



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

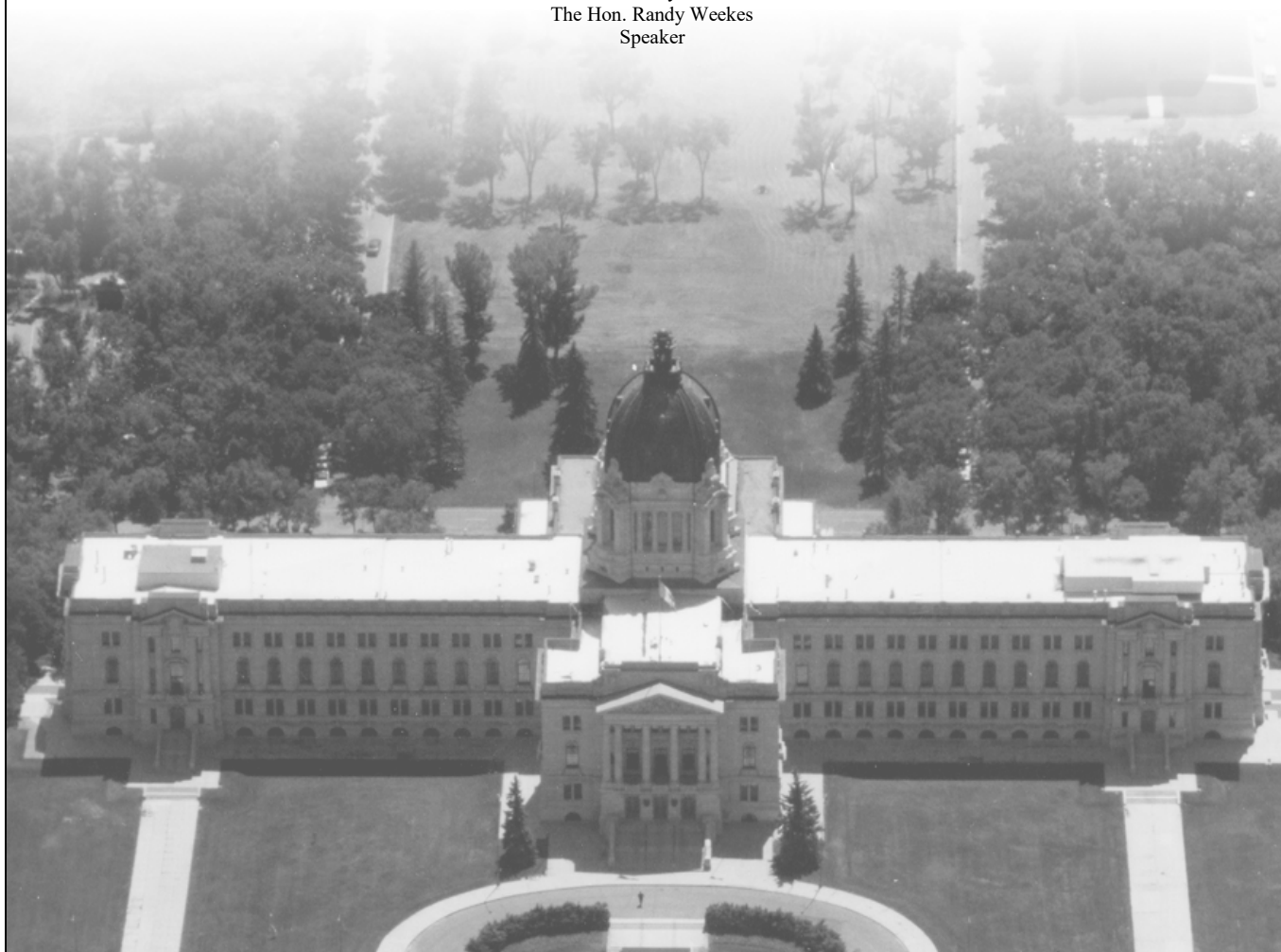
of the

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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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for the Government of Saskatchewan to provide pay equity legislation. Those who have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: Saskatchewan is one of only four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation. 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. While *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* prohibits gender-based compensation discrimination, the complaint-driven process puts no positive obligation on employers; and that while pay equity advocacy primarily seeks to address gender-based wage discrimination, it must also be mindful of ability-, age-, identity-, and race-based wage discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing the petition today come from Buena Vista and Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

New Canola Crushing Facility Announced for Regina

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The good economic news for our province just keeps rolling in. Today Viterra announced that their new world-class canola crush plant will be built right here in Regina. Viterra is a global grain company with proud roots in our province and a history going back nearly a century.

The company is in the feasibility stage to finalize the plant's capabilities and design, with an initial targeted annual crush capacity of 2.5 million metric tons. This will make it the world's largest integrated canola crush facility.

Viterra's new canola crush plant will support a number of goals in the Saskatchewan growth plan: to grow our agri-food exports

to \$20 billion; to increase agricultural value-added revenue to \$10 billion; to increase the value of exports by 50 per cent; and to grow private capital investment to \$16 billion annually. Furthermore it not only supports the growth plan's goal to crush 75 per cent of the canola produced in this province; it means we have in fact now achieved that goal well ahead of 2030.

This project will create jobs during the construction phase as well as permanent employment opportunities once in operation, and it will create additional jobs through the supply chain. I would like to congratulate Viterra on this exciting news, and I ask all members to join me in welcoming this significant investment into our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Community Support for Prairie Harm Reduction

Ms. Ritchie: — Prairie Harm Reduction has a mission to improve the quality of life for all community members through harm reduction. When the provincial budget was announced with no funding for Prairie Harm Reduction, people rallied together to keep the doors of this critical organization open. Many constituents and businesses in my riding of Saskatoon Nutana are donating money and stepping up to hold fundraisers. Some of those businesses are the Broadway Theatre, d'Lish, Turning the Tide, and The Better Good.

Mr. Speaker, it has not just been financial support that has shown up to support Prairie Harm Reduction. Some of the vital support has been through the work of destigmatizing and educating people. Daniel Hearn, one of my constituents, runs a live-stream talk show, *Hard Knox Talks*, designed to bring attention to substance use and psychological health and safety. Daniel uses this platform to spread the word, educate people on the benefits of harm reduction, mental health, and recovery initiatives.

These are just some examples of small businesses and people in my constituency that have come together to help Prairie Harm Reduction keep their doors open. I ask all members to join me in celebrating the hard community work they do to serve our province's most vulnerable.

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

Reservoir Named to Honour Saskatchewan Soldier

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to recognize an individual who faithfully served his province and country: Daniel Green, a Saskatchewan resident who honourably answered the call during the Second World War. Daniel enlisted in the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals and later served in the 1st Canadian Special Service Battalion. Sadly Daniel was killed in action on December 24th, 1943 near Cassino, Italy.

A few weeks ago, a reservoir near Pambrun, Saskatchewan was officially named Daniel Green Russell Creek Reservoir to commemorate his memory and service. This new geographic name was put forward by Daniel's nephew Richard Green for consideration under the geo-memorial commemorative naming

program. This program names geographic features in honour of military personnel, police officers, first responders, and others killed in the line of duty.

The reservoir was constructed in 1950 and since that time had remained without an official title. Daniel was raised on a farm across the road from where the reservoir sits today. This serene setting in southwest Saskatchewan, while not Daniel's final resting place, is a fitting memorial to him. Mr. Speaker, I invite all other members to join me in honouring Daniel Green, a local resident who made the ultimate sacrifice. Thank you for your service.

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

Remembering Ali Syed

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize and mourn the passing of Ali Syed and stand in respect for Misbah Zakir and her children, including six-day-old Nusaybah. A SaskPower employee and father of three, Mr. Syed was a warm and generous family man, colleague, and member of our community. Despite cautions and doing everything right with two young children and a pregnant wife, Mr. Syed contracted COVID while returning from Estevan after a shift at Boundary dam.

Mr. Syed died yesterday in Regina's ICU [intensive care unit], and the funeral is today. His wife, Misbah, gave birth last Wednesday without her husband, who lay intubated on the same floor of the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, I am heartsick. And I wept, having to imagine going through a Caesarean section scared and alone without my partner, going through the challenging first days and weeks in which it is a struggle to lift an infant or sit comfortably to nurse or feed without my partner, and to look down at beautiful, new, helpless life while being ripped by grief, anger, and sorrow, a new widow and a new mother of three.

Mr. Speaker, COVID is real. It is dangerous. It is cruel. And it does not care who it takes. I ask all members to join me in sending our deepest condolences to Misbah Zakir and her family while they are struggling through this terrible tragedy.

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

Unity Author Published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul Series*

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest edition of the popular *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series, *Listen to Your Dreams*, includes a submission by Unity's very own author, Anne Riess.

As a child, Anne always loved to read and write and often wrote plays for her siblings to act out. This is Anne's fifth story that has been accepted by the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series. Mr. Speaker, in 2005 she took several writing courses through North West Regional College. She then signed up for Writing for your Soul, a two-year course which was more in-depth and took

diligent work.

Ms. Riess also won a spot in a writers' workshop put on by *Guideposts* magazine where she was flown to New York City for a week of intense study under professional writers. Ms. Riess's story, "Attitude of Gratitude" from the *Listen to Your Dreams* book came out in the fall of 2020. *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books have been published for more than 20 years with more than 200 titles being released.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Ms. Riess on her story being published in *Listen to your Dreams*, the latest edition of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series. Thank you.

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

Optimist Hill, A Saskatoon Attraction

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to talk about a fantastic attraction in Saskatoon, the Optimist Hill. 2021 was the third year that the Optimist Hill was enjoyed by more than 20,000 visitors of all ages. They had the opportunity to ski, snowboard, and tube safely.

This is a great example of the spirit of Saskatchewan volunteers. The hill is operated by OSP Community Development Corp., a non-profit corporation formed by the Optimist Club in Saskatoon. The management is entirely run by a volunteer board. Saskatoon Willowgrove constituent Bradley S. Sylvester is both the Chair and the president, with Terry McAdam serving as the finance Chair. Under the project development leadership of Rob Letts and Joe Van't Hof, both directors, Optimist Hill represents nine years of work in the community, raising \$3 million of capital investments to make Optimist Hill a reality.

Bradley Sylvester was instrumental in working with the COVID-19 operations centre and Saskatchewan Health to safely open and operate Optimist Hill, this innovative recreation facility. Mr. Speaker, I know the season is over, but I invite members of this Assembly to visit Optimist Hill next season. It's a lot of fun and another great attraction in our beautiful city of Saskatoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Saskatchewan's Vaccine Rollout

Mr. Nerlien: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's vaccine rollout continues to lead the nation. Our vaccine teams in every part of the province have now administered more than 400,000 shots. That's the highest per capita rate of vaccinations of any province in Canada and the highest percentage of vaccines received that are already in people's arms.

More than 80 per cent of Saskatchewan's residents aged 60 and older and more than 70 per cent of people 50 and older have received their first shot. Later this week, the eligibility age will drop to 40, and more front-line priority workers including police officers, firefighters, corrections officers, and teachers will become eligible.

In addition to the dozens of clinics the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] is currently operating throughout the province, 61 pharmacies in 13 communities are now booking appointments and will start administering shots this Thursday. Mr. Speaker, the road to the end of the pandemic is through these vaccine clinics and pharmacies, and Saskatchewan is now moving at full speed down that road. Mr. Speaker, when it was my turn, I had my vaccine.

So I want to thank all of the health care workers delivering vaccines in every part of the province. I want to thank the thousands of Saskatchewan people who have done their part by getting their shot. I want to thank everyone else who is patiently waiting their turn. Keep following the public health orders, and when it's your turn, roll up your sleeve and stick it to COVID. 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. Last week I asked the Premier to join me, alongside Dr. Jeff Betcher, the head of the ICU here in Regina, and tour the ICU here in the city in order to see first-hand the pressures that COVID-19 have put on our health care system and on those front-line health care workers. The Premier wasn't interested then. But our ICUs are still overwhelmed and the offer still stands. Dr. Betcher said, and I quote, "It's one thing for me to share with you the numbers and describe this to you, but it's not as tangible and not as real as if you see it." Real people, not numbers.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear we should go and see for ourselves what's really happening. I'm ready to go any time. Has the Premier reconsidered? Will he accept Dr. Betcher's offer and go see for himself what's really happening in Regina's ICUs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Let me first off begin by again thanking all of our front-line health care staff, our teams across this province that continue to deliver testing opportunities, vaccines, but most importantly those that are working in our health care centres providing services to Saskatchewan people and in particular those in our ICUs, and I think even more so the ICU here in Regina where we have had increased pressures for a number of weeks now, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank them for the efforts that they make each and every day and continue to make even today.

Mr. Speaker, the Health minister and myself were briefed by the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Health Authority as well as the deputy minister of Health . . . the CEO of which did go through the ICU here in Regina late last week.

[13:45]

We had a comprehensive briefing on, you know, exactly what the conditions are in the ICU here in Regina as well as, you know, conversations around how we are ensuring that we are utilizing

the provincial ICU capacity that we have, up to and including the provincial human resources that we have, to ensure that we are supporting the care that . . . the care, in particular, in our Regina ICU that is being offered to residents that need that service.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a growing number of voices who are calling on the Premier to go and see for himself what's happening in Regina's ICUs today.

Whitney Walker-Ross is a nurse who works in that ICU right here in Regina. And she said, "The public and politicians, they see the number of cases. But as front-line workers — especially in the ICU — we are seeing the faces of the number of the cases, so it's a completely different perspective." Real people, not numbers.

Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier: will he reconsider, join me, and go and see exactly what's happening in Regina's ICUs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — As I said in my last answer, Mr. Speaker, myself and the Minister of Health had a very good conversation this morning with the CEO of the Saskatchewan health region that was in the ICU here in Regina just last week. And let me say again how much I appreciate the effort that is being given and put forward by all of those that are working in our intensive care unit, in particular our intensive care unit here in Regina.

And let me just say to the rest of us across this province, myself included: we have a job to do as well, a job to do to support those people that are working so very hard offering those health care services in our health care facilities, Mr. Speaker. It is incumbent on all of us to support them by ensuring we know precisely what the public health orders are; ensuring that we are following those public health orders to ensure that we're keeping as many people around us and ourselves safe, Mr. Speaker; and ensuring that when it is our turn, we are lining up, making our appointment, rolling up our sleeve, and taking the first vaccine that is offered to us. That is how ultimately we can support all of these folks that are working on the front lines across this province in the long term.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier says no to me. I get that. But then he says no to front-line health care workers, to doctors and nurses. That's harder to understand, but sadly it's not new. The question, though, is will he also say no to the grieving families who have lost a loved one in our ICUs?

Roshelle Montgomery's husband, Warren Montgomery, a chef here in Regina, died at the age of 42 from COVID-19. She too is asking the Premier to go and witness himself the chaos and the heartbreak that are unfolding in Regina's ICUs:

"I'm not very political," she said. "But he needs to . . . see what's going on there first hand. You can't turn a blind eye once you've seen it. It gets burned into your memory."

And she's right. It's hard to witness, and I can understand why

the Premier would be reluctant to go and see for himself. But it's worth it, Mr. Speaker. Again, will the Premier listen to grieving families? Will he show up and show some care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we've read about the Syed family, the Montgomery family, many other families, 476 families that have lost a loved one due to COVID across the province over the course of the last 14 months. We've had many other families, some of which I have also conversed with, Mr. Speaker, that have also lost loved ones to many other causes. Most certainly, you know, we offer our condolences and our most sincere thoughts and prayers to all of those families.

We are in the midst of a global pandemic, Mr. Speaker, a pandemic where this government has worked with public health to ensure that we have public health measures in place to keep and guide people to a place of safety.

Mr. Speaker, we have made every effort, which we've discussed many times on the floor of this legislature and beyond, to ensure that we are turning those vaccines around as quickly as possible. But most certainly this has been a tremendously difficult year for everyone in Saskatchewan and across this nation. And, Mr. Speaker, I would say it has been even more difficult for 476 families that have lost a loved one.

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

Mr. Meili: — People are asking for more than thoughts and prayers, Mr. Speaker. They're asking this Premier to walk the talk. Why? Give me one good reason why you won't show up.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, what people are asking for, what front-line health care staff are asking for is to ensure that they are supported, so that they can continue to provide the services that they so adeptly do provide to the people of this province, not just during COVID but especially during COVID, and I would say in particular here in our capital city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last number of weeks.

And, Mr. Speaker, that support was again and has been conveyed to all of those folks through the CEO that was in the ICU late last week. It has been conveyed to all of the leads of their teams. The supports have been provided. All of the equipment that is necessary has been provided, and the provincial resource that we have in ICU capacity more broadly, but also in the human resources that we have that can support in particular these folks working in our ICU here in Regina, Mr. Speaker. Every effort is being made to ensure that they can continue day after day to provide the services that are there.

And I say again, we all have a job to do in what we do each and every day in supporting our health care workers in this province, and that is to ensure that we are following the public health orders that are in place. And I ask people of this province to do that. And I ask them also to get vaccinated when it's their turn.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know I shouldn't be surprised. I know I shouldn't be disappointed. I know I should expect this by now. But you'd think for a moment, there will be some humanity and humility, and we don't see it.

The Premier says he doesn't need to see what's going on with his own eyes because he's getting briefed. He's reading about it. He's getting great advice. He insists that his choices, whether it was to relax measures or not to introduce effective measures, that those were based on the best advice. Doctors and nurses are being told one thing; the public is being told the opposite. Public health experts have had to take the extraordinary path of bypassing the Ministry of Health and speaking directly to the public about the need for more measures.

Mr. Speaker, there's a great deal of confusion about what advice this Premier's getting and who he is listening to. But to the Premier: if he stands by his actions and thinks he's got it right at every step, if he wouldn't change a thing, then surely, surely he'd be willing to publicly release the advice that has been provided to his office and to his cabinet, so that we know why he's made the decisions he has.

So to the Premier: will he share that information? Will he trust the people of Saskatchewan with the facts and give them the chance to trust their Premier?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've been working very closely. I meet with my Health officials on a daily basis every morning to find out what's happening in our ICUs, what's happening in our hospitals, and what's also happening on the offensive side on our vaccine rollout, Mr. Speaker. We continue to do this every day.

Mr. Speaker, to say that we're not listening to people is absolutely false. We are. I am on the phone hearing these stories first-hand from people all across the province, Mr. Speaker, of some of the challenges that they are facing.

But, Mr. Speaker, as the Premier identified, there are two things that we as the general public, everybody can do to be able to help our health care workers. One is adhere to the public health orders. There's no exceptions; there's no skirting on the edges of this. And the other thing is get your vaccine as soon as you possibly can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Reporting on Conditions in Long-Term Care Facilities

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think it's becoming clear that across the board this government has failed to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Nowhere is that failure more clear than in what took place at Extencare facilities where dozens of residents' lives were tragically lost. Mr. Speaker, last week I reported that 1 in 14 seniors in these homes passed away. And while the minister likes to wax on about 2007, he still has not provided a clear answer as to why seven years of reports chronicling the dangerous conditions in these homes were

ignored by his government.

Again to the minister: why didn't his government act on the CEO tour reports and keep seniors safe? And does he recognize that these reports are meaningless if they sit on his desk collecting dust?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I've stated in the House previously, the deaths that have occurred in not only Parkside Extendicare facility but in any long-term care facility, any seniors' facility in this province throughout COVID-19 have been tragic. And that's why, you know, Mr. Speaker, we take this very seriously in terms of the care that's provided for our seniors. And it's why, you know, I have written to the Ombudsman and asked for her to investigate the situation at Parkside. And it would be inappropriate for me to speculate on what the Ombudsman's report may find and what her recommendations may be, Mr. Speaker.

But I would say this: we're going to make sure that we co-operate in every way possible with the Ombudsman. It's part of, you know, the overall strategy that we have as a government for making sure that we provide the best possible care for senior citizens in this province, regardless of whether they're in a long-term care facility or elsewhere. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This tragedy is theirs to bear. Clearly the minister is willing to ignore seven years of reports. But you know who else doesn't think that these reports are leading to action? The Ombudsman.

Five years ago she called on this government to publicly report on how each care home is meeting the special-care home guidelines, guidelines I should add, that she finds to be inadequate. Unlike minimum standards of care, they do not regulate staff hours; they do not regulate bathing; they do not regulate hours of care for residents.

So why doesn't this government think that seniors deserve the protection of bare minimum standards of care? Why doesn't this government implement the Ombudsman recommendation from five years ago to publicly report conditions in long-term care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite references some investigations and reports done over the last number of years, and you know, I'd speak to a couple of those. This House would know that in recent years that there was an Ombudsman investigation into the Extendicare Sunset regarding an incident there at that particular facility. Mr. Speaker, I understand that in that case, and that was in 2016 that the Ombudsman's office investigated that situation and came through with a number of recommendations, and all those recommendations were implemented as a result of that investigation.

Secondly there was also an investigation in 2015 into Santa

Maria and in that particular case which was well publicized there, in that particular instance as well, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health and the former health authorities, which would now be the Saskatchewan Health Authority, worked to address those recommendations in the report. And it's my understanding that 18 of those recommendations have been implemented, and one recommendation is partially implemented with work ongoing on that particular one. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — You know, Mr. Speaker, other premiers in Canada can rightly blame the state of long-term care in their provinces on the inept and corrupt Liberal governments that came before them. But this Sask Party government has been in power for 14 years, and they have no one to blame but themselves for the last decade and a half of inaction and broken promises.

The tragedy at Extendicare is squarely on their shoulders. They've ignored reports from the Ombudsman, all the while telling us they're going to wait for the next report from the Ombudsman. To the minister: why should anyone in Saskatchewan believe that this government will listen this time if they haven't in the past?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we take this issue very seriously, the care that is provided for the senior citizens and older adults of this province. It's why we've made significant investments into long-term care capital projects in the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, 14 new long-term care facilities. And work continues on some additional facilities as well as new ones that were announced in this year's budget, Mr. Speaker.

It's why we've also invested into more staff, whether it's nurses or doctors or continuing care aids, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do so. There's funding for that in this year's budget as well. And we're going to continue to move down this path.

[14:00]

You know, with respect to the member's question about why the people of Saskatchewan should believe the government and why things are going to change, I would point to a number of things. You know, most recently with respect to the four-person rooms that we have . . . We no longer have those, Mr. Speaker. We haven't built any of those since 2007. So that is an example of where we've changed the model of care for long-term care in this province, and we'll continue to improve upon it for seniors across Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Employment and COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is failing to take action to protect vulnerable seniors, and they're failing to take action to protect people going to work every day and failing to protect the economy. Mr. Speaker, this government

has no plan for COVID-19, no plan to keep people safe just trying to go to work every day, and no plan for jobs.

Mr. Speaker, you cannot have an economy without healthy people. So with more and more workers getting sick and the economy struggling, unlike the Premier would the jobs minister do things differently or will he not change a thing?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And the member opposite referenced jobs and the economy in the question. And I have some very, very good news, Mr. Speaker, on that front, and it was something referenced by a member earlier in members' statements.

But what I want to say by way of preamble to that is what this side of the House understands is the way that you create jobs and long-term prosperity, Mr. Speaker, is create the conditions for investment to happen, which I might add, something the members opposite never did and never will understand.

Just today we saw a huge announcement that is going to have long-term, very significant and positive consequences for our province. And I want to thank Viterra for making the decision to locate right here in Saskatchewan, in Regina, a 2.5-million-tonne crush canola plant, Mr. Speaker. This will be the largest facility of its kind, not just in Canada but in the entire world. An investment worth hundreds of millions of dollars that is going to have the impact of hundreds of jobs right here in this city. And that's in addition to an announcement we saw just last week. I look forward to talking about that in the next question, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It goes without saying we are thrilled about the announcement at Viterra. But, Mr. Speaker, in order to get the jobs back that have been lost under that minister, we would need 460 more Viterrans. So the fact that more and more working people are dying because of COVID-19 ought to be enough for this minister to wake up, change course, and save lives.

You'd think that the government which claims to be focused on the economy would at least recognize that people dying from COVID-19 is bad for the economy. We have seen a bigger drop in jobs than any other province in Canada, and the second-highest rate of ICU admissions. This government is trying to pit jobs against public health, and they are failing at both.

So, Mr. Speaker, how much worse do things need to get when it comes to jobs and when it comes to lives lost before this jobs minister will get his act together and get COVID-19 under control?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And the reality is, is that we have one of the lowest

unemployment rates in the entire country. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker. And we have had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country through the entirety of COVID-19.

And we know what their plan is, Mr. Speaker, for the economy, and that's to shut it down. Contrast that, Mr. Speaker, with our plan which is to work with companies who are looking at making investments in this province to make sure that those investments happen. And we saw today, Viterra which I referenced in the previous answer, which is a project that, like I said, will be the largest canola crush facility in the entire world.

Last week Cargill made a major announcement, \$350 million announcement, to build a 1-million-tonne canola crush facility, also to be located right here in Regina, Mr. Speaker. And the list doesn't end. Just last month, we had Richardson International, which made a huge announcement worth hundreds of millions of dollars as well to expand and double their crush capacity at their canola facility in Yorkton. Mr. Speaker, the list goes on. I look forward to talking more about that list in the next question.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, unless . . . If it's somehow not clear, COVID-19 is bad for jobs, and it is bad for the economy, and it is bad for people. This government's failure to get COVID-19 under control is costing small-business owners their livelihoods and costing some workers their jobs and others their lives. Because people are following the rules and they are still getting sick. We've heard about them today, Mr. Speaker, Ali, Roshelle. These people are following the rules and they are still getting sick.

These are serious questions, and they deserve serious answers from that member. So a clear and direct question to that minister: how many workers in Saskatchewan have died after contracting COVID-19 at work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just for the record in the House, anybody that passes from COVID-19 or any other ailment in this province, we take seriously. We don't sub people out that just have jobs or are unemployed. You know, we don't do that. There have been, as the Premier alluded to, 479 people that have passed from COVID, Mr. Speaker.

That's 450 that I take extremely seriously, Mr. Speaker, because that's happened under my watch. And I have said every morning when I get a note from my deputy minister on how many people have COVID and how many people have passed from COVID, that's 450 little prayers that I have said for those individuals that we have lost, Mr. Speaker.

For them to actually consider saying that we don't take this seriously, Mr. Speaker, is just disrespectful. This weighs on us day and night. And it's absolutely ridiculous that those members over there continuously say that we don't care. These are people in our communities, our constituencies, and our neighbours. So we do care, and it's absolutely disrespectful. They should absolutely apologize for acting like that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Sick Leave and Supports for Employees

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, this government talks a big game when it comes to jobs but does nothing to support people working in precarious and dangerous working conditions. Throughout this pandemic, front-line workers have been showing up and putting their lives at risk to ensure Saskatchewan people can get on with theirs. But we know that many of these essential workers, who have been lauded by this government as heroes, don't have paid sick leave and are left with the impossible choice of staying home when they're sick or paying their bills. Without paid sick leave, people go to work even when they feel sick, and we have seen the deadly consequences of this reality.

Does the minister recognize that paid sick leave would help control the spread of COVID-19 and variants of concern in our communities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour Relations and the workplace.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question and would like to use this opportunity to offer our condolences on behalf of SaskPower Corporation and on behalf of the entire Government of Saskatchewan for the worker that was from SaskPower that passed away this last weekend. I can only imagine the horrible tragedy and the horrible grief that his family must be going through. So on behalf of all of us, I want to offer our deepest sympathy and offer our prayers.

Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question in the House before with regard to paid sick leave. We have extended job protection for employees that are accessing the federal Canada recovery sickness benefit. It provides employees \$500 per week. We also have got the Canada recovery caregiving benefit. We also have . . . These people are able to access employment insurance. We're watching carefully to see how things play out. We're watching as well what happens with Workers' Compensation. Workers' Compensation, where there's a diagnosis of COVID that's tied to the workplace, that kicks in virtually immediately. We will continue to watch that kind of thing.

And right now, Mr. Speaker, the best advice that I can give to anybody in this province: roll up your sleeve and get the injection. The path to recovery is through a vaccine clinic. So I want to ask everybody to go out and get it. I think most of the people that are old enough have now gone and gotten it. I want to encourage more.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Ms. C. Young: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 29, *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Trade and Export Development.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 29, *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act* and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to third reading.

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — Third reading.

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 Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise this afternoon and enter into the debate around Bill No. 14, *The Protection From Human Trafficking Act*. I'd like to thank my

colleagues who have already spoken to this bill while I was away. And I had the opportunity to listen to most of their remarks and appreciated the thoughtful response that they had given to this piece of legislation prior to me being here today.

Of course all members, including the members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, support us doing everything we can to ensure that survivors of human trafficking are able to get all the assistance that they can, Mr. Speaker. And we will continue to call on the government to do everything that they can to eliminate human trafficking from this province, Mr. Speaker.

This legislation follows what we've seen in other jurisdictions creating a tort for survivors of human trafficking to be able to sue for compensation. Mr. Speaker, we've heard some concerns from stakeholders with respect to this bill, mainly just ensuring that this is actually able to support survivors of human trafficking, that those who would like to access this have the tools necessary to be able to access this, and in no way should this be considered a mission accomplished banner on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

This will be one small tool in the toolbox, but government has a lot more to do to ensure that human trafficking is erased from our province, Mr. Speaker. Part of that includes ensuring that supports are available for young people who are falling through the cracks, as well as ensuring that there are robust and well-funded gang strategy initiatives in our province, Mr. Speaker. With that, I have several questions that I'm looking forward to asking the minister and his officials at committee, and to facilitate that I will now allow this bill to move on to its next stage.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 14 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

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

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

Bill No. 15

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

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise this afternoon and enter into the debate around *The Residential*

Tenancies Amendment Act. Again I'd like to thank my colleagues who had the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation. I've also had the opportunity to see the minister's second reading remarks as well as some media that came out when this bill was initially introduced.

When this bill was initially introduced last session, the government was quite excited to promote the second half of the legislation which allows for the termination of a lease if a tenant experiences a sexual assault, Mr. Speaker. It's intentioned to ensure that sexual assault survivors are able to leave their place of residence without financial consequence. They were able to break their lease, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

While we were initially very happy to see this change, of course members on this side of the House support us doing everything we can to support sexual assault survivors, and happy to see the expansion of *The Residential Tenancies Act* provision that actually we suggested and government passed around: breaking of leases for survivors of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from several stakeholders. I know they've sent letters to the minister as well expressing concerns about this provision. And those stakeholders who are expressing concerns are the front-line workers who work in our sexual assault centres, Mr. Speaker, mainly because they haven't been consulted on this legislation. And they do have very constructive feedback for how this particular portion of the legislation could be enhanced to ensure that it actually is able to do what it's endearing to do, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, what wasn't included in the media when this bill was initially introduced was several changes that are also included for *The Residential Tenancies Act* that have nothing to do with this provision to support survivors of sexual assault.

One provision in particular has made a lot of stakeholders very concerned. And we're very concerned about it as well, namely that it will reduce the eviction notice for non-payment of rent days from 15 days to 7, making it easier for landlords to evict tenants, Mr. Speaker, during a pandemic, which obviously we're very concerned about. We're very concerned about the effect this will have on homelessness in this province at this time.

And we're hearing that from the stakeholders, not just from stakeholders who are dealing with poverty and housing, but again the stakeholders who are on the front lines of helping survivors of sexual assault, Mr. Speaker. They're actually worried that this legislation, and this provision in particular, will also actually do more harm than good in terms of supporting survivors and supporting people in this province at this time.

They're calling very strongly to have, at the very minimum, that section removed from this bill. But what they are calling for universally is to have this bill in its entirety tabled to allow for further consultation with stakeholders, both those who work with sexual assault survivors and those who work in the general area of supporting those in poverty in our province.

I will have many questions for the minister, including why these stakeholders have not been listened to yet at this time, at

committee. And so to further facilitate that dialogue, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to allow this bill to move on to its next stage.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 15 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

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

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

Bill No. 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 Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise this afternoon, enter into the debate around Bill No. 21, *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act*. Mr. Speaker, this bill makes several changes to this piece of legislation, some of which will make it more difficult for those who are subject to complaints.

The safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation has for a very long time provided, on one hand, support for those who are in a neighbourhood where they have a neighbour who is creating some challenges. But on the other hand, it's also quite onerous and the bar is very, very low for an individual to get removed from their place of housing if they are subject to a SCAN [safer communities and neighbourhoods] complaint, Mr. Speaker. In fact those who are subject to SCAN complaints sometimes don't even receive notice of these particular complaints prior to learning of the order and their subsequent eviction.

So it's always with that in mind that we need to have a sharp eye on all the legislative changes with respect to this bill, to ensure that things are being done properly and that we're putting all considerations at the table and we're ensuring we're doing everything we can to make sure everything is kosher, Mr. Speaker. I have several questions for the minister about this bill for committee. So to allow this bill to move to committee, I am prepared to sit down and let the bill move to its next stage.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 21 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

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

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

Bill No. 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 Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join on Bill No. 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021*. I know that back home and different places where I've gone, I've heard people complain about serious incidents when it comes to complaints about our police services. And it's not just rural, urban, cities, you know, it's right through the province you'll hear people complaining. And obviously you want to make sure that if somebody feels that they've been wronged by the police services that there is a body that will make sure complaints are dealt with in seriousness and dealt with in a way very professional and independent.

And I see this as such an important process for our province. It's a time that, I think, clearly as a province, citizens of our great province are demanding and wanting our police services held accountable by a civilian, independent body to bring that support and reassurance that there is a process that's fair and will hold the police officer, whether it's the provincial police services as the Act says or whatever provincial police we choose as a province to utilize. I think it's so important to make sure when someone has a complaint that, you know, it'd be followed up and be done in a way that's very professional, that's independent body. And just looking at some of the, I guess, recommendations and the process that will happen, we're going to watch it unfold.

But what I've noticed in the legislation, it's going to allow the director, whoever will be in charge of that initially, will not be a past member of law enforcement. So that to me, I think, is probably a good suggestion. Obviously, I'm hoping they've consulted with the powers that be out there, whoever it was that the ministry and the minister . . . and I've seen some of his comments in a press release.

And I think it's important that we have somebody who we feel, the civilians and citizens feel, that it's a person who's not, oh well you're just a part of the police force, so you're just going to take care of your own. I think having that person as kind of independent and not being a past officer is good. But it doesn't stop that director from hiring and making sure people that

investigate are past — with experience — officers and can do that. And what I'm following, if I'm getting it right, that's the flow of it. It's not eliminating that.

It also talks about bringing in . . . And sometimes we know that there's many challenges when it comes to our First Nations and our Métis citizens. They want to feel like they're a part of that process. So when they use that as liaisons, you know, First Nations and Métis liaison workers or a body to work together, whether it's maybe elders, it will be interesting to see who they're going to utilize to have that process to make sure that we as Indigenous people feel like hey, we do have some say and we feel a part of that process, to make sure we feel that it's done right and we feel a part of this province as we are starting to be a large voice in this province with the numbers.

When you look at our numbers as population, our young people, our families are growing. I've said that before. I've been fortunate to have 17 grandkids and will continue to have, I'm going to be having a great-grandbaby so that's going to be kind of exciting — I'll be a cāpān.

So at some point as we move forward, we want nothing but best for all our citizens, but we want to make sure that the process we use makes our citizens feel like they're a part of it. And when they have concerns and when they're faced with hurdles and faced with challenges from police forces, that they have that civilian body to investigate serious incidents and so hold people accountable.

Whether you're a police officer, I think all of us want everyone to be held accountable. It doesn't matter who. You get held accountable if you do wrong, and that's what we try to teach our citizens. So if we're going to hold one part of our citizens accountable, we need to hold everyone. So to me this process, it was probably time that it comes, in light of some of the civilian . . . And I guess the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] have their process that, you know, that they go through when they're investigating incidents.

So this to me is at home and it's going to give us an opportunity to have some control. I know we're going to have more questions, and things may have to change as we forward, to adapt. It's legislation that's going to be new. It's going to be a new body. It will answer to . . . I believe in here I was looking at it. It will fall under the direction of I think it was the Public — what was it I was looking under here; I just want to make sure — Complaints Commission. So it will kind of fall in that process.

So I know when we have a chance to ask more questions when, you know, the process comes forward, I know my colleagues have shared some good comments. The minister in the press release had covered some of the areas where we were wondering, you know, what would it be. So to me it's a good process. It's starting forward.

I've hoped, you know, that the minister did and consulted with the right people. And we've got to make sure that we get it as best we can. Is it going to be perfect? Well probably not yet, but we want to make sure that at the end of the day, we're doing all we can to make sure people feel confidence in that process, and you know, whether it's someone investigating the complaints, that it's taken serious and that it's done almost, like, independent.

So having said that, I know we'll have more questions. And I know my colleagues will, and the critic will also have, in committee, have a chance to ask more questions and clarify exactly some of the things we're wondering about. Who all did they consult with? And we can ask those questions, so at this point I don't think I have many more.

I think it's timely. It's about time that we have a body that's independent, you know, a civilian complaints commission that, you know, will go through that process. So I am prepared to adjourn debate on Bill No. 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) 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. 27

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

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition with respect to Bill 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*. This bill, the intention is to make it easier to resolve traffic tickets with process improvements as well as a new online system. It will extend later on to tickets for other offences as well.

Government has indicated it will reduce court volumes. This is crucial, Mr. Speaker, since this government has closed several courthouses. And this bill will also allow for holding trials in electronic format, which is something, I think, that we've all been making the shift over this past year to do things in different ways, and some of those changes have been very positive. I think this is one of them.

[14:30]

Reducing court volumes is necessary as well due to backlogged courts and pandemic-related challenges which have seen remand facilities overflowing. All the while, prisoners who have not been convicted of a crime are left waiting for justice. It is good to see added ease of enrolling in the fine-option program, Mr. Speaker, especially considering that the Sask Party attempted to do away with this program a number of years back. Alternatives to fines are good for both community organizations and also for those people who, you know, struggle to afford to pay fines.

I think that we do need to make sure that these modernization processes don't fairly impact people who are already struggling to resolve their summary offence, so that's something to certainly make sure of.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I know the critic, our Justice critic is

going to have many more detailed questions when this bill is reviewed in committee. And with that I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 28

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

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to enter into adjourned debate on Bill No. 28, *The Active Families Benefit Act, 2021*. I also want to note by the Assembly that at the conclusion of my remarks, as critic for Parks, Culture and Sport, I am prepared to allow this bill to continue and proceed on its path and proceed to committee at the conclusion of my comments today.

I have taken time to review the bill, the minister's comments, listened to my colleagues in opposition, and I think that there is, you know, strong support for this piece. And I just want to add a few thoughts in here. And the first way that I read through this bill and its particular need in Saskatchewan is reflecting on my own childhood. And I grew up, Mr. Speaker, in a single-parent home raised by one of my heroes, my mother, who raised three boys of which I was the middle. And we were very active as youngsters. You know, there was a lot of sports. You know, I grew up playing soccer and then baseball, and later on a little bit of hockey in there too. Later on it was football and rugby and basketball.

My younger brother is a trained opera singer who's performed across Canada. He's performed in New York. And of course he was very involved in the arts and taking lessons growing up.

Mr. Speaker, I know that sometimes we take joy in finding embarrassing photos that linger out there online. And there's ones of myself as a young lad wearing a cummerbund in tap dance class. And you know, that was my childhood, very active, and I'm thankful for being in a family where that was all encouraged and available. And also you know, as a parent now to three children, I think of the incredible work and strain that that put on my mother.

And so I think that we know well the benefits that these types of activities bring to young people, to active families, and so I think it is encouraging to see that this government has decided to reverse course on a previous decision to do away with this program, decision of course was made in 2016.

And I think that's something that Saskatchewan families are looking for, not just support and benefits through an Act like this,

you know, and I think that they're here. There's \$150 per eligible child per taxation year. That goes up to \$200 per child with a disability, and of course we're very supportive of that consideration in the official opposition. But I think that that support is meaningful, and we stand with the government in seeing the need for that.

But I think I'll just call it, Mr. Speaker, that we also see the need for stability, that families want to know that this benefit is there for them now, that it will be there in the future, and I hope that this is the last time that the government changes their mind on this particular piece.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to conclude remarks in adjourned debates from my colleagues in opposition and will be suggesting that Bill No. 28, *The Active Families Benefit Act, 2021* do proceed to committee. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 28 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this bill.

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

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

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

Bill No. 30

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

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition with respect to Bill 30, *The Saskatchewan Technology Start-up Incentive Amendment Act, 2021*. This bill extends the existing tech start-up incentive five additional years up until 2026. The incentive offers a 45 per cent tax rebate for eligible start-ups on eligible shares. This bill is also retroactive until March 31st, 2021, and it furthermore changes the required holding period on applicable investments from two to three years.

Mr. Speaker, as the critic for Innovation, I view the extension of this incentive as fantastic news for the tech industry in our province, which is a very important part of our economy. We're excited to see this sector thriving and glad to see it being supported.

My colleague from Regina University and I just had the pleasure of touring the Conexus Cultivator this past Friday, a business incubator that supports Saskatchewan-based start-ups. It's exciting to see these innovators and their ideas taking off, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition will be looking closely at the amendments to ensure that other smaller changes to the legislation regarding shareholding periods are appropriate. And our critic will have further questions regarding this bill once it is reviewed in committee. So, Mr. Speaker, I move we adjourn debate on Bill 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 the 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 Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to enter into adjourned debate on Bill No. 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*. I have taken the time to review the legislation, reviewed the comments made by the Minister for Trade and Export Development, and of course listened to my colleagues in opposition as we debate Bill No. 31 and examine its contents and its potential benefit for our province and of course for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, in my initial comments, I'll just focus on some of the key aspects of this bill that we've located. I know that some of this has already come to the Assembly from my colleagues in opposition.

But obviously, you know, this bill was introduced to further support agriculture development, something . . . a value that we share on both sides of the Assembly. You know, it provides Innovation Sask authority to make investments in ag tech start-ups. And also as we've seen in another piece of legislation is his . . . had a focus on changing some of the language in the bill to update that. In this case, modernizing gendered pronoun usage, something that we definitely support on this side.

We also see changes to this bill, changes to the requirement of the board to have a fixed number of members. We know that boards depend on this kind of a certainty moving forward of knowing the makeup of those boards so they're able to recruit and retain members to make these important decisions.

You know, a few other things we've noticed here, that there's a \$15-million investment here in this piece corresponding with the budget of \$3 million per year over a five-year span to invest in

ag tech venture capital funds. You know, as opposition members we fully support investment technology in agriculture, so certainly you know, you'll hear our members say that we are in favour of the spirit of the bill. It's certainly something that we are on board with.

We do need to look further at additional powers provided to the treasury board, just to be sure that, you know, all of the implications of this bill have thoroughly considered and provide a net benefit to people of Saskatchewan.

And I just want to conclude by looking at the minister's comments. A couple things here that I noticed when I was reviewing the comments of the Minister for Trade and Export Development, and I think that these are things that, you know, do provide some hope for this sector as it continues to grow and change as our society changes. And something that the minister pointed out was, number one, that the \$15 million will be invested exclusively in Saskatchewan-based ag tech companies. Something that we definitely support on this side, that when we invest our public dollars, that we do so in ways that supports our businesses and gets people back to work in this province, working for Saskatchewan companies so that benefit is able to stay right here, and we know that that investment will support other businesses in our strong communities. So I think that that's a very positive move.

You know, the only other comment that I wanted to pick out here, Mr. Speaker, was an indication that there was a forecast for the Royal Bank of Canada looking at potential to add \$11 billion to Canada's GDP [gross domestic product], and of course Saskatchewan is a leader in the field of agriculture in our country. You know, this is something that I think we will be watching to see how this investment, you know, leads the road, that Saskatchewan can lead the road to that bright future, and that increase of \$11 billion in GDP is certainly something that we can take advantage of when the right plans are put in place. So I think that's something that we support on this side.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to conclude my comments. And you know, I'll be looking forward to hearing more of my colleagues on this side share their thoughts on Bill 31, and of course looking forward to our critic for the area asking more questions as this bill moves along. But at this time I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan 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. 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 Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer comments on Bill No. 32, *The Vapour Products Tax Act*. And some of the changes with this Act are going to provide . . . I guess the primary issue being a new tax of 20 per cent of retail price on vapour liquids, products, and devices, replacing the 6 per cent PST [provincial sales tax] and taking effect on September 1st. I also note that this will also include additional provisions for vendors to acquire a licence to sell these products, and it also provides some other details around enforcement and penalties as well.

I guess one of the things that stands out for me on, you know, sort of initial review of this bill is the curious choices that the government makes on when it chooses to either lag or lead when it comes to taxation. Certainly vapour products have been around for quite some time now. And so of course we're very pleased to see that these changes that, as the Finance minister indicated, are being brought in will be communicated as a public health measure around encouraging tobacco and nicotine cessation. But it would have been nice to have seen this much, much sooner.

There's so many people that are affected by the use of these products. We've seen how their use has skyrocketed within, you know, youth populations under 25 years of age, and we know cost-wise it's been very affordable for them to take this kind of behaviour up, you know, comparative to more traditional cigarette products and nicotine products which have been taxed at a high rate for many years.

[14:45]

You know, of course I have family members who smoke or vape, as I'm sure we all do. I mean it's very pervasive in society. And you know, I am aware that oftentimes people using traditional nicotine products will transition over to vaping or e-cigarettes because, you know, it's seen as less harmful than traditional types of cigarettes. But there is a growing body of evidence that is indicating that there are links to chronic lung disease, asthma, heart disease associated with these products.

Of course we always want to see evidence-based policy measures and certainly, as the minister indicated, this is intended as a method of discouraging a harmful behaviour. And of course, it also to a small degree will also provide, you know, a cost burden to society from the use of these products. I'm interested to know, you know, of those revenues that are collected in the form of this new tax, what they'll be put towards, whether it's, you know, just straight into the General Revenue Fund or will it be targeted towards some of that public health education that we know needs to happen? I know that the critic for this area will have many questions for the minister when this bill does go to committee on that matter.

But going back to my earlier point, I was talking about the fact that we all have family members who use nicotine products, both traditional and these new types of products that are on the market now. And I think that in some cases also, you know, it's also relied upon as a little bit of self-medication for some people who struggle with issues around mental health. And I think that bears mentioning when we're looking at, you know, not just sort of the physical effects of these products but also the role that they're playing in a lot of people's lives in terms of managing their mental wellness and their mental health, and how some of

them . . .

I can think of one individual in particular who was never a smoker but then after having some exposure to, you know, the health system and those who suffer from mental health, you know, took up the practice and now is a regular user. And you know, I think that it's important to understand and be sensitive to that issue of the manner in which these products are used to, you know, provide people with a degree of aid when struggling with mental health. And I want to make sure that that's also considered when we're looking at not just cessation — I mean obviously we want to encourage that — but also ensuring that people are receiving the appropriate mental health care that they need so they can lead a full and prosperous life.

You know, as I've mentioned, of course we've been calling for vaping to be treated like smoking and to see, you know, uniform regulations and enforcement. And we believe in evidence-based policies and protecting youth and, you know, certainly when we send these sorts of market signals, you know, it does curb their use. I'll have more to say about that on one of the next bills that I'll be speaking to, Mr. Speaker. But I'll maybe leave it at that, you know, that topic for now.

And just one final question I do have . . . and I confess I didn't have time to sort of look into the research myself beforehand but I would be very curious to know also how these tax rates compare with other jurisdictions across the country, and then how those funds are being used to promote, you know, healthy lifestyles and also inform people about this emerging science-based evidence around their effects, because I think that that's something that hasn't really seen as much exposure as it should. And a lot of people I think are under the mistaken impression, you know, that there aren't really comparable health effects associated with these products with other traditional forms. And I think we really need to make sure that the record is set straight on that point and people are fully aware of the risk that they're putting themselves in through the use of these products.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will move we adjourn debate on Bill 32, *The Vapour Products Tax Act*. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 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 University.

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to offer initial comments on behalf of the official opposition with respect to Bill 33, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2021*. This bill adds the term "heated product" to the Act, meaning tobacco which is heated without combustion. It creates a tax of 20.5 cents per heated

tobacco product, and it also creates a new offence for possession for unmarked tobacco that was illegally obtained. There's also a new section to define possession limits on marked tobacco.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has been calling for vaping products to be treated like smoking with uniform regulations and enforcement. Smoking and vaping rates for youth in Saskatchewan are some of the highest in the country, Mr. Speaker. I know myself, I started smoking when I was a young teenager, and I know a number of my nephews themselves have taken to vaping. It's a cool thing to do these days. But I can say for myself, you know, as someone who has unfortunately started smoking at a young age, it's so difficult to quit. Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances that is out there. And so coming from myself as a smoker of a couple decades here, I would like to say that I fully support some regulation here.

I want to note that the minister had said in her comments that these changes will sustain the province's revenue base. I would hope to see that taxes collected for vaping products as well as tobacco products are allocated toward prevention and cessation efforts, Mr. Speaker. As the member who just spoke to Bill 32 said, I would also hope these taxes don't simply end up in the General Revenue Fund.

One other thing I wanted to note, we want to ensure that new sections on marked and unmarked tobacco do not infringe on treaty rights. This is very important. And then of course our critic will have further questions once the bill moves to committee. And, Mr. Speaker, I now move that we adjourn debate on Bill 33, *The Tobacco 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.

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 Nutana.

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill No. 34, *The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2021*.

Well as you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, I am very eager and keen to enter into debate on this particular Act. I did have the occasion to also provide a member's statement on the topic a couple weeks back here in the legislature. And it's a very discouraging sign that we're seeing here from our government in terms of the signals that, you know, that they're sending to the marketplace about their level of commitment and sincerity when it comes to acting on the climate crisis.

You know, there's been some suggestion made that a lot of what motivated the government to act . . . You know, we often talk

about incentivizing the public. Well you know, it's curious also what incentivizes our provincial government to in fact act, when they choose to lag or lead on any particular area of policy, and when they're in a very boldfaced way taking a step that, you know, has been deemed a slap in the face to people who are, in a very sincere and genuine way, trying to make steps towards ensuring that we protect the planet and ensure sustainable lives and livelihoods for the people of Saskatchewan.

And well you know what? I would almost congratulate them on their cleverness in terms of bringing forward such a fair tax, you know, that is simply, as the Finance minister suggested, this is really just about ensuring that, you know, we have revenue to cover the maintenance of our highways and in the name of fairness. And it's a very curious application of the principle of fairness.

I also would point to, you know, principles of justice and intergenerational justice and environmental justice. And it takes a very narrow view, I'm very sad to say, of that principle and one that very much is biased towards I think — and sadly so — a view of the world where, you know, it's one of personal freedoms and to heck with the broader social costs of the actions of individuals.

And I would just say that, you know, I did have a chance to look at a couple pieces of information in relation to this bill. You know, it has been pointed out that when it comes to that question about ensuring fairness around who's paying for the upkeep of our roads and so forth, that the 2021-22 budget projects spending of 830 million on highways here in the province, and the fuel tax is expected to raise \$477.9 million. So it really only goes halfway at the present time towards covering off on those costs.

I'd also note that from 2008 to '22, fuel tax revenues totalled \$6.8 billion while 10.6 billion was spent on highways. And so you know, fuel taxes do only cover part of the total costs of maintaining our highways. There's other money coming from income taxes, other levies, you know, Crown corp dividends to government. And so the addition of what's been estimated to be \$60,000 from the approximately 400 current EV [electric vehicle] users to these coffers is really just a pittance when you look at the broader, you know, broader costs and landscape.

[15:00]

And you know, it's curious to me. On the one hand, I look forward to the opportunity to put some questions to the Environment minister, you know, on their climate change strategy in the next couple of weeks here. But it's curious to me how this government has come out in such strong opposition to market signals. And so they spent a lot of money, they put a lot of time and effort to fighting with the federal government over a price on carbon and yet, you know, here we go again.

I mean these are financial incentives, whether it's a fuel tax or a price on carbon or, you know, a levy of \$150 every year onto electric vehicles, to those individuals in our society who are trying to show the way forward in terms of how we transition and diversify into a clean economy. And so you know, it's a situation where you've got a conservative government who you would think would understand what a market signal is and the fact that this levy will only act as a disincentive.

I would also say that, you know, it's also the case that there are currently no policies that address transport emissions that have been put forward by the Saskatchewan government. I spent quite a bit of time this weekend, I would like to advise you, Mr. Speaker, having a look at that climate change strategy and the measures that are being undertaken purportedly to, you know, do our fair share when it comes to addressing climate change here in Saskatchewan. I'm very sad to say that there was nothing substantive when it actually comes to providing incentives to Saskatchewan people to make that transition to electric vehicles.

And I'll maybe just take this next opportunity to share with the Speaker a few examples of what we're seeing in other jurisdictions. In BC [British Columbia], businesses are considering switching their fleet vehicles to electric ones and may see a significant rebate that they'll be eligible for. On January 13th of this year, the Government of BC said that those purchasing eligible vehicles will be able to get as much as one-third of the cost back per vehicle to a maximum of 100,000. That's a lot of money — wow.

Eligible vehicles, including battery electric or even hydrogen fuel passenger buses and transport trucks are also included. They also include vehicles like motorcycles and cargo e-bikes [electric bike]. And the money will come from provincial rebates through CleanBC's speciality use vehicle incentive. And it's part of a commercial vehicle pilot program, so you know, they're very focused on taking some serious action in BC.

Homeowners also in BC can get a rebate of up to 50 per cent on the cost of buying and installing an EV charging station in their homes, and that's up to a maximum of \$700 per household. And that's double what it was before — they had previously had it at 350 — so lots of incentives in British Columbia.

In Alberta they have funding also for transitioning fleet vehicles to electric options such as battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. They don't, sadly, offer any incentives to individuals purchasing EVs, but there are rebates for charging stations.

In Manitoba they encourage the use of electric vehicles and, you know, make the point that, you know, electricity in Manitoba is produced from hydro.

In Ontario there is a non-profit called Plug 'n Drive that offers two incentives. There's a used EV incentive that offers \$1,000 towards the purchase of a used electric vehicle and \$500 towards the purchase of a used plug-in hybrid. They also have a scrappage incentive program that offers \$1,000 towards a purchase of a used fully electric or plug-in hybrid car when you transition from a gas-powered vehicle.

In Quebec they offer a rebate on the purchase or lease to individuals, businesses, organizations, and municipalities up to \$8,000. They have a program called transport green that offers \$100,000 in rebates for large-scale projects or fleet vehicle transitions. The program also offers a variety of other supports, including financial assistance for the use of energy-efficient equipment such as electric charging stations and funding for trainers.

In Nova Scotia, there is an electric vehicle rebate program.

Applications started on March 21st. It offers varying rebates through the Clean Foundation on used electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids, and e-bikes. Rebates provide \$3,000 for new vehicles; 2,000 for used vehicles; \$500 for e-bikes; and they can be coupled with the \$5,000 federal rebate that's available for new electric vehicles as well.

In Prince Edward Island, government offers \$100 annually savings. There's no registration fee for electric vehicles, and registrations for hybrids are half price. Well that's interesting. Isn't that interesting? So they've decided to go the other way and actually cut registration fees for electric vehicles and hybrids. I'd be curious to know what they would have to say about the fairness argument that we've heard from the other side. They also offer a \$5,000 rebate for the purchase of a new or used EV and 2,500 for those who buy a plug-in hybrid. Residents who purchase a BEV [battery electric vehicle] or a PHEV [plug-in hybrid electric vehicle] will receive a free level 2 charger. Oh and I forget what those acronyms actually mean. My apologies but you know, there's different types of electric vehicles out there and they use different types of charging stations. So that's what that's about.

Just moving down the list here, and okay, so last one I'll mention here is one that I referenced indirectly a moment ago, and that's of course that the Government of Canada offers a point-of-sale incentive of 2,500 to \$5,000 for consumers who buy or lease an electric vehicle. So just wanted to, you know, sort of enter that into the record here, a little bit of information on what's happening in other parts of the country right now when it comes to incentivizing electric vehicles.

And myself, of course, I do want to share a little bit of some personal experience when it comes to these issues. I purchased my first hybrid vehicle back in 2009. We've had it in our family now for, gosh, 12 years. It was used when I bought it. It's a 2007 Toyota Prius and so I didn't buy it straight off the lot. And it's been a great vehicle for our family. We've put a lot of kilometres on it. We did have to replace the electric battery a few years back. We were fortunate to get one from salvage, so you know, that helped with the cost. And it's running great. You know, I just keep fixing the brake pads and other sort of regular maintenance and it keeps on ticking. It's such an amazing vehicle. I didn't bring it with me here to Regina. I left it at home for my kids to use while I came down here and as you probably already know, well I've been, you know, walking and riding my bike.

But you know, I think families are making these kinds of choices. And I've been having conversations with car dealers and neighbours and friends and people who own and operate electric vehicles. And I say to them, well gosh, is now the time for me to buy an electric vehicle? I've got this, you know, this 14-year-old car. It's going to be time for something new, you know, especially with all those miles I'm going to be putting on visiting constituents right across this province.

And a lot of them tell me no, you know, you don't want to do it. It's too early. There's not enough infrastructure. And I think about, well I could go back and forth between Saskatoon and Regina and I could stop in at the Co-op in Davidson and charge up there. I know they've got a station. So you know, I think I'm pretty covered when it comes to that drive between the two major centres.

But when it comes to, you know, just anywhere sort of off the Trans-Canada or maybe the Yellowhead, maybe the Yellowhead . . . I don't know; I haven't really looked at the Yellowhead. But you know, it's pretty difficult if you go off-road beyond that. Let's call that off-road here in Saskatchewan.

I know I was speaking with one of my constituents who owns a Tesla. She works up at one of the mines for Cameco. And she does really great work. She's really proud of her job, you know, around public safety up at one of the mines. And she was telling me this somewhat humorous but a little bit nerve-racking story about how they've tried to go home at Christmastime to see the family and, you know, managed to just come into the farmyard, literally on, you know, proverbial fumes with their electric vehicle. And that was really, you know, a tense moment for them. So whether it's going to Edmonton or Calgary or other points, it's tough, you know, being an early adopter of an electric vehicle here in the province.

And yes it really does, I think it does feel like a slap in the face if you're putting out that kind of money and trying to make the right move, and then you're penalized in these ways with this 150 tax in the name of fairness, right. Oh my god, in the name of fairness. Such a crazy argument. I mean I actually heard it mentioned that, you know, and I found this really interesting. I did. I found this very interesting, you know, that some people are positing that the reason why this tax was brought in is that it was a form of fed-bashing. And I had to think about that for a bit, you know, in terms of like, really? Is this, I mean the feds aren't the ones who are actually going to be, you know, have to bear the brunt of this punitive tax measure. It's the Saskatchewan people.

But you know, some are saying though, that because, you know, our Sask Party government took the feds to court and lost . . . What a waste of time that was. Actually it wasn't. I apologize. It wasn't a waste of time. We got a lot of, you know, certainty out of that process. It became very clear that, you know, the federal government does have a role to play when it comes to ensuring the national interest is upheld.

So we all don't agree on a price on carbon. We've been very clear on that. But thank you for providing that certainty we needed to understand. I mean, like, hey, I could have told you that 10 years ago that it was in the national interest. But you chose, in the interest of the public, to take them to court. And yes indeed, sure enough, we did find that out. So we thank you for that. We don't necessarily appreciate how much time and money you wasted to reach that what was, for most people, you know, a fairly evident situation. But I digress. So apologies for that. Anyways, Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. I kind of lost track of where I was there for a moment. Let me try to get back, perhaps.

[15:15]

So I was talking about, you know, the punitive nature of this tax and what might have been some of the underlying reasons for it, and was it a way to get back at the federal government by penalizing the Saskatchewan people? I don't know. I think we all have to sort of think about that one ourselves. But I will say this, you know, I think it is true that it is working at cross purposes. I think that that's very clear. It's shocking, it really is that, you know, we have the highest per capita emissions in the country. We have no policies to help address the emissions from our

transportation sector, and yet in the name of fairness we have a \$150 surcharge on electric vehicles. That to me is the definition of working at cross purposes.

Yes, I do have a couple more things to say. I mean I'm sure you've probably heard enough from me on this topic by now. But I do also want to, you know, mention that there are some people and some organizations here in Saskatchewan that are doing a lot of yeomen's work to encourage, you know, the industry and that transition happening.

I had the, you know, the great honour and opportunity to speak with a number of electric vehicle owners here a couple of weeks back. They presented a lot of very, what I would consider to be fair and reasonable arguments for why the tax is a bad idea. And I think they're doing such a great job of communicating and educating the public about the value of these vehicles and how great they work, and you know, how reliable they are, and also in doing other advocacy around seeing that build-out of charging stations that we need to see across the province.

I also think of the CarShare Co-op in Saskatoon, and I did have a little bit of involvement with that organization in its early inception. So in case you don't know, I'll maybe just explain that one a little bit. This is a co-operative that provides electric vehicles for rent to co-op members. And these vehicles are also charged through . . . Their charging stations are also powered by solar power. This was a program that was . . . Also you've received federal funding. I think maybe one of my members across the way was . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I didn't quite hear what he said but I think that's what he was referring to. We could get some federal dollars.

And so that's, you know, a really great example of one of the initiatives that everyday Saskatchewan people are taking upon themselves to initiate. These are grassroots efforts. In the absence of government leadership, they are taking matters into their own hands to ensure that there are these positive examples of how to, you know, have a more sustainable form of transportation. And of course, I mean, sustainable transportation can mean many things. It can include, you know, active transportation like walking and cycling. It can mean carpooling, you know, ride-sharing arrangements. And there's been a number of those through the years that have tried to get off the ground unsuccessfully due to lack of funding.

And then of course, you know, vehicles that consume less fuel. You know, we see the clean fuel standard that the federal government has recently announced to drive down the level of emissions. But you know, if we're going to get to net zero by 2050, decarbonizing is a key part of that. And electric vehicles charged from the grid is seen as a big part of the solution, and so that's also important.

And going back to, you know, sort of the purpose of this tax amendment, you know, we're already at the back of the pack. You know, we're seeing that other provinces are much further ahead than us when it comes to the adoption of electric vehicles. And some people talk about this being the decade of the EV and we're, you know, hopefully going to see . . . or at least in other parts of the country, we're going to see that rapid uptake.

But I'm concerned that here in Saskatchewan that, you know, it

won't be quite the same because we're getting mixed signals. You know, it's like, do you want me or don't you want me? And I mean, I as much as anybody am in that same position. It's like, I need a new vehicle. I want it to be an electric vehicle. Am I going to be able to get to Estevan and meet with constituents there if, you know, there isn't a charging station for me? Or what about going out to Yorkton and see my family there? Or hey, what about my buddy, the good member from Cumberland? My goodness. He talks about the challenges with, you know, the potholes. How long do you think before I'll be able to drive an EV up to go visit the member from Cumberland House? I don't know. That's going to be tricky. I mean, I could take the bus. Oh no, wait a minute. I can't take the bus. That's not possible. No bus. No EV. Potholes all over the place. I mean, what's a gal to do? What's a gal to do? I don't know.

I do know though that there is a member in my constituency; his name is Kent. Kent's a great guy, Kent Rathwell, and he is a visionary. Oh my God. This guy is such a visionary. He has a business where he is establishing electric vehicle charging stations right across the country. And I just have such respect for this man. And you know, as well I'm happy to see that, you know, whether it's Petro-Can or if it's the network of co-operatives around the province, I mean like there are businesses and companies that are looking to establish that infrastructure. And Kent is one of those that is leading the way, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention him here in this debate. He's doing a lot to sort of be a thought leader, change the dial, change the conversation a little bit. And I'm so happy once again that my remarks are eliciting so much engagement and response from the other side of the House. Thank you again.

I'm glad you're listening. You know, I hope you take my comments to heart and think about this. You know, like I know that our member will have more to say about this bill when he goes to committee. And I hope that you will be, you know, reconsidering because I don't . . . I and my fellow caucus members don't see this amendment being in the best interests of Saskatchewan people, and I won't be voting in favour of it for all the reasons that I have just enumerated to you. And I mean, I don't even think I've actually said everything that I wanted to say but, you know, I think I've made my point and we'll leave it at that. And so, Mr. Speaker, thanks for bearing with me here this afternoon. I do move we adjourn debate now on Bill No. 34, *The Fuel Tax Amendment Act*. Thank you.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 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 Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to enter

adjourned debates on Bill No. 35, *The Income Tax Amendment Act*. I think it's fitting to follow up my colleague, you know, as this bill certainly puts forward a couple of things that this government was able to change their mind on. And so many of my comments will be based on recognizing the ability of the Sask Party government to change their minds when the evidence and the will of the Saskatchewan people supports that.

So I did have a chance to review this piece of legislation as well as the comments offered from the Minister of Finance, who indicated in the Assembly that the updates to the income tax amendment included in this Act reflect the active families benefit, something I've already spoken to, and the need for that, for folks in Saskatchewan and families to have some certainty as far as when those benefits will be here, when they will be . . . Or will they, you know, continue to be given and taken away, only to be given and taken away again? And I think certainty is very important there.

And I also had a chance to talk to the significance of the tech start-up incentive, which again is something that my colleagues in opposition strongly support and we think that there's, you know, certainly a benefit there for jobs now and jobs in the future. And I spoke about the importance of that for the young folks I've had the honour to work with over the years as a teacher, and to see the great things that they're doing now. And so I think that that's important.

But you know, this bill brings to light the truth that this government has changed their mind on some things. These are things that they've, you know . . . We can go back to 2007 to the royalty tax rebate and we can look at, you know, we can look at 2012, the film employment tax credit. And we can wonder, will they change their minds on that? I hope they do. And, Mr. Speaker, I had a chance during the campaign . . . We were knocking over 10,000 doors. I met a lot of people who are still hurting from that decision, a lot of people. And that is one that has kind of gone down in the books as something that was, you know, a fully partisan, ideologically driven decision from this government that has had a net negative impact on the people of this province. It has driven people away. People are leaving. Hundreds of people have left this province because of this singular decision. And I hope that this government will reconsider. They've shown their ability to do that in Bill No. 35.

So I think that it's really important to note, right, as people continue to leave our province under this government, that they have a chance to reconsider the film employment tax credit. When you hear the stories of the folks impacted, their families, their businesses, their income, their livelihoods, it's certainly something that we're not holding our breath on, but I think it would be a positive. And they've shown their ability again to change their minds. So we call on them to do that when that's a benefit to the province. You know, overall the things included in this bill, as I've mentioned — the active families benefit, tech start-up, federal emergency wage subsidy — these are positive things.

And so with that, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I will continue to listen to my colleagues in opposition. You know, we'll continue to push this government from our side in opposition to do the right thing. And so I think it's positive in Bill 35 to see changes to their previous cuts, changes to their previous decisions to show

Saskatchewan people that they will reconsider the path that they're on. And hopefully that's something that this government continues to do.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and I will move that we 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 Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer comments on behalf of the official opposition on Bill No. 36, *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2021*.

This bill offers several amendments to update taxation provisions for marketplace facilitators and operators of online accommodation platforms. It also is providing the exemption for PST from vapour products, which will now be subject to a higher tax under *The Vapour Products Tax Act*, which I had the pleasure to speak on earlier.

[15:30]

You know, it's certainly been evident especially during the pandemic that, you know, the way that we as consumers enter into the marketplace and the way that, you know, businesses by the same token are also operating has changed dramatically. And you know, our sales taxes legislation needs to reflect those changes. I mean, certainly this isn't anything new. It's like my previous comments on, you know, vapour products, that online markets have been in existence for at least a decade now. And so, you know, I think that it's important that our legislation be modernized to account for these modern realities. And so certainly having the provisions there for marketplace facilitators and online operators is an important amendment that's been put forward.

And I would just, you know . . . I think our critic for this area will have many questions and debate in terms of, you know, what took so long. It's curious to me. I talked before about, you know, this leading and lagging kind of approach we see here, where this is something that I would have thought we would have done, you know, 10 years ago. It seems curious to have waited this long. And yet in other areas, we see them putting that proverbial cart before the horse, that horse that we like to ride on sometimes.

And you know, I guess I would just also make that broader point about, you know, it's important that we not see this type of

leakage occurring. You know, we talk about other forms of carbon leakage, and you know, tax leakage is also a reality. So I'm glad to see that we're going to be addressing that.

You know, it also does present that opportunity, as my colleague was mentioning a moment earlier, about making some other changes at the same time. We've on many occasions mentioned the job-killing tax on construction labour and the disincentive that that provides to the marketplace, and also removing that at the same time would be a very welcome move to see.

But there does seem to be a bit of confusion. I noticed . . . I was looking in the statements about, you know, which bill actually is the one that provides the immunity provision for the employees, administrators, or agents of the minister. And I notice that in the bill that was tabled, that does fall under the new section 43.4, and that is a welcome addition. I think it's important that they have that protection, so happy to see that. As well, of course, we always want to be avoiding unintended consequences with such things. And people do need to be accountable for their behaviour, but also when acting in the interests or behalf of and as agents, certainly they shouldn't be subject to a liability.

And so, you know, I think my main points, I've already stated them. You know, it's really about ensuring that, you know, we're collecting and receiving that PST on retail transactions that are occurring online, outside of the province. I think the same could also be said, though, about any of those kind of purchases that are, you know, from cross-border shopping. We do see tax leakage in that area. And I don't know how much of an issue that is right now or what's being done about it, but it's kind of in the same vein. You know, also a concern particularly when we have jurisdictions to the west that don't have a provincial sales tax, and people will often go shopping to Edmonton and Calgary for that very purpose. Not today, mind you, of course, under COVID times, but in normal times that has been the case.

So as I say, welcome to see this modernization; wondering why it didn't happen sooner. And with that I will conclude my remarks. I know my colleagues will have more to say when this reaches the committee, but I'll adjourn debate now on Bill 36, *The Provincial Sales 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. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the sitting of committee in this Chamber very soon, I would move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:36.]

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