



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

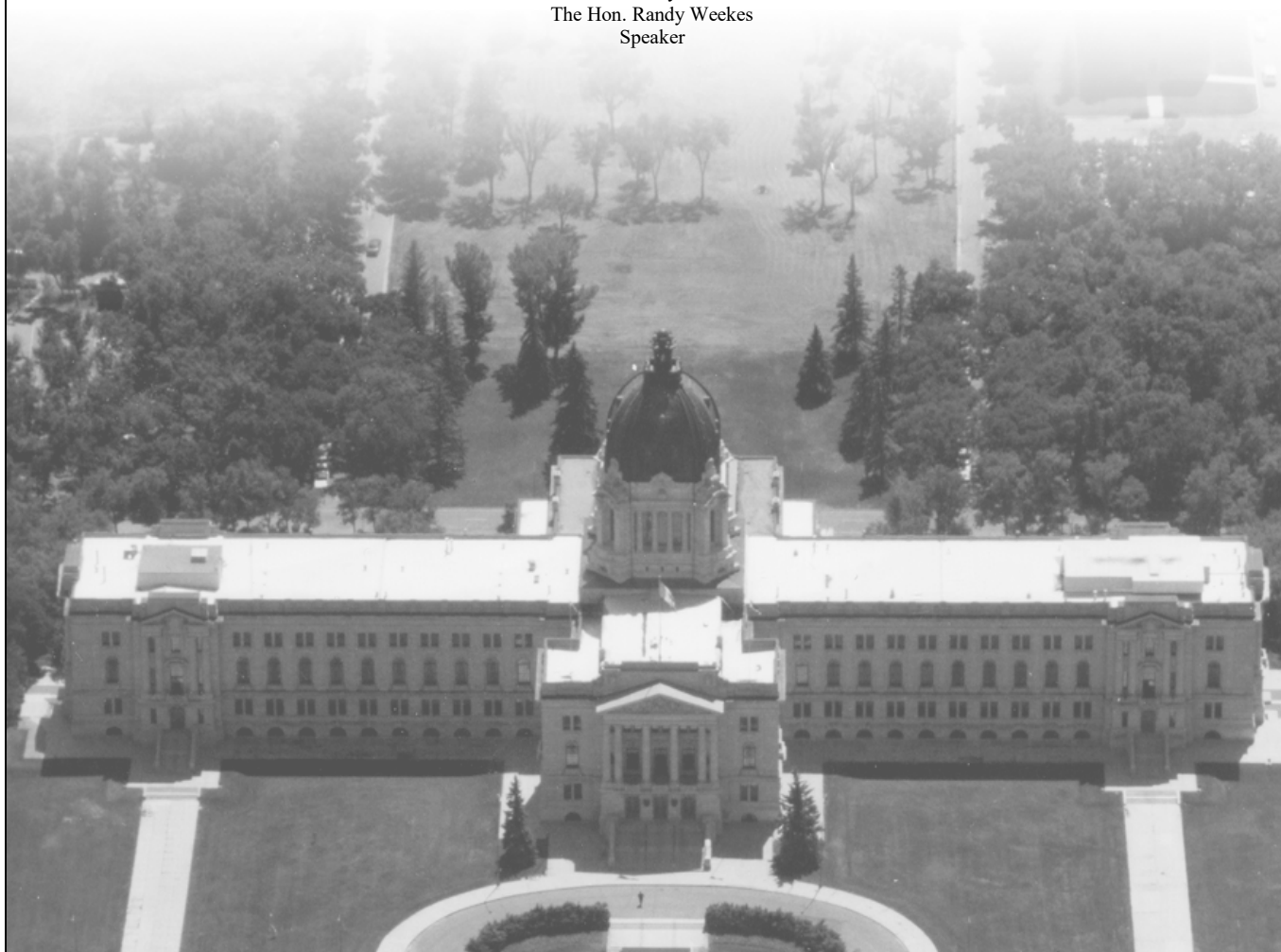
of the

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

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

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for pay equity legislation. These individuals wish to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan is one of only four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation. We have 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; that 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.

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.

This petition is signed by individuals from Regina, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — I rise today to present a petition to reject the proposed Lambert Peat Moss development. Many good northern residents, local trappers, traditional land users, and leaders are opposed to the proposed peat moss mine near La Ronge. The Lac La Ronge Indian Band is opposed. People have drafted a petition to let their concerns be known. More than 20,000 people have signed an online petition.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the provincial government to protect the boreal forest and reject the proposed Lambert Peat Moss development.

This petition is signed by many good people in northern Saskatchewan. For today we also have signatories from Grandora and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and present a petition to save the Lighthouse for The Battlefords and provide core funding to emergency homelessness shelters across the province. This petition urges this government to provide core funding — we're one of the last jurisdictions to do this — and to restore funding to the Lighthouse for The Battlefords. I had the pleasure of going to the shelter in March. I saw first-hand the outpouring of community support for this shelter.

I will read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately provide stable, guaranteed core funding to the Lighthouse serving The Battlefords and to expand supports for emergency shelters across Saskatchewan by moving to a core funding model.

The signatories of this petition reside in North Battleford. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Lloydminster Addictions Services Program

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize a very valuable and important addictions service and program in my community of Lloydminster, Residents in Recovery. Mr. Speaker, Residents in Recovery is the dream of CEO [chief executive officer] Tyler Lorenz, a recovered addict himself, whose vision was to empower individuals to regain control of their lives through education, encouragement, and inspiration. It provides a continuum of care for individuals in their first year of recovery and beyond, helping residents to prepare for treatment in a safe and supportive environment and reducing stigma surrounding addictions.

I'm happy to announce that just this past November, our government signed a three-year agreement with Residents in Recovery for operational costs of just over \$500,000. Tyler commented, "This gives Residents in Recovery the hope to expand their programming and do what we can to support as many people as we can." Mr. Speaker, our government's record investments in mental health and addictions services continues to support the work of organizations like Residents in Recovery across our province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members now to join me in thanking Tyler Lorenz for his caring, passionate, and ambitious dream of creating a program like Residents in Recovery that serves some of the most vulnerable citizens in our communities. Thank you.

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

May Day

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate May Day. Tomorrow, May 1st, is May Day, which celebrates the legacy of workers, the workers' movement, and celebrates the millions of people around the world who have fought tirelessly for their rights. Through their struggle, their resilience, and hard work, we have achieved so much, from minimum wage, pensions, employment security, and the abolition of child labour.

But we have much more work ahead of us. Minimum wage in Saskatchewan is not yet a livable wage. Women are overrepresented in underpaid and under-respected work. People with disabilities face substantive barriers to entering the workforce, and workforce discrimination continues to be a reality for many.

This official opposition stands side by side with workers. We have and will always fight against the attacks on their rights. We will always push to improve workplace safety to ensure that workers have the right to retire in dignity and to protect their collective bargaining.

Now more than ever, our government must prioritize our workers. This pandemic continues to put front-line workers in harm's way and continues to force them into unspeakable working conditions. We must continue to fight for them, protect them, and value them. It's time to build a modern economy that puts people first, that protects our workers' rights, improves working conditions, and strengthens this province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Municipal Co-operation Results in Ride-Sharing Initiative

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Assembly about a great example of municipal co-operation. Mr. Speaker, this stems from our government, who passed legislation to allow for ride shares to operate within the province under municipal bylaws. Regina and Saskatoon of course were early adopters, but it was always our government's vision that many other municipalities would adopt this program.

Mr. Speaker, it took the RM [rural municipality] of Edenwold to bring 17 other municipalities into the room to talk about this ride-sharing service. Six RMs; seven towns such as Balgonie, White City, Lumsden; five villages such as Sedley and Wilcox all came to an agreement to benefit citizens throughout the area. Mr. Speaker, now a ride-share company just has to go to the RM of Edenwold, get a licence, and have the ability to operate in 18 different municipalities in and around Regina, Mr. Speaker.

This initiative won the 2020 SMA [Saskatchewan Municipal Awards], Saskatchewan municipal associations' award for regional co-operation. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the RM of Edenwold and all the communities surrounding to offer this transportation service to their residents within their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day of the Seal

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in my place today to recognize a day that may be of interest to this Assembly. March 22nd marked International Day of the Seal. Seals are part of the pinniped order, which also includes sea lions and walrus. It's believed that seals have evolved from terrestrial creatures and bears.

I was interested to learn the majority of seals' body weight is blubber, helping them to withstand the cold climate. I should note for the record, though, that blubber is not a substitute for thick skin.

My experience with seals is mainly with those held in captivity, where they are sometimes trained to clap on command, perform tricks, or complete simple tasks. To quote a seal appreciation website:

The clowns of the marine mammal world, seals are a comical bunch of interesting creatures. They spend most of their days lazing about and [a shared interest with the member from Prince Albert Carlton] enjoy sunbathing and warm locations.

I ask all members to join me in clapping loudly in recognition of this noble, obedient creature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Protection for Citizens under Clare's Law

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 29th, 2020, your Saskatchewan government moved to further protect our citizens from abusive relationships, being the first province in Canada to pass legislation known as Clare's Law. Today, Mr. Speaker, those who serve and protect us in their role as police officers in this province can now disclose risk information related to someone's violent or abusive past to intimate partners whose safety may be threatened.

If I was someone experiencing this kind of abuse, I'd want to know that my family, my friends, my community, the police, and our laws are there for me, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a good day in Saskatchewan because that is the case.

I found a recent quote from our Justice minister on Clare's Law:

The RCMP's participation in Clare's Law is a significant step forward in our efforts to prevent interpersonal violence. This change will ensure that everyone in Saskatchewan can take advantage of that protection that we offer for the rights of people in our own communities.

Mr. Speaker, three and a half years ago this same Justice minister received a green wristband from the NEOSS [North East Outreach and Support Services] women's shelter in my hometown. He called me a year ago because it had broken, Mr. Speaker, and he needed a new one. Mr. Speaker, our Justice minister wears that band every day to remind him of those in need of our protection. And we know that members on both sides of this House feel the same way.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is a good day in Saskatchewan. And I want to thank everyone working for the safety of every precious life in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

New Hospital Planned for Weyburn and District

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm thrilled to stand today to announce that, thanks to our government's two-year, \$7.5 billion capital plan to stimulate the economy following the pandemic, design plans will soon be under way for a new Weyburn and district general hospital.

Led by our province's very own Group2 Architecture Interior Design, this new build by a Saskatoon-based company will provide an integrated health care facility all under one roof. Mr. Speaker, this 35-bed facility will include 10 in-patient mental health beds and ensure that patients are going to be able to access a variety of services including acute care, primary health services, and enhanced emergency services. The facility will also be home to a new heliport for the province, allowing patients in southeast Saskatchewan quicker access to critical care.

Mr. Speaker, community engagement and support has been a key factor in moving this project forward, and I'm very thankful for that effort to get us this far. I want to especially thank the Weyburn & District Hospital Foundation for their tireless advocacy and fundraising, raising in excess of \$23 million. A brand new state-of-the-art facility is something that the people of Weyburn and area have been working towards for a long time, and we're so grateful to see this project come to fruition. And I know everyone back home can't wait until 2022 when construction is expected to begin. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

A Great Economic Future for Saskatchewan

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to reflect on the great economic future that this province has. This past month, Richardson announced their plans to double their crushing capacity in Yorkton. Then Cargill unveiled their own plans for a new canola processing facility right here in Regina. After that, Mr. Speaker, Viterra announced their plans to build the world's largest integrated canola crush site here in Regina. Mr. Speaker, these are positive investments and will not only lead us to a strong economic recovery but a more prosperous future in the long term for our ag producers.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have yet to hear any support from the NDP [New Democratic Party] and I don't think we will, Mr. Speaker, because they ran on policies absent of any real supports, investments, or incentives for our agricultural industry last fall; because they have spent the last 13 years attacking every economic policy of this government that supports our entrepreneurs.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this advice is free to them: no need to strike a committee or pay for more out-of-province NDP consultants. Our province is going to see more ag value-added

announcements in the coming months, Mr. Speaker, and it won't be just that sector. Mining, engineering, manufacturing, and a growing tech sector all have recent Saskatchewan success stories with much more to come. As always, Mr. Speaker . . .

QUESTION PERIOD

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

COVID-19 Testing

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the second and third waves, this Premier has failed to protect Saskatchewan from COVID-19 and failed to protect our economy. And he's failed to support the front-line workers who are doing that crucial work of testing and contact tracing to help contain the spread of the virus.

[10:15]

This is doubly important now with the spread of the more contagious and more transmissible variants. Does the Premier believe that it's acceptable in 2021 where we've led the nation in cases most of the year, where we continue to lead the nation in hospitalizations that we've used less than 5 per cent of the rapid tests delivered to the province and that we continue to be 20 per cent below the national average when it comes to testing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, throughout our response to the COVID pandemic dating back over a year now, we've made every effort within the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] as well as looking at exterior sources to ramp up our testing capacity here in the province, our contact tracing capacity, and yes, disperse out our rapid tests that we received some time ago from the federal government to our schools, to our health care centres, our long-term care centres, our correctional facilities, as well as, you know, always talking to places that have large numbers of people come together, Mr. Speaker, if we can work with the federal government to provide them with rapid testing kits as well.

Mr. Speaker, we have testing capacity here in the province that has, on very seldom occasions, been used to its maximum. There's excess testing capacity yesterday, the day before. I assume there will be here today. I commend the SHA for the effort that they have made to bring that testing capacity on stream just over a year ago, how they have been able to ramp that testing capacity up when required and then also engage with the private sector, for example, to provide additional testing capacity and optional testing capacity for those that have been travelling throughout, out of necessity, been travelling throughout this pandemic. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are well served by the work that the Saskatchewan Health Authority has put forward.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With less than 5 per cent of the tests used, it's hard to understand why, when it comes to rapid testing, this government is so slow. And it's not just rapid testing. When it comes to testing in general, last September, eight

months ago, this Premier set a goal of 4,000 tests per day. He's managed to meet that goal a whopping 10 times. He's failed 96 per cent of the time to meet that goal. That's a spectacular failure, Mr. Speaker.

Meanwhile in Nova Scotia — Nova Scotia that's done far better to control the COVID-19 epidemic; Nova Scotia whose economy has fared far better because they haven't been stuck in the slow-motion, long-term lockdown of this Premier — Nova Scotia is doing 10,000 cases a day. They're shooting for 15,000 with military support, Mr. Speaker.

If you combine our test positivity rates with Nova Scotia's rate of testing, you'd have 600, 700 cases a day in this province. No wonder people are alarmed, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Premier not realize how important testing and tracing is for getting the variants under control? Or is he simply shortchanging testing because he doesn't want the people of Saskatchewan to know just how badly he's failed to keep COVID-19 under control?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to go out with the police and drag people in and make them get tested here in the province, Mr. Speaker. We most certainly aren't going to do that.

Mr. Speaker, what we are going to do is we are . . . What we're going to do is we are going to offer the testing capacity for those in this province that have been contacted through contact tracing or feel that they need to go and get tested for whatever reason that might be. We do have the capacity to provide those tests across this province in many, many locations, Mr. Speaker, so that people of this province can be well served in accessing those tests when they need it.

We've augmented that with the dispersal of our rapid tests out to a number of locations that I mentioned, Mr. Speaker. We had 3,300 tests that were performed yesterday. Those are people that for some reason, whether they were contacted by the contact tracers that are working very hard in this province, Mr. Speaker, or people that felt that they had a need to go get tested. They most certainly had the opportunity to do. And again that is thanks to the Saskatchewan Health Authority for ramping that capacity up so that it is here for people as they require it. It has been every day since the outset of this pandemic, and it will be every day until we find our way through, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nova Scotia manages to do 10,000 tests a day. The barriers are still in place here. The lack of staff is still a problem here. This Premier's lack of commitment continues to be a problem. He hasn't supported testing and tracing. He never staffed up, and the front-line staff are burning out. They talk to us about it all the time, Mr. Speaker.

Testing results well below the national average despite leading the nation in cases, well below the national average. And the variants have surged throughout the province. Well no wonder now you have folks like Charlie Clark, the mayor of Saskatoon,

calling for increased public health measures in Saskatoon as we see the cases rise in that city. Mr. Speaker, has the Premier spoken to the mayor of Saskatoon and will he institute more effective public health measures before it's too late?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — I don't think the Leader of the Opposition is actually listening to the answers, Mr. Speaker. We have excess capacity in our testing here today. We have capacity in house to do over 4,000 tests a day. 3,300 done yesterday. You add to that the private capacity; you add to that the rapid testing kits that have been provided, Mr. Speaker.

We most certainly have the capacity to test the levels, Mr. Speaker, that we are seeing here in the province. And we will continue to use all avenues available should we have to ramp that up in the days ahead, in the same way we are utilizing every avenue available to ensure that we are delivering all of the vaccines that we receive from the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Saskatchewan Health Authority appointment-based system which is working very well and is really the backbone of the system that . . . our vaccination rollout system here. We augment that with drive-through clinics as we receive excess vaccines to ensure we can get them out to people in this province. We're going to have one in Saskatoon on Saturday, one in Regina here on Sunday. Others are operating around the province, Mr. Speaker, as vaccine supply allows. And we have now as of today, added our pharmaceutical capacity, the very entity that delivers 70 per cent of the flu vaccines in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Health Care Staffing in Small Cities

Ms. Mowat: — In fact, Mr. Speaker, most days they are not processing all of the tests that they have on deck. There are unprocessed tests that are rolling over day after day. Mr. Speaker, despite leading the nation in case rates for much of this year, Saskatchewan testing rates per capita are still 20 per cent lower than the national average.

This is driven in no small part by this government's failure to recruit and retain enough lab staff. Now we're learning this government is considering cutting lab services at Yorkton regional hospital. Does the minister agree that we need more, not less, high-quality jobs in our smaller cities, and that it makes no sense to be cutting lab services during a global pandemic?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very curious as to their line of questioning, that we're talking about testing when everybody in this province is talking about the vaccine rollout and the age categories and the age categories that we dropped to 40. We've included teachers and other associations. But what I am pleased to be able to report . . . Is the member opposite going to listen, or is she going to continue to heckle from her seat in a disrespectful way, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, what we are very proud of in this province is again I'm reporting to the House. Now they don't want to talk about vaccines. They want to be able to talk about testing, something that they haven't brought up for months, Mr. Speaker. What is absolutely disappointing is the member opposite is actually telling us to go and test people in the street, just randomly grab people and test them. Is that what he's saying? Is that what the mayor of Saskatoon is saying, Mr. Speaker?

The mayor of Saskatoon has my personal cell phone number. Still haven't heard from him, Mr. Speaker. Would love to be able to talk to him about this and tell him how the rates are actually dropping in Saskatoon and be able to have that conversation. But for the member opposite to just say that we should just go randomly test, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely ridiculous.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Well that's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are hearing a pile of concerns from concerned community members from Yorkton and area. I'll remind the minister that that's the train of thought that we're on here. They are concerned for their jobs. They are concerned about what sending samples all the way to Regina will mean for patient care.

And frankly, Mr. Speaker, they're confused. On the one hand, the SHA says that staff shortages leave them no choice but to cut microbiology services. And on the other, they're seeing comments from the member from Yorkton, who told the local paper after speaking with the Minister of Health that he was assured, "There is no intention of pulling these services out of Yorkton." These can't both be true, Mr. Speaker. So to the minister: which is it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the situation in Yorkton, my office is aware of it, as is the Minister of Health. We have been talking to the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Yorkton as well as other area MLAs in the area. We've been having conversations through my office about improving the situation with respect to the Yorkton lab at the regional hospital.

Mr. Speaker, Yorkton is a regional hospital, serves a very broad area there. It's my understanding there may be some challenges right now with regards to staffing, but we are continuing to work through the SHA and with the good health care workers that we have in the community of Yorkton to try and come to a resolution there. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Well I guess the answer is somewhere in the middle, Mr. Speaker. That's not a clear answer. This government ignored lab staffing shortages for years, and now they are using this failure as an excuse to cut jobs in services that rural residents are relying on. This isn't the solution.

An SHA memo circulated to lab staff suggests there have already

been service reductions to labs in Swift Current, Humboldt, and Estevan. And the SHA is currently listing 20 service disruptions for labs in rural communities across the province.

The solution is not cutting services that rural residents rely on. The minister needs to address the heart of the issue. Will the minister develop a strategy to train, recruit, and retain lab and other health care staff that keep hospitals and health services in our smaller communities open?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are committed to training additional health care workers of all designations. It's something that we've done for a number of years now, whether it's doctors or nurses of all designations, lab techs, combined lab X-ray techs. We're offering, and we've expanded training for continuing care aids, as an example, in all Sask Poly campuses, all seven regional colleges, and the Dumont Technical Institute, Mr. Speaker. There are a total of 519 training seats actually under the CCA [continuing care aid] program.

But just to the member opposite's broader question, Mr. Speaker, of course we're committed to hiring more health care staff in this province. We're very thankful and grateful for the dedicated health care workers we have across this province. And with a growing province and a growing economy, we know that we have additional pressures on the health care system. And we look forward to continuing to hire more staff as we build more hospitals, build more long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker, across this province.

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

Resumption of In-Classroom Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I do like to roll out quotes from the Minister of Health. On Wednesday regarding schools reopening Monday: "... Regina Public and Regina Catholic have made the decision, working with ... information that they have at hand." It turns out, Mr. Speaker, that the information that school divisions have on hand is nothing. As reported by CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation], school administration and boards receive recommendations from public health officers — no data, no numbers, no proof, no information in hand.

School divisions are being forced to make critical life-and-death decisions, but they aren't getting the full picture from this government. Why does the minister allow schools to be forced into making decisions with no information in hand?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is just not the case. In fact I've had an opportunity to speak with a number of leaders in the school divisions to ask if they needed more information when making these decisions, and that was not what was communicated to me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, boards of directors meet with their local public health officers and with people like Dr. Shahab on a regular basis.

They don't make these decisions in a vacuum. They're provided with the advice based on the information by local public health officers and from the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is what has been communicated in this case by Regina Public. They took that information and made the decision that schools would return on Monday. It's no different than when they made the decision based on local public health officers to move to remote learning, Mr. Speaker, and I think that that's the way it should be. Thank you.

[10:30]

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, that minister needs to be better briefed on the issue because that's not what we're hearing. The ministry is setting itself up not just for a health disaster but a real mess with teachers and school staff. We know that many teachers are getting refreshers on how to refuse unsafe work. And thanks to collective bargaining, they can organize to keep themselves and others safe.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that school staff have not been given proof that schools are going to be safe on Monday. They see what the public sees: alarming test positivity rates in children and outbreaks in schools that have been nearly empty for almost a month. Will the minister stop hiding from teachers, stop gambling on public health, and make the back-to-school benchmarks publicly available today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Regina director of education sent a message to teachers in the system that began in part, and it said, and I quote:

Return to school may seem premature based on data that we all see on media and social media. However we don't work with what is shared in the medias. We work directly with Regina-focused medical health officers, their provincial counterparts, and Dr. Shahab. These are the medical professionals that gave us advice, on several occasions, to move to remote learning. These are the same medical professionals that recommend to move back to class on Monday. These decisions have been supported by our board of education.

The director went on to say, and I quote:

I personally participate in briefings related to COVID-19 cases in our schools and our city several times a week. What we have heard consistently is that all risks considered, the return to in-class learning is prudent.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the pattern is this: that minister delegates the hard decisions to the school boards and then he hides behind his briefing notes. Nearly 4,000 people have signed a petition calling to keep children out of schools until the science

says it's safe to do so. Of course the decision about in-class learning lies with school divisions, but this government has forced them to make difficult decisions without the necessary data to support those decisions.

School divisions have confirmed that there are no specific metrics, no benchmarks to guide the safe return to school. Parents are hassling school divisions to see those numbers, but school divisions aren't even privy to it. The director of education has been told "return to in-class learning is prudent" by health officials.

This minister has seen the numbers at the cabinet table before making a decision about sending his child back to school in Regina. Why does he think that families in Regina sitting around their kitchen tables don't also deserve to see that data?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we as a family have decided to send our child back to school in Regina next week, not based on what I've seen around the cabinet table, but based on Regina Public School Division saying that they will go back to in-class learning beginning on Monday. We have confidence in our school. We have confidence in our teacher. We have confidence in the administrator. Knowing that there are risks, but that's the decision that we have made. There's also the ability to make a different decision and that is, if you don't feel comfortable then don't send your child back to school, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll go on to say that the information that has been provided . . . And school divisions have had the ability and have contacted me over the months that I've been the Minister of Education, and not one school division has asked me to make the decision for me. They all appreciate having the ability to make the decision at a local level in conjunction with local public health, Mr. Speaker. That's the way it should be, and that's the way it's going to continue to be.

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

Support for Saskatchewan Businesses

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As noted yesterday, today is the final day for the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment program, and yesterday I asked the minister when it would be extended. He said that I shouldn't worry and that I should stay tuned. Well small-business owners are not interested in riddles. They're interested in answers. So, Mr. Speaker, when will the government extend the Saskatchewan small-business emergency payment program?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There will be an announcement that will be coming later today.

But the members opposite like to talk about jobs, Mr. Speaker, and out-of-province jobs. Yesterday . . . and I want to apologize

for something more, Mr. Speaker, to this House, sincerely apologize to the House. A couple of weeks ago I brought in information that the NDP had hired 45 workers on their most recent campaign from out of province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sadly incorrect. That number was actually 60 workers that they flew in from around the country during COVID. This was their . . . Fully 54 per cent of every dollar that was spent by their central campaign went out of province. One of whom, Mr. Speaker, I would note is Rachel Notley. Right here we have the documentation showing the Alberta NDP were paid \$36,000. I'm not sure what Ms. Notley's appearance fees are for his events, but they seem pretty high.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's amazing to watch that minister try and develop a sense of humour when thus far every joke has been on him. But, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan small-business owners aren't interested in jokes, and I'm not clear why the minister thinks this is a game.

People in Saskatchewan are not joking around. People are losing their lives and they're losing their business, and our worst-in-the-nation jobs minister has managed to kill more jobs over the course of this pandemic than any other minister in the Dominion of Canada. He's sitting there talking, cracking jokes, throwing petty partisan shots across the aisle, and he is not taking the jobs crisis seriously.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses need certainty, and they need to be able to plan. He's still refusing to announce this on the last day of the program. So does this minister honestly think he's doing small businesses any favours with his chaotic and shambolic leadership?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think small businesses are going to be quite pleased with the announcement later today. I look forward to making that announcement.

But, Mr. Speaker, what they are not pleased with is the NDP's record and what the NDP would be planning to do if they ever had the chance to form government in this province. Because they know that if the NDP had been successful — which thankfully they weren't — in October, they know what they would be doing right now, Mr. Speaker. And they would all be shut down. Every loss of a job is a tragedy and we're going to be working very, very hard to get those jobs back, Mr. Speaker.

But businesses know as well that the NDP want to have it both ways. They want to lament job losses on one hand and then demand a hiring boom on the other with their policy that they should all be shut down. They know it doesn't make any sense, Mr. Speaker, and that's precisely why those members opposite, the Leader of the Opposition in particular, has zero credibility on the economy.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is so focused on his hyper-partisanship he can't focus on facts. And, Mr. Speaker, the fact is small businesses in this province have been closed 50, 75 per cent of the time under this government's watch.

And, Mr. Speaker, things in this province are deadly serious. Saskatchewan people are counting on this government to protect jobs and get this pandemic under control. And somehow that member has become responsible for both. This government's failures in both COVID and the economy are his to bear.

Now, Mr. Speaker, shifting goalposts and changing messages for small business have been the norm under this minister's watch. And these aren't my words. These are the words of small businesses, whom I would encourage him to go out and consult with.

So, Mr. Speaker, this latest tease of an 11th-hour announcement to extend the small-business support program is just the latest, the latest in a trail of incompetence from that member when it comes to supporting small businesses. Does he honestly, honestly believe that he is doing a good job providing the clarity, timeliness, and support that small businesses need?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And of course we have been working very, very closely with the business community throughout the pandemic and our response to it.

And I would point out to their own report, Mr. Speaker, very recently to show that they haven't been. And I would quote — this is from their own report — “Working people no longer see the NDP as their party.” I wonder why that is, Mr. Speaker. That is a well-earned reputation because they do not support small business. They do not support working people. And their own report confirms that.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, in that report that they said they had to distance themselves from Jagmeet Singh. Well the Leader of the Opposition was asked, well what do you have to distance from Jagmeet Singh on? He had no answer, Mr. Speaker.

But what his lucky day, I can help him out. Here's a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. Maybe on pipelines, where the federal NDP have never supported a pipeline going forward, which they have in common with that Leader of the Opposition who also opposes pipelines. The one thing he was definitive on though is that he will not change the name of the NDP. I say, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Never change, NDP. Never change.

The Speaker: — I would like to caution the minister in his answers that he shouldn't bring in party politics into the answer, and you know, your answer should stay close to what the question was about. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A point of order.

The Speaker: — State your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, during question period the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre referred to a minister opposite as a ignorant idiot. Mr. Speaker, I believe that is unparliamentary language. I know in fact that it is. It was heard by all members in the Chamber. This member is quickly developing a reputation as lacking respect for this institution. I would call on her to do the honourable thing — to stand up, withdraw that comment, and apologize to the House.

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Speaker, it's true that when the member made his comment about testing, I referred to that comment as idiotic and ignorant. And I apologize for using that language, and I withdraw the comments.

The Speaker: — Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Agriculture Value-Added Strategies

Mr. Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me and I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House today to bring forward a motion which I will be formally moving at the conclusion of my remarks here today.

Mr. Speaker, before moving to Saskatchewan I had the opportunity to work for a number of years in the agriculture sector in British Columbia. Working in both the greenhouse and the field vegetable sectors gave me the opportunity to see a number of different operations. At both of the operations where I worked, we worked relentlessly to capture more and more of the value chain to make our operations more profitable.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to travel around the world, and I quickly learned that the most successful operations and the jurisdictions that had the most vibrant agriculture sectors were areas where producers had opportunities to process their crops in the jurisdiction where the primary production occurred. I remember visiting numerous potato processing operations in both Belgium and Germany, and I was impressed at the variety of options available to producers and processors to fit their crops into multiple market categories.

So when I stand here today and I talk about value-added agriculture in this House, I understand the urgency with which we must create the conditions and pursue the opportunities that are available to us here in Saskatchewan. As land prices increase and the cost of labour increases and our producers face increasing global competition, it is even more essential to have value-added options for producers to ensure that they can be successful at the primary level.

Now the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, has a specific value-added strategy that is the basis of my motion here today. The value-added strategy is intended to build on the existing strength of our primary agriculture sector, and to attract investment and develop infrastructure that will create new opportunities here at home in Saskatchewan.

There are four key parts to the value-added strategy: competitiveness, research and development, international market development, and investment attraction. Now, Mr. Speaker, when we speak about competitiveness in the agricultural sector, there is no doubt that Saskatchewan is a leader. We grow the crops that the world needs, and our increasing export numbers show that our producers are up to the task.

[10:45]

And I'd like to just quickly deviate from my written comments here and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to bring attention to a facility that is in northwest Saskatchewan, not necessarily in my home constituency of The Battlefords, but a facility that serves our entire region. That facility is North West Terminal located in the town of Unity. In addition to being one of the largest independent terminals in Western Canada, it is producer-owned. It has a storage capacity of 2.3 million bushels and can receive 30,000 bushels per hour.

A number of years ago, Madam Deputy Speaker, they added an ethanol facility, which has positioned them to be a significant player in the neutral grain spirits industry. And even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the company was able to shift more of their production to provide the key ingredients for products such as hand sanitizer. This facility and organization is a great example of how value-added agriculture presents immense opportunity for us here in Saskatchewan. And as these investments continue to be made in this province, we move closer to achieving the goals that our growth plan sets out.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, a key part of growing the economy and having a workforce that is ready for increased value-added opportunities in this province means that we need a robust post-secondary education sector that is ready to train people, both from Saskatchewan and elsewhere, for the specific competencies that industry requires.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, in her budget reply speech, the member from Regina University made the assertion that our government had cut funding to Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions. That comment didn't sit well with me, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I see quite the opposite in this budget. And I would invite that member opposite to look again at the Advanced Education budget and see what I personally think is actually a forward-looking strategy to fund our post-secondary institutions.

This four-year funding model helps them both recover from what has been a challenging 14 months and then make some significant investments upfront that will better prepare them to be competitive in an increasingly challenging marketplace, but also to better prepare their students for an evolving economy. Of course the feedback from these post-secondary institutions has been positive.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, when it comes to research and development, it should be noted for the record that the Ministry of Agriculture has invested nearly \$33 million into research in this year's budget, which is an all-time record in this province. These are key funds that will support important research initiatives that will help support our producers.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to just draw some attention to the Crop Development Centre at the University of Saskatchewan. You know, it's known worldwide as a leader in the development of new varieties that will increase yields, be more resistant to disease and drought, and require fewer chemical inputs.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, our government knows that our primary agriculture and value-added agriculture sectors cannot be truly strong without having market access, and that's both domestically and internationally. Our government has international trade offices opening in China, Japan, India, and Singapore this year, and we look forward to expanding into further markets in coming years.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, with the opening of trade offices around the world, we give both our primary producers as well as our value-added processors opportunity to access international markets by developing close relationships with customers and other stakeholders. It takes time for our private sector partners to build relationships, and the support that our government can offer through these international offices is essential.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, everybody in this House and really around our province knows that canola is obviously one of our province's major success stories. I did some research, Madam Deputy Speaker, and according to the Canola Council of Canada, the average seeded canola acres over the last decade is nearly eleven and a half million acres per year. And that compares with six and a half million acres in the preceding decade.

Now they have been spoken about in the House already so I won't belabour the points, but the three recent announcements by the private sector of large canola processing investments into Saskatchewan are all significant positives for this province. With Richardson's expansion of their existing Yorkton crush plant and then the new investments announced by Viterro and Cargill for crush plants right here in Regina, we will have achieved our growth plan's goal of crushing at least 75 per cent of Saskatchewan's canola crop here in province.

But beyond the crops that we produce in this province and the processing opportunities that tie in with those, are the various other sectors that support our agriculture industry. And frankly these sectors are really what excite me about how focusing on value-added industries is going to build and grow Saskatchewan's economy.

Perhaps most directly related, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the agricultural equipment manufacturing sector. Now I know my colleague from Melfort talks often about Bourgault Industries and the success that that company has had in becoming a world leader in air seeder manufacturing and a significant employer here in Saskatchewan. There's also many other successful companies like Rite Way and Schulte that all make

Saskatchewan a world leader in ag equipment manufacturing.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to just speak for a few moments on the recent announcement from Clean Seed group to base their prairie hub in Saskatoon. And that's an exciting, another exciting investment attracted right here to Saskatchewan. Now Clean Seed's innovative Smart Seeder Max product is an exciting innovation that allows producers to seed their crops even more efficiently and accurately. And we look forward to having their 16,000-square-foot facility here in this province and seeing them hire Saskatchewan people to build their products.

This is an exciting investment because it is directly related to an incentive that our government put in place. This is because Clean Seed is the first company to take advantage of the patent box initiative. And for the benefit of all members in the House today, I'll just remind members of that initiative. The patent box initiative is an incentive that cuts corporate income tax in half on income earned on the commercialization of patents and other IP [intellectual property] into new products by Saskatchewan companies.

And this is one of many initiatives that our government has put into place, including the Saskatchewan value-added agriculture incentive, the Saskatchewan manufacturing and processing exporter tax incentive, the Saskatchewan manufacturing and processing profits tax reduction, the Saskatchewan manufacturing and processing investment tax credit, and the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund, the Agtech Growth Fund, and the Saskatchewan research and development tax credit. Madam Deputy Speaker, that's quite a list, but these incentives have benefited hundreds of Saskatchewan companies and have helped to literally inject billions of dollars into our provincial economy.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the other sector that supports our agriculture industry, both primary and value-added, is our burgeoning tech sector here in Saskatchewan. And I wish that I had more time today to speak to this part of our economy that has seen tremendous growth, but it will have to wait for another day in this House. But just quickly, specifically related to agriculture, we have seen new companies emerge in the areas of precision ag, robotics, and farm management software.

Now last week a former premier of this province made the assertion that there has been no significant or innovative new economic activity in Saskatchewan since the early 2000s. That quote might be familiar to the members of Regina University and Saskatoon Meewasin, as I believe they were also part of that meeting. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't know that former premier personally and I'm not going to question his love of or service to Saskatchewan, but I do seriously question how prevalent that line of thinking is present among the members opposite in this House today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the members opposite stomp their feet and shake their heads when we talk about this province's past, and frankly I can understand why. It's a rather inconvenient truth for those members that their party saw significant economic decline and atrophy while they were in government. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we ignore our history, we are bound to return to being a have-not province in the federation that is Canada. The NDP have long doubted this province's ability to grow, but the

last decade and a half have proven those ideas wrong.

And so would the members opposite want to talk about 2021? And that's exactly what I'm talking about here today. And I'm proud to do so because 2021 in Saskatchewan is a much different reality than what those in our province had to endure in the 1990s and early 2000s.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm happy to try and work with my neighbours on the other side of this House, but that's going to be difficult when we continue to hear regressive economic policy ideas coming from them. Whether it be cheering the federal government's increasingly punitive carbon tax or whether it be seeking to violate our inter-provincial trade agreements by pursuing protectionist procurement strategies or whether it be shutting down small businesses with circuit-breaker lockdowns, Madam Deputy Speaker, these are the ideas that would send our province back decades.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'll remind this House and the people of Saskatchewan that the NDP governments of years past neglected to make critical capital investments in health care, education, long-term care. And then they've turned around and called it fiscal prudence.

And it seems, Madam Deputy Speaker, that every day one of the members opposite rises to talk about a jobs plan. And I have to shake my head because all government members in this House, Madam Deputy Speaker, often talk about the growth plan. And that is the plan, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's our plan to build and grow the province of Saskatchewan, both in the short term as we recover from the effects of COVID-19, but also well into the long term to provide opportunities for future generations in this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to come back and re-emphasize what we believe on this side of the House and in this government. We believe that economic growth and job creation in this province is fuelled by the private sector, not government. It is government's role to create favourable conditions for private sector investment, offer incentives where needed, and ensure a reliable regulatory framework.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, given everything I have said today, I move:

That this Assembly supports the government's agriculture value-added strategies as highlighted in our provincial growth plan, recognizing that it will support Saskatchewan in both our short-term economic recovery, as well as its role in assuring the long-term prosperity of the province.

I so move. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for The Battlefords:

That this Assembly supports the government's agriculture value-added strategies as highlighted in our provincial growth plan, recognizing that it will support Saskatchewan in both our short-term economic recovery as well as its role in ensuring the long-term prosperity of the province.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a real privilege to enter into debate around our agricultural sector and about adding value to this sector and about the performance of this sector and the opportunities in this province that are remarkable, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And to be able to recognize our incredible ecosystem in agriculture from world-leading producers that are always willing to innovate and take on new practice; through to the research and innovation agenda and the researchers and the university and all of that work; through to agribusiness and the entrepreneurs and the innovators on these fronts that have commercialized for years in Saskatchewan, creating jobs in manufacturing and, as we talk about now, in ag tech, and so many opportunities — these are things that excite me. These are things that need to be supported.

The member opposite, I thought, entered into this speech it seemed in earnest with some thoughtful remarks about this remarkable sector. It seemed that part of the exercise was getting into a bit of partisan back-patting. That's become quite common for this Sask Party, sort of trying to fluff their own feathers and prop themselves, Mr. Speaker, instead of recognizing those that are doing this work and that are innovating, that are on the front lines today, and the kinds of supports they need now, and some of the heavy lifting as well to support them.

Things that are being blocked right now by this government when it comes to things like that foundation around fixing AgriStability, around connectivity in this province, around making sure our rail system actually performs instead of treating the duopoly and this system with kid gloves as we've seen time and time again by this Sask Party.

[11:00]

So I thought the member's remarks were at first reasonably earnest. A bit back-patting, as we know is the tradition of late with this big majority Sask Party, fluffing their own feathers, Mr. Speaker. But I thought the last part of that member's remarks were ridiculous and out of line and inconsistent with the history of the province, but very in line with what sort of is rewarded on that side of the Assembly.

And I guess I'm not here to give that new member advice. I like him. I think he's a real nice guy and I appreciated his earnest remarks. But if he has to shill like that for the House Leader over there, Mr. Speaker, with that kind of behaviour to try to get new opportunities to get to the floor more in here or maybe take on a new responsibility, that's a shame. And I'd say, don't lower himself to that kind of partisan nonsense and revisionist history, Mr. Speaker.

And to take what should have been focused on producers and innovators and agribusiness and the opportunities before us, and for him to go into this diatribe that's incorrect and inconsistent with the facts about the 1990s, Mr. Speaker, you know, that's his prerogative. But I guess I'll remind him, Madam Deputy Speaker, that producers in this province, agribusiness in this province, researchers in this province demand and expect better, and they know, they know the history of his party, Madam

Deputy Speaker.

He knows what happened with his party, the most corrupt government in Saskatchewan's history, in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, that put this province into the brink of bankruptcy, that put businesses out of business, that drove people out of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and put members of this Assembly in jail, Mr. Speaker. So if that member wants to talk about the 1990s in ways that aren't consistent with the facts, let's put the facts on the record about his government's record in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker — a shameful one. Probably the most shameful chapter of any government in Canadian history, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Shifting focus just a little bit again, we have tremendous opportunities in value-add in this province, and we need to pursue those. With respect to things like the world-class and high-quality proteins in this province, both livestock-based proteins but also plant-based proteins, these are opportunities we need to pursue. Where we have the ability now to add jobs through processing things like fractionation in Saskatchewan, we have the ability to bolster jobs in rural Saskatchewan and to supply the world with the kind of high-quality product they're looking for: the ability to break apart, not just sending raw product to the world, but able to sell fibre and proteins and energy, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Think of the opportunities like higher value crops in Saskatchewan and the opportunities that present us on these fronts. I think of the opportunities around renewable diesel and biodiesel and all of the canola crushing that we see going on. These are investments that we need to be pursuing and supporting and making sure we have the supports and climate in place to make it happen.

I'll note, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this Sask Party government actually sat idle and on their hands recently when a tremendous, massive biodiesel, renewable diesel opportunity presented to this province.

And it's this sort of laissez-faire, lazy approach, Madam Deputy Speaker, that will prevent Saskatchewan from seizing this moment, because these investments are going to be placed and we need them in Saskatchewan. And you know, we love our neighbours across the Prairie provinces, but you know, I want to see those investments placed here in this province. We have a government that sits on their hands on those fronts.

When it comes to doing some of the other heavy lifting that's required to make sure we have the conditions that are going to support agriculture and producers and value-add, we have a government that really takes rural Saskatchewan for granted. They fail to roll up their sleeves and do some of the heavy lifting. When I think of things like business risk management programs and AgriStability, the fact that this government continues to block, block a needed fix to AgriStability is beyond shameful. This is a program that was gutted by the then federal Conservatives in 2013. The Sask Party of course were along for the ride and didn't say boo at that time, and gutted this program. And it's a program that's important, that needs to be fixed for producers.

And I've heard the Agriculture minister say, well you know,

different excuses as to why he's not stepping up. I need to remind them that we have the most at stake in Canada on this front, that our producers have the most at stake on this front. And agriculture will lead us in so many ways into the future and out of this pandemic, but we need to make sure producers have the foundation that they can count on, and fixing that program is critical.

I mentioned transportation. You know, we have a government here that's been so weak with an underperforming rail system instead of pushing for better performance, instead of pushing the federal government and engaging through the CTA [Canadian Transportation Agency] to push for things like joint running rights and enforcing interswitching, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have a government that has sat on their hands and it's producers in Saskatchewan and exporters and manufacturers that have been left to pay the price. In fact this government of course sold off the Grain Car Corporation and then, in so doing, gutted the matching grants of up to a million, nearly a million dollars a year to our shortlines in Saskatchewan. And that was a huge loss when what we should be doing is supporting our shortline rail across Saskatchewan to make sure that our producers, our exporters, our manufacturers get product to market. A million dollars matching grants for shortlines is a big deal.

I see one of the members chuckling across the way, like he maybe thinks he knows something on this. If you sit down and chat with any of those shortline folks, they know how the Sask Party sold them out a few years ago on this front, Madam Deputy Speaker, and how weak they are with these big rail companies.

Getting around to other points as well in agriculture, where we have a government that has had no willingness to dig in and enforce the laws around foreign land ownership, where illegal foreign land purchase has been allowed to occur within Saskatchewan, where lawyers have been able to design deals that have been able to skirt the spirit and intent of those laws, and we have had a Sask Party that's been complicit, asleep at the switch as there's been a massive transfer of land ownership in Saskatchewan. A government unwilling to make sure that the Farm Land Security Board has the tools and the teeth that they need to make sure that they have the ability to enforce, or even basic things like a statement, a required statement of beneficial interests when one purchases land. So it's sort of a government turning a blind eye to a very serious issue in our province, failing to enforce the laws.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm so proud of agriculture in Saskatchewan, and the hope and possibility and opportunity and all those that exist in driving opportunity within this space. But I'm disappointed with the member's remarks, and I'm disappointed with this government not doing the heavy lifting that really matters to producers in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm honoured to enter into today's debate on a topic that is certainly near and dear to my own heart and to support the motion presented by my colleague, the member from The Battlefords. This motion that speaks to our government's commitment to

agriculture is a good motion. It is an important motion, and it is one where I suspect and truly hope we'll find much common ground.

It goes without saying that the COVID pandemic has struck Saskatchewan and all corners of the globe with both severe health and economic consequences. And just as a vaccination plan charts the path through the health challenges people in the province face, agriculture, and in particular value-added strategies, play a significant role in the short- and long-term economic health of Saskatchewan.

In 1905 when we became a province the plan was for agriculture to propel us toward growth and prosperity. Fast forward 115 years later and agriculture remains at the core of our success. Throughout the COVID pandemic, while the world around us seems to be perpetually thrown curve balls, agriculture has remained firmly planted and steadfast.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would argue that never before in our province's history has the reliable hand of the ag sector been more needed. During these turbulent economic times, the ag sector has proven its resilience. Strategies put forth in this year's budget do much to support the value-added agriculture sector. Saskatchewan is home to more than forty-six and a half million acres of cultivated land. That is, Madam Deputy Speaker, 40 per cent of the total cultivated acres in Canada. We have forty-six and a half million acres to raise, grow, develop, and produce — acres from which we can innovate and create opportunities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I was raised on about 1,900 of those acres, and it would be fair to say that a lot of farming runs through these veins. Since I was quite young, I qualified for a steady dose of cultivating, rock picking, and sweeping out bins. Come harvest, I was the designated trucker, while my dad ran the combine. And I guess you could argue that there was kind of a hierarchy on our farm, and my place, well I qualified for quality time spent with dust and chaff. Spring wheat, barley, flax, and canola were staples on our farm, and over the course of the following year we would deliver load after load destined for somewhere else, somewhere that was not Saskatchewan.

We were primary producers who received what my dad would contend was the bare minimum for our product. While dad may have been right in saying so, he and my mother were able to carve out a life and raise two beautiful children, one more beautiful than the other, just as my grandparents did before them.

Fast forward to the Saskatchewan ag sector we see now. More and more of what is raised and grown on the farm stays in Saskatchewan to be enriched, processed, crushed, and packed by others in the province. In fact because of the government's targeted strategy, Saskatchewan's annual revenue from the value-added sector has increased from 3.5 billion in 2012 to 5.6 billion in 2019-20. This present growth in value-added revenue feeds directly towards our 2030 goal of reaching 10 billion in this area.

I think dad would be impressed and pleased to see where we are now in such a short time. Unlike the days when we would say goodbye to our untouched commodities, now Saskatchewan people are not so eager to bid farewell so soon. Our goal for 2030 is to crush 75 per cent of the canola grown in this province.

Private investment in our province's canola-crushing capacity by Richardson, Cargill, and most recently Viterra creates the capacity to make Saskatchewan not only a Canadian but a world leader in this industry.

Further, 2030 goals such as processing 50 per cent of our pulse crops and doubling our meat processing and animal feed value-added revenue to more than \$1 billion, is presently supported by a host of initiatives and driven by entrepreneurial spirit and innovation. Programs such as Saskatchewan value-added agriculture incentive and the manufacturing and processing exporter tax incentive support this burgeoning sector. Madam Deputy Speaker, today our value-added sector includes over 300 food processing companies, employing approximately 6,000 hard-working people of Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as outlined on our Government of Saskatchewan website, the four pillars of the value-added strategy are competitiveness, investment attraction, research and research commercialization, and trade and market development. I look forward to hearing the thoughts of the other members regarding this strategic framework, and as such I would like to offer up how I view these working together towards a single purpose.

Before my family adopted the more common soil conservation farming practices of today, we were 50/50 farmers, meaning in short, each year we seeded half of our land and maintained summerfallow in the other half. Unlike with our present direct seeding practice, the 50/50 model required much preparation prior to placing a single grain in the soil.

The lead-up to seeding required us to cultivate the fields, pack the soil, and meticulously pick rocks. By the time the drill was ready to take its turn, my dad would have turned those fields so beautifully manicured that it was almost a shame actually to disturb the soil. We did eventually move in with the seeding equipment, and then we would begin to pray for that timely rain.

And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, circling back to our value-added strategic pillars, let me comment for a moment about the pillar of competitiveness. That is creating an environment for growth. My dad knew that to get that tiny kernel of grain to germinate, to grow, he had to create an environment most conducive to that growth. He also knew that by removing rocks, he had removed impediments to growth for years to come. Initiatives like the farm and ranch water infrastructure program produce the setting for businesses in the value-added sector to flourish and overcome obstacles for years.

[11:15]

In regards to a second pillar, building the investment climate, my dad understood that well-placed, well-measured fertilizer would augment the nutrients in the soil to encourage roots, shoots, and leaves to stretch out. Similarly, initiatives like the Agtech Growth Fund promote targeted investment, showing itself as both expansion and new start-up ventures. For decades farmers and ranchers in this province have unwittingly lived by the mantra of the great Carthaginian leader Hannibal. His motto was, "We will either find a way or make one." Our agriculture industry has deep roots and a deep history of finding a way.

Fittingly the third pillar of our government's value-added strategy seeks to capitalize on that spirit of innovation. The development of new uses, processes, and technologies works to create opportunities where once sat challenges. The recently introduced Innovation Saskatchewan amendment Act serves to support ag tech development in this province. This Act will aid the economic recovery while at the same time generate long-term benefits.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and then there is the rain. Unpredictable at best, spotty at times and always necessary, the moisture from above made it all come together — all the labour, all the care, and all the planning. With that in mind and to borrow a phrase from Canada's best jobs minister, our very own Minister of Trade and Export Development, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have some very good news. The fourth pillar of our strategy proposes to bring predictability to our rain, that is our markets for our products. Initiatives from this government purposefully work to expand our access to current markets while carving out new markets and demand for our home-grown products.

In addition to our trade offices in Japan, India, Singapore, and China we have recently announced plans to expand our cohort to include four additional international sites. Potential locations in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Southeast Asia are all under consideration. These strategic centres are a key part of our government's larger market diversification undertaking and goal to grow the value of our international partnerships to bring more predictable rain — that being markets — to the fields filled with our entrepreneurs, our manufacturers, and our innovators.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in Arm River I am blessed to see agriculture at its best. Dotted across the constituency are countless initiatives to make the most out of what we produce, whether it be goat jerky from JE Ranch of Holdfast; a pint of lager from the Nokomis ales brewery; a glass of prairie — members are enjoying that one — a glass of prairie sangria from Wolf Willow Winery, situated on the edge of the South Saskatchewan River; the annual Riverhurst Bean Festival; special variety seed potatoes from True North just outside Outlook; or one of the agronomic services and innovative products from SynergyAG, it is evident value-added agriculture is steadily gaining momentum.

Further continued growth in this sector is how we create jobs and opportunities. And it's for this reason I am in full support of the motion put forth by my colleague on this side.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure to enter into debate this afternoon on this motion:

That the Assembly supports the government's agriculture value-added strategies as highlighted in our provincial growth plan, recognizing that it will support Saskatchewan in both the short-term economic recovery, as well as its role in ensuring the long-term prosperity of the province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, something that I often say when I'm entering into second reading debates is, you know, some of the questions that I like to think of when I'm looking at new

legislation are similar to my curiosity around how we find ourselves or how the members opposite pick their 75-minute debates. I would say for one thing that they need something uplifting to talk about and I think that that's understandable. It's been a very difficult year and it's been a pretty difficult session for those members, so I certainly understand that.

The other thing that I'm curious about and I would suspect that I'm right about, but I'm willing to be wrong, is they think that they would get somehow some . . . there would be pushback from our side about the value of rural Saskatchewan or value-added agriculture in the province. And I think that's a misstep, that I think that that's the result of something that we see a lot in here. And that is, you know, as my friend, the member . . .

An Hon. Member: — The balding member.

Ms. Beck: — The balding member. I'm afraid I'm going to get called out and have to apologize. The member for Rosemont suggested, Mr. Speaker, is that . . . Now he's made me lose my train of thought here — heckling your own members, Mr. Speaker.

I suspect that there is some expectation that there will be pushback from our side, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that's simply not the case. I think as the two speakers previous from the other side had mentioned, there's a lot of room for areas that we agree here. We, like the members opposite, support the agriculture sector in our province and recognize not only the history and value to today but the enormous potential going forward in this province. We have, you know, just so many instances, from canola right up to modern-day examples of innovation in this province, and something that I think we all can be proud of.

And it's not the purview of any member in this place. This is a result of us being blessed, for one thing, of living in this place that is so abundant in natural resources, in great loamy soil and not-so-loamy soil in different places, you know, being protected from some of the worst weather events in many cases, but also the quality of people who find themselves in this province, people that came to this place specifically to seek out their lives and livelihood in the agricultural sector, people from all over the world. And I think that that is a shared heritage that I think both sides would do well to understand doesn't belong to any political party. That is the fabric of this province.

You know, there is no end of places that I think we can agree in terms of our pride in being from Saskatchewan. And of course the agricultural sector is woven deep into the fabric of this province. And it's not something that exists in the past, although there's a lot to be proud of there as I said, Madam Deputy Speaker. The innovations that we see today, the innovations around the seed production and genetic improvements in this province as well as, as was spoken by the member from Arm River, we've really been leaders in terms of conservation and soil conservation. And there's just no end of things to be proud of there.

And I find myself . . . Maybe I'm really missing those lobby days and the opportunity to meet with various groups more than I think, because I think this is the third time that I've brought it up in my comments, Madam Deputy Speaker. But I think of some

of the time that we had spent talking to innovators and talking about . . . I was thinking specifically of GPS [global positioning system] and satellite-guided spraying in the province, so actually being able to target with GPS technology to find where, as the sprayer's passing over the field, you can actually calculate and save on chemical that way.

And I think we all know that farmers are the original conservationists, not only caring for the environment but also because no one wants to spend an extra buck. You want to make sure that you keep your implement costs as low as possible so that you can have the highest possible return. So I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, I might be right. As I said, I'm willing to be wrong, but you know, they're looking to find something that is a win — and certainly the agriculture sector is something that we can all be proud of here — but also looking to distract from their own record.

So I will admit, and maybe not as much time as the member from Meadow Lake spends looking at our documents, but I did spend some time with the previous growth plan. And you know — and maybe this is a bit harsh, but I think it's fair — I think we're looking at a government whose best days really are behind them. I was looking at the . . . I will stipulate, a government who's looking at their best days behind them. It's certainly not a province whose best days are behind them because I think we have much to look forward to in this province.

So I was looking at the previous *Plan for Growth*, and you know, it's quite a document. And there were some pieces in here that I have to admit that I didn't look at before, and I had cause to look at them a little more closely. Madam Deputy Speaker, when we are looking at plans, we're responsible for not only those plans and the self-congratulations but also some of the results. There have certainly been some fabulous results within the agricultural sector, but this is a government who has consistently picked winners and losers.

And I always end up closer to the time than I want to be, but I wanted to make sure that I read something from this report, the previous *Plan for Growth*, because I think that this is something that is lost even within this government over the years. And the rush to . . . You know, sometimes when governments have been in power for a long time they tend to, you know, drink their own bathwater, as I've heard members say, be self-congratulatory. And they lose sight of the reasons that they got in this for the first place. This is from page 32 from the previous *Plan for Growth*:

Despite the inherent benefits of growth evident in Saskatchewan today, growth is not an end in . . . itself. Instead, growth is valued because it leads to a better quality of life.

I couldn't agree more, Madam Deputy Speaker. And unfortunately we see this government congratulate themselves over milestones and, you know, hitting certain targets, but they don't take a big picture. They don't look at the fact that over a quarter of our children in this province live in poverty and have across the time of this government. We don't look at the fact that we have three times the national average in terms of mortgages in arrears.

They used to promise about the debt, again responsible not only

for your plan but the actual carrying out of that plan. We saw this government through the best years in this province not only fail to balance a budget in all but three of those years, but have actually added to the debt to the point that every person in this province — every child and every child not yet born in this province — is going to have a considerable debt to pay off.

And yet we failed to make meaningful progress toward some of the other goals that they stated around conservation, around GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions lowering, and certainly we have failed our children in this province year after year with cuts and falling per-student funding. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, great for value-added agriculture. On the rest of the work, a failing grade.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The silence you hear right now is the NDP's ag policy. They have no policies, no plan, and indeed no ideas on how to grow agriculture and value-added processing in Saskatchewan. The last ag idea the NDP had was to rip up GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] contracts with producers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, agriculture has always been the backbone of the province, and it will continue to be for years to come. Ag producers have seen many challenges over the decades: droughts, floods, insects, disease, high interest rates, and low commodity prices. Producers have battled adversity and always come out stronger and better. Last year Saskatchewan agri-food exports reached a new high: \$16.9 billion. That is over 55 per cent of the total provincial exports. Producers also harvested their second-largest crop on record.

[11:30]

Madam Deputy Speaker, farmer ingenuity has spawned several Saskatchewan-based manufacturing businesses. They had a need to help themselves farm better and more efficiently. They seized these opportunities and many grew their business into international manufacturing companies exporting their products around the globe. Farmer ingenuity also led to the creation of a driverless power unit capable of hooking up to a variety of attachments. Technology continues to drive the future of agriculture.

Madam Deputy Speaker, agriculture practices are more efficient, using precision farming technologies with the use of GPS, auto-steering, nozzle selection on sprayers, and seed run selection on the drills, eliminating overlap when seeding or spraying. These technology developments allow for precise seed and fertilizer placement — a very efficient use of crop inputs to save money, a producer's first step to having a healthy crop.

Madam Deputy Speaker, research in crop development in Saskatchewan is world-renowned. Our research is developing new varieties every year: seed varieties that are resistant to insects and disease, varieties with early maturity and higher yields, new seed varieties to help producers realize higher yields and higher profits.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan government has put

forth the plan for growth to 2030: growing Saskatchewan's agri-food exports to \$20 billion, increasing crop production to 45 million metric tons and livestock cash receipts to 3 billion, expanding irrigation, increasing agriculture value-added to \$10 billion, growing value-added revenue through Saskatchewan-based processing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the government will work with industry and expand irrigation acres to maximize Saskatchewan's irrigation capacity. The Lake Diefenbaker irrigation expansion project will increase irrigation by an additional 85,000 acres. Irrigation will not only provide higher crop yields; it will also increase crop selection. Producers will have the opportunity to expand, grow field-to-table crops, high-quality crops that yield high returns.

Our plan for growth to 2030 includes increasing crop production to 45 million metric tons per year. Increasing crop production is one step. The next step is adding value to what we grow, growing our value-added revenue to \$10 billion by 2030.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Three Farmers foods from Midale, Saskatchewan know the benefits from value-added. They knew by processing their own crops they would increase the value of their farm production. Three Farmers roasted chickpeas, lentils, and green peas, turning their own crops into a healthy snack direct to consumers. In addition to snacks, they ventured into extracting oil from camelina, an oil that is coveted by many.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Endless Sky is building a plant to extract CBD [cannabidiol] oil from hemp, providing ag producers an alternate crop to add into their rotation. After extraction the residual fibres can be utilized for additional processing, adding value to Saskatchewan crop production.

A large portion of Saskatchewan-based processing will be canola crushing. Our 2030 goal is to have 75 per cent of our canola crop processed at home here in Saskatchewan. The *Western Producer* headline states Saskatchewan is hit with a canola crush wave, and that is so very true. Saskatchewan has over 40 per cent of the Canadian cropland acres, producing over 39 million metric tons in 2020. Raw product is a given, building on the excess of the existing Agriculture Development Fund, supporting projects under way and new initiatives to increase value-added processing.

As part of this wave, Richardson International recently announced plans to double the crush capacity at their Yorkton facility. Construction will begin immediately with completion in early 2024. Upon completion, total capacity will be 2.2 million tonnes of seed annually. Cargill also unveiled construction plans on a new canola processing facility in Regina and also an expansion to their plant at Clavet. This new plant in Regina will process 1 million metric tons per year. Viterra announced a new canola crushing facility in Regina with a capacity of 2.5 million metric tons — the world's largest integrated facility anywhere. They have targeted the start-up for late 2024, but also Viterra has announced their plans to construct a new grain terminal near Biggar.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these construction announcements came after two companies had put forth proposals to build renewable diesel refineries. These refineries would produce

renewable diesel using canola oil. True North Renewable Fuels hopes to build in Regina a refinery capable of producing 1 billion litres of renewable diesel per year from 1 million tonnes of canola oil. Additionally, Covenant Energy is proposing a refinery one-third that size to be constructed in Estevan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are growing value-added revenue through Saskatchewan-based processing, turning our crops into ingredients for food, livestock feed, and for fuel — fuel intended to comply with the Clean Fuel Standard, canola meal targeted for livestock feed mills and cattle producers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with increased crop production and value-added processing, Saskatchewan will require additional markets here in North America and around the world, expanding existing trade and unlocking new markets. Growing our exports is critical to growing Saskatchewan. The Ministry of Trade and Export Development will open new international trade offices in Japan, India, and Singapore in early 2021. These will complement the current trade office in Shanghai, China. We are also exploring trade office locations in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, having representation on the ground in those countries showcasing to the world what Saskatchewan has to offer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, growing Saskatchewan includes growing the livestock industry. Saskatchewan's Growth Plan includes achieving \$3 billion in livestock cash receipts by 2030. Increasing livestock production provides a critical local market for low-quality crops and by-products from processing activity. To aid in growing the livestock industry, we need to identify and address the barriers to intensive livestock operations through the intensive livestock steering committee. Approval processes will become more responsive and predictable.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the world's demand for higher amounts of protein are increasing. Growing Saskatchewan's livestock industry will better position our province to fill that demand. In 2020, Saskatchewan increased trade with China to 4.1 billion, increased trade with India to 1.2 billion, and increased trade with Japan to 1.2 billion. Brazil, Indonesia, UAE [United Arab Emirates], and Pakistan have also seen significant increases since 2007. Our largest trading partner, the United States, remains a key trading partner. We are less reliant today on trade with the US [United States] than we were in 2007, but the US and Mexico will remain our nearest and dearest partners. Trade will continue to be expanded.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan producers produce what the world needs. Saskatchewan relies on trade exports. It is imperative that we introduce the world to Saskatchewan and the products we produce — your government standing up for Saskatchewan. Madam Deputy Speaker, I support the motion by my colleague, the member from The Battlefords. I support the government's agriculture value-added strategies in our provincial growth plan. Thank you.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak on the motion on the floor here today:

That this Assembly supports the government's agriculture value-added strategies as highlighted in our provincial growth plan, recognizing that it will support Saskatchewan in both our short-term economic recovery as well as its role in ensuring the long-term prosperity of the province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I guess I'll maybe start my remarks by just offering a little bit of personal background here. You know, I'm really proud to say that my grandma's from Rama. That was a slogan we had on our T-shirts to a family reunion back in 2005, celebrating a 100-year anniversary of my great-grandparents establishing a homestead in the Rama area. And so you know, my roots go deep here in the province and extend wide out to, you know, a network of family relations across the province from the southernmost to the northernmost parts, east to west across this province. And I'm very proud of those roots and those family relations.

And when we're talking about agriculture, I think it's also important to take a moment to include acknowledgement of our Indigenous heritage and their role in agriculture with the signing of Treaties 4 and 6 in the province, and the fact that they were given marginal lands on which to farm and little access to implements and inputs in order to be successful farmers. So I'd just point out that, you know, any kind of a strategy around agriculture needs to also account for those historic inequities delivered to our Indigenous neighbours and friends and also work to reconcile those inequities.

I also, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, represent the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana. And there are many people in my constituency whose work and professions do relate to the agricultural sector. Many of them are researchers. They're involved in innovative companies and projects that are leading the way on creating value-added products to take to market. And so of course, you know, it's been said here more than once, I don't think that there's any disagreement on the point of the value of agriculture to our province. And you know, certainly as we see other markets go through cyclical cycles, experience ups and downs, we know that we can always rely on acre as a foundation of our economic policy.

And it's vital that that sector receives the supports that it needs in order to remain relevant and competitive in an increasingly competitive marketplace moving into the future. Obviously innovation and new technology plays a vital role in ensuring that we maintain that advantage. As my colleague the member for Regina Lakeview was mentioning before, we're blessed with, you know, the largest amount of arable, quality agricultural land in Canada, and it is what drives our economy. And you know, we're blessed with that natural resource, and it's one that we need to ensure that we're preserving, that we're conserving.

Many of the researchers at the University of Saskatchewan, many of whom do live in my constituency, talk to me a lot about the importance of soil conservation and maintaining healthy soils that can remain productive over many years and how historic farming practices have really broken down those soils in many cases and reduced their productivity and the need for that innovation to ensure that we can keep those soils productive, moving forward in the various types of crops that we grow and new ones that are constantly being developed, and then also having those available for value-added processing as well.

[11:45]

And the member from Saskatoon University is very fortunate to have the University of Saskatchewan in her constituency and has had the opportunity to engage with many of the, you know, researchers and innovators in that field to help identify and understand, you know, those important innovations that are occurring there. And so you know, we take that role very, very important and very seriously. We want to make sure that we have the right foundations for growth, for agriculture in Saskatchewan, that there is, you know, the funding arrangements for innovation, for R & D [research and development], for market, you know, bringing products to market and understanding what the barriers are and what sort of incentives . . .

As part of that of course is also the need to have environmental policies that are also supportive of our agricultural sector so that, you know, when we look at what international markets are expecting from our producers or if they're looking to invest in new operations and endeavours here in the province, that we have a world-class regulatory framework that is protective of the environment, that ensures that we have strong policies around wetland conservation and carbon mitigation. It's by last count . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The 65-minute period has expired. The 10-minute period, question-and-answer period will begin. I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member for The Battlefords went to great lengths to provide a revisionist history and do some real partisan backslapping and partisan focus in his remarks. What he didn't answer for is why he and the Sask Party government are blocking needed fixes to AgriStability. Of course producers and Saskatchewan farm groups are united on this front, and it's this government that's blocking this very important fix for producers in Saskatchewan. To the member from The Battlefords: how does he explain that to his constituents?

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the member for Regina Rosemont for the question. I know that's an issue that he is very interested in. It's disappointing that it took Wab Kinew and Rachel Notley to get interested in that issue for the opposition to also get interested in these programs. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will just remind the member opposite that our government has fully funded all these programs up front and we will continue to do so. Thank you.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. A hundred and seventy-six schools closed, 52 hospitals closed, 31 service centres closed — that's the NDP legacy in rural Saskatchewan. And this iteration of the NDP didn't even bother to have an agricultural policy in their platform.

To the member from Saskatoon Nutana: the member ran on a platform that had nothing for rural Saskatchewan. The NDP has

attacked our growth plan, voted against every piece of legislation that we've put forward to attract value-added ag investments. Could the member give us anything from the NDP that would help attract private investment for our agricultural producers — anything?

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. So happy to have that first question because I kind of got cut off a little early there a moment ago . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well okay, fair enough.

Yes, so you know, in terms of policies, you know, first of all we didn't close hospitals in Saskatchewan. Those facilities were converted to health care, home-care facilities so, you know, maybe we can go back and have another look at that.

But you know, one of the big issues that I've been running into a lot when I've been engaging with stakeholders is rural connectivity. That was certainly an issue that was part of our platform, addressing the needs for modern farming methods and how vitally important that is on a whole host of fronts in rural communities. You know, farming of course, access to online education . . .

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I mentioned in my speech, you know, there's a lot of agreement about the value of value-added ag and to this province, to the present, past, and future of this province. I also mentioned that this government and these members tend to be very selective about the things that they choose to highlight and very silent on the things that they're not so proud of or ought not to be so proud of, Madam Deputy Speaker. So to the member from The Battlefords, can he explain which part of the growth plan will address the 23,000 jobs that have been lost under this jobs minister?

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the member from Regina Lakeview for the question. I would direct the member opposite to the Saskatchewan growth plan, the 30 goals for 2030. You know, I see, "Crush 75 per cent of the canola Saskatchewan produces [right here] in Saskatchewan." That's done. With these investments in Yorkton, in Regina we're going to be crushing more than 75 per cent of canola produced in this province. Those are jobs in this province, and that's how we're going to get that done.

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

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The member for Regina University has chosen not to apologize after she referred to hard-working and qualified public servants working in our international trade offices as ". . . cushy foreign patronage postings with little to show for the shrouded work,"

though her questions in committee made it clear she had no idea who was staffing these positions. To the member from Saskatoon Nutana, now that she has heard the qualifications of our public servants, does the member agree with her colleague?

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Well thank you for the question. You know, certainly the issue of export and trade is something that I did want to touch on in my comments here because environmental and social governance is so vitally important. And what I hear from, you know, the export and trade sector is they're looking for world-class agriculture policy here in Saskatchewan that will be able to support investment here in the province, not drive it away to other jurisdictions.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course the member from The Battlefords finally had an opportunity to speak in the Assembly here today and it was good to hear him speak, at least the first six minutes of his remarks. But what the member didn't do when asked the question was that he had no ability or no interest in answering the question as to why he and his government is blocking the improvements, the needed fix to AgriStability. So I'll bring that question back to the member. Maybe this time he can answer the question. How does he justify to his constituents that he and his government are blocking these needed fixes to AgriStability?

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you once again to the member from Regina Rosemont for the question. You know, I'll just remind the members opposite, you know, we supported removal of the reference margin limit to provide additional support for our producers. We fully funded these business risk management programs upfront, unlike the NDP governments of years past.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the member from Regina Rosemont talks often about consulting with stakeholders. You know, I've spoken with many ag stakeholder groups over the last number of months. They're interested in research, Madam Deputy Speaker, something our government has invested in even more in this budget this year. Thank you.

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Our government is increasing our exports and growing our economy by opening international trade offices. I'm very interested in hearing from the member from Saskatoon Nutana. If the New Democrats were to take government, would they keep our international trade offices open?

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, the questions that I have around these additional trade offices that have been prioritized as part of the budget this year is, you know what? Why aren't they working more collaboratively at the federal level with their export offices to ensure that, you know, we're not duplicating methods, that we're leveraging resources that are already on the ground and working as part of a cross-country, you know, national collaborative strategy?

I would note that, you know, that relationship has been sullied to a high degree by a lot of the, you know, confrontational tactics used by the government opposite. So I guess I would just ask in reply as a third question that, you know what . . .

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh it was a good one.

The Deputy Speaker: — The 75-minute debate period has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in the Assembly to move second reading for this bill. I would like to add some comments to a second reading and make some comments known and thank some people and acknowledge many that have gone through this process of reminding us why we're here in this Chamber and Assembly as members opposite, as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, as government MLAs. I think I've tried to express my views and feelings about such an important bill, but I want to talk about the true heroes, and there's many of them. And they've been impacted by losing a loved one.

[12:00]

And I want to think about some of the community members and the people I've come to know and love and appreciate their awareness about suicides amongst Indigenous people, amongst northern people, amongst our urban, our rural. So many lives have been impacted, but these family members who have lost loved ones . . . I think about Kimberly Beatty — just amazing — she does a walk in awareness of suicide each year. And I want to thank her for that and her team.

I think about Sally Ratt, who's like family to me. They've accepted me as their family. And I think about her loss of her daughter at such a young age.

I think about Jason and Laurie-Anne Roberts. They continue to do a walk to raise awareness about suicide amongst Indigenous people and about northern people and recognize it's throughout the province. We have a problem and a crisis.

I think about Michael and Linda Roberts who do a walk. I attended the walk with them each year since they lost their young daughter. There's been so many heroes. I think about the supports and the families that have come out and supported them in so many ways to raise the awareness about a crisis in our province.

And when you look at Indigenous children, our youth, it's shocking; it's alarming. But there are so many that are impacted. But I again want to thank the families who support these individuals who have lost loved ones. There are so many of them, and I think about . . . I was going through some of the, just thinking about the different walks we've been on, petitions, raising awareness, whether it's questions, you know.

And at some times I've said in some of my responses, I haven't always been the best member in this Assembly. I've come to look at it differently, and it is because of some of the people that are in this Chamber. There's a reason why. There's serious work to be done. And sometimes, you know, those are the challenges that needs done. And I'll talk a little bit more about that when I conclude my remarks.

I think about some of the teamwork and I watched as Tristen Durocher, walking with our angels. I think about the many, many days he sat and he hungered 44 days to send a message of hope, to hope he would impact our province to do something about suicides and about the awareness. And I think about the photo gallery he had. People who sent those photos to him have lost loved ones to suicide. The mental health, the challenges were all impacted.

I think about Christopher, and I think about Christopher, and I think about him supporting him — Merasty — how he supported Tristen in the walk, making sure he was protected and, you know, he did that. And there were so many people came out and supported awareness and walking. I just, you know, I think about the Leader of the Opposition and many of my colleagues on this side. I call my family, they are my NDP family, and they're on this side.

And I think about the awareness that we've done and we've tried to do. It's been tough. I have to be honest. I've shed a few tears when I've hugged people and seen them go through their grief. I feel for anyone who's lost a loved one. And whether it's members on this side have lost family members or members of the government, I truly mean that. My heart goes out.

This is an opportunity to do something, truly, for Saskatchewan people, to finally take some action. These individuals I talk about who walked 600 kilometres plus to Regina to raise awareness, all the people that came. I watched on the lawn as I joined Tristen and the group Walking With Our Angels. So many families, so many non-Indigenous and Indigenous people came here who were suffering the loss of a loved one and understanding mental health, that we have to do more and we have to be better. And we can, we can do better as a province.

I think about so many, so many people just been affected. And I watch them as you see the caskets and you just see their loss when it's such a . . . It feels like it's just, why couldn't we have done more? Could there have been something we could have done? And that's what I remember more in my heart: watching mothers and fathers, grandparents saying to me, is there something, could

we have done something more? They just want to know was there something more they could have done. And that's what they shared with me.

And when I think about this bill, and I know it came through the first time. I introduced it a second time. And then the mothers asked me, Doyle, don't give up; reintroduce that bill. You know, you weren't sure, and in my heart as soon as they said that to me, I knew I had to reintroduce the bill. And I still said I had hope that it would pass, that we would do the right thing for Saskatchewan people. And it's so important that we do that. And it gave me hope.

When I look at some of the challenges that we have in our province . . . We talk about, whether we say racism or we say truth and reconciliation, there's a chance and some healing. We have many First Nations leaders who came forward. We have Métis leaders who came forward to ring the alarm bell. We've had school divisions. We've had New North raising concern about suicides. There's been so many municipal leaders come forward. So many front-line workers who are doing everything they can, and they're burning out. But I want to thank them for everything they've done, the front-line workers. Their job's unreal, and they still come every day and they do what they can.

COVID's challenging times. People's mental health, I think we will see, you know, it's going to get worse. So when I think about the leaders I talk about and preparing the legislation . . . and I'm happy to stand here today and make some comments. I'm not going to be much longer, but you know, I thought about some things that I would like to say and thank.

And you know, our leaders of our province, whether they're First Nations, Métis, municipal leaders, or they're our elders, our advisors, they tell us that we're supposed to work together, that when you have a crisis in the province . . . And I have a member, you know. I'm going to talk a little bit about, you know, that member. And I've said we have my NDP family here and that's so important. They're always here to support me and they have been supporting this bill. But I also now have . . . I call them my neighbours because we have members on government side on this side of the House that I refer to as my neighbours. And I may even have some neighbours on the other side of the government side, and that's good and that's okay.

You know, when we pass legislation we prepared, we have staff who support us all, and I want to thank the staff that have helped. And I think about, you know, Mitch. He does a great job with helping me to understand. I think about Ken Ring, the House and the Legislative Assembly lawyer. He helps to prepare everything to make sure we get it right, and I want to thank him for his support putting the bill together. There are so many people that I would like to thank to get to this point.

We've got more work to do. And I'm hoping this bill will pass, and I hope we do the right thing for Saskatchewan people. It is the right thing, I hope, to the Premier. This is the right thing to serve all the people of the province, and I mean that with sincerity. We have to get this right. And is this going to fix everything? It's not going to fix everything. But can we work together in this Assembly for all Saskatchewan people? I think we can.

There's times we can say . . . You know what, we'll have many days when we can debate and we can argue and say what I like or don't like. I get that. We can heckle and sometimes do all that. But today we have an opportunity to send the message to Saskatchewan people, to families who are struggling with mental health, with the loss of loved ones. We have an opportunity to do that.

And I want to thank the members of this Assembly for the process to happen, to allow it to happen, to get to the point where we're at today. It's important. We all have tough times but we, as my neighbour will say, will come together and we look out for our neighbours. And I want to thank my neighbour for that. On this side of the House, I have a neighbour. He's close. I put him in my prayers. He's touched me in a special way as my neighbour.

I've got more I could say, but I want to say this. Once this bill and should this bill pass, there's more work to be done. Like yes, I heard the government, the pillars of hope. There's some dollars allocated. I think we're going to need more. There's an opportunity to do some serious work that needs to be done, partnering with those front-line workers who are doing everything, with those different groups, agencies, many of the people who, when it comes to mental health, who are organizing on their own. Companies I'm watching, they're doing mental health awareness, and they're working.

We have a team. Saskatchewan has that team. It's going to take the government to commit some resources — federal, provincial — but we can have that dialogue. We can make sure. What's the best practices out there in our province, in Canada? Are there things that we can do better? Can we learn from other provinces and jurisdictions? Can we actually have a serious plan and walk through it? And can we monitor to make sure at the end of the day we're achieving it? And if we're not achieving it, why not? And that'll be important, and this legislation does that. It doesn't criticize. It's saying, look we've got a crisis; let's work together. And I really feel we can do that.

You know, I've had so many thoughts going through my head and thinking I wanted to phone families who are, you know, who are dealing with such tragic loss of loved ones. I know there's a lot more I could say. I've said it time and time again. The people that have signed the petitions, have wrote letters of support, school divisions, everyone. There's a list that goes on of people, experts, the people, back and forth. We've had, you know, 44 days of hunger strike with Tristen Durocher, the sacred camp, a fire. And you look at all of the leaders. Everyone's come together. There's truly been some awareness.

And I think we now have an opportunity, and we owe it to Saskatchewan people. We owe it to the children, those young children. I think about my grandkids, who suffer so much with mental health because they're wondering. Is it enough? Let's just make sure we've done everything we can to support them so that we can say at the end of the day, look we've done all we can. We've supplied the dollars. And there are many dollars going to be needed, we know that. But the government will have a plan, and you'll do that.

So for me right now, I've thought about it, and you know, I don't know that I want to go on much more. And I thanked everybody,

and I don't want to . . . I hope I didn't forget anyone for all the supports that they've done whether . . . you know, and it doesn't matter what background you come from. We all have issues and challenges.

You know I'm wearing a pin, a beaded pin about suicide awareness from one of the family members who had these made, and it's an honour to have a beaded pin like this. It is. It's to bring awareness. And I thought I'd wear it today — because I've been wearing it steady since I got it — but I wanted to wear it today and just recognize how important it is to bring awareness. That we're going to come to the Assembly and we have a chance to do something amazing for Saskatchewan people who suffer.

And I think about the member from Regina Walsh Acres. I think about him and his loss, and I don't wish that on anybody. When I'm done today with this beaded ribbon as awareness for the people that have lost their lives, the families who've lost a life, I'm going to sanitize it and I'm going to go present it to his office, to him from northern Saskatchewan to say, we feel for your hurt. You're in our prayers and thoughts.

To all of us: we can do better when our neighbours come together. We can do the right things. And today we have an opportunity to send a very clear message. Nobody has to be a winner and a loser here. As I said, we will have our chances and our days to debate many other issues. But this, I think today, we don't have to debate anymore. We can do the right thing.

So I'm hoping the minister, I'm hoping the government will say it's the right thing to do, and we're going to show our neighbours that Saskatchewan can come together when we need to. So with that, I think I'll conclude my remarks on the bill. And I'm prepared, I'll move that Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021* be now read a second time.

[12:15]

The Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Minister of Rural and Remote Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to join debate on the second reading motion for Bill 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021*. Mr. Speaker, I will begin by thanking the member for Cumberland for introducing this bill. We respect his advocacy and share his determination to support individuals and families affected by the tragedy of suicide. And, Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone in this Chamber doubts his passion and his sincerity on this issue that is very, very close to him, and for that I thank him. I can't possibly thank him enough for his dedication to this cause.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the member for Walsh Acres who is a new member in this House. But, Mr. Speaker, he has been very public about a personal tragedy, a very recent personal tragedy that has affected his own family, Mr. Speaker. And I just simply cannot fathom how difficult that must have been and continues to be for him and for all of the families, as the member for Cumberland has spoken about, for them to comprehend and try to grasp each and every day. So I thank those two members

in particular.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that suicide is both a mental health issue, it's also a public health issue. And I think that all members of this House agree that suicide prevention needs to be a priority for all of us: for politicians, for community-based organizations, and community leaders, for our friends, and our families.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think this is where one of the benefits of an election comes into play. You hear from people directly on the doorsteps, over the phones, and on main street. And what we heard, Mr. Speaker, last fall is that the bill brought forward by the member opposite was a very important one to the people of this province. We have been a government that listens to Saskatchewan people, and we heard that passing this legislation would be a meaningful step in supporting suicide prevention efforts across Saskatchewan. And we agree, Mr. Speaker. It's a dynamic issue, one that is extremely complex. It can affect anyone, no matter your age, gender, race, where you live, or your stature in life.

We are prepared to support this bill and state these goals in legislation to help us bring together and focus our collective efforts on those who need help. Mr. Speaker, suicide prevention is a health and safety priority for this government. The principles outlined in this bill are principles upon which we all agree. We support extensive collaboration with partners. We believe in transparency and accountability. We support the use of research and evidence-based practices to find solutions to complex issues.

I will note that much of this work has been done and will continue to be done on the key points outlined in the legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will help provide further accountability in enacting our existing suicide prevention plan. *Pillars for Life: The Saskatchewan Suicide Prevention Plan* released by our government approximately a year ago provides a firm foundation as we work together with our partners to improve suicide prevention programs in the province. It is structured around five pillars: (1) specialized supports; (2) training; (3) awareness; (4) means restriction and means safety; and (5) research, surveillance, and evaluation.

Over \$1.24 million was invested towards Pillars for Life in the 2020-2021 budget and there's an additional \$1 million in this year's budget to support year two actions. Some of those ongoing actions include improving psychiatric access to patients accessing emergency rooms in the northwest part of Saskatchewan, further expanding mental health first aid training across the province, and enhancing research to support local suicide prevention with a specific focus on northern youth.

As noted by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, "The five-pillar plan provides an adaptable starting point for the province to address identified needs and aligns with work already being done by community leaders in the three Roots of Hope Saskatchewan communities." And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's Advocate for Children and Youth recently noted just this week that she is "encouraged that the government's recent suicide prevention plan was informed by many of the youth who lent their voices." And in a 2017 report she is "pleased to have seen significant progress on mental health initiatives and investments."

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work on advancing this progress. Other ministries are involved doing important work as well. The Ministry of Education's anti-bullying strategy, Social Services' poverty reduction strategy, Government Relations' Embracing Life and work with northern communities focusing on youth, and Advanced Education's work on Healthy Campus.

And, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of collaboration we signed a tri-party letter of commitment with Indigenous Services Canada and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations to focus on suicide prevention amongst First Nation residents in Saskatchewan. We will continue to work with our federal counterparts and Indigenous leaders to advance that work. Pillars for Life also includes the learnings and perspectives in the FSIN's [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] suicide prevention strategy and calls for ongoing engagements with Indigenous leaders. And we are committed, Mr. Speaker, to involving all partners in this work.

To that end, stakeholder orientation sessions took place following the launch of Pillars for Life last May and continue to take place as recently as last week. Consultations will continue to happen to further relationships between key organizations working on suicide prevention. And I want the member for Cumberland to know, and all members of this Assembly to know, that we look forward to having the opportunity to have them involved as we move forward on Pillars for Life to help it form the decisions that take place going forward.

In support of transparency and accountability, the Ministry of Health accounts for its suicide prevention expenditures and activities online and in annual reports, and we look forward to providing an additional update on Pillars for Life progress as this work continues. We continue to fund and implement a broad range of suicide prevention initiatives that use best practices, innovative strategies validated by research, and learnings from other jurisdictions, as the member from Cumberland has stated.

This year, Mr. Speaker, a record \$458 million is being invested into mental health and addictions support, including some of that new funding that I spoke about earlier to support suicide prevention. Some of that work that is already under way and will help to get us where we need to go includes the Roots of Hope program in La Ronge, Meadow Lake, and Buffalo Narrows; the walk-in counselling services offered by family services Saskatchewan in 23 communities; the police and crisis teams in six communities; mental health capacity-building in five schools; development of a post-secondary suicide prevention framework in partnership with the University of Saskatchewan. Also the internet-based cognitive behaviour therapy accessible to people across this province is offered by the fine folks at the University of Regina, as well as public awareness campaigns, Mr. Speaker, to help people easily find these supports they need.

Mr. Speaker, we know the urgency of suicide prevention work, with families and individuals suffering. The pandemic environment has made it challenging to make progress as quickly as we would like, but we are making progress and we're committed to doing more.

We are focusing on continuing the implementation of the Pillars for Life plan with oversight from experts involved in overseeing Saskatchewan's mental health and addictions plan. Pillars for

Life addresses much of what is in the bill, but the bill also formalizes the effort so that it transcends governments into the future. And to succeed, all partners involved need to work together.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to once again thank the member for Cumberland for his continued advocacy on the issue of suicide prevention, and all the people that he mentioned in his remarks today for their advocacy as well. I want to thank the front-line workers, the people who also take the phone calls, take the appointments. It's not easy, trying their very best to save lives. I'd also like to thank the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, for voicing their expectation of support for this legislation. Our shared goal is to assist people in getting the help they need so that lives can be saved.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this bill and the second reading motion made by the member for Cumberland. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the member for Cumberland that Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021* be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt to 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 member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — I designate that Bill No. 601 be committed to the Committee of the Whole on Bills and that the bill be considered immediately.

The Speaker: — This bill is committed to the Committee of the Whole on Bills.

Clerk: — Committee of the Whole on Bills.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for the Assembly to go into Committee of the Whole on Bills.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE ON BILLS

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

The Chair: — The item of business before the committee is Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021*. Clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive agreed to.]

[Preamble agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021*.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. I move that the committee report the bill without amendment.

The Chair: — It has been moved that the committee report Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021* without amendment. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[12:30]

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Committees.

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the committee to report Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021* without amendment.

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

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to move third reading of Bill No. 601 immediately.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave to move third reading of Bill No. 601 immediately. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member from Cumberland may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the member from Cumberland.

THIRD READINGS

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

Mr. Vermette: — I move that Bill No. 601 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It's been moved that Bill No. 601, *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021*, 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.

An Hon. Member: — *Nemine contradicente*.

The Speaker: — Carried. *Nemine contradicente*.

Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

I'm advised that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is here for Royal Assent. All please rise.

[At 12:34 His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber and took his seat upon the Throne. His Honour then gave Royal Assent to the following bills.]

ROYAL ASSENT

His Honour: — Pray be seated.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly in its present session has passed several bills which, in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk: — Your Honour, the bills are as follows:

Bill No. 29 - *The Supporting Saskatchewan Restaurants Act*
Bill No. 901 - *The Saskatoon Foundation Amendment Act, 2020*
Bill No. 601 - *The Saskatchewan Strategy for Suicide Prevention Act, 2021*

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these bills.

[At 12:36 His Honour retired from the Chamber.]

The Speaker: — Please be seated. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:37.]

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