



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

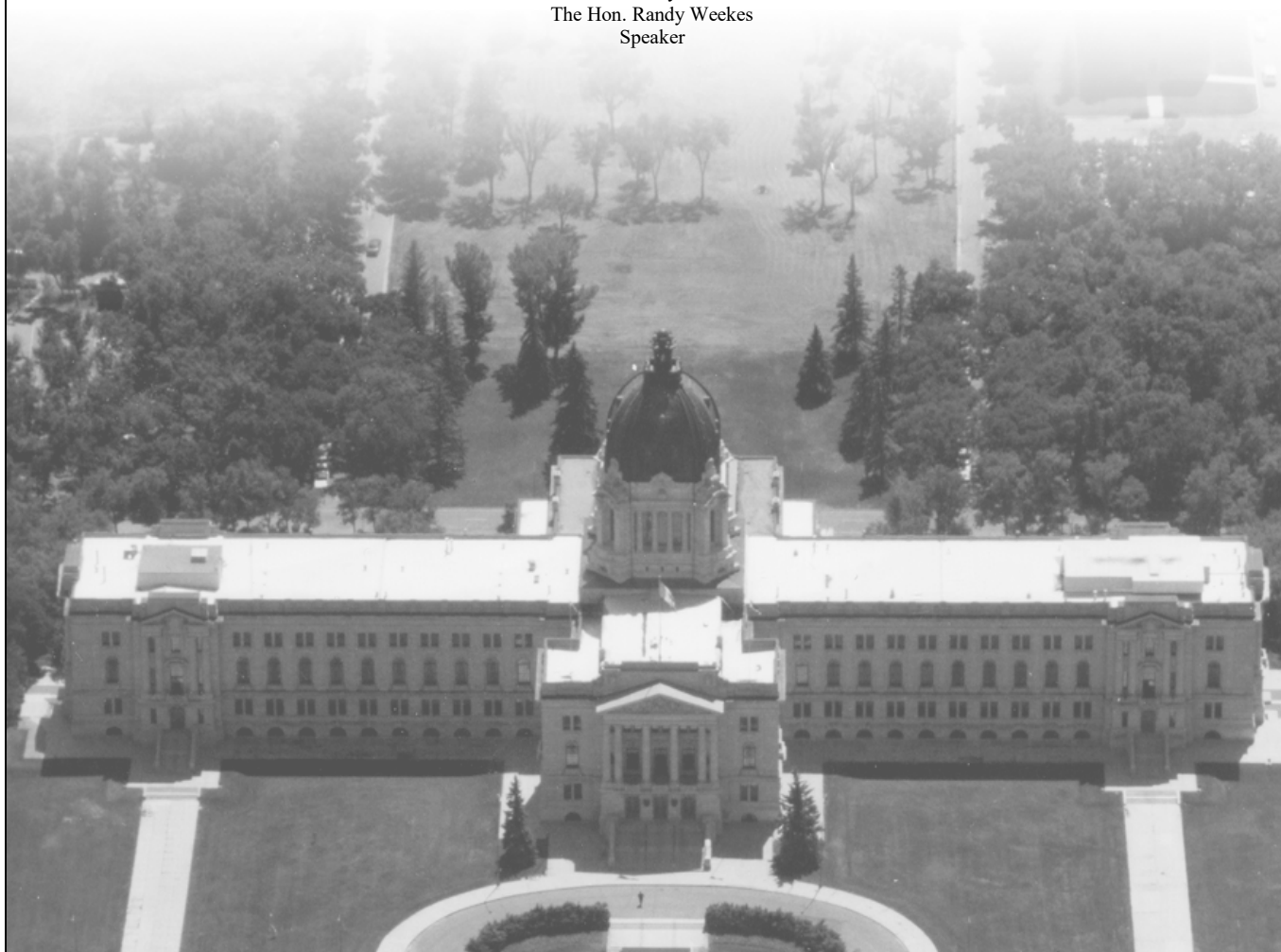
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

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

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

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Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

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The Speaker: — According to section 39 of *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act*, I would like to table before the Legislative Assembly the annual report for the Advocate for Children and Youth for the year 2020.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to present a petition again today calling for pay equity legislation.

Equal-pay-for-equal-work legislation ensures that a woman and a man performing the same job in the same workplace are paid the same. We already have this legislation in place in Saskatchewan. In contrast, pay equity legislation guarantees equal pay for work of equal value. It requires employers to assess the value of male- and female-dominated jobs objectively on the basis of skill, effort, responsibility, and working conditions.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, today we have signatories from Saskatoon and Martensville. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

New Indoor Skateboard Park in Regina

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to thank and recognize impressive local leaders that have created a new recreational opportunity for young people in Regina. As a result of their hard work, after more than seven years Regina's Evraz Place will once again be host to an indoor skate park.

The credit goes to the Regina Skateboarding Coalition, founded in 2019 as a non-profit. Their mission is to develop inclusive facilities, events, and activities that support the physical, psychological, and social well-being of Regina youth through skateboarding. They've created a safe and inclusive park, and they are working at organizing summer youth camps, depending on the state of the pandemic.

The return of an accessible skateboarding facility to Evraz is a welcome move. From 1999 to 2014 Regina was home to the

longest running indoor skate park in Canada. I want to give a big shout-out and thanks to the dedicated and hard-working board of directors: Shane Reoch, president; David Chapados, vice-president; Noel Wendt, treasurer; Jared Sigethy, secretary.

In addition I want to thank local skateboard shop owner Michael Langan, Femmes Across the Board, all helpers, volunteers, and the leadership of Evraz Place. I ask all members to join with me in thanking all these good folks that came together to make this happen.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Ituna Teacher Receives Excellence in Teaching Award

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year a student from Ituna School nominated their teacher Mrs. Cindy Yanko for an Excellence in Teaching Award from Horizon School Division. This award is given to five to seven teachers each year who go above and beyond for their students. On March 22nd, 2021, Cindy was presented the award.

Cindy has been a favourite among all students who have the pleasure of attending her class, including my daughters. Her love, dedication, and willingness to always help her students is admirable. Mr. Speaker, Cindy instituted a curling program at Ituna School where she coached many teams that competed at a high level. In her home economics class, she taught many students the ability to cook nutritious foods and feed themselves on a tight budget when they left home. Another highlight was ensuring the students received their safe food handling course. Many were able to use this to secure part-time work after they left Ituna School.

Students who have moved on to university have commented on how they would not have made it through those years if it were not for the skills she taught and her ability to connect with her students.

I now ask all members to please join me in congratulating Mrs. Cindy Yanko on her well-deserved Excellence in Teaching Award. Thank you.

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

Wakamow Valley in Moose Jaw

Ms. Beck: — Moose Jaw is well known for being a friendly Prairie city, famous for their quaint downtown core. And of course they're famously proud of their giant moose, Mac. He's the tallest moose in the world, as you know, Mr. Speaker. Moose Jaw has also two landmark green spaces: Crescent Park, located downtown; and the Wakamow Valley, situated on the south side of the city, complete with a campground, plenty of picnic spaces, and even a speed skating oval. It is known as the River Valley and is much-loved and much-used space for Moose Javians and is represented here in the Assembly by Moose Jaw Wakamow.

This year Wakamow Valley will host a farmers' market. The goal here is to provide residents with a way to enjoy this incredible

public space. As Todd Johnson, the general manager, says, "It's also a way to fundraise so that Moose Javians can continue enjoying the space."

Mr. Speaker, I've risen today to remind this Assembly that members opposite, including the representative for the constituency of Moose Jaw Wakamow, voted to cut funding to this urban park along with four others in 2016. I ask every member in this Assembly to join me in recognizing the hard work, creativity, and commitment of this community and others to maintain and support their urban parks. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Opening of Cumberland Crossing in Prince Albert

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Chamber today to recognize the significant investment in Prince Albert by Cumberland Cree Nation, along with their partners, Saskatchewan River Bank Development Corporation and Timanaska Development Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, on March 15th I was honoured to attend and congratulate the members and Chief Chaboyer of Cumberland House First Nation and invited guests at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly named Cumberland Crossing. In his address to the elders, guests, and dignitaries attending, Chief Rene Chaboyer said, "The main focus of this building will be affordable student housing and medical accommodations, along with further plans for a 24-hour daycare centre with a potential up to 94 spaces."

Mr. Speaker, this centre will provide a culturally inviting, safe place for families coming to the city for medical appointments and to visit loved ones in the hospital. Students from northern and rural areas will be able to live in a comfortable, culturally appropriate environment that will provide them with the support they need to focus on their studies.

This is a welcome project in the city of Prince Albert and for the people of northern and rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me in congratulating and wishing Cumberland Crossing great success. Thank you.

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

Revitalization of Outlook Legion Branch

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2013 after almost 70 years of existence, the Outlook Legion Branch 262 brinked on closing its doors due to declining membership. Unwilling to accept its impending fate, the Outlook Legion, under the leadership of John McPhail, dug in their heels. Hard work and perseverance saw this veterans organization blossom from only a handful to well over 50 members.

The good community work of this Legion branch has also flourished under President McPhail. Scholarships for local graduates and music festival participants, awards for Legion poetry, essay, and poster contests, and funding for local athletes count among the ways this group serves Outlook. Further, true to its roots the branch also serves to support veterans and their

families through a variety of initiatives, donating almost \$60,000 to such programs since 2016. Most recently, Mr. McPhail and the Legion branch have undertaken the construction of Veterans Memorial Park, located right in the heart of Outlook.

The Outlook Legion Branch is another example of an organization that stands to benefit from our government's recent increases to the veteran service club support program. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to help me to recognize and show our appreciation to Mr. John McPhail and the entire Legion branch 262 for breathing life back into this most important organization. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Construction of Passing Lanes on Highway 7

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer, as part of this government's \$520 million highways capital budget, construction begins on three sets of passing lanes on Highway 7 west of Kindersley to the Alberta border. This is the final phase of Highway 7 improvement to this vital corridor between Saskatoon and our western constituency boundary. This stretch serves as a primary route for farmers, oil and gas companies, and local travellers.

Contrary to popular belief that Saskatchewan is flat, this stretch does have several hills and valleys that slows down larger grain and oil trucks and the thousands of highway tractor-trailers that travel that route 24 hours a day. In the past, this activity has caused long lineups of backed-up traffic. With these new passing lanes, this highway will be wider, more efficient, and safer for everyone that travels it.

Since 2008 our government has invested \$10.6 billion with improvements to over 17 000 kilometres of highways, an increase of over 150 per cent. Mr. Speaker, in our 2020-2030 growth plan, we made a commitment to build and upgrade 10 000 kilometres of highways across the province.

Mr. Speaker, last fall, the people of Saskatchewan were given a choice, and they chose to stick with a party with a proven track record and, more importantly, a plan for the future. They did not choose a party well known for showing indifference to and neglect for our provincial road system. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Helium Plant Commences Operations in Cypress Hills

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to share some good news about the new job creator in my constituency, Cypress Hills. Battle Creek is now the home to Canada's largest helium purification facility, starting its operations up this week. The new \$32 million plant built by North American Helium is expected to produce 50 million cubic feet of purified helium a year. Mr. Speaker, that's enough helium to fill approximately 400,000 balloons a day. This facility is expected to create local jobs in my riding, increase the province's helium export capabilities, and attract investment.

Mr. Speaker, helium is a critical mineral that is used in medical research and space exploration and fibre optics. Mr. Speaker, this

project is being supported by our government's oil and gas processing investment incentive program, which provides 15 per cent transferable royalty credit to an innovative project like this one.

The company's chairman and CEO [chief executive officer], Nicholas Snyder, said, "This is an important milestone in the development of a . . . long-term sustainable helium production . . . in Saskatchewan." I'd like to thank North American Helium for their investment in our province, and our government is proud to support the important step in growing our natural resource sectors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November the Premier refused to do a circuit breaker when we saw the second wave coming, despite calls to do so from hundreds of health care professionals. He said at the time that it wasn't necessary, that his weak half-measures would be enough. Hundreds died in that second wave. Thousands more have been sick. And we've been stuck in his slow-motion lockdown ever since, as he's failed to control COVID or protect the economy. It's a complete failure on every possible measure, Mr. Speaker.

Will he release the advice that he was given in November that suggested that it was okay to do so little?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen a number of provinces that did choose to go into a circuit breaker, full lockdown, whatever you'd like to call it, Mr. Speaker, back in November. We're seeing many of those provinces, and other areas of the world actually, Mr. Speaker, that are now struggling with the third wave of COVID-19 infections.

In fact if you look back to early April to just a day or two ago, throughout the month of April, the last two or three weeks, Mr. Speaker, we had about 450,000 cases in the world in early April. Just a couple of days ago, we were up to about 850,000 cases around the world, Mr. Speaker — almost a doubling of COVID infections worldwide. We most certainly are in our third wave.

Here in this province, Mr. Speaker, we have taken a measured and balanced approach, Mr. Speaker, an approach that, yes, does have a significant number of measures in place, but an approach that also is most assuredly focusing on ensuring that we are providing those vaccines that we are receiving from the federal government to people in this province. That ultimately is our path through this pandemic. We have the significant measures that are in place, more so here in Regina, and we are providing as many vaccines as we receive to Saskatchewan people.

[13:45]

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Failing the people's

health and failing the economy is a very funny idea of balance.

Mr. Speaker, we know the Premier doesn't want to see for himself what his decisions have caused in the province's ICUs [intensive care unit], and he doesn't want people to see why he made those choices.

On March 9th the Premier decided that he would relax restrictions, despite seeing modelling that showed an upcoming surge of variants of concern, despite knowing what that would mean for provincial health, Mr. Speaker. Will he release the public health advice that convinced him at that time that that tragic mistake was a good idea?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have always met with the measures and with the vaccine access here in this province, Mr. Speaker. We have done our best to provide what we can to ensure that those modelling projections are not met, and they have not been met here in Saskatchewan.

As I was saying in the previous answer, the world is most certainly going through a third wave, Mr. Speaker. 450,000 cases a day in early April; up to 850,000 today. Many countries are having a tremendous challenge, Mr. Speaker. And we see it in the global media with respect to this third wave and containing COVID, save for three countries, Mr. Speaker, three countries — the USA [United States of America], the United Kingdom, and Israel.

The USA is actually down 10 per cent over the course of the last month; the United Kingdom down 15 per cent, and Israel down 75 per cent. During that same time period, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is up about 10 per cent or has held fairly steady through the month of April, admittedly at a level far too high.

These three countries, Mr. Speaker, have had wide-scale early access to vaccines. These three countries have reducing COVID numbers, Mr. Speaker, despite what we see in the rest of the world. That's why we are most certainly focused on providing the vaccines that we receive in a priority fashion, Mr. Speaker, to the folks of this province so that we ultimately can get to numbers like this, Mr. Speaker, over the long term.

Vaccines are our path through the COVID pandemic, Mr. Speaker. We're making every effort to make every one that we receive available.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier has ignored every public call to understand that we were in a race between variants and vaccine. And instead what did he do? He decided to give the variants a head start. And we've seen exactly what happened as a result and why he's failed Saskatchewan people and fails to answer the question, which is about the information that he was given.

If the Premier really wouldn't change a thing, if he's so proud of the decisions that he's made, then he should have no problem sharing with us why he made the choices he did. When it became clear that the variants of concern were already out of control in

Regina and were set to spread around the province, he chose to do nothing to stop that spread, to introduce the necessary measures to protect other communities. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier release the advice that said there was no need to follow what was going on in Regina and protect the rest of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, most certainly we've been clear with the people of the province throughout this pandemic, Mr. Speaker. Every week over the last number of months — more often previously — myself or the current Minister of Health, the previous minister of Health would go out, Mr. Speaker, and address the media on a weekly, sometimes on a daily basis. We have Dr. Shahab, our chief medical health officer, that is addressing the public biweekly at this point in time, and has been available many, many times over the course of the last now 13, 14 months, Mr. Speaker.

There are multiple folks that are involved in gathering the information and providing that information ultimately to ourselves as the government, Mr. Speaker, as well as our chief medical health officer, Dr. Shahab, is digesting that information, Mr. Speaker. He's providing recommendations to the Government of Saskatchewan. He's signing off on health orders on behalf of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, putting those measures in place — I again say some of the most significant measures that this province has ever experienced in its history, Mr. Speaker.

We are combining that effort with the other effort that we have, Mr. Speaker, the very important effort of providing those vaccines to Saskatchewan people. We have over 30 per cent, leading the nation, over 30 per cent of our general population. Thirty-nine per cent of all of those eligible, all of those adults in this province have now received their first dose, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see increased deliveries in early May, and we're going to make every single one of them available to the people of this province. And we're going to find our way through this pandemic.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier can't trust people with the truth, how can people possibly trust this Premier? Every step of the way he's refused to share the information behind the decisions he's making, but there's nothing stopping him from doing so. If he's so proud of the choices he's made, if he wouldn't change a thing, then what is he hiding, Mr. Speaker? If the advice says, backs up the choices he were to make, why won't he share it with the public, Mr. Speaker? We know this has been his call all along.

The third wave has not subsided in Regina. New research shows, waste water research shows that Saskatoon is about to be hit as hard or harder, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier, will the Premier release the information he's getting right now to address this public health disaster? Will he release what this will mean for the ICUs he refuses to visit? Will he release the number of cases or deaths that are projected?

We've got a COVID-19 update today. Will he show us the

modelling? He's seen it; will he share it? For just once, will this Premier be open and honest with the people of Saskatchewan? Will he show even an ounce of accountability?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker. Let me start by addressing the people of Saskatchewan in saying this: thank you. Thank you, for the vast majority of you, for following the public health orders . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, the people of this province have shown their true grit throughout the course of the last year, notwithstanding the challenges that we have all had to undertake as people of this province, people of this nation, and people around the world as we face this global pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

But the people of Saskatchewan, I for one can say am extremely proud of how they have faced this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, I am increasingly proud of how I see the people of this province continuing, yes, to follow the public health measures that are in place, but now when it is their turn, making their appointment for a vaccine, getting in line at one of the drive-throughs, now phoning the pharmacies across this province to make an appointment, Mr. Speaker.

Ultimately this is our path through this pandemic. The people of this province know it. The government knows it, Mr. Speaker. I hope very soon the Leader of the Opposition and the opposing party will realize it.

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

Management of Long-Term Care Facilities

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the people of this province. We received an access to information request that sheds some serious light on what this government was hearing. I'd like to quote from a public health inspection at Extendicare Parkside: "Staff report being harassed if they need to stay home due to being symptomatic." Harassed, Mr. Speaker.

This inspection took place on December 2nd before the outbreak had fully spiralled out of control at Parkside. Why did the minister sit on this information? And what role did this harassment play into the deadly situation that unfolded? Can the minister explain why he's interested in continuing this relationship with a company that was trying to force symptomatic front-line workers to stay on the job in the middle of an outbreak?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as soon as we became aware of the situation at Parkside Extendicare, we had the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] involved, providing supports. We all know, Mr. Speaker, what happened at Parkside was indeed very tragic. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, that I have asked the Ombudsman to take a very thorough look into what happened at Parkside, Mr. Speaker.

We need to continue to make improvements, and with respect to long-term care for the seniors of this province, Mr. Speaker. It's why we need to put the needs of our senior citizens first and make sure that we continue to make improvements wherever we can.

It's why we've asked the Ombudsman to conduct a very thorough review into this.

Mr. Speaker, we need to know as a government what actions were taken and what actions could have been taken and what need to be taken in the future to make sure that we prevent situations like this from happening again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you that if that information came across my desk, I'd be horrified. And that minister should have been horrified too.

This government's own infection control audit also found that masks for staff were being rationed. Residents' rooms were so crowded that they couldn't even fit a hamper for PPE [personal protective equipment] into the room, and the facility was using shoe holders to store PPE.

I'll remind the Assembly that 1 in 14 residents died under Extencicare's watch, a company that put profits ahead of patient care while the Sask Party sat back and let it happen. To the minister: how much more evidence does his government need to decide that Saskatchewan seniors deserve better?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess what the member opposite is asking for us to pre-judge the Ombudsman's report and interfere with her independent investigation. Mr. Speaker, I've said in this Assembly before that this is why we have taken this matter very seriously. And I've asked that the Ombudsman take a very thorough investigation into what happened at Parkside Extencicare.

We know that these are very tragic circumstances and that's why, Mr. Speaker, we know that we need to have a thorough investigation completed. We look forward to the Ombudsman's investigations and her recommendations into what happened at Parkside Extencicare to make sure that this does not happen again.

Mr. Speaker, we've taken this issue very, very seriously. We know that we need to do as much as we can to protect the senior citizens of our province and make sure that the residents of these long-term care homes, in any residence of any long-term care, personal care homes in this province, receive top quality care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, that's an unacceptable response from the minister who knew about each of the problems. I'll review them for the minister: quadruple bunking, problems with HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning], short-staffing. These are the problems that this government knew about since 2013 and did nothing. And then in December of last year, he watched as the horrors unfolded in long-term care homes in other parts of the country.

And we have a report right here that says that sick staff were being pressured to come to work around the most vulnerable citizens, and that PPE was being rationed. And again he did nothing. Can the minister explain why his government sat on these reports? And can he explain why on earth his government hasn't ended this deadly relationship with Extencicare?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Seniors.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've mentioned, we are working very closely on this particular issue. And we're awaiting the Ombudsman's report. We know that she's doing a very thorough investigation into what took place and what's transpired at Extencicare, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken steps to move away from the four-bed-room wards we had, Mr. Speaker, which we happened to inherit, by the way. The record will show that Extencicare has operated long-term care homes in this province for a number of years. All of their facilities actually opened between 1963 to 1972 under former governments, Mr. Speaker. So we have taken some temporary steps to move away from the four-bed-room wards, to move away from having four patients in a room, down to two if not less, Mr. Speaker.

It's why also, Mr. Speaker, we've got more funding in this year's budget to make sure that we can expand upon the replacement project of long-term care beds throughout the entire city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, because we know we need to put the priority of seniors first, and we're going to continue to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Sick Leave and Supports for Employees

Ms. Bowes: — Mr. Speaker, working women have gotten a raw deal from this government. They dragged their heels in rolling out a wage subsidy and left too many front-line workers out. They have no plan to make child care more accessible or affordable, no plans to address the wage gap or pay equity. And they don't even have the decency to consider paid sick leave.

Last spring the Sask Party seemed open to working with the feds on this. Now they've walked it back and won't even entertain the idea of saving lives with paid sick leave, a program that would especially lift up working women.

I'm sick of the talking points, Mr. Speaker. A healthy economy has healthy workers. Will the minister at least agree with me on that?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad for the question and appreciate the opportunity to give some information. It's similar information to what's been given before. We're the first province, and for some significant time the only province, to provide paid vaccination time. I've said it before and will say it again: the path out of the pandemic is through the vaccination clinic. So we're the first one to provide it. We understand other

provinces are now looking at it and are going to implement it as well. We're fully supportive of that as a major step forward towards working out of the recovery on the pandemic.

We've also created the public health emergency leave, which can be accessed if an employer, physician, or government requires somebody to stay home for public health reasons. We have extended job protection for employees that are accessing the federal Canada recovery caregiving benefit or the Canada recovery sickness benefit, which gives a federal benefit of \$500 per week. We highly encourage employees to use those programs. If the member has more questions, I'll have more to say, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have more questions. Mr. Speaker, with 23,000 fewer jobs since last year, it makes no sense for this government to fail to support people who are still holding on to theirs. Saskatchewan workers are at a significant disadvantage compared to their counterparts across the country, with the lowest minimum wage in Canada and no support from the government to protect them when they need to stay home sick.

We're past hearts in windows and platitudes about heroes. It's time for real action. Will this government walk the walk and introduce paid sick leave to support front-line workers and to protect our province?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To better facilitate the money that is being paid by the federal government, we have a number of benefits that are available directly to the employees. They include holding a person's job for 12 days, so that their job is held for them. If they have leave for a serious illness, for personal illness, or illness of a family member, we have an additional 12 weeks. We also have leave for work-related injuries. We also have a number of benefits through Workers' Compensation Board.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite want to talk about paid sick leave. We've looked at what other jurisdictions do and, Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, where after six months of employment, a worker is entitled to two employer-paid days per year. That would do very little benefit to the people that are going through the issues that they're going through right now. Prince Edward Island, where after five years of employment, a worker is entitled to one employer-paid day per year.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, we are the only jurisdiction that has three weeks of holidays instead of two. Mr. Speaker, I'm not urging people to take holidays, use holidays, but we have done a number of things for the workers in our province. We want to continue to do those things. We will continue to work with the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

University.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about other provinces here. We're talking about Saskatchewan. Just because every other province isn't doing something doesn't mean it's not the right thing to do. Mr. Speaker, it's not enough that's been done. Why not show some leadership? Paid sick leave is already a part of the Canada Labour Code, and other jurisdictions are working on proposals as we speak.

Our ICUs are filling up with front-line workers and their families. Every day more of them are losing their battles with COVID-19. Why won't the minister do the right thing, step up to the plate, and introduce paid sick leave for those who have sacrificed so much? What does he have to say to a minimum-wage worker, living paycheque to paycheque, who has to risk their life because they just can't afford to stay home when they're feeling sick?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we've watched carefully what's taken place in other jurisdictions. We've seen that the Ontario government offered to put some money to top up the money that was being paid for by the federal government. The federal government has turned it down. Mr. Speaker, we're going to watch what's taking place in other jurisdictions. Mr. Speaker, we want to do what's right and what's best for our workers in our province. Mr. Speaker, we're working to try and do the best we can for our workers.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've got some pretty good stats right now. The member opposite raises the issue of what happens with women in the workplace. And I can tell you that the average weekly wage for women in our province is \$886.49, the third-highest among the provinces. The proportion of Indigenous women working full-time in Saskatchewan was 74.9 per cent in 2019, which is above the provincial average of all women working, which was a provincial average of 74.1 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019 women entrepreneurs contributed \$23.1 billion to the Saskatchewan economy and created over 191,000 jobs. When Saskatchewan women lead a business they are more likely to headquarter that business in Saskatchewan. We will work with them, Mr. Speaker.

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

Role of the Ministry of Trade and Export Development

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to hear at least one minister talking about work because, Mr. Speaker, we've seen 23,000 jobs lost throughout this pandemic under this government, a number that surely would have been fewer had this government kept people safe at work and ensured workers had access to paid sick leave.

But we also would have likely done much better if the jobs minister had stayed in his lane and focused on getting people back to work. Now, Mr. Speaker, we learned at committee a few days ago that officials in his business response team weren't just

helping people navigate the federal and provincial business supports, but as one of the minister's own officials described at committee last week, I quote:

The Minister of Health and the chief medical health officer establish the public health orders and the guidelines. We consult and we provide interpretation of those guidelines.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask, how on earth did this minister get the idea that his ministry was the one interpreting public health orders? And, Mr. Speaker, why wasn't that being done by the Ministry of Health?

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 wanted to talk about jobs, and that's something I'm very happy to talk about, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has one of the most comprehensive, if not the most comprehensive jobs and economic plans in the entire country, Mr. Speaker, and that is *The Saskatchewan Plan for Growth*. And I can tell you the theme that's underlying that entire plan for growth, Mr. Speaker, is that the private sector would be able to and confident in making investments into this province, something that we know never happened under the NDP [New Democratic Party], Mr. Speaker.

And I have great news today, Mr. Speaker, which one of our colleagues, my colleague, already spoke about, alluded to earlier today. Another wonderful announcement: \$32 million, Mr. Speaker, from North American Helium, who are going to be opening the largest helium facility in the entirety of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

And this continues a roll that this province is on. Literally in the last month, we have seen nearly \$2 billion of new investment in this province: Viterra just yesterday, a major, massive announcement, the largest canola crush facility in the entire world, going to be located here in Regina; Cargill just last week. I look forward to talking about some more, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly great news about the helium, but I believe the member cited 400,000 balloons, and it's unclear how much helium is going to be needed with the amount of hot air coming out of that minister, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. He didn't answer the question, but it's not just the minister's own officials who are shedding light on who's really pulling the strings. Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Parks, Culture, and recreation told committee that when a music festival came to her seeking guidance on how to operate safely, how they could go about following public health orders, Mr. Speaker, she went to the jobs minister, not to the Health minister. And I quote: "... I brought that up with Minister Harrison and said, you know, need a little help here. How do we do this?"

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask, why did this minister, who hasn't even

bothered to come up with a jobs plan, end up being the one in charge of interpreting public health orders? And, Mr. Speaker, if he's the one in charge of the COVID response, does he take any responsibility for how poorly things are going?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the BRT [business response team] works very closely with the Ministry of Health and we canvassed that in estimates fully, fully, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to point something out. I think it's a little bit offensive to North American Helium, who are making a \$32-million announcement, to be flippant about what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. Helium has some very real and significant uses. This is primarily going to be used in applications in medicine, space program, all kind of other applications, Mr. Speaker. To somehow allude that this is about hot air balloons is pretty offensive to a company that has the confidence to make a \$32-million investment in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And they can beak from their seats, Mr. Speaker, because they know ... They should be apologizing, actually, is what they should be doing, Mr. Speaker. But what is important is the fact that the business climate exists in this province right now for companies to be making investments worth hundreds of millions and billions of dollars just in the last month, Mr. Speaker, creating hundreds and hundreds of jobs, investments that we know, Mr. Speaker, would never have happened under them.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Vaccination Partnership with North Dakota

Hon. Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to share some good news with the people of Saskatchewan about a unique partnership between this province and the state of North Dakota. Our neighbours to the south have agreed to vaccinate essential workers who transport goods across the international border. Saskatchewan-based truck drivers will have the opportunity to receive their vaccination at a special clinic near the Pembina border crossing. An additional vaccination site has been approved near the North Portal border crossing. An appropriate location is currently being determined and will be confirmed in the coming days.

Approximately 2,000 Saskatchewan people will be eligible for the program. This will allow the strong relationship to continue between Saskatchewan and our largest trading partner, the United States. Last year trade between Saskatchewan and North Dakota was valued at \$2 billion. This extraordinary partnership will protect more Canadians at a time when vaccine supply in the United States exceeds that of Canada. We thank the state of North Dakota for working with us to make this happen.

Vaccines will be available Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. The partners are also considering a plan to extend vaccinations to essential workers in the oil and gas industry who cross the border on a regular basis. North Dakota's Department of Health

will provide the staff, location, and supplies. This service is being provided at no cost to either the state or province. The United States federal government is providing the vaccine and funding to administer these vaccinations.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan and the people of North Dakota have always been more than just neighbours. We are friends, and friends look after each other. This is one more example of the depth of that friendship with North Dakota and the United States of America. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the minister for providing the statement in advance to the official opposition. I'll respond briefly in place of the critic here today, Mr. Speaker, but certainly North Dakota is acting as a neighbour, as a partner, as a friend, and we're thankful for that, Mr. Speaker. This is a historic challenge that we face. Certainly North Dakota and the United States aren't just big and important trading partners. They're allies, Mr. Speaker, and that's evidenced in this program here today.

Certainly I want to extend care and condolences to North Dakota, the people of North Dakota. As we know, they've endured horrifying loss of life and pain and suffering through this pandemic, Mr. Speaker. We extend our care their way and we extend our thanks to them for providing these vaccines to truck drivers.

Certainly we will continue to push our provincial government to show the kind of leadership that people are expecting and that they need to contain COVID within our province. Of course we have the worst in the country, hospitalization rates on this front, and loss of life and suffering that's a heavy, heavy toll for the people of Saskatchewan. We'll continue to push for those measures to get COVID under control, to save lives and livelihoods, and our economy here in Saskatchewan.

But with respect to this program with North Dakota we simply say thank you so very much.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 26

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

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to offer and add my comments on behalf of the official opposition

for Bill 26, *The Police (Serious Incident Response Team) Amendment Act, 2021*. When I was reviewing the documents and reading the opposition's comments on this, I agree with some of the discussions that they presented and questions that they've had. And I have had a chance to review this, and I think that this is very needed.

[14:15]

And you know, references were made to the starlight tours in Saskatoon, as well as the treatment of Ms. Baptiste by the police and of course the way the Indigenous people and minorities are treated in this province. So I'm very pleased that there is this bill and the amendment of it.

One of the things that I would like, as the critic for First Nations and Métis relations, is that the stakeholders are consulted in a meaningful way — and in particular the special investigation unit at FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations], that they be consulted. The other ones that I'm thinking about is the Native Law Centre and of course the Indigenous Bar Association.

And when I think of the makeup of this group, I think it's very important to have us civilians here, as we do not want to see police investigating each other. And so I think it's important to have Indigenous people that have that experience — lawyers, Indigenous lawyers — on this. And one of the questions I have around here is the . . . I'm pleased to see that the executive director will be an Indigenous lawyer, or a lawyer, right? And the others could be retired police officers.

My concern with that is we all know in the culture of the police services there's a systemic racism and a culture of mistreating people. And my concern about having retired or RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] police officers on that committee is that they'll bring that baggage with them when they're doing some investigations.

So having said that, I really believe it's important to have Indigenous people that have that lived experience as well as that academic training to be able to carry out the duty of these investigations. And I'll also echo what my colleagues have said as well, is to be inclusive of the minority group as well and First Nations in particular, having elders at that table to balance out the group.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we 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 Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter in here today on Bill No. 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2021*. And I understand my colleague from Regina Douglas Park will have additional comments and questions for this when it proceeds to committee. And I would like to start by recognizing how wonderful it was to see her back in the House yesterday, especially with wee little Ronan in tow. More babies, Mr. Speaker, in this legislature, and I hope there are many more to come in the subsequent years.

So, Mr. Speaker, in sum this bill essentially proceeds to make it easier to resolve traffic tickets with process improvements and a move to a new online system. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is wonderful, bringing fine payment into the 21st century. And I will take the opportunity to inform the members opposite that if they are digging around for dirt on me, I have never once been issued a traffic ticket. So don't bother wasting your time there, fellows. Although parking tickets, another whole different story there, so I might be the white whale of parking tickets in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker.

But seriously, Mr. Speaker, I think the fine option program is great. We're glad of course to see the added ease of enrolling in this program, especially given some of the moves to attempt to axe this program just a few short years ago. And of course, Mr. Speaker, we do want to ensure any time we make these moves to modernization, whether it's in fine payment, whether it's in, you know, things like remote learning, which folks are going through right now, we do need to make sure that there is equity and that everyone can access those systems equitably, and that these modernization processes don't unfairly impact those already struggling.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to see the alternative to fines, which is present here, does great work with community organizations across this great province and really gives both opportunity and wonderful experience to those that cannot afford to pay a fine.

And, Mr. Speaker, I guess for my last remarks — this has been canvassed by some of my colleagues — of course any opportunity that we have to alleviate backlogged court systems, especially while remand facilities in this province remain overflowing, is a wonderful opportunity to pursue and I commend this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, with that I think I will conclude my remarks here, noting again that of course the critic will have some additional comments to bring forward in committee.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Bill 27, *The Summary Offences Procedure 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. 30

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. 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 Centre.

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to also offer my initial comments on behalf of the official opposition regarding Bill 30, the Saskatchewan technology start-up initiative amendment Act, 3032. What I'm very pleased is that extending this incentive is great news for the technology industry. I think of the small businesses back home in my constituency and some of them that focus on technology. I think this would be very good for them and very positive for them.

And I don't have much to say on here. And I'm just so grateful. I'm just pleased that there is an incentive for extending this for the small tech industries.

And I think back, probably in the early '90s when I worked at the Saskatoon Tribal Council. I worked there, and there was a new computer technology business coming up. And it was so exciting to see Indigenous people owning and being involved in the tech industry. Today I don't know what's happened to it but I'm sure they've expanded. And this I am sure would be something that the tech industry would be very pleased with and certainly within the Indigenous community and especially more so now with COVID and with all of us having to find alternative ways of conducting business.

So I'm sure my colleagues and the one that has the critic role for this would have more to say and more questions to ask. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 30, the Saskatchewan technology start-up initiative amendment Act, 2021. miigwech.

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 University.

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to offer my comments on behalf of the official opposition with respect to Bill 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*. This bill amends a number of sections of the Act. Amendments have been introduced to further support agricultural development by providing Innovation Saskatchewan with the authority to make

investments in ag tech start-ups. This corresponds with the budget's \$3 million per year over five years in an ag tech venture capital fund.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's venture capital activity over the past number of years has lagged far behind Ontario, BC [British Columbia], Alberta, and Quebec, where most Canadian venture capital activity is concentrated. In fact according to the Canadian venture capital association, Saskatchewan sits at the bottom quarter of the provinces for venture capital activity in Canada, and that's since 2013. We also fall a long way behind Newfoundland. In 2020, the CVCA [Canadian Venture Capital and Private Equity Association] reported Saskatchewan as the province second last in Canada at 15 million at a time when Canada saw the second-highest levels of venture capital on record.

The minister did note in his remarks that by accelerating investments in technology, agriculture could potentially add \$11 billion to Canada's GDP [gross domestic product] by 2030. The opposition is certainly supportive of investment in both the technology and agriculture sectors, so the intent of this bill is well appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, just last month the member for Regina Rosemont and I met with folks from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] to discuss research and innovation. During the presentation we received, it was noted that for every dollar of ag research there is a return of \$7 for producers. This is incredible.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments furthermore seek to modernize gendered pronoun usage, which is great to see. Good to see us getting with the times here. One other amendment we see in this bill is the elimination of the requirement to have a fixed number of board members. And finally, this bill also provides greater authority to the treasury board to direct Innovation Saskatchewan to engage in investment or business activities.

So we'll need to certainly look further at the additional powers provided to the treasury board, Mr. Speaker. And we do need to be sure of the implications here and to be sure that the investments and business opportunities undertaken on behalf of government are both fair and transparent.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will move to adjourn debate on Bill 31, *The Innovation Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2021*.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 32

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter in briefly here this afternoon with respect to Bill No. 32, *The Vapour Products Tax Act*. We will largely follow up at committee with this bill at this point, recognize that this new tax, this will represent a 20 per cent tax on the retail price on all vapour liquids, products, and devices. I understand that that'll come into effect on September 1st. We understand there's some additional provisions around vendors requiring a licence and further details around enforcement and penalties that will come. We'll certainly do some follow up on that front at committee as well, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly you know, we have a high level of concern with respect to the very high rates of vaping rates for young people in Saskatchewan, concerned about the health impacts and consequences, Mr. Speaker. I think we'll follow up and make sure we're following the evidence and best practice around the treatment of vaping. I think the evidence will point to treating it in a uniform way with respect to smoking, Mr. Speaker.

We do have some questions around how our tax rates compare to other jurisdictions and other measures, Mr. Speaker, that can address the high rates for youth within Saskatchewan, but we'll follow up. I don't have much more to say here on the floor of this Assembly, but we certainly will follow up at committee with respect to Bill No. 32, *The Vapour Products Tax Act*.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 32 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.

[14:30]

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

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

Bill No. 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 Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter in on the floor of the Assembly with respect to Bill No. 33, *The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2021*. I've read the minister's comments. I've heard what he's suggesting are the aims of this legislation. I understand that this adds the term "heated . . . product" to the Act to make it equal to tobacco which

is heated without combustion. It creates a tax rate of 20.5 cents per heated tobacco product, and it creates a new offence for possession for unmarked tobacco that was not legally obtained, and a new section to define possession limits on marked tobacco.

We've been calling for vaping tobacco products to be treated like smoking with uniform regulations and enforcement. Certainly as I've identified in my previous remarks with respect to the previous bill, smoking rates, vaping rates in Saskatchewan are really high for young people, and that's a concern. Certainly we need to be doing what we can to ensure public health, to ensure the health of young people across Saskatchewan.

We'll certainly have questions around other measures around prevention and cessation and enforcement on these fronts, Mr. Speaker, and you know, some questions as well about the licensing side of this space, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I guess it's also important, we'll be following up to make sure that the measures here aren't infringing on treaty rights, Mr. Speaker. But at this point in time, I don't have much more to say here on the floor of the Assembly, but certainly we will pursue greater scrutiny and questions at the committee stage.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 33 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 Crown and Central Agencies.

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

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 Regina Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to rise and enter into debate on Bill No. 34, *The Fuel Tax Amendment Act*. I'd like to put some comments and thoughts on the record with regard to this bill, Mr. Speaker.

So what's proposed with this bill is \$150 per passenger-electric-vehicle charge to be charged through SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] at the time of registration, some provisions for a pro-rated amount if the length of registration is less than a year, and changing the name of the Act from *The Fuel Tax and Road Use Charge Act*. So I did look

at the comments that the Minister of Finance put on the record during her second reading remarks. There was scant detail there, Mr. Speaker, but a little bit more has been said in the media.

I know when I looked at the budget initially this was one of those, initially one of those head-scratchers, you know, wondering what exactly this was designed to do. But, Mr. Speaker, I've been here long enough that I think I've got some ideas about why this found its way into this budget at a time when we're facing so many issues in this province and you know, so many concerns. Why would we be here today? But I'll get into that a little bit.

The argument that was put forth by members opposite is that currently — and there's truth to this — non-electric vehicles don't pay fuel tax. Of course they don't. They don't use fuel and therefore don't contribute to highway maintenance. So okay, there's some truth to that certainly, Mr. Speaker, but I'll get into some of my other concerns with that. Well I've woken them up somehow over there, so hopefully they're paying close attention.

One thing that isn't in this bill, but there's some mention of consideration at a later time, is charging this rate for commercial vehicles and vehicles who are registered in other provinces who come through and use our highways. So perhaps we'll see more on that, Mr. Speaker, but I think what's really behind this — and this is something we see time and time again — is just, you know, plain, old straight-up politics here. You know, this is throwing some red meat, as some say, or you know, blowing on the dog whistle. You know, it's not enough to just not support measures to reduce greenhouse gas. You have to be seen and shown to not care about that, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's terribly unfortunate for a number of reasons.

You know, certainly the wear-and-tear argument, it's there. At a certain point we will get to a place in this province where we have additional electric vehicles using our roads and tearing them up, and I think that that's reasonable. One of the jurisdictions that the government members opposite like to point to is California, for example. So I thought well, at least maybe our numbers here in Saskatchewan must be . . . you know, I could've missed it sometimes. You know, busy and in a COVID fog, I missed a whole bunch of electric vehicles that were on the roads in Saskatchewan and frankly haven't been travelling much lately. But so I looked it up, and I know members over here have talked about this. So the grand total of the number of electric vehicles in this province right now is about 400. The collection here for this tax right now is projected to be about 60,000.

An Hon. Member: — Big money.

Ms. Beck: — Not a huge amount of money. That won't even get you a four-year degree right now in this province. But you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not a lot of money, as you might guess. It is not enough to cover the costs of actually implementing this tax or crafting the legislation . . . So the member from Kindersley would like to get into the debate here, and I'm sure he'll get his time. But I hope he learned his lesson last time he tried to heckle from behind me, Mr. Speaker.

So in comparison, Mr. Speaker, I thought we must be very close to getting near what California has because that keeps getting brought up — well, California does it. So California, the latest data that I look at, has about 27 per cent of their vehicles there

... 27 million vehicles are electric vehicles. So certainly when we get to that point, Mr. Speaker, you know, it makes sense and maybe at some point before here, but let's make no mistake. This is not a public policy. This is not a revenue issue. This is not an equity issue. This is politics straight up.

And unfortunately we have all sorts of examples here, Mr. Speaker, that we see this government . . . They're pretty good, I will admit. I'm giving you a compliment here. So they're pretty good at playing the wedge politics. They've had some success with that, Mr. Speaker, and we see that time and time and time again. But when it comes to actually dealing with the real problems where it takes long-term vision, where it takes collaboration, where it takes input from experts, we don't see them doing so well at that certainly, Mr. Speaker. Something like COVID, for example. Their failures are clear day after day unfortunately in this province.

And another one that I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that deserves their attention, their clear-headed policy making, their collaboration, is the challenge of the climate crisis. And that is something that we see them simply not prepared to deal with because that's not how they govern. They govern by wedge. They govern by dividing this province, and unfortunately that has terrible impacts in the long term in this province. We see it time and time again, Mr. Speaker.

And this is a concern that is brought up. I've heard the members opposite dismiss concerns of young people, dismiss the concerns of young voters or those not quite ready to vote yet. But, Mr. Speaker, this is the legacy. This will be the legacy of people in this Assembly right now, and we have a choice here. We can get serious and actually work toward solutions, or we can continue to play the short-term, divisive politics that are getting us nowhere, that have us consistently with the highest GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions in the country, Mr. Speaker, and that will have our children looking back, rightfully so, wondering why we didn't do better, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, they don't like to hear this, Mr. Speaker, but sometimes they need to hear it . . . And the member from Kindersley wants to talk to me about Al Gore, Mr. Speaker. How about this? Let's talk to the people from SGI.

So, Mr. Speaker, I recently had the honour to be the critic for SGI. And one slide will always stick out in my mind, and that is looking back at the catastrophic weather events over the last number of decades. And, Mr. Speaker, those 1 in 100 year catastrophic weather events are happening more and more frequently. You know what that has impact on? Infrastructure. Take a drive down a highway where you've seen the roads washed out because there's been, you know, two or three 1 in 100 year floods in the same area, places that didn't used to have that flooding, Mr. Speaker.

This inability to actually deal with this issue, to want to play the short-term politics over the long-term gain, is costing. Mr. Speaker, it's costing money and it will continue to cost money, and on a global scale will continue to cost lives.

So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest, you know, the game has changed. I suggest that these members quit with writing off those voters who don't vote for them — as we've seen with the film industry;

we've seen with electric vehicle users, Mr. Speaker — and start planning for the long term for all people in the province, because that is the job that they are tasked with and they are failing at miserably, Mr. Speaker. So with that, I will conclude my remarks on Bill No. 34 and move to adjourn debate on this bill.

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 Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter in, albeit briefly, this afternoon with respect to Bill No. 35, *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2021*.

I want to hear if the muppets are making noise in behind here. I see the Sask Party backbench was heckling the previous member, Mr. Speaker. And you know you're deep in the backbench. You know you're deep in the backbench, Mr. Speaker, when you've been pushed over to the opposition side and you can heckle from behind the members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. But you know, hopefully they can contain themselves here this afternoon. But we'll focus in to Bill No. 35 . . .

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — State your point of order.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — The member opposite, who just said it again from his seat, referred to members being muppets, Mr. Speaker. Obviously this is unparliamentary. The member knows better. He should stand in his place and apologize.

The Speaker: — The point of order is well taken. I ask the member to withdraw that word.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw the remark "the muppets," for sure.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll move ahead here this afternoon with respect to *The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2021*. This bill sets out a few things, Mr. Speaker. I guess it brings about the active families benefit. I've already entered into debate on that bill. Of course that was a benefit that had been in place by the Sask Party. They took it away from Saskatchewan families. They say they're bringing it

back here now again, at a time where folks are facing incredible financial hardship, Mr. Speaker, strain economically with the performance of this government on the jobs front, Mr. Speaker, worst in the nation when it comes to jobs creation. Certainly I've posited positive remarks with respect to the tech start-up incentive and will engage with some questions around the emergency wage subsidy as well.

[14:45]

I see though, Mr. Speaker, that this bill also repeals sections of legislation. I see specifically that it repeals the film employment tax credit, Mr. Speaker, and it would be wrong not to speak briefly to just how negative and how devastating the choice of the Sask Party was with respect to the film industry a number of years ago. Of course the Sask Party government took what was a thriving industry in Saskatchewan, investment that was being placed here in Saskatchewan, jobs that were being created, and the Sask Party eliminated that industry. They killed that industry in Saskatchewan — killed jobs, killed investment, drove people away from Saskatchewan, weakened our economy, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, this was an industry that employed so many within our province and provided us an opportunity as a province to be proud of that work and proud of our province but also made us millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. An important part of our economy, an important component of diversification to that economy, and the Sask Party canned that industry, killed those jobs, weakened our economy, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the results of that economically in those choices within our province.

It's worthy to note that other jurisdictions, our neighbours to both the east and the west, and provinces across the country have really seen the film industry thrive. And we see hundreds of millions of investment flowing into those provinces, our neighbours, Mr. Speaker, and we see that bypassing Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which is a tremendous shame. So, you know, we'll follow up in committee with respect to the changes that have been brought forward here today. It's a real shame though, Mr. Speaker, that when given the opportunity, this government has chosen to repeal this legislation instead to admit the error in their ways, the damage that they've caused economically, and to commit to rebuilding a film industry in Saskatchewan.

I don't have much else to say on the floor of the Assembly here today, but certainly we'll be following up in committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the member that Bill No. 35 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 Crown and Central Agencies.

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

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 Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll enter in briefly here today with respect to Bill No. 36, *The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2021*. I felt better when I saw the minister's remarks on this front. I know, you know, any time you hear the Sask Party talking about PST [provincial sales tax], folks get nervous in this province — for good reason, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it was not long ago, just a few years ago of course that the Sask Party had won an election, had a big majority, had promised that they weren't going to hike taxes. And then just a year later, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party brought forward the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history by doubling the take on the PST, Mr. Speaker, a betrayal of Saskatchewan people and something that's really amounted to being a job-killing tax on so many fronts for Saskatchewan people.

So when I looked at those remarks, I guess I was disappointed, Mr. Speaker, to not see this government admitting the error in their ways on these fronts. What I don't see in this legislation is an elimination of the PST on construction labour, Mr. Speaker. What I don't see is an elimination of it off restaurant meals. That's a sector that's been hit so hard through this pandemic and that was hit very hard by the PST imposed by the Sask Party long before the pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

And these are industries that could use the support right now, Mr. Speaker. And these are industries that could be employing so many people in this province, but we don't see a government willing to do some of the heavy lifting here to build an economy for the future, secure an economic recovery for people, and get people back to work.

I do see amendments that update taxation in this legislation. We'll follow up at committee around those measures. Certainly we are, you know, supportive of measures that ensure fairness in taxation, Mr. Speaker. And we see some of the changes responding to an evolving economy and e-commerce, Mr. Speaker, and new online accommodation platforms I believe, such as things like Airbnb, Mr. Speaker. And we also see that there's changes around the vapour products in the province with respect to the PST [provincial sales tax]. So we'll follow up on all of those fronts.

But I would just say this is a tremendous lost opportunity in this legislation by the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, a government that chose to betray Saskatchewan people and their word to hike taxes in an unprecedented way in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, with the doubling of the take on the PST just a few years ago. We know how devastating that's been for so many workers in Saskatchewan, so many small businesses in Saskatchewan, what

an impediment it's been economically.

Instead of doing that heavy lifting and admitting the error in their ways and eliminating the PST on construction labour and on restaurant meals, Mr. Speaker, they've brought forward a few other measures that we'll certainly review at committee. So I don't have much else to say on the floor here today, but certainly we'll follow up in committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the member that Bill No. 36 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this 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 Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — This bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:53.]

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