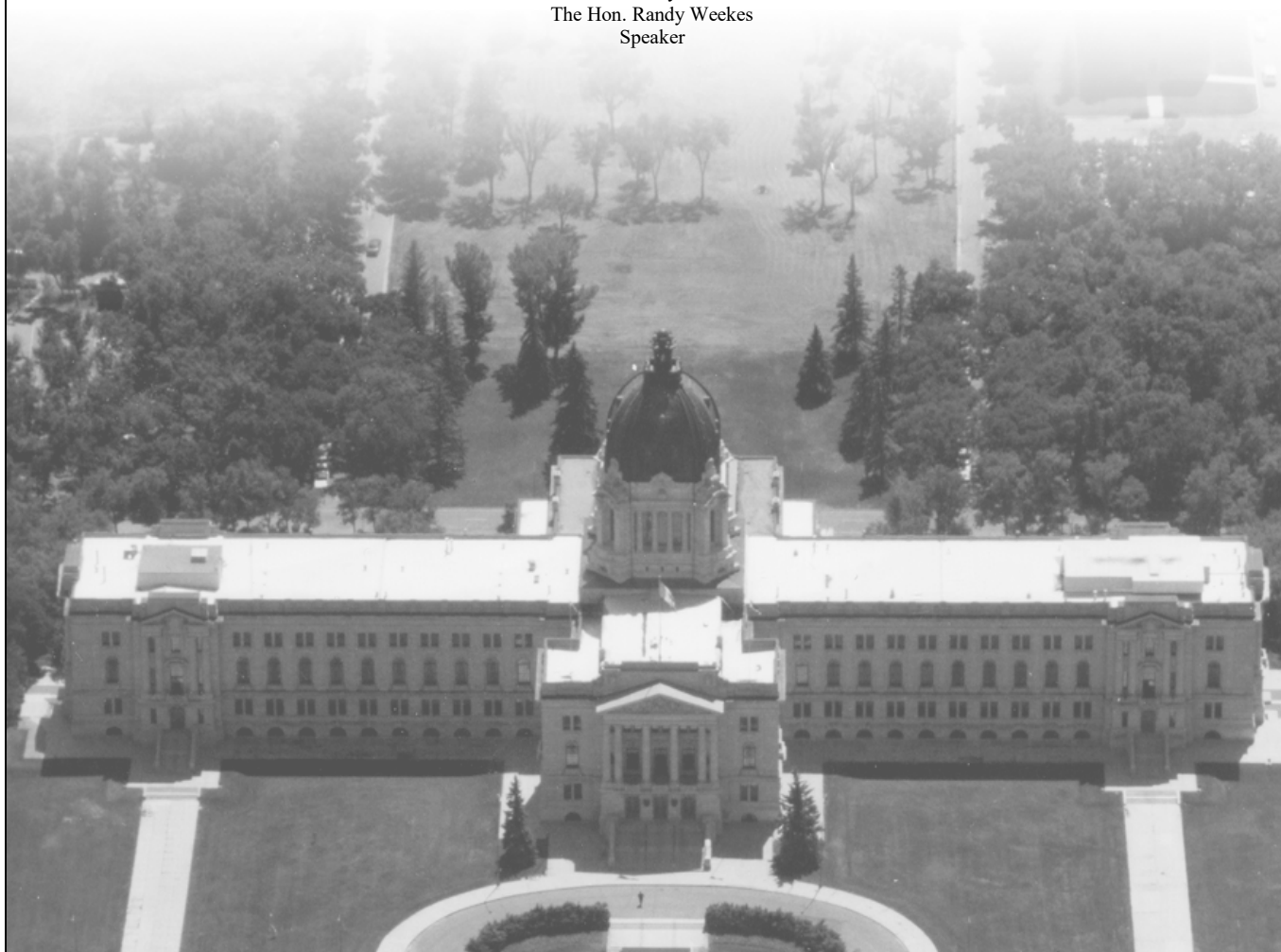
of the

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

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

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition regarding Hemlibra coverage. Wendy and Donald Quinn's son was born with hemophilia A and has had to self-administer IV [intravenous] two to three times per week to give him moderate protection from bleeding.

Hemlibra means no more IV, greater protection from bleeding, less complications, and more freedom to join in with his friends, unencumbered. It also means less reliance on the health care system, including reduced emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

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.

Got a large stack of petitions here, Mr. Speaker, signed by individuals from several communities including Humboldt, Muenster, LeRoy, Watson, Elrose, Drake, Bruno, Englefeld, Warman, Hague, Annaheim. I might have missed a few. I do so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present important petitions for pay equity legislation in Saskatchewan on behalf of concerned residents that are fighting for justice and for fairness. They note that Saskatchewan is one of only four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation; that Saskatchewan has one of the highest gender wage gaps in Canada, which is the result of systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work, that must be corrected with pay equity legislation.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has recommended proactive and comprehensive pay equity legislation, which has not been pursued by the Government of Saskatchewan; and that while pay equity advocacy primarily seeks to address gender-based discrimination, it must also be mindful of ability-, age-, identity-, and race-based wage discrimination.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request

that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to introduce pay equity legislation.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents from Prince Albert and Meath Park. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Battlefords Businesses Sponsor Event to Support Mental Health

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to highlight a recent event that happened in my home constituency of The Battlefords. Two locally owned businesses, Hawtin Plumbing and Maunula Electric, sponsored an event to host Chris Beaudry, who is an assistant coach with the Humboldt Broncos. He was to speak with their employees about mental health.

But not stopping there, Mr. Speaker, these businesses worked with Pattison Media and the Dekker Centre for the Performing Arts in North Battleford to live-stream the event and made it widely available in our community.

I was able to join the event myself, and I was grateful and humbled to hear about Chris Beaudry's experience with mental health and addictions. Mr. Speaker, even more amazing is that Hawtin Plumbing and Maunula Electric donated the proceeds from the event to our local Battlefords branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members in this House to join me in thanking the Hawtin and Maunula families and their businesses for both putting on this event and sharing it with our whole community. It is so great to see businesses engaging in issues relating to mental health and contributing to their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Earth Day 2021

Ms. Ritchie: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand here today to celebrate the 51st Earth Day. Earth Day is recognized as the largest secular observance in the world. More than 1 billion people participate every year.

The theme for Earth Day 2021 is Restore Our Earth. The focus is on natural processes, emerging green technologies, and innovative thinking that can restore the world's ecosystems. In Saskatchewan we have many opportunities to seize on these emerging trends and protect our natural biodiversity. Saskatchewan people want to be the change we see in the world by embracing the principles of Earth Day.

What's needed are government policies and programs that incent, protect, and prepare Saskatchewan people and businesses to diversify our economy and create good-paying green jobs. It sends the wrong signal when the government enacts punitive

measures, like the recently announced electric vehicle tax, that discourage positive actions.

By participating in Earth Day, people in Saskatchewan are demonstrating that they are ready to act and drive positive change. I ask all members to join me in recognizing Earth Day and call on the provincial government to take actions that will support Saskatchewan people in restoring a healthier and more sustainable world for future generations.

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

Saskatoon Man Honoured for River Rescue

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month Brad Pilon was enjoying a trail ride with his wife and two friends by the South Saskatchewan River in Saskatoon. Along the trail he noticed two small kids' bikes lying empty. Shortly after, he heard screams from the shore. He immediately rushed down to the shoreline to find a 7-year-old boy crying for help as his 8-year-old cousin was slowly beginning to drown in the strong current of the river.

"He can't swim," the young boy shouted from the shore. And Brad, without hesitation, ran down the riverbank and jumped in the water. It took him a few strokes to get out to the boy, but he was able to reach him and safely bring him back to the land. This is a story especially close to my heart, as I was also rescued from the Saskatchewan River as a young boy.

Mr. Speaker, Brad will be recognized this September with a Star award at the Badge, Shield, and Star event hosted by Rotary Clubs of Saskatoon. Brad thinks he was just in the right place at the right time, but to those two boys and their families, he will be forever remembered as a hero.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask this Assembly to join me and thank Brad Pilon for his courageous efforts in saving that little boy from the river. Thank you.

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

COVID-19 Variants of Concern

Ms. Mowat: — You know, Mr. Speaker, 13 months in, it's become abundantly clear that this Premier has failed to handle the COVID-19 pandemic. From he and his front bench laughing off the risk of COVID-19 as they planned a snap election, to sending signals to Saskatchewan people that the cold might protect them, and even describing the infections across the province as a "sprinkling" as they ravaged communities across the province, it's clear he's in over his head.

I have to say though, Mr. Speaker, the Premier really took it to a whole new level yesterday. In response to questions about the presence of a more transmissible, more severe, and possibly more vaccine-resistant Brazilian variant, the Premier had this to say: "Whether it's the UK variant, the South African variant, they're all COVID," Mr. Speaker.

Now I'm no epidemiologist, but this is not the message the

Premier should be sending to Saskatchewan people. The spread of variants of concern should be sounding alarms for the members opposite. But for some reason this government continues to hit snooze.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier has no plan for jobs, no plan to get COVID-19 under control, and clearly no plan to adjust to the very distinct and very dangerous variants. Saskatchewan people deserve so much better.

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

Saskatchewan Scientist on Mars Rover Mission Team

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 18th, Tim Haltigin and his family gathered together on the couch to watch *Perseverance*, a space rover, successfully land on Mars. This was a big celebration for Tim as he had been part of the exploration team to get the rover on the red planet.

Mr. Speaker, Tim grew up outside Canora and always had a fascination for space and geography. While studying river flows during his master's, Tim joined the competition focused on finding water on Mars, which caught the attention of the lead professors in Mars exploration and the Canadian Space Agency. He now works as the senior mission scientist in planetary exploration for the agency and will be instrumental in the new rover's mission. Now that Percy has landed, Tim will be guiding scientists around the world on how to bring samples back to Earth, getting us closer to discovering water or life on Mars.

Mr. Speaker, this is profound work, and Tim and his team are addressing one of the most important questions on humanity: are we really alone in this universe? Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members in the Assembly to join me in recognizing Tim Haltigin on his team's successful rover landing mission on Mars and wish him the best. Thank you.

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

Earth Day 2021

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks Earth Day, and this year's theme is Restore Our Earth. Today many jurisdictions are focusing on the impact of climate change and highlighting emerging green technologies and innovative thinking that can restore the world's ecosystems. I'd like to recognize our agriculture producers, who for decades have provided sustainable stewardship for our grasslands, utilize innovative farming practices, and are providing important opportunities for carbon sequestration in the province.

Mr. Speaker, our government supports many initiatives that will move the province forward both economically and environmentally, such as our carbon capture storage facility, North American Helium project, DEEP [Deep Earth Energy Production] energy geothermal, the Meadow Lake biomass project, and many other renewable energy projects.

Mr. Speaker, in 2017 we launched our climate change strategy, Prairie Resilience, making more than 40 commitments designed to make Saskatchewan more resilient to a changing climate. Today our Ministry of Environment has also published online

their *State of the Environment* 2021 report. The report includes comprehensive information to enhance our understanding of the environment. This report highlights that our air quality is good; our forests are sufficiently regenerated after harvest activity; we've introduced multiple regulations to address greenhouse gas emissions; and our province's recycle programs continue to thrive and expand.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me in recognizing Earth Day.

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

Constituent Advocates for Recreational Firearms Owners

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has a long history of responsible firearms use, whether it be for hunting or recreation. I was fortunate enough to have an enlightening conversation with a constituent of Walsh Acres that represents firearms owners in our province, Gil White.

Gil is the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation representative and the chairperson for the recreational firearms committee in Saskatchewan. And the members of the recreational firearms committee, as well as the 70,000 licensed hunters in Saskatchewan, are quite concerned with the federal government's Bill C-21. Mr. White and the law-abiding firearms owners that he represents know this bill will do little to address firearm crime. Legal gun owners like Mr. White are quite pleased that Saskatchewan has taken steps to hire our own provincial Chief Firearms Officer.

Today I would like to recognize the leadership that Mr. White has shown as he continues to advocate in the media and working collaboratively with our government to ensure that responsible gun owners continue to be heard.

I now ask all members to please join me in thanking Gil White for his continued efforts in representing legal recreational firearms owners here in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's ICUs [intensive care unit] are at an absolute breaking point. In an interview with Global News yesterday, the Saskatchewan Health Authority's chief medical officer, Dr. Susan Shaw, an intensivist herself, Saskatchewan's top doctor, said that if things don't improve they will start having to make decisions about who will get care based on who's most likely to survive their ICU stay, Mr. Speaker.

She said doctors are already making decisions about which surgeries to delay, which patients to move to other hospitals. She said our hospitals are seeing whole families infected with COVID-19, and she's worried about who is taking care of the children while their parents are admitted to hospital.

The Premier keeps trying to tell us that things are fine, that he's got this. But doctors are saying the opposite. Hundreds of doctors, Saskatchewan's top doctors, Mr. Speaker, they're saying the opposite. Does he not care, or does he simply not know? And if he doesn't know, why does he refuse the invitations to find out?

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I as well had the opportunity to read the article — I believe it was with Global News — with respect to Dr. Susan Shaw who had made some comments with respect to triaging and the plan that they are looking at for triaging. Not enacting, Mr. Speaker, not planning to enact, but the plan that they were ultimately looking at.

And I think in fairness, if you look across Canada, you're going to see many medical health teams doing exactly the same thing as we are undergoing a . . . you know, what will hopefully be the final weeks of a global pandemic. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the modelling that has been released, you know, week after week, month after month throughout this pandemic, in our province at least, there has always been a range of consequences that can occur, Mr. Speaker.

And it's always been with the guidance of our public health department that we have made decisions in this government to enact measures, to hold those measures where we need to, Mr. Speaker, to support those people in those communities that are being impacted by those measures, and then ultimately to very ambitiously and aggressively offer vaccines in as quick a manner to all of the people in the province. All have had an effect, Mr. Speaker, and increasingly we're starting to see the effect of vaccines.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not some hypothetical. This is one of Saskatchewan's lead doctors and intensivists saying that this is a going, immediate concern, Mr. Speaker. This is not normal, and it is not going well thanks to this Premier.

The Premier said he needs a formal invitation through official channels in order to hear from the doctors on the front lines of our ICUs. They've asked, Mr. Speaker. They've asked in meetings. They've asked through the media. And they've begged with the blood, sweat, and tears they've poured into care of patients in our ICUs, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier shouldn't need an engraved invitation, shouldn't need to be asked. He should want to know. He and his minister should be reaching out to hear and see the realities faced in our ICUs today. And yet yesterday once again, the Premier ducked an opportunity to learn the truth of what's happening in our ICUs. He should go see that reality himself.

And if he's still too afraid of what that will reveal, will he at the very least commit to a face-to-face or teleconference meeting this week with the heads of Regina and Saskatoon's ICUs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, let me take the opportunity to thank the head of ICU here in Regina, thank Dr. Shaw, and thank all of their colleagues and all of our health care workers across this province that are working the front lines, Mr. Speaker, caring for people, providing the testing capacity that we have, providing the vaccines when we have the opportunity to receive them and provide them to Saskatchewan people.

They, like many others across this province, are working throughout this pandemic on the very front lines, doing their job day in, day out, Mr. Speaker.

With the limited vaccines that we have had, we have made every effort to ensure that our health care workers are vaccinated because of what they do and who they come in contact each and every day. We've now expanded and attempting to bring that opportunity to other front-line workers, public workers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We have correctional guards that have gone to work each and every day unvaccinated to this point. We're going to get them vaccinated shortly. Teachers, Mr. Speaker, that have gone to work each and every day across this province. If they're 40 or younger, they have not been vaccinated to this point.

I think I'd say to all of our public workers in this province, all of our front-line workers whether you're a teacher or a trucker or a correctional guard, Mr. Speaker, we appreciate what you have done to this point, and we most certainly are making every effort to get you vaccinated as quickly as possible and get things back to normal.

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

Mr. Meili: — Just once, Mr. Speaker, just once I'd like to see this Premier actually show some humility, some recognition of how bad things are going. But no. Instead for the past month this Premier stands up and says, vaccines are on their way; don't worry. Acting like this is already over. Mr. Speaker, it's not over. Yesterday four more people died in this province from COVID-19, four more people that are never coming back, four more families mourning a loved one.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday one doctor in the province described the ICU here in Regina as a war zone. He described the mood of the heroes working day in and day out to save lives, as one of resignation because they know it's not getting better any time soon. It's so disappointing that the Premier has allowed things to reach this point because it didn't have to be this way.

But every step of the way this Premier has had choices, and every step of the way he has proven that he's not up to the job. Mr. Speaker, I'm so sad that I have to ask this question. I just can't believe we've come to this point. But what is the plan for when our ICUs can no longer cope? What's the plan for when doctors are put in the unfathomable position of having to decide who will live and who will die?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think if I was to show an emotion to the people of this province it would be one of appreciation, Mr. Speaker. And let me take the opportunity to say thank you. Thank you again to all of those front-line medical teams that are working in our health care facilities here in Regina and across the province, and have been working in those very front lines for over a year now, dealing with the COVID pandemic that we have been dealing with in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and around the world. These certainly are not normal times.

Mr. Speaker, let me say thank you to the correctional guards, the correctional guards that have showed up each and every day to ensure that they are providing the service that they provide each and every day to the people of this province.

Let me say thank you to the teachers. And let me say how much I appreciate what the teachers have done to ensure that their classrooms are as safe as they possibly can be through these very unprecedented times.

Let me say thank you to the truckers that continue to bring our products in across the border, Mr. Speaker, the north-south border, providing us with the essential goods that we need.

Let me say thank you to all of the Saskatchewan front-line workers who have gone to work each and every day, gone to work safely, Mr. Speaker, have followed the public health orders that are in place and are now lining up to get their vaccine so we can get back to some degree of normalcy in our communities in this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Well those thank yous are all well and good, Mr. Speaker, and thank you is the right thing to say to Saskatchewan people. But what this Premier needs to say is "I'm sorry," because he has failed the Saskatchewan people on so many levels. No regret. No humility. No compassion. No comprehension of the lives that we have lost because of his failures, Mr. Speaker.

He's happy to make big announcements about lowering the age in Regina and Moose Jaw for vaccines, but there's no appointments. You can't actually get a vaccine in the two cities that are at the heart of the variant explosion in this province, Mr. Speaker. This Premier has gambled on vaccines and lost, and he wants to blame anyone else.

But where's his plan B? Where's his leadership? Where's any sense of responsibility at all? Nowhere to be found with this Premier, Mr. Speaker. When will he stop? When will he stop trying to change the channel? When will he stop trying to blame everyone else and take any responsibility for the way he's failed the people of this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, throughout the course of the last year this government under a couple of Health ministers now, four Health ministers in total, have been making decisions as we find our way through these very unprecedented times. As I said in my last answer, so very appreciative, very appreciative of what

the people of this province have done in following the public health measures, Mr. Speaker, and what they are doing today in ensuring they are taking the opportunity to get vaccinated when it is their turn.

Mr. Speaker, most certainly, most certainly if there is something that I would like to see different over the course of the last year and most specifically the last number of months, I wish us like the United States, I wish us like Israel, I wish us like the UK [United Kingdom] would have had access to more vaccines.

If we had access to more vaccines, Mr. Speaker, we would be able to provide them to Saskatchewan people in even a sooner fashion, find our way through this pandemic, find our way back to normal, save lives in our communities and most certainly, Mr. Speaker, make COVID a thing of the past.

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

Support for Agriculture and Rural Saskatchewan

Mr. Wotherspoon: — This government isn't just failing when it comes to COVID-19. They're failing to deliver — in fact blocking — an important change needed to fix AgriStability and to make it work for producers.

Earlier today we joined with the leaders of the opposition from across the Prairies, calling on this government to finally sign on to act to improve AgriStability. Producers have been calling on these Prairie premiers to do so. In fact Saskatchewan producers and farm groups are united on this front. The damaging cuts made to AgriStability need to be undone. Federal dollars are on the table, but that Sask Party government has refused to sign on and to back producers.

Will the Agriculture minister finally act and stop blocking this needed fix for producers in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have supported the removal of the reference margin limit to provide additional support to our producers. Myself as a farmer all my life, I'm very proud to talk about what our government has done to support Saskatchewan producers, Mr. Speaker. And it reflects in our budget.

This year's increased budget includes record funding for agriculture research, fully funding suite of business risk management programs, highest average per-acre coverage in the history of crop insurance program, and compensation to the Saskatchewan producers for damage caused by wildlife, Mr. Speaker.

Unlike the NDP [New Democratic Party], Mr. Speaker. What did they do? They wouldn't fund the fully . . . business risk management programs. They cut services to rural Saskatchewan, closing 31 rural service centres, Mr. Speaker. They decreased crop insurance coverage and increased premium. We will take no advice from the members opposite on agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Saskatchewan producers are being let down by this government and they know it, Mr. Speaker, and by conservative premiers right across the Prairies. But this is a tale as old as time. Come election time, the Sask Party love to hop in the pickup, put on the boots and the buckle, pretend they're the champions of agriculture. But it's an act because where the rubber hits the road, this government fails to step up for producers and to get the job done where it counts. All hat, no cattle, Mr. Speaker. All talk, no walk.

Producers are united on this front. Federal dollars are on the table that should be coming to Saskatchewan producers. What's it going to take to get this Sask Party government to listen to producers and to fix AgriStability to support producers, to support jobs, livelihoods, and farms all across Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to say a few comments. And one I do want to bring to the table or on record is, we actually brought forward changes to the treatment of private insurance under AgriStability program. The province of Saskatchewan took that to the table. We've got it now. Beginning in 2020, private insurance revenue is excluded when calculating a producer's program year margin, Mr. Speaker. This increases the potential for any AgriStability benefit.

Once again I will highlight on our budget, Mr. Speaker. It's a good budget. It's a great budget for agriculture. Mr. Speaker, I can get into a lot of discussion, and I can get into quotes — and I will — from the ag sector in this province. From APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan]:

. . . recognizes the provincial government's increased agricultural spending in the Budget. The six per cent increase amounts to \$386.9 million for the agriculture industry. The government's priorities for AgriStability, irrigation development, and research funding maintenance are positive impacts for the agricultural industry [here in the province of Saskatchewan].

I have more.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Saskatchewan producers deserve so much better from this government, a government that's taking them for granted. When I talk to producers they want to know, not only know why this government refuses to fix AgriStability, but they also want to know why this government won't make rural connectivity a priority.

For more than a decade, the Sask Party has stripped hundreds of millions of dollars out of SaskTel in order to pay for that government's mismanagement, scandal, and waste. It's long past time for that government to allow SaskTel to hold on to more of its dollars, so it can invest in making connectivity happen all across Saskatchewan.

In the 21st century, connectivity isn't a luxury; it's an essential service. Instead of just the lip service we get from this

government, why won't they put our money where their mouth is and make rural connectivity happen all across Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

[14:00]

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, as I said before, this government will take no advice from the members opposite on agriculture. I am very privileged to be able to reach out to our stakeholders almost on a weekly if not a monthly basis and talk about our agriculture policy and what we're doing. And if I can, I just want to list a few more of our good changes that we made, Mr. Speaker.

We're obviously, we're fully funding, we are fully funding the business risk suite of programs unlike the members opposite. We've increased it to \$265 million. AgriStability is up \$5.3 million this year. AgriInvest is up another \$2.7 million this year. Crop insurance is up \$11.1 million, Mr. Speaker, increased the highest coverage per acre with the premium ratio. Record, record research dollars. I'm proud of our record investment in agriculture in this province, and the sector is proud of what we're doing as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Small Business

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is letting down farmers; they're letting down rural people; and going for the hat trick, they're letting down small businesses too. Our nationally renowned worst-in-the-nation jobs minister loves to talk about his support programs as though he's Tommy Douglas electrifying rural Saskatchewan. But what he doesn't mention is something that I'm hearing more and more from small-business owners: as the lockdown that that minister has imposed continues to drag on and on and COVID-19 cases continue to climb, it's clear that the lights are on and no one's home.

There have been no new supports and no new programs offered to help struggling small businesses. So what is that minister's plan to help the small businesses that he shut down survive this challenging time?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I would . . . I can't leave the fact that they finally asked an ag question alone. We think it's the first time in years that they've actually stood up to acknowledge that we have an agriculture industry in Saskatchewan. On top of that, coming from members opposite . . . I think we have nearly 300 RMs [rural municipality] in Saskatchewan, the grand total of which . . . How many do they represent, Mr. Speaker? Zero. Zero. Why do you think that is? Because ag producers know what the NDP's record on agriculture is, which is utterly and completely abysmal, Mr. Speaker.

As it relates to small business, we have stepped forward with some of the most significant and important supports for our

small-business community of any jurisdiction in the entire country, Mr. Speaker — now six rounds of the small-business emergency payment. We have cut the small-business tax rate to zero per cent for small businesses. We have introduced the Saskatchewan tourism sector support program. We have come forward with the most significant suite of business support programs in the entire province, Mr. Speaker. Their only small-business plan is to shut them down.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I point out to the member opposite that that PST [provincial sales tax] program will only help businesses showing a profit. It will do nothing to help businesses that are struggling. And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment program will only go so far. That minister's programs are underutilized and inadequate. And even the businesses that have been able to receive support haven't received nearly enough to keep their heads above water.

Now that minister can wax on and on about his record and how great he feels about it, but clearly he doesn't understand overhead costs and he doesn't understand small business. Because, Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap and that minister's rhetoric will not help struggling businesses pay their bills. So will the jobs minister expand these programs and make them responsive to small businesses who need to be able to plan and survive?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And we are working with the small-business community every single day. And I can tell you what they want, Mr. Speaker. They want to be able to operate. They want to be able to carry on business, and that's precisely what we have worked with them, relying on the fact that they have operated in a very responsible, in a very considered fashion, Mr. Speaker, throughout the course of this pandemic.

Despite all of that, we know what the position of the members opposite has been now for six months, which is that they should shut down. That is their position, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition can beak from his seat all that he wants. We know he doesn't want to talk about the economy, Mr. Speaker, because his only economic policy is to shut down these businesses.

Mr. Speaker, they have operated responsibly. They have operated in a very, very responsible and positive fashion through all of this because we have worked with them. And we have provided very real and significant supports, Mr. Speaker, for which we have seen some very, very positive outcomes, including reducing their power bill by 10 per cent and reducing the small-business tax rate to a grand total of zero per cent.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And yet again, the answer to a question no one asked. And, Mr. Speaker, I hate to

say this, but it's clear that the emperor has no clothes. That minister would love to strut through the province and have people shower him with praise and adoration. And he thinks that the Sask Party are the only people who can talk about agriculture and small business, but it is clear that minister is complacent and out of touch. And the emperor has no clothes.

He has the worst jobs record in Canada. People are fleeing this province in droves, and his suite of small-business programs are inadequate and insufficient. There is no plan for small business. No plan for jobs. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, having been in his job as long as he has, you'd think he'd be better at it. Because, Mr. Speaker, why won't this minister actually talk to small businesses, expand the programs offered, and ensure that entrepreneurs do not have to close their doors forever?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And of course we are working with the business community every single day, and it's something that we take pride in and we do work very, very closely. But the member opposite talked about fleeing in droves. She was talking about, I assume, the NDP record on population. Because when they were in government for 16 years, what did we see, Mr. Speaker? People fleeing in droves.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last 13 years that the Saskatchewan Party has had the honour of forming government? The greatest population increase in the history of this province since the 1920s. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is because people have found opportunity in Saskatchewan, and the reason they have found opportunity is because the economic conditions have existed for people to grow their business, to expand their business, and to be employed and build their future right here in Saskatchewan.

We know from their record the exact opposite was true, Mr. Speaker. In fact businesses had to flee. Businesses shut down. They did not welcome private sector investment, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we do, and I look forward to talking a bit about that in the next question.

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

Support for Long-Term Care Facilities

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to bring us back to 2021, in fact yesterday. Yesterday I asked the minister about Extencicare's deadly track record in this province, and he couldn't point to a single thing that he would do to make sure that tragedies like this one never happen again.

It was interesting to hear him point to CEO [chief executive officer] tour reports as a mechanism for accountability. So here's a bit from the last eight years on those reports: 2013, 1 to 30 staff ratio overnight; 2015, staffing levels not meeting special-care home guidelines; 2017, infrastructure is the main issue facing this home, and I quote, "especially relating to 4-bed wards and the associated issues with infection control." And in the last report issued before the pandemic, I'll quote again: "The facility is old

and in need of replacement . . . large number of 4-bed rooms does not meet current standards of care."

Can this minister please explain, what are these reports for if this government never listens to them?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and the member opposite touched on a number of items there in that question. I answered yesterday with respect to the one issue, with respect to four-bed rooms in these facilities. And as I pointed out yesterday, none of the facilities that have been built since 2007 under this government have four-bed rooms, and none of the new facilities will be built under that as well. And we're moving away . . . we've directed the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] to move away from the four-bed-room model.

Mr. Speaker, all long-term care residents deserve safe, high-quality care, and we're committed to that. This government is committed to that. It's why we've invested into long-term care facilities. It's why we've hired more staff since 2007, whether it's doctors, whether it's continuing care aids, whether it's nurses of all designations, Mr. Speaker.

We know that the senior citizens of this province deserve the best quality care, and we're going to continue to make improvements in that area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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 Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on Bill No. 14, *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*. Mr. Speaker, you know, I look at this bill and it has some, definitely some need for protection when it comes to human trafficking in Saskatchewan. We've seen so many people being taken advantage of, the most vulnerable people taken advantage of. And we have a province that this shouldn't be happening. People need to be protected.

And when you have a situation like this, in a serious situation like this, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to human trafficking, the Act, Bill No. 14 is making some changes. And I know I was wondering about this, and I was looking at some of the minutes from my colleagues and the minister.

And what exactly is the legislation supposed to do? Is it supposed to really make sure those that have been in the . . . The most

vulnerable that's been taken to care when it comes into the sex trade, are they being protected? Is this going to give them more protection? Is this going to give Indigenous young people, Indigenous people that are young ladies, girls that are being taken advantage of, will this provide more protection? Have they consulted with those that are out there struggling, those survivors? Are they protecting them?

And I was wondering about that. You know, you hear stories about young girls going missing throughout Canada, and it's alarming. Alarm bells are going off. Missing and murdered women. You look at that, the issue there, and you wonder sometimes. Where are some of these young women gone? Nobody knows where they are. They don't know if they've been, you know, taken against their will, if they've been pressured, if they've had certain things . . .

And this legislation talks about taking away and giving certain powers, and I think to the court system, certain powers to be able to protect those vulnerable individuals. And I'm hoping that at the end of the day the government has made sure they've consulted, that they have consulted with so many. Because I think families, the most vulnerable, those that have worked in the sex trade, are they protecting them? Have they talked to them? Have they made sure organizations, groups that work with women and young women that are in the sex trade, have they worked with those vulnerable individuals as an organization? Have they reached out to them to make sure that they've gotten the information right, that they got this right?

Because we have a serious crisis going on in Canada but in Saskatchewan as well. And we need some action from the government. Families are asking that. The victims are asking that. So I'm hoping that they have consulted. I'm hoping they've taken the time to get this right because we have to get this right. People's lives are at stake, and that's so important.

Fear. People are being forced to do things that they don't want to do and go into the sex trade. They don't want to. But you have to make sure there's protections for them. We have to make sure we get it right. We have to talk to our police officers. We have to talk to those in the justice system. We have to make sure we're getting this right, Mr. Speaker. We can't afford not to get this right. We must, we must get this right. We owe this. The justice system owes this to the most vulnerable in our province. We have to take care of the most vulnerable.

We have to make sure people are protected. And we have to make sure that we do everything we can to protect women, anyone who's been taken and going into the sex trade against their will. We have to make sure they're protected. There has to be protection for them. And it can't be wishy-washy; it has to be very clear. Some of my colleagues have stated it very well. We have to get this right.

[14:15]

And we have an opportunity to consult with people. We have an opportunity to talk this out to make sure it's the best we can possibly do to protect the most vulnerable. And I'm hoping at the end of the day with my colleagues asking, with the critic reaching out to different organizations, individuals, those that want to reach out to the government, to reach out to individuals, to make

sure we've got the right protections when it comes to dealing with this. And the justice system and the protections that can be provided from the courts for, you know, individuals that are vulnerable and have been taken advantage of, that it's there to protect them.

So I don't know if I have much more, Mr. Speaker, to comment on this. I know the critic will have more, and I know there'll be more comments to be said. So on Bill 14, *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*, I adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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 Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into debate today on Bill No. 15, *The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act*. I think there are . . . We've had a number of folks who have weighed in already, but I do want to provide some of my thoughts on this bill as well.

I think we've all had different experiences when it comes to residential tenancies. I know I have been a renter for a number of years. I am both a renter and a landlord and a homeowner at the same time now, so I think we can see things from sort of all different perspectives.

And when you speak to different organizations, I know that these are complex issues. And when we talk about pieces of legislation like *The Residential Tenancies Act*, we always talk about wanting to strike a balance and want to keep a balance between all of these different interests, because of course we want to make sure people are able to have homes that are safe, that they can live in and afford. We also want to make sure that landlords aren't getting the raw end of the deal. So I think that we want to make sure this balance exists. And that's what we're looking for when we look at this, any changes that exist to this Act.

And one of the concerns that I have is that there is this mention of trying to protect survivors of sexual assault, which we certainly agree is important. And there are questions about whether these changes actually will assist survivors.

And I think something that many of my colleagues have been quite vocal about thus far already are the changes around the timing for eviction notices for non-payment of rent being reduced from 15 days to 7. And I now, putting on my MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] hat as well here, Mr. Speaker — we all wear so many different hats — I know that in my office we do have a number of folks that come forward who are struggling

because, for whatever reason, their social assistance cheque didn't come. They don't have access to that money, and they're struggling to be able to get the rent in on time before that 14-day cut-off. And sometimes we know that that . . . You know, if that was down to seven days, I cannot even imagine how many people would be getting booted from their homes.

And this is just an example of the government's own ministries being expected to bring forward that cheque. It doesn't account for all of the other unexpected things that happen in life. And in the time of COVID where we have more and more unexpected situations coming forward, you know . . . I can't even count, out door knocking this summer, how many people I met that had been laid off, had lost their jobs, were trying to get into a new industry, were trying to figure out how they were going to get their family through this pandemic.

At a time when we're in the middle of the pandemic, where we're asking people to stay home to stay safe, we ought to make sure that they have homes to go to. And when we're talking about the fact that there's so much instability for people's jobs right now, we know that those paycheques could be harder to come by. So I think that this move is incredibly short-sighted. I don't know what kind of consultation took place to bring it forward. The minister didn't even mention it in the opening remarks, I understand. This is especially problematic and something I can't get behind, Mr. Speaker.

We could also have the Sask Party adopt the SASS [Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan] Saskatchewan sexual violence action plan which contains many different recommendations for government action on this issue. And this is not included as one of those recommendations.

We're certainly supportive of measures that help support survivors of sexual violence. We need to ensure those measures are done correctly and with proper consultation with survivors and those who are working on the front lines, Mr. Speaker. So I think some significant questions about balance in this piece of legislation, something we need to take a close look at. And I know many of my colleagues will want to weigh in on this so with that I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 15.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 21

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter in briefly with respect to Bill No. 21, *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, Mr. Speaker. I've read

through the minister's comments with respect to the aim of this legislation. Certainly it's going to be critical that we review with stakeholders whether or not there is any other unintended consequences on this front, whether or not this gets the balance of supporting the good work and important work of *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*, SCAN right, along with making sure that it's balancing and respecting the rights of homeowners and people, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly SCAN is an important tool to many within our province. I've certainly seen it deployed in an effective way for constituents that are dealing with extremely challenging situations where there's severe crime and violence and serious concerns, Mr. Speaker, serious safety concerns for neighbours and for a community. I want to thank those that are involved in that important work.

This really puts a spotlight on an issue that this government has really failed on, Mr. Speaker, and that's addressing crime and gangs within Saskatchewan. This is a government, of course, that actually cut funding to anti-gang efforts a number of years ago, Mr. Speaker, good work that was making a difference in the community, that was assisting those that were in gangs to get out of gangs, that was working to reduce harm within our community, that was making our communities safer. And of course, it was the Sask Party government that cut that funding and really walked away from those important partnerships.

Not only that. This is a government that has failed to fix our broken mental health and addictions systems within Saskatchewan, the supports that people need and deserve, Mr. Speaker. And in fact now we face a crisis on these fronts, Mr. Speaker. This crisis has ravaged the lives of so many people, so many communities, Mr. Speaker. And we have a government that still sits idle on this front instead of stepping up to ensure people, communities have the supports they need with respect to mental health and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, the tragic consequence of this is that it steals many loved from families across Saskatchewan. It also makes communities less safe and creates harm within the community. And we believe you need to take a broad and holistic approach on these fronts, and this government really has failed to step up and provide the leadership needed there.

Not to mention that they failed to make sure that we have conditions that allow people to thrive, that people can access a job. We've recognized the terrible record of this government when it comes to the economy — the worst jobs record in Canada. The fact that Saskatchewan people are subjected to the lowest minimum wage as a result of choices of this government and all too often don't have access to safe, affordable housing, Mr. Speaker, or things that could really make a difference on these fronts, like child care, Mr. Speaker.

And of course it's sort of mind-blowing here this week to observe the Sask Party government basically balk at the federal dollars that would be dedicated to making an incredible difference in the lives of so many young parents and families across Saskatchewan, but that would also be such a boon to our economy, such a boon to job creation within our province.

Our critic is engaged, as we speak, with stakeholders with respect

to this legislation. She will be bringing forward their thoughts and concerns and her perspective. Our aim of course would be to be constructive and work to ensure that legislation is as effective as it can be, Mr. Speaker. So we would invite any other stakeholders to reach out at this point and make sure they're sharing their perspective to address concerns and gaps with this legislation, to do so certainly with the government, Mr. Speaker. We know often they don't listen to stakeholders and Saskatchewan people. But of course also do so with the critic and with the official opposition, so we can all do our part to ensure we have the supports in place that people need.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I will adjourn debate with respect to Bill No. 21, *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods 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. 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 Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to have the opportunity to rise and offer some comments on Bill No. 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act*. I look at this Act and I am cautiously optimistic that we are seeing some incremental change and incremental movement towards an independent police oversight body, and I do thank the minister for his comments on this, as well as my colleagues who have entered into it thus far.

And I do just really want to talk personally for a moment about how important accountable and independent and truly transparent police oversight is. And it is something that really impacts everyone. Mr. Speaker, I'm a person of incredible privilege; I'm an upper-middle-class white woman. And I myself have had some relatively traumatic experiences with police in my life. I reflect on a time I was walking home from the bar by myself in university and two police officers grabbed me, threw me in handcuffs, threw me in the back of a police car for no reason, and threatened me with sexual assault in a drunk tank. And I was terrified. I had no idea why this had happened or what had been done. And thankfully they drove me around for a little while and let me out. And what was just a night of fun for them, I suppose, was a deeply concerning and infuriating experience for me.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'm a white woman. And this was not something meriting . . . This is not something that would constitute a serious incident, and yet this was a significant abuse of power at the hands of those two gentlemen. And, Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that black lives matter and

Indigenous lives matter, and marginalized people and people of colour in this province are significantly more likely to experience concerning issues at the hands of law enforcement.

And you know, I look at this bill, Mr. Speaker, and I think about the experiences that some of my friends have had, that I've had, that people and leaders in our province like Debbie Baptiste have had, and I reflect on the great importance and necessity for an Act like this. And I am cautiously optimistic. And I am cautiously optimistic, Mr. Speaker, because I know there are wonderful, hard-working people in law enforcement.

I think about my friend Kelly Gorman, who I had the privilege of sitting on the board of Family Service Regina with. And he worked in child protection and he worked as a resource officer for Regina Public. And, Mr. Speaker, the school resource officers in Regina Public, if you ever have to meet a police officer, those are the police officers that you want to meet. They are wonderful, wonderful individuals and I wish every single person was like my friend Kelly because he's done a . . . I don't even think he knows it, but he's done a great deal to restore my faith in law enforcement and my comfort with that.

[14:30]

And you know, I think about the leadership that's been shown by Chief Evan Bray here in our community and the leadership that's been shown by some folks in Regina Police Service, their front-line administrative staff, in being trained on how to properly and respectfully in a trauma-informed way engage with sexual assault victims coming to the police station here in town.

And I think about the good work that can be done with all of our communities, but all of that is for naught if there is not care and consideration given to true, independent, and transparent oversight. It's something we talk a lot about. We don't want bodies policing themselves and you know, I look forward to learning more about this.

I do know my colleague, the critic for this file, from Regina Douglas Park, will do fantastic work in committee on this. But I did really want to take the opportunity to rise and share personal stories about why I feel this is so important. Because again, Mr. Speaker, I'm a person of incredible privilege and if this is something that has touched my life, I just . . . I think and I reflect on the impact that policing can have on communities who are less privileged than myself. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and move to adjourn debate on Bill 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 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 Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter into debate with respect to Bill No. 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*. This Act, I understand, will make it easier to resolve traffic tickets with process improvements and a new online system. So a bit of a modernization, Mr. Speaker. That sounds like a fine and reasonable thing. It will also extend to tickets for other offences, and so we'll examine that as we move forward. It will allow folks to enrol in the fine-option program prior to court appearances. And it's expressed by the government that this will also reduce court volumes, Mr. Speaker.

And I remind, I guess, the government that they closed some courthouses over there through their tenure, Mr. Speaker, and have really been unresponsive to stepping up in a meaningful way around things like addictions and mental health and crisis that many face in this province. And certainly that, you know, comes to bear in many tragic ways, with lives lost, Mr. Speaker. It comes together, intersects with crime, Mr. Speaker, and community safety concerns. And it intersects and connects to court volumes as well, Mr. Speaker.

But what I see in this legislation, just at first blush, seems to be decent, reasonable modernizations of the processes for folks. I believe it was just a few years ago that this government cut or worked to cut some of the fine-option program. It would have been a real regressive move. We pushed back against the Sask Party when they were bulling ahead with that approach, Mr. Speaker. Instead, I am pleased to see them recognize the error in those ways and to improve access to fine-option programs.

Certainly it's incredibly important for those facing financial hardship to enter that program and to provide some community service and work to pay off their tickets. I remember being a 16-year-old young guy myself with a real nice 1966 Plymouth Valiant that I'd paid 320 bucks for, Mr. Speaker. Got a speeding ticket. Wasn't in a position with an extra buck in my pocket at the time, and worked some hours over at the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] and the food bank to pay that ticket off, Mr. Speaker. But it's important for people.

I know our critic is engaged on this front and she will conduct a full review, constructive review at committee. I know that we invite all stakeholders to engage with us now, Mr. Speaker, and with our critic. So with all that being said, with respect to Bill No. 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*, I'll adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 28

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

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise here today and speak to Bill No. 28, *The Active Families Benefit Act, 2021*. And now this has been well canvassed by a number of my colleagues thus far and I would join them in noting that this is a bill restarting the active families benefit program, a program cut in 2016, and that cutting this benefit five years ago hurt families with kids in sport, music, or other rec programs.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is great to see it being reintroduced in light of COVID-19 which we know has had a significant impact on kids and children in this province, Mr. Speaker. We spend a lot of time in this House talking about the impact that things have on grown-ups, on big people. But it's some of the smallest people in this province, Mr. Speaker, children, who have had to manage a lot of the challenges of COVID-19, whether it's an inability to see their friends, increased isolation, not being able to go to school, and really just, you know, having to live through a pandemic at such a small age. What a crummy, crummy thing to have to do.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm pleased as punch to see this coming back, I would be remiss if I didn't note a couple other things that I hope get reintroduced by this Sask Party government, starting of course with STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] which still disproportionately impacts poor folks, women, people in the disability community who don't have the ability to access reliable transit.

And you know, I have friends, Mr. Speaker, in rural communities who take great pride in helping their neighbours get into town for doctors' appointments or shopping trips or to see their family. And while I think that's wonderful, I always think, you know, what if that person didn't have a Janet? What if that person didn't have a Duncan? What would that poor person do to be able to get into town?

So, Mr. Speaker, one more thing we'd like to see come back, I would also add, you know, something else we'd like to see is funding for those preschool programs that was cut by this government that again disproportionately impacted poor kids and children with exceptionalities who are struggling, as well as a hearing aid program that was also cut, ensuring all of these things come back, especially these programs that helped children.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am pleased to see the active family benefit coming back. And I know my colleagues will bring more comments in committee. And I look forward to more and more programs that have been cut by this government being reintroduced.

And with that, I will conclude my remarks and move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 28, *The Active Families Benefit 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. 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 Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter in, albeit briefly, this afternoon to debate with respect to Bill No. 30, *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*.

The bill basically extends some of the incentives that were brought about to support the tech sector with respect to start-ups in our province. It also makes some changes with respect to the holding period on applicable investments, changing from two years to three years. I think it's fair to say that with respect to that change, we'll be reviewing the intent of that and the implications of that and making sure it's in the best interests of this sector.

In general this is a really vital, strong, and important sector that's really grabbed a solid footing within Saskatchewan, and it's one that needs to be supported by the provincial government. We see, you know, in this legislation, positive intentions on that front. The tech sector really has the ability to create new opportunities for so many within Saskatchewan — new jobs, new abilities to attract investment here in Saskatchewan. And it's really an impressive sector as you observe the successes and the hustle and hard work of entrepreneurs and innovators within this field.

Certainly there are important organizations and institutions on this front that are very dynamic, that are very focused on our future. I think of SaskTech itself as an association and its member companies. Wow, are they a pleasure to sit down with and hear about the successes that they're finding and also to hear about some of the challenges they're facing, but really about the potential of tech here in Saskatchewan. So I'd want to give a shout-out to them.

I think of folks like the Co.Labs in Saskatoon. I think of the Cultivator here in Regina, organized through Conexus, and many other important partners, you know, people like Jordan McFarlen who are providing such strong leadership, laying out opportunities for young people and all people here in Saskatchewan in this important sector.

So it's critical that we get the support of this sector right, that we look to make sure that improvements like this are enough, that we look to other gaps that can be addressed to make sure that we're supporting these innovators, these entrepreneurs, this ecosystem, Mr. Speaker, that we really want to see thrive in Saskatchewan.

It's also fair to say that on this front, this is another reason why I and why Saskatchewan New Democrats are so committed to connecting Saskatchewan, to the connectivity across Saskatchewan, because it really can be a game changer economically across this province and a game changer for so many small, rural, remote northern communities, First Nations, Mr. Speaker, when we look at a sector like this that really, with

connectivity, can operate anywhere. And I know I've chatted with folks out at SaskTech on this front, and they really see the opportunity of being able to create jobs in rural communities, remote communities, First Nations, Mr. Speaker, in this vital sector for when connectivity is made to happen. Which is why we really continue to push this Sask Party government on this front to do more than offer up the lip service that we see, but to leverage the tools we have, amazing tools such as SaskTel in concert with Saskatchewan people and communities and businesses to connect this province.

With all that being said, I would just like to recognize the incredible tech sector that's emerging, recognize those entrepreneurs and innovators that are working so hard bringing their ideas to fruition, that are grinding to make that happen, and that are leading the way in diversifying the Saskatchewan economy and creating new opportunities for many people across our province. I would invite them to engage on this piece of legislation and of course on any other matters as well to make sure that their foundation and their footing and that the conditions and supports that they have from government will allow them to seize the moment in front of them.

With all that being said, I will adjourn debate with respect to Bill No. 30, *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 31

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Hon. Mr. J. Harrison that **Bill No. 31 — *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the official opposition on this Bill 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act*. And this is a bill that's intended to provide further support to the agricultural industry by providing Innovation Saskatchewan the authority to make investments in ag start-ups, particularly those who are sort of seeking venture capital, as I understand it.

[14:45]

And I think that, you know, when we talk about the ag sector and its need for support to innovate, I think that obviously here in Saskatchewan that's a key sector. I note the minister's remarks in that regard. And certainly, you know, as with so many industries undergoing technological disruption, it's important that these tech businesses that are focused on the ag sector, that they have the supports to ensure that they can keep pace with and ensure that we're making the advancements that are going to allow for this industry to stay competitive for the long term.

It's a bit of an aside, but you know, I was reading a book over the weekend about, you know, ancient civilizations. I'm a bit of a history buff. And it was really interesting to see how, you know, the point being made that many civilizations that, you know, that kind of met their demise often did so when they failed to adapt and they failed to innovate, you know. So this is a lesson that history has, I think, told us over and over again and it's one that we would do well to bear heed.

Another comment I wanted to also offer was about a young man that I had the privilege to get to know when I was living here in Regina a number of years ago. And he was an international student who came to the University of Regina to do a master's in engineering in the field of artificial intelligence. And he and I had a very great dialogue and I learned so much from him about the developments in this space and their application to the agricultural sector. I also learned a lot about his home country. He was from Iran, and you know, just the ability to learn about Persian culture through that exchange was something that I really highly valued, and you know, we formed a strong bond. I brought him home at Christmas time to share in our traditions as well, and you know, we remain good friends to this day.

You know, he had the opportunity when he graduated to work for a local company here in Regina that was focused on autonomous agriculture vehicles, and sadly he eventually ended up having to leave the province and relocated to Edmonton.

And I guess I share this story about my friend Moji because, you know, it represents a real lost opportunity for Saskatchewan here with such a bright, young individual with so much promise to start a life here in Saskatchewan, put down roots, start a family, and instead ended up leaving the province like so many other people have had to do here of late in the province. I hope that one day Moji will be able to come back to Saskatchewan and carry on his work in these vital industries, providing the knowledge around artificial intelligence and contributing to Saskatchewan's economy.

I also wanted to touch on the topic of the areas where I think that this kind of innovation needs to be encouraged here in the province. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am the critic for Environment. And we face many, many concerning issues around agricultural production and its impacts on the environment.

I know that ag producers are working very hard in very difficult circumstances with, you know, razor-thin margins, and it's difficult for them to be able to be operating in ways that can always put the environment first. So I would really like to see that when we're looking at supporting innovation and ventures in the ag sector, that we're focused on the things that we really need to see some advancement in, whether that's in areas around agricultural runoff and nutrient loading into our rivers, lakes, and streams; issues around water management.

You know, the government on the other side has had 14 years to address farm drainage, and you know, we're still waiting. I would really like to see some advancements made in that area, you know, with some things that we can look at. Water management on farms would be dearly welcome. And then of course, you know, we've heard a lot of discussion about the ability for ag soils to sequester carbon. And with new innovative techniques

and methods that are available in the ag sector, to see some really strong advancements made in that respect would go a long ways towards benefiting the ag sector.

And you know, when we structure our tax incentives smartly in ways that are addressing these kinds of key policy priorities . . . And I think we really have, you know, tax policy that's working in the best interests of Saskatchewan people. And of course, on Earth Day that's a crucial point for me to be making.

I also wanted to say that of course when we're looking at offering, you know, incentives in innovative fields of endeavour, that we ensure that we get the legislation right, that the dollars are going in areas that aren't going to be exploited and taken advantage for other purposes. And I think that that's good, prudent legislative drafting. I know that, you know, the critic for this area will be asking many questions in committee to ensure that we get the right balance with this legislation, that it does indeed provide for the right sorts of incentives that encourage that technological innovation and development at the right stages in that innovation cycle that we want to see here. Agriculture is a very key sector. We have such strengths with research and development and so forth here in the province. And we just want to make sure that that is the ultimate outcome that we're indeed seeing.

A couple more points I'll make on this particular bill. You know, we do have some questions regarding some of the additional provisions the legislation is providing to the treasury board to direct Innovation Saskatchewan when engaging in investments and business activities. Certainly that's always a concern, that there is the right level of autonomy of these arms-length organizations that are acting on behalf of the Saskatchewan people. And we'll certainly be wanting to look at that further to ensure that that is fair and transparent.

And then just a final point: I do notice that there's been some attempts made in this legislation to also ensure that we have modernized the use of gendered pronouns in the legislation. And it's sort of I guess a side point but an important one nonetheless, and one that . . . You know, as a mom with four grown children all in their 20s, I really look to them to help me to stay modern myself and keep up with the times. And certainly when it comes to things like gendered pronouns . . . And the use of "they" and "them" has really been an interesting learning experience for me. And it's one that I'm always having to sort of be reminded of and think about its application in our general usage of vocabulary. And I'm pleased to see that it's being adopted in this legislation as well.

That's everything that I wanted to comment on with regards to this legislation. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak here today, and I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 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: — Carried.

Bill No. 32

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 32 — *The Vapour Products Tax Act*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in on Bill No. 32, *The Vapour Products Tax Act*. I just want to make some opening comments. Of course there are some provisions in here, the way I think government's trying to tackle this, and I hope they've consulted with many different groups out there when it comes to vaping products. And I see some of the comments and I know many young people. Unfortunately, you know, it's getting identified that there's such a young crowd out there vaping, using the vape system.

And it's probably very alarming to different groups and organizations that have tried to bring awareness about smoking products, but now you have the vaping products as well. And I think there's many challenges out there, and all the different flavours now they're having. It's anything you possibly could want. I was talking to somebody who actually uses them, an older person. I asked, like all the different flavours . . . I said, it's unreal the flavours you can get for this vaping. And you know, very concerning for young people, as young as they are, if they're having access to it. And unfortunately that does happen.

But on the other side of that, you know, we're hoping with some awareness, the government's making some changes. And I know I'll get a chance to talk more about that. But they're changing this, regulating some of the rules and how people will be licensed, the vendors, to make sure they're licensed to follow through, and certain guidelines that they'll have to follow, regulations, once they're in. We don't know exactly what all the regulations will be, and sometimes that comes in later, but here you have the legislation.

And then I know sometimes the ministry or whoever's responsible will come up with regulations regulating the industry, telling them the dos and don'ts. But I hope that they have consulted with, you know, vendors, with those that are championing the cause for less harmful tobacco, whether it's smoking or vaping, that they're doing what they can as government to protect our young people, our youth. There's so many youth utilizing this.

And yes, it's like smoking. You go around and you can see young people smoking and vaping. I've seen it myself. It is what it is. I mean, it's like everything else. You've got to do what you can. But I guess if we're making some of the effort to educate our young people about the harms, making sure they're well aware, families are aware, and I guess you can do what you can.

And that's what's going to be asked of the government. You're the one that's regulating. You're the one that's allowing the sale, so you hopefully will provide the protection to protect young kids, those that are vulnerable and don't really understand sometimes the consequences of using these products. So you try to do what you can. And I'm hoping that, you know, whether somebody's . . . You have protections to protect the youth and different things, maybe discouraging people from purchasing

them for them outside a store, or whatever. There's different ways to do that. I just think we have to do all we can to change that.

[15:00]

And I know that in another part of legislation they're making some changes where . . . And I don't want to get into that because that's another piece of legislation, and I'll get a chance to talk about that. But again I see this as something. Any time you could see government coming forward, you want to make sure they consulted. We want to make sure our critic has a chance, we get a chance to talk to industry people out there, making sure, you know, you've got the best legislation you possibly can. Hopefully they'll come up with the best regulations that they can to protect our young people, to make sure people are well aware with the warnings, you know, whether it's the federal government, complying with what the federal government has in rules, the province moves along.

I'm just hoping at the end of the day we can do all we can to protect our young people, to make sure everything possible is done to bring the awareness and making sure, you know, our youth are not hurting themselves and not damaging their lungs before they even get a chance to fully develop their lungs. So you know, that's awareness we hope to do and encourage people, you know, young people not to smoke. And I know there's groups out there that really lobby hard for people not to smoke and champion the cause of being a non-smoker, you know, and quitting it.

And I have to say that myself, I was a heavy smoker. I smoked two packs a day. I was a chain-smoker. This August it'll be 21 years that I quit, and so that was enough, you know. So you try to encourage other people, you know, to make healthier choices for themselves. And you know, that's what we try to do.

So with that I don't have a lot more to say. I just hope we can do all we can to work together to protect our youth. It's important. They are our next generation and we've got to try to do all we can to make sure that they can live a healthy life and live very long lives. I used to be kind of a negative guy and these days I've tried to change my ways of being negative, and even letting some of my colleagues and neighbours. We want them to live a long life and a healthy life, so I encourage in that. So this will be something I would encourage for our young people to as well. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would prepare to adjourn debate on Bill No. 32, the vape products 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. 33

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 33 — *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Nutana.

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill No. 33, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2021*. Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that is going to add the term "heated product" to the Act. That is tobacco which is heated without combustion. Yes, it's been sort of interesting to see how the tobacco sector . . . I don't know what else to call it. But yes, you know, as with so many parts of society, we see change and innovation and I guess the tobacco industry hasn't been immune to that any more than any other industry.

So it's good to see that we are working, albeit somewhat late, but nevertheless better late than never as I always say about the Sask Party government. But good to see that we are amending *The Tobacco Tax Act* to include heated products. It will create a tax of 20.5 cents per heated tobacco product. And it also makes it an offence to possess unmarked tobacco that was not legally obtained. And then there's also a new section to define possession limits for marked tobacco as well.

I guess I would also just begin my remarks by saying of course that, you know, this is one tax that I can get behind. You know, I talked earlier in my member statement about, you know, how do we incent behaviour on the part of Saskatchewan people? Certainly tobacco taxes have been widely and generally known as a sin tax.

And I would also make the comment though that, you know, when providing those disincentives to the consumers of tobacco products, that we're also thinking about, you know, the message and incentives that we're sending to the producers of these products as well. And I know that our critic for this area will have much to say about how that balance has been struck and how that also compares to what we're seeing in other parts of the country in terms of the level of taxes that are paid, both by consumers and producers of these products.

Of course it's also another interesting area of policy debate, you know, when we're considering areas of personal freedoms. I know that that's also a topic that our government is very keen on discussing. And you know, there's always personal freedoms, but there's also personal responsibility and social accountability. And we want to make sure that the health system isn't being overburdened by the health effects that are associated with tobacco consumption. And so certainly this tax does provide for a measure, albeit not entirely, but a measure of compensation for the costs to our health care system that are experienced and then that are paid by all of us as members of society and as taxpayers as well.

I would note that, you know, the taxation on vaping products and on heated products is something that we as official opposition have been calling for, for quite some time, and a lot of that has been stimulated by our concerns for the rates of youth smoking here in the province. You know, it's been increasing at alarming rates — some of the highest in the country — and it leaves me very concerned for the future of our children who are accessing these products. You know, oftentimes they're flavoured and marketed to be enticing for teenagers and other young people to purchase and consume. And I guess I would ask the question, you know, what else is being done to discourage their use?

We want to make sure that this tax revenue from tobacco products is being directed in ways that are addressing issues of prevention and cessation in order that we ensure that we're seeing that compensatory impact that addresses the increased costs that these products are causing to our health care system. And we also have some questions around how this new section on marked and unmarked tobacco will incentivize problematic enforcement behaviours while also not infringing on treaty rights.

So I think, you know, in the final analysis there are some technical and administrative questions that we'll want to be getting some answers to in committee to understand how, you know, our rights are protected and we're not having any unintended consequences from the way that the legislation is being amended, and in doing that, also ensuring that there has been proper consultation by affected stakeholders to provide their input into the legislation. Mr. Speaker, that concludes my remarks on Bill 33, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act*, and I move that we adjourn debate. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 34

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 34 — *The Fuel Tax 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 again today on Bill No. 34, *The Fuel Tax Amendment Act* of 2021. We know that there were some statements about this today but today's Earth Day, Mr. Speaker, and a pretty widely celebrated day around the world where folks sort of re-examine their habits, look at ways that, you know, they can work to be kind to the planet, reduce emissions, you know, help out mother nature a little bit here.

And so it's bizarre to be standing here talking about Bill No. 34 under these circumstances, you know, when we have . . . I made reference to this during the 75-minute debate, but the next generation is really educated. They have access to information. It's at the tip of their fingers, and they have high expectations for what we're doing with these roles and what we're doing in government. And none of us is exempt from those expectations. We all have a responsibility to do what we can. And you know, I want to live in a province where we have a government that's doing everything they can to be kind to our planet and be leaders on this front. And right now I don't feel like that's where I live, Mr. Speaker. And I know that I'm not alone in that feeling.

And we have climate activists that, you know, even into the pandemic, a little bit, have been out protesting. I've seen crowds in Saskatoon bigger than I've seen before on these fronts, on Fridays where kids feel so passionate about this. I shouldn't say kids. Some of them are teenagers as well. Young adults feel

passionate about this. Some of them are skipping school to make a stand here. And although I'm not encouraging people to miss out on their education, I think we should be standing up and taking notice.

And I know the legislature hasn't been exempt from this either. There have been protests out here, I understand. I haven't been here on a Friday when that's been happening, but I've seen some photos of it, Mr. Speaker, and you know, there are certain expectations that we're all going to have to live up to.

And 50 years down the road, 20 years down the road, I expect these are some of the conversations that I'm going to be having with younger folks in my life. And you know, as I look at my nieces and nephews and they say, you know, Auntie, you used to work with government; what role did you have in making sure that we were doing what we needed to do to make sure that we're looking after our planet? Because you know, this is the only one we have.

And you know, at that point, I want to be able to say that I stood up for our planet, that I advocated for action, real action to be taken on climate change. We're so far past acknowledging, we should be so far past acknowledging that climate change exists. And at this point, you know, we're sitting here with a government that's disincentivizing the use of electric vehicles.

Now I understand people have to pay their fair share. I fully understand that. I have a couple of questions though about, you know, if we say there are 400 electric vehicle owners in the province and we're taxing them all a little bit annually to pay for the roads, I understand that this stands to bring in about \$60,000, Mr. Speaker. I understand this is . . . the money's probably going into the Ministry of Highways.

And I do have a question about this though, because I wonder if there's a breakdown, if we know sort of where all of these electric vehicles are located, because we don't have a ton of infrastructure between cities at this point in time. So I wonder how much these vehicles are actually driving on those highways. I certainly know that they're heavy and, you know, we need to do our maintenance, but I don't actually know if this has been thought through. So this is one question I have is, is this having more of a negative impact on the city infrastructure? I don't know, and this is something we should probably look at here.

[15:15]

And of course I know that there have been other states that have brought in this type of tax, Mr. Speaker, and I understand that usually it's brought in after you've sort of reached a threshold of, you know, a lot of people are driving these vehicles and we should probably put a tax on so they can pay their fair share. But I also understand that at the beginnings of an industry is not the time to apply that tax. It just seems so backwards, Mr. Speaker, to reverse the incentive, to disincentivize people for trying to do what's right for the planet here.

I hope to be able to afford an electric vehicle one day. There isn't a huge market for used vehicles so, you know, we haven't gotten there yet, but I do hope that we'll be driving one of these. Certainly we'll pay our fair share. But our government has to be the people that are being leaders on this front and doing what we

can when it comes to the climate. And you know, I've had a lot of people talk to me about this tax, and they're just throwing their hands up in the air like, what is the government doing? It seems like a principled stand. It seems like an ideological stance. And I know our critic has been quite outspoken about this and I do thank her for that.

But I did want to put my comments on the record that, you know, there's a lot of things this government has done that have escaped logic to me. This is one of them that I'm not, I'm not, I'm not sure that they've got this one right, Mr. Speaker. So I don't even know how much it's going to cost to administer this program, whether they are even going to get that money back.

So I know a lot of other folks are going to have comments about this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I'll let them enter in. But with that, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill 34 for today.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 35

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 35 — *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a second time.]

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill No. 35, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2021*.

Mr. Speaker, this is generally an administrative Act that's updating *The Income Tax Act* to reflect some of the new budgetary measures that were recently announced, including the return of the active families benefit and the tech start-up incentive as well as the federal emergency wage subsidy.

It's particularly interesting to note that there's a few sections also that have also been repealed, those being the royalty tax rebate that was eliminated in 2007 and the film employment tax credit which was eliminated in 2012. And I do want to make some comments on that. I always like to take these opportunities to share with the legislature the comments and concerns that I hear from my constituents, and during the last campaign, you know, I had to speak with many of them. And there are many creatives who work and live in my constituency, or at least those who haven't had to leave the province, I should mention.

And they talk to me about the damaging effects that the film employment tax credit had on that sector. And you know, the few folks who are remaining here in the province, I tell you, they tell me some pretty terrible stories about its impact and the fact that we have a facility here in Regina that is not being utilized, and how the industry was so vital and creative and brought in so much more revenue into the province, and was really delivering on its goal of promoting economic development within the film

industry here in Saskatchewan.

And it's these kinds of issues that, you know, don't lay to rest. People are still really upset about that tax credit and its elimination. And it's quite sad to read in the explanatory notes for this bill that, you know, the section is being removed because there's no longer claims for credits. We have an industry that was effectively killed, and just another tragic example of where we're seeing jobs fleeing the province because people can't ply their craft.

And as I mentioned at the outset, you know, that is an industry that is very important to the people of Saskatoon Nutana and one where I was expressly requested to bring those concerns forward and beg this government to please bring back that tax. So I wanted to make mention of that here today.

Of course the new provisions that are now included in the amended tax Act, I have had the opportunity to speak on those items already and laid out my concerns around the questions I have about the effectiveness of these measures and whether or not we will see the full subscription to the active families tax benefit, and whether or not it is really the most cost-effective way to ensure that families are accessing sports and music and other recreational activities. And I do want to speak sort of at a high level again, you know, in terms of the way that tax policy is used as a lever to incent economic development and provide people with a measure of relief, financial relief, and my serious concerns with the overall benefit and effect that we see with this measure.

I do want to mention again that we have been calling for other measures that are focused on the same sorts of outcomes and objectives in terms of affordability, those being things like providing greater funding for early education and daycare. Of course that has been a priority topic for debate here this week with the announcement from the federal government and also more funding for education in general and programming for families.

And so I do raise my concerns about the use of tax benefits, both to businesses and individuals, and wanting to make sure that we get the balance right, that it is in fact leading to both appropriate wealth distribution and economic incentive. And I know that our critic for these areas will be asking many questions to ensure that we have indeed struck that right balance and that the needs of all stakeholders have been considered in their formation.

I think it pretty much concludes my remarks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity. I wish to adjourn debate on Bill No. 35, *The Income Tax Amendment Act*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 36

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that **Bill No. 36 — *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2021*** be now read a

second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in Bill No. 36, *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2021*. You know, before I get into some of the comments, I was going over the minister's comments and some of my colleagues and, you know, just seeing what exactly . . . try to get an understanding of it. And you know, I was thinking of something and I referred to it a while ago when the government came up with a tax for electric vehicles, a surcharge, or they needed to find \$60,000.

But before I get into that, you know, and I forgot to do that and I should have done that at the time. I wanted to. You know, the Finance minister has staff who work for Saskatchewan Finance, officials who work with that ministry, that department. And they do a lot of great . . . and they work very hard. And I know they give us briefings when the budget comes out and they spend a lot of time making sure even the opposition understands. We can ask some questions.

And I want to thank them for all their great work because they do do a lot of work. Especially at budget time, they go through a lot of process, and you know, working with this government they probably have their hands full. So I give them credit for the great work they do do on behalf of Saskatchewan people. So I'm sincere when I say, I want to thank the officials for the great work they do.

But before I get into that, some of the other comments, you know, Mr. Speaker, I've been looking at it and it just amazes me to see, you know, probably the process that happens where they try to get their budget together and the Finance minister is doing things, cabinet is doing all their work. And you know, they're working too.

And you know, it's interesting because I keep saying to the member, our roads up north are really bad, and you know, every time the government announces record spending on highways and they want to pat themselves on the back. I'm okay with that. You know, you go ahead. But then I look at the condition of the roads that I'm travelling on. And I've talked about some of the vehicles that I've seen up north and they disappear. And my colleague, the critic from Athabasca. He's the critic for Highways. He talks about the, you know, goat trails, goat paths up there sometimes, some of the roads are so bad.

But again I want to thank some of our great workers in Highways. They try to do all they can with the little budgets and the way they can do it. They try to do their best. So I want to acknowledge them. I don't want to forget about those hard-working men and women out there working on highways, keeping us safe. So I want to thank them as well.

But I was thinking a little bit about some of the other challenges when government's, you know, doing their budget, and you know, the colleague, Finance critic from Regina Rosemont. My colleague, you know, I like listening to him. And he likes to articulate well. And I am . . . He's an educator and he speaks well, and I've always said that — a very passionate, caring man.

But you know, he really, when it comes to the finances, you

know, he watches everything in this building. And I say, like go to bed, and like live your life. Have your family. Like don't worry about what's going on. No, he said, I seen, I seen there's lights on. They must be working. The budget's going on. Why do you worry about cabinet working on that? So I don't know why he worries. I said, you know what? Well maybe, maybe they're looking for dollars, extra money to fix our roads. And we wonder about that. Well maybe that's what they're doing. And I said, well hmm, so they're actually really working late because the lights are on. He figures they're all working to fix the roads and stuff.

I reassured him, you know, reassured him. You know, they're finding ways to find dollars because obviously, Mr. Speaker, they're always looking for more money. And I say, they must be just busy looking, where can we find money? And like I've said previous bills, my colleagues talked about they found 60,000. Electric vehicles. Now they're trying to find some more money. They're trying to get PST on more things.

You know, and it's interesting. They're always looking for more money because well you know what? We're spending, you know, billions of dollars and the money has to come from somewhere. And our Liberal government is giving us 20 per cent of our budget, I think some of my colleagues have talked about.

[15:30]

It's interesting, you know. They're always ready to get the money. And when they, you know, they call down the Liberals when they want to. But you know, when it's money coming in, then it's all great. And the money's great coming in for the northern people. Our First Nations, our Métis people are supposed to get taken care of with these dollars.

So here they're collecting more tax money with Bill 36. They're trying to find more tax dollars. This is what I see, and I'm trying to observe and go through it. There's certain things where they're going to not charge PST on vaping. So they won't charge PST on vaping now. But the vendors who sell the product, now they're going to be charging, you know, 20 per cent or so charge. I don't understand it all.

And I know we're going to get through that and we'll have an opportunity with the critic and with my colleagues as we have questions in committee to find out exactly, well so is it 20 per cent? Like what do you, how are you determining that? So you're going to get more money into the coffers. Well if they get more money into the coffers from vaping . . .

And maybe the minister's comments and others have commented saying well, you know what, maybe we'll have less people who want to use that product because it's getting more expensive. And maybe it will do that. And I hope it does. But I hope, I really hope any extra dollars, that money they're always looking for, they spend it wisely. Like I want them to spend that money wisely to make sure Saskatchewan people get the best roads that they can travel on, to get the best services they can get from this province.

Because you know, having said that, there's been a lot of areas lately, especially with COVID, and I know I've talked about the challenges in addictions, mental health, education. I mean, you think up North, and I don't say this without . . . And I'm sincere

when I say this to the government and the minister of SaskTel. I wish he was here because the internet in one of our biggest areas, the tri-community in La Ronge, 13th populated area in the province of Saskatchewan, the internet is terrible.

I just don't understand it, how you're going to educate our kids, you know, online, you know, away from school when you can't even get the proper service. So something's wrong. But I'm going to have a chance with the minister to talk about it, maybe suggesting some of this money they're going to collect they could do that.

But having said that, they're trying to find more money. And I said that. They're always finding ways to find more money. It's amazing how they can do it. And they find it. I found out. As Trent says, he sees the lights on late at night and they're all working in here finding ways to get more money from the Saskatchewan people. And you know, they're really good at it. Like one thing I give them is, pat yourselves on the back because you are good at doing that, getting the money from Saskatchewan people.

But you know, when they open this bill up, and I was thinking about this. Well okay they're opening up this bill and they want to amend taxation, provincial sales tax, they're going to amend stuff. Ah, so I thought to myself, so while they have this open, we could maybe give them suggestions from like the construction industry saying, could you please quit killing us with the 6 per cent PST on construction. It's killing them. We hear, you know, the colleague, the Finance minister talk about that industry saying you're hurting the industry. So you have that.

And then you hear restaurants. You go out to a restaurant and they've had PST put onto them. Maybe you could take that off. And I mean, you know, the member, the Finance critic has said maybe you could take it off restaurants, and we've heard that. The entrepreneurs out there, they're struggling. Restaurant people, they are struggling. Entrepreneurs are struggling and they're saying, give us a break. Maybe that would help their industry. Maybe, you know, less taxation, people get more to spend.

But you know, I don't know. We'll see while they have this open. I think we would be willing to work with them from our side as opposition to remove PST on construction and restaurant dining food bills. We would be probably willing. I can't speak for all my colleagues, but I know I sure would be willing to have the discussion and say, let's work with the government and let's do that when they're opening up this Bill 36 to make these amendments.

You know, I don't have a lot more comments. I was just trying to look at how we could work together, because I've been saying that. And I want to try to work with government in many areas. And I still have many issues facing northern Saskatchewan and the rest of the province when it comes to mental health and addictions, that we could find these dollars, extra dollars they're finding, to do something.

Because, you know, we've seen like places like Saskatoon. There's organizations, community-based, that do great work in this province. They help people; they save lives. But they can't seem to find a little bit of money to help, you know, Prairie Harm

Reduction in Saskatoon. They can't help other community-based organizations. They can't find the money.

So I'm hoping when they're making their little meetings and they're up late at night, maybe they could start thinking about some of these groups to say, look, they're saving lives; let's support this.

And you guys could. And I say that to my neighbours. I have neighbours over here. And I'm going to encourage my neighbours, push on the ministers. They're there. I know they'll listen to their colleagues, like their backbenchers and their neighbours. And maybe we could all work together in meaningful . . . to get things done and help the Saskatchewan people, the way our province was meant to do when we're collecting taxes to look after education, health care.

Well I wouldn't get in there too much because right now with COVID the way they've been handling things, we're hearing very clearly that it's not the type of health care that Saskatchewan people want. And they're asking more and they're asking government to do more, so maybe they can find ways to do a much better job when it comes to that.

But I don't think I have much more to say, Mr. Speaker, on this bill, so I am prepared at this point to adjourn debate on 36, *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2021*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that we're done adjourned debates and in order to get ready for committee, I move that this Assembly 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. We stand adjourned till 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:37.]

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