



FIRST SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

## Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

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# DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Randy Weekes  
Speaker



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**1st Session — 29th Legislature**

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

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

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**Belanger, Buckley** — Athabasca (NDP)  
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**Keisig, Travis** — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)  
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**Lambert, Lisa** — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)  
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**Love, Matt** — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)  
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**McLeod, Tim** — Moose Jaw North (SP)  
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**Meili, Ryan** — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)  
**Merriman, Hon. Paul** — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)  
**Meyers, Derek** — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)  
**Moe, Hon. Scott** — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)  
**Morgan, Hon. Don** — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)  
**Mowat, Vicki** — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)  
**Nerlien, Hugh** — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)  
**Nippi-Albright, Betty** — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)  
**Ottenbreit, Greg** — Yorkton (SP)  
**Reiter, Hon. Jim** — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)  
**Ritchie, Erika** — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)  
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**Steele, Doug** — Cypress Hills (SP)  
**Stewart, Hon. Lyle** — Lumsden-Morse (SP)  
**Tell, Hon. Christine** — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)  
**Vermette, Doyle** — Cumberland (NDP)  
**Weekes, Hon. Randy** — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)  
**Wilson, Nadine** — Saskatchewan Rivers (SP)  
**Wotherspoon, Trent** — Regina Rosemont (NDP)  
**Wyant, Hon. Gordon** — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)  
**Young, Aleana** — Regina University (NDP)  
**Young, Colleen** — Lloydminster (SP)

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

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**Clerk** — Gregory A. Putz

**Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel** — Kenneth S. Ring, Q.C.

**Deputy Clerk** — Iris Lang

**Clerk Assistant** — Kathy Burianyk

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

### Ruling on a Point of Order

**The Speaker:** — Yesterday, May 11th, 2021, the Government House Leader rose on a point of order asserting that the member for Regina Rosemont referred to the Deputy Premier in a disparaging way and did not use her proper title.

I have reviewed the comments on page 810 of *Hansard*. The member for Regina Rosemont clearly referred to the Deputy Premier as the “minister of taxes.” I shouldn’t have to constantly remind members that rule 51(c) requires reference to one another by title, position, or constituency. The rule and the requirement to address comments through the Chair exist to guard against the tendency or temptation to personalize debate.

We’ve been doing a very poor job of it lately. There have been numerous infractions over the past weeks. Yesterday’s question period is a good example — in typical fashion, one infraction led to another.

I am concerned also by the continued use of personal insults in debate. For instance, yesterday the Leader of the Opposition disparaged the Premier by referring that the Premier is rarely honest. I should have immediately brought him to order, but I missed the comment until I read it in *Hansard*. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has been cautioned many times in the past.

The member for Regina Rosemont knows that ministers should be addressed by their portfolio titles or by their constituency. He has been called to order on several occasions by previous Speakers. However, the Government House Leader did the same thing he accused the member from Regina Rosemont of doing in his point of order, when in question period he used disparaging comments about the member. These are just the examples from yesterday. The Speaker shouldn’t have to be constantly interrupting and having to rule on matters of decorum that are well known to members.

I’m going to leave it at that for today. Henceforth, there will be no toleration when it comes to forms of address. It has become a source of disorder, so in the future the rule will be rigidly enforced.

Lastly, I want to advise the Leader of the Opposition that the rule against insulting language applies to all members regardless of their position in rank, and the use of profanity is not acceptable. I know the Leader of the Opposition is capable of expressing his emotion and passion without resorting to expletives.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Domotor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who are concerned with the unrelenting assault by certain parties against our natural resource industries, most specifically against very necessary pipelines such as Enbridge Line No. 5.

Special interest groups have attempted through every means to block the development of energy pipelines, whether it was Northern Gateway, Keystone XL, Energy East, or Trans Mountain. None of these acts will stop oil consumption, but it will force Saskatchewan to sell its oil at a discount or see its more environmentally responsible and ethically produced oil replaced with oil from places with lower environmental, labour, and human rights standards.

I’ll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the federal government to immediately engage with the United States of America at both the state and federal level to ensure the continued operation of the existing pipeline network and its future expansion for the benefit of both our peoples.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Regina. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan calling for pay equity legislation. These individuals wish to bring to our attention that Saskatchewan is only one of four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation. And it has one of the highest gender wage gaps in Canada, which is the result of systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work that must be corrected with pay equity legislation.

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 is signed by individuals from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

**Mr. Meyers:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who are opposed to Bill C-10, put forward by the federal Minister of Heritage. Mr. Speaker, the scope of this bill represents a concerning constraint on individuals’ freedom of expression guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Simply put, placing government oversight over creative users of the internet, whether on traditional social media platforms or otherwise, is poor policy.

I’ll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the federal government to stop Bill C-10 from proceeding, or at the very least make amendments to stipulate that all creative internet content generated by Canadians will be exempt from any regulatory supervision by federal government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens in Regina. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan against the \$150 electric vehicle tax. Those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to a number of points: that the citizens of Saskatchewan are concerned with the newly imposed \$150 annual tax on fully electric vehicles that will be applied during SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] insurance registration starting this fall; that the government's flawed rationale is that the annual tax will help pay for wear and tear from electric vehicles operating on provincial roads and highways; and, Mr. Speaker, as has been well canvassed in second reading speeches on this bill, this bill appears to be less about credible public policy and more about dog whistle politics.

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 cancel the \$150 tax on electric vehicles and invest in charging stations to encourage electric vehicle use in Saskatchewan.

Those who have signed the petition today reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition today calling for the government to save our swales. The signatories would like to bring to our attention the following point: the provincial government is neglecting its environmental protection duties to adequately protect wild species, habitats, and ecosystems of local, regional, national, and global significance.

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: (1) suspend planning for the Saskatoon freeway and development around the swales until a regional cumulative effects assessment has been completed; (2) update *The Wildlife Act* and expand the list of wild species protected by provincial regulation; (3) recognize the swales as important ecological habitat and designate them as protected areas; and finally, ensure adequate long-term funding for research, management, and enforcement to protect the swales for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, the petition today has been signed by people from Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. 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 northern people in Saskatchewan. I so present.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

#### Library Launches Good Neighbour Award

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to share with you a heartwarming initiative hailing from the community of Paddockwood, located in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Paddockwood has a wonderful library staffed by a fantastic librarian, Kyla Fremont. Earlier this year, in an effort to recognize and thank local volunteers and community servants, the Paddockwood Public Library launched a Good Neighbour Appreciation Award. This initiative encouraged community members to nominate a generous, deserving neighbour to be entered into a draw to win a monthly prize sponsored by a local business or individual. The motto of the project was, Let's Spread Something Positive.

Joanne and Barry Day, two generous community stewards, were both nominated based on their community spirit. Joanne was nominated for the award in February for her cheery attitude, lending a hand to her neighbours, baking and delivering cookies to people in the community. Her husband, Barry, was nominated in March for always being willing to lend a hand for community fundraisers and events. This couple is the definition of community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask that other members to join me in acknowledging the Paddockwood Public Library for their community-minded initiative. Please join me in thanking everyone who engages in neighbourly acts of kindness throughout our province. Thank you.

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

### Ongoing Work Helps Most Vulnerable

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and thank Bonnie Morton and Peter Gilmer for their decades of advocacy. Earlier this week Bonnie and Peter, who both work tirelessly and fiercely with the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, were honoured with doctorate of divinity degrees from St. Andrew's College at the University of Saskatchewan. The two are recognized throughout the community for their work advocating for low-income individuals. They are dedicated to improving housing, shelter, and other resources that are critical to living a quality of life that we all deserve.

Bonnie and Peter hold the belief that in order to deal with issues of social injustice, we must deal with them head-on. And that is a lesson I believe that we can all learn from.

As gaps in the system grow and people are turned away from the support that this government is responsible for providing, Bonnie and Peter step in. The majority of their cases relate to people who've been denied income security or social assistance, and those who can't cover the cost of housing, food, or utilities. Bonnie and Peter show up for those when systems don't.

I stand here today to thank both Bonnie and Peter for the ongoing work they do for our community. They are dedicated, they are leaders, and their work provides hope, support, and security for some of the most vulnerable in our province.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

### Shopping Crawl Supports Charities

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the last seven years, Chrisinda Tkatch has been organizing an annual shopping crawl event to support local boutiques in Regina.

On one night every year, 60 to 80 women are chauffeured around Regina by a local chauffeur service and get the chance to shop at up to eight local businesses. The stop usually includes clothing boutiques and home decor stores. The attendees are hosted all evening by excited store owners, who often stay open late and prepare complimentary refreshments for their guests. The organizer, Chrisinda Tkatch, also arranges swag bags filled with small items from boutiques around the city. The evening ends at a local restaurant where prizes are drawn.

Chrisinda initially started the event when her trip to the United States was cancelled and she still wanted to enjoy a shopping trip with her friends. The event has grown each and every year, and tickets continue to be in demand. Remaining proceeds are donated to charities like SOFIA [Support Of Families In Affliction] House, Carmichael Outreach, and Shine On Foundation.

Unfortunately the 2020 shopping crawl was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Chrisinda hopes that she will be able to hold the event again in November 2021. Shop local. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Initiative Builds Community Relationships

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize the incredible work of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and the partnerships they have successfully fostered. The OTC [Office of the Treaty Commissioner] announced an exciting new partnership with the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and the Saskatchewan Open Door Society this past November. With the University of Saskatchewan's vice-provost of Indigenous engagement, the OTC signed a memorandum of understanding to ensure that more Indigenous students graduate through increased work in treaty education, implementation, and reconciliation.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, this partnership is founded on a strategic plan to further relationships and foster Indigenous inclusive learning environments. The organizations have come together to provide treaty education and Indigenous awareness on all Saskatchewan Polytechnic campuses across the province.

Treaty promises have not been fully realized, and we know that to get there we have to work to decolonize systems. Working with partners, we can promote treaty identity, awareness, and understanding that helps us move towards the goal of truth and reconciliation through treaty implementation.

The commitment to an ongoing, positive partnership to foster and build strong relationships between children of Indigenous communities and new immigrants will create a stronger Saskatchewan. Through this initiative, children and youth from both communities will have opportunities to learn and absorb each other's cultures and form long-lasting bonds for a harmonious future in Canada.

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

### Early Childhood Education Month

**Mr. Skoropad:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize May as Early Childhood Education Month and May 12th as Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day.

A child's early years are the foundation for their future development and provide a strong base for lifelong learning. This month is our opportunity to recognize all the ECEs [early childhood educator] in Saskatchewan who have continued to step up to support families during this challenging time by ensuring children can participate in early learning opportunities in safe environments.

Throughout the pandemic, ECEs have consistently adapted to the changing situation to meet the unique needs of our youngest learners. This was done while balancing the impact of COVID-19 on their family and personal life. I am truly grateful for all their efforts and sacrifices.

Our government remains committed to working towards creating 176 new home-based child care spaces and 51 centre-based spaces this year as part of our four-year commitment to creating 750 new spaces. We have also recently announced a website in partnership with the United Way where parents can find child

care spaces nearest to them. This will further reduce barriers to the public in creating a one-stop location for folks to see what child care services are available to them.

So on behalf of our government, thank you to all the early childhood educators across this province. Thank you.

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

#### Expansion of Agri-Food Innovation Centre

**Mr. Steele:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to announce an investment of 2.3 million into expansion of the Agri-Food Innovation Centre. This will allow food and beverage processors to continue to develop value-added products and prepare them for commercialization. Mr. Speaker, the food centre is a non-profit organization that is the result of a partnership between our government, the Saskatchewan Food Processors Association, and the University of Saskatchewan. Since its inception the centre has served over 400 clients and helped with the development of 885 new products.

The centre is a vital hub for our agri-biz sector, and this investment will help us continue developing new products to address changing consumer demand around the world. Our producers are known worldwide for the high-quality products they grow, and this expansion will continue to help build our province and our global reputation as a trusted supplier of safe, high-quality commodities and value-added products.

This investment will also bring us closer to achieving our growth plan goal of increasing agriculture-valued revenue to 10 billion by 2030. Mr. Speaker, the producers are the backbone of our province, leading us to a strong economic recovery. I now would ask all the members to join me in celebrating this significant investment into our Agri-Food Innovation Centre.

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

#### Investment in Saskatchewan Science Centre

**Mr. Meyers:** — Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. Since 1989 the Saskatchewan Science Centre has hosted over 5 million visitors. Young and old from far and wide have learned about the wonders of our world and had their imagination captivated at 2903 Powerhouse Drive right here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that just last week our government, along with its partners, announced a significant investment of over \$2 million that will help the next generation of dreamers, scientists, farmers, doctors, and inventors explore the earth and space right here at the Science Centre. Now with this investment, it will see upgrades to bathrooms, flooring, new seating, more accessibility.

The Saskatchewan Science Centre will continue its 30-year history as being the place that many young students — and more recently my own kids, Mr. Speaker — explore and learn and have fun. All told, when this investment is included with the contributions from the federal government, the city of Regina, and other partners, it represents a combined investment of over \$50 million in the province. This financial commitment is an

important part of our local learning economy, and our government is proud to do its part to keep Saskatchewan as strong as its resilient people who call this great province home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Public Projects and the Saskatchewan Workforce

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the Premier is happy to see jobs go out of province so long as Sask Party donors and his friends are making bank off the back of Saskatchewan taxpayers. But if he won't stand up for the province's workers and provincial jobs — and he never has; I don't know why he'd start now, Mr. Speaker — will he at least consider the public health implications in a pandemic?

An out-of-province private company built a windmill project near Assiniboia last summer, Mr. Speaker, bringing in a large number of employees from Ontario and Quebec. Thank goodness there were no outbreaks. But, Mr. Speaker, those jobs should have been going to people from here in Saskatchewan. Even after the Assiniboia Town Council and RMs [rural municipality] raised concerns directly with the Premier, he said nothing and he did nothing to keep the community safe.

Now another Quebec company is bringing in workers from Quebec to build the Blue Hill power plant near Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. Why does the Premier want to put local communities at risk and not put local people to work?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the question and to tell the member opposite and the citizens of Saskatchewan that SaskPower takes COVID very seriously, as do all of the Crown corporations. They've developed a variety of protocols — and they've worked well — because they're a front-facing organization. They have to meet members of the public. They have to work in close spaces with other workers.

And, Mr. Speaker, they have responded well where there has been outbreaks. They've worked to contain those. They developed a number of protocols. They have implemented rapid testing. The protocols are being maintained and evaluated on a regular basis to make sure that they maintain compliance. They work with the chief medical officer. And right now, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that a lot of people are working from home. There are some that are working in their offices. There are some that are working in the field.

Since April 26th of last year, 79 employees of SaskPower have tested positive, but they're continuing to work with those employees to make sure . . .

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

**Mr. Meili:** — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has some of the best tradespeople in North America, hard-working, skilled women and men ready to do the job of building our province. Too many



of these people have been out of work for too long, Mr. Speaker. And we hear all the time how disheartening it is, how frustrating for them to be sitting at home ready to go to the job site and watch trucks from Alberta, from Texas, from Ontario roll by to that job and leave them behind, Mr. Speaker.

Now we've got another Quebec company building another SaskPower project, and SaskPower is set to announce the next round of power purchasing agreements. What is this Premier going to do differently this time around, Mr. Speaker? What will he do so that when we're building Saskatchewan's power capacity, we're using Saskatchewan's workers?

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

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'm happy to stand up and talk about jobs here in Saskatchewan because we had just last week a very, very positive jobs report from Statistics Canada showing Saskatchewan gaining 9,500 jobs over the course of just one month. The country lost over 207,000 jobs over that same period, Mr. Speaker.

We have the economy that is leading Canada. Manufacturing numbers which have been outstanding. Construction numbers . . . Just today new construction numbers came out — month-over-month increase, 5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the economy is moving in the right direction.

And the member opposite brings up bringing folks in from outside of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I actually am surprised that he would go there, given the fact that in the limited areas of employment that the opposition have, during an election campaign, what did they do? They brought in 60 people from across the country to run their election campaign, Mr. Speaker. They didn't hire local. Apparently they couldn't find . . .

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

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing says standing up for Saskatchewan workers when the Premier can't even find his feet in this Assembly. Now come on, Mr. Speaker, we're not even supposed to travel from Regina to Saskatoon to not spread COVID-19, but this Premier's just fine, he's just fine with a Quebec company bringing in Quebec workers for jobs that we need for Saskatchewan workers right here, right now. He's happy to see those jobs go away.

We're 13,000 jobs below where we were in an economy that was already struggling under this Premier, Mr. Speaker. Why does he think it makes sense to have people coming in from across the country in the middle of a pandemic when there are workers in Saskatchewan ready to do that job?

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Premier again, and we'll see if he can find his feet this time. Why is he willing to put local communities at risk but not put local people to work?

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

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — He has the gall, Mr. Speaker, to stand

up and talk about people coming in from out of the province, from across the country, in the middle of a pandemic. Did he look at his record? As leader, he brought in over half of their campaign staff from out of the province, from across the country, in the middle of a pandemic.

I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, what COVID protocols did they use? Did they isolate when they arrived here? What were the specific parameters of his campaign staff, including his personal vanity photographer from Vancouver, who came in from across the country?

**The Speaker:** — I just want to remind the minister to watch his language, please. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

### Plan for Reopening Saskatchewan

**Ms. Mowat:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're getting a little bit off topic, so I'll bring us back around to the track. Saskatoon now has more active cases than anywhere else in Saskatchewan. Cases have been found in four more Saskatoon schools this week, with some suspected to be variants of concern. And the newest wastewater analysis is predicting a spike in cases in the city.

This government's Re-Opening Roadmap has no clear off-ramp if cases, hospitalizations, and ICU [intensive care unit] admissions begin to climb like they are in Saskatoon. This government has regional benchmarks for vaccines, but what's the regional approach for reopening if Saskatoon cases continue on this trajectory?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad to report to the House, as I have the last couple of days that our numbers are stabilizing across our province, which is directly for two reasons, Mr. Speaker.

One first reason is that people are adhering to the public health guidelines, Mr. Speaker, and all across the province. We have a few outliers, but in general the Saskatchewan people have rose to the challenge and adhered to the public health guidelines.

The second step, which is extremely important, Mr. Speaker, they've got out and got their first shot of COVID-19. We are leading the country again, Mr. Speaker, in our COVID rollout.

But what we need to continue to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, is we're not done yet. We need to get that second shot. We're going to start rolling out our second-shot strategy next week. And if they want to start cherry-picking stats across there on what happens here, and numbers go up and down there in a specific . . . Mr. Speaker, again if they want to keep cherry-picking numbers out of here and there to feed their narrative, they can continue to do that.

The facts are on our side, Mr. Speaker. We have a road map to reopening that is looked at not just by other provinces but around the world.

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

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, this minister knows full well that active cases in Saskatoon are moving in the wrong direction. There are 57 active outbreaks currently declared in the city. There's legitimate reason for concern that what unfolded in Regina could happen in Saskatoon next, Mr. Speaker. The province-wide reopening plan fails to account for regional variation in COVID numbers.

What are the regional metrics that will be used to determine whether it's safe to include Saskatoon in the next phase of the reopening plan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I recognize that the numbers have increased slightly in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. But they failed . . . Two weeks ago they were screaming about what was happening in Regina. And those numbers have stabilized in Regina, and I expect the exact same.

[14:00]

But, Mr. Speaker, what are they proposing? They always say, stand up; do something. What are they proposing? Would they like us to lock down Saskatoon? If so, I'd like them to stand up and have the courage of their convictions to be able to say, yes, lock down Saskatchewan, lock down Saskatoon. If that's what they want, Mr. Speaker, they should have the courage to be able to stand up and say it.

If not, maybe they should step in line with the other 537,000 people who got a shot of vaccine, Mr. Speaker. And we'll be able to continue to be able to do that with our second shot rolling out right away. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Surgical Wait Times

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, we've all got our shots on this side of the House. And that minister knows that what we're calling for are clear benchmarks that are related to COVID numbers. That's it, Mr. Speaker. It's simple as that. We've been clear on that. We're not calling for random, mass, large-scale lockdowns. The minister knows that.

Last week I asked the minister straightforward questions about this government's plan to get our surgeries under control. The minister got a little hot under the collar and accused us of actually wanting the pandemic to continue. Remarkable stuff, Mr. Speaker. But other than suggesting he'd get to it and thanking people for waiting, we didn't get an answer. So to the minister: what's the plan? Where are the targeted resources to get the surgery wait-lists under control once the pandemic is behind us?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what they don't understand. It was very clear — 70 per cent, 70 per cent uptake of people over 40. Then we start looking at reopening three weeks after that, on the advice of Dr. Shahab, Mr. Speaker.

But again I don't know where they're finding these people, Mr. Speaker, that are just going to magically perform surgeries. The hospital system is working extremely hard on two sides. They're being able to defend against COVID. They're also trying to maintain our emergency . . . [inaudible] . . . But they're also working on the COVID vaccine shot. If they think we just have surgeons sitting around the province that are not doing anything, they're dead wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And what did they say? When our hospital system has been working flat out, they stand up and they publicly say, oh you know, Mr. Speaker, we support all the public health care workers. But then they accuse them that they can't walk and chew gum at the same time and they can't perform their services. I'd like to stand up and be able to say thank you to those public health workers that are working day and night to make sure that we're safe, not just on COVID but everything else to do within our health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Mowat:** — Mr. Speaker, that is a gross mischaracterization of my words in this Assembly where I clearly accused the minister of not being able to walk and chew gum at the same time.

The minister only needs to look in the mirror and around that front bench if he's looking for someone to blame for unacceptable surgery wait-lists. His government stopped funding the Sask surgical initiative. They took their eye off the ball on the campaign trail and didn't plan for the second wave, and they relaxed measures in March despite modelling showing that the variants were coming and that Regina numbers were about to skyrocket. That's why there's no room in our hospitals and in our ICUs for people to recover from surgeries.

Beyond deflection and blame, what is the plan to address this backlog? And will this government follow other provinces and provide dedicated resources to get surgical wait times under control?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again the member has to just look to last year's budget where we put in an extra \$20 million for a surgical initiative that was not used because of COVID-19, that we had to cancel a lot of surgeries and postpone those surgeries. That carried over to this year, Mr. Speaker.

So when they say they're doing nothing, they're absolutely wrong. All they have to do again, Mr. Speaker, is stop reading the questions that their researchers have written for us, look into the budget, go past the first page . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The plan is, Mr. Speaker, is that we are going to continue to do emergency surgeries; we're going to continue to defend against COVID-19; we're going to continue to make sure that our ICUs are being the most effectively used. We're going to continue to do that.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I didn't . . . This was a quote from the member opposite who said that the people that are in our public

health commission said . . . If the leader from the opposition wants to ask me a question, tell him to pop up.

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

### Funding for Child Care

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, we know that accessible, high-quality early learning and child care is a key economic investment. It's an investment that must be at the forefront in a post-pandemic recovery here in Saskatchewan.

On April 20th the member from Regina University was told by the minister in question period that he would be having conversations with Ottawa about expanding accessible, high-quality child care in "the coming days." That was weeks ago. The coming days have come and gone, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister provide an update on the child care conversations had with his federal counterpart?

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact I have had a phone conversation with Minister Hussen. I believe it took place about a day or two after I made that comment in the House, Mr. Speaker.

Our officials have also started to engage with the federal officials with respect to what allocation may be in place for Saskatchewan and what flexibility Saskatchewan may be able to see out of the national child care program that the federal government has made a commitment around, Mr. Speaker. So we look forward to having those discussions over the next number of weeks and months, Mr. Speaker.

And at the same time we look forward to implementing the 176 new child care spaces that we committed to in this budget, as well as the 51 new centre spaces, Mr. Speaker, that'll be opening in Weyburn later this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, it is welcome news that the minister is having those conversations with Ottawa, and now it's time to walk the walk. In a child care survey, 70 per cent of centres reported that their financial situation was worse off than before the pandemic. An even higher amount of day homes — 8 out of 10 — said the same.

This government has a not-so-proud record of leaving millions of federal dollars on the table, and picking and choosing only what money will reinforce the conservative ideas of job creation. Will the minister commit that not a dime of this job-creating federal early learning and child care funding will be left on the table?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It should be no surprise to hear from the NDP [New Democratic Party] opposite the position of the province should be "just take whatever Ottawa says." Because we heard that from those members opposite when it came to the carbon tax: whatever Ottawa says, just sign on to it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do is ensure that we take the time to ensure that we can access as much federal dollars as possible while ensuring that we have the flexibility to use those dollars. That is something that we need in Saskatchewan to be able to support all families that care for a child regardless of who provides that care or where that care is provided, Mr. Speaker. So I look forward to having these discussions with the federal minister and our officials engaging with Ottawa as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, it's very disappointing to me that on early childhood educators day here in the province, the minister chose to torque up hyper-partisanship answers rather than deal with the actual concerns that those in the sectors have repeatedly brought to this government.

We're not talking about a handful of cash here, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about a billion dollars. The facts show that currently we cannot train enough ECEs in Saskatchewan for the demand. Retention and recruitment is a huge issue for centres across the province. We need a strategy to exponentially increase child care spaces over the next few years. The Sask Party made a big promise on a handful of child care spaces, but there was nothing in their budget for staffing, for training, or for affordability.

The minister has said that they'd be interested in the child care transfer "if it makes sense for the province." Growing our economy through increasing access and affordability of child care is something that makes sense, Mr. Speaker. In what world would a billion dollars for job creation and head starts for children not make sense for Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's something to hear from the member opposite that we should take the money when the federal budget hasn't even passed yet. Mr. Speaker, we're going to have discussions with the federal government in terms of what this could mean for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would just quote from a *National Post* editorial from a couple of days ago:

Flexibility also means subsidizing many kinds of daycares to meet the needs of today's diverse workforce. The budget commits "support primarily for the not-for-profit sector," which would leave out private operators, often small female-owned businesses, that provide daycare to today's workforce . . .

Mr. Speaker, that was written by Janice MacKinnon and Jack Mintz.

Mr. Speaker, we also agree in looking for flexibility. It's no wonder that the NDP's own report on the election said too many working people no longer see the NDP as their party. I think you can add former NDP cabinet ministers to that list as well.

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

### AgriStability and Support for Agriculture

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it would be an understatement to say that this spring has been a difficult time for everyone in our province. But for producers, the drought conditions, the lack of moisture that we've seen in the recent months makes what's normally a busy seeding season a very stressful one as well. The same can be said for livestock producers. Producers know what's at stake.

We're all hoping and praying for rain to make this year's growing season a success. I know that the Minister of Agriculture is aware and shares the concern. But thoughts and prayers don't pay the bills, and there's something the Sask Party could do right now to help producers in our province if these drought conditions persist.

Will the Sask Party finally stop blocking the needed improvements around AgriStability and fix the AgriStability compensation rate to provide producers the peace of mind and stability that they need and deserve during these incredibly challenging times?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

**Hon. Mr. Bradshaw:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member for the question. First off, I want to thank our farmers and ranchers for all the good work they do here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's too early to determine whether regions will experience drought or flood conditions this year. We continue to monitor moisture conditions throughout the province. And under SCIC's [Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation] multiple insurance program, crops that do not grow or adequately establish may be eligible for establishment benefit.

We also encourage producers to consider SCIC's full suite of programs, including crop insurance, AgriStability, and livestock price insurance. The enrolment deadline for AgriStability has been extended to June the 30th. Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to another question on agriculture.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — I don't think the minister heard the question. I don't think he's been listening to producers, and I'd encourage the minister to take that answer out to the farm gate and see how that goes over. Producers are united in calling on this government to get off their hands, stop leaving federal dollars on the table, and to fix AgriStability. This is a program that is supposed to support producers through challenging years.

Saskatchewan producers, farm groups, and the official opposition have been pushing hard for the removal of the reference margin limit and compensation rates. This

government's half measure just doesn't cut it. Let's listen to what Todd Lewis said, president of APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan], on the point around going further: "Farmers' costs and business risks have both increased significantly since the program was cut in 2013, so we still need improvements to the compensation rate."

Why won't the Minister of Agriculture commit to doing that today? Why won't he fix AgriStability?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

**Hon. Mr. Bradshaw:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for that question. As we all well know, agriculture is the backbone of Saskatchewan. We supported the removal of the RML [reference margin limit] to provide additional support to our producers.

In the last FPT [federal-provincial-territorial] meeting, provinces voted on a proposal asking the federal government to provide their 60 per cent share of the cost to increase the compensation rate. The proposal was supported by the majority of provinces participating in the call, which represent the vast majority of agriculture production in Saskatchewan. The fact is, I believe we have about 40 per cent of the agriculture right here in Saskatchewan.

We hope that the federal minister will keep their money available to producers. I'm proud to talk about what our government has done to support Saskatchewan producers. Last year we provided support to producers dealing with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic . . .

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's pathetic. It's clear the minister has no clue what the producers of Saskatchewan have been pushing for on this front, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that that government, that Sask Party is taking producers for granted.

[14:15]

It's as if this government thinks that they have their vote, and now they don't need to have their backs, Mr. Speaker, and that's shameful. Producers deserve support. Federal dollars are on the table. Agricultural groups are united on this front. The only folks who can't seem to see the light are the prairie conservative premiers that are blocking this very important fix.

These changes would go a long, long way to protecting producers if these drought conditions continue, provide a foundation of support that will help producers lead us out of this pandemic. The minister doesn't have the ability to control the weather, but he could fix AgriStability here today. Will he do just that?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, you know what's pathetic? What is pathetic is the way that the NDP, when they were in government, treated farmers. That is what is pathetic. I was a producer at that time, Mr. Speaker. I was a producer when they closed all of the rural ag centres across the entire province.

I was a producer when they downloaded onto farmers taxes, property taxes, to the point that there was a tax revolt for the first time in this province . . . was under the NDP because what they did to farmers.

Mr. Speaker, you want to talk about safety net? Let's talk about the safety net contract that farmers had under the NDP. They tore it up. They did not honour it. They tore it up. It was known as GRIP [gross revenue insurance program]. And farmers will never forgive them. And then when there was federal negotiations on another safety net, do you know where the Agriculture minister was, Mr. Speaker? The Agriculture minister was sitting on the beaches in Mexico. That was my predecessor, Eric Upshall.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 605 — *The Protecting a Woman's Right to Access Abortion Services Act*

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 605, *The Protecting a Woman's Right to Access Abortion Services Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member from Saskatoon University that Bill No. 605 be now introduced and read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Clerk:** — First reading of this bill.

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

**Ms. Bowes:** — At the next sitting of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

## WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question no. 21.

**The Speaker:** — Ordered.

**Clerk:** — Committee of Finance.

**The Speaker:** — I do now leave the Chair for Committee of Finance.

[14:30]

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Executive Council Vote 10

**The Chair:** — Good afternoon. The business before the committee are the estimates for Executive Council.

The first item of business are the main estimates for Executive Council, vote 10, found on page 53 of the Saskatchewan Estimates book. Before we begin, I would like to advise the Committee of Finance of the process. First I will invite the Premier to introduce his officials, followed by calling the estimate. Then the Premier can make his opening remarks. Will the Premier now introduce his officials, please.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for presiding over this committee meeting here this afternoon. I have with me a number of officials that I will introduce. To my left, we have Shannon Andrews, who is the Premier's chief of staff, Mr. Speaker. Behind Shannon is Cam Swan, the deputy minister to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, right behind myself is Michelle Lang. She is the executive director of House business and research. We have to my right, Reg Downs, who is the special advisor to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. And in the back, Mr. Speaker, we have Kristen Fry who will be sourcing any information that we may require throughout the next three hours. Thank you.

### Subvote (EX01)

**The Chair:** — Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX01), central management and services. The Premier may proceed with his opening remarks.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Once again, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and welcome to all members here in what is a very unique and hopefully never-to-be-repeated session, Madam Chair.

Before I begin, I want to take this opportunity once again to thank the people of Saskatchewan. The people of Saskatchewan have most certainly rose to each and every challenge that has presented itself over the course of the last, now, just over a year. I want to thank them for their hard work, for their diligence, and most importantly for their sacrifice over the course of addressing this COVID-19 pandemic. And I want to thank them for showing up and getting their vaccine when it is their turn.

It's been a long year for all of us in this House. It's been a long six weeks in this House, Madam Chair. But it has been a year that has seen this province pull together, Madam Chair, pull together by ultimately staying apart. It's a year that has saw tremendous sacrifice by people, families, communities, and most certainly is a year where we have seen the spirit of Saskatchewan on true display.

I think as we look back over the course of the past year, we should . . . I think it's paramount and very important that we don't minimize what has occurred in Saskatchewan, across Canada, and in many other areas of the world. We have implemented in this province — I'll speak specifically to this province — some of what are likely the most significant public health measures that

have ever been implemented on the people in this province's history.

Madam Chair, this past year the Government of Saskatchewan, alongside many other governments, have . . . well we've inserted ourselves into the everyday life of Saskatchewan people. We've impacted people's personal freedoms. There's been some tremendously difficult decisions over the course of the past year. This has had impacts. This has had impacts in a positive way in ensuring that we can control the COVID outbreaks here in Saskatchewan. And when you look at some of the early modelling that was provided, Saskatchewan people have done very well in controlling the outbreaks of COVID here in Saskatchewan.

But there are many other impacts that this past year has given rise to. There are mental health impacts which we see in our families. We see them in our communities. We see them with our friends. We think to the past school year, the disruptions that have occurred in our classrooms — going to distance-based learning; going back into the classroom. The disruptions have been very real for our children and for our educators and all of the staff in our schools.

We've missed two graduations. Two classes in this province have missed their graduation celebration. Madam Chair, university has been moved virtually to online across the province, virtually all of the classes. I myself have two children that have been learning from their apartments. These are very important years for that age of a person, those young adults, very important years socially. And these have been very . . . a very challenging year.

People's incomes, people's livelihoods in this province have been impacted over the course of the past year. You look at our communities that have been impacted. In the early days of COVID with the northern communities and the discussions that we had, the minister of Government Relations at the time and today's Social Services minister, the weekly and daily discussions that she had with northern leaders on the travel restrictions that we had to put in place in those early days. Look at the travel restrictions we have now, the travel restrictions in our capital city of Regina that has caused us to be here and consistently away from our families for many of us for a number of weeks now.

Think of the young parents. I talk about their children's school interruptions that they've had, child care interruptions that have occurred, career interruptions for many young parents in our province. You think of the families across this province that have had to worship in a different way and continue to to this day. Think of our grandparents not being able to see their grandkids.

I think of probably one of the most difficult decisions that I was involved in throughout the course of the past year was the measures that we brought in with respect to our long-term care homes. Madam Chair, we had families that . . . We had families across this province that weren't able to see their loved ones for months. Most certainly it's an important, it's a necessary decision to keep our family members safe from this awful virus. And so many that had their surgeries delayed, weren't able to visit their loved ones in hospitals. The Leader of the Opposition is among them, and his family.

The kids, that drastically altered their sporting opportunities that they have, maybe less so here in Saskatchewan than other areas of Canada, but it's changed. This last year has certainly changed how we all function each and every day.

We had weddings. We had funerals that have been delayed, have went on with small groups, went on virtually. We had funerals in this caucus of family members. We had rodeos, we had fall suppers, we had fundraisers in communities across Saskatchewan that just simply didn't happen this past year. We haven't been to a Riders game, a Rush game, a Rattlers game. We haven't been able to . . . We have now our WHL [Western Hockey League], have been able to watch with the bubble here in Regina. We had birthdays, anniversaries. We've missed Easter. We missed Remembrance Day. We barely had Christmas. Can't even go outside these doors and walk around the lake counter-clockwise.

Over the course of the past year I've taken part in many press conferences with our chief medical health officer, Dr. Shahab, and others. And you know, I went down and read out very significant measures, very significant measures that have been implemented in our communities, and our province, and on people.

These are difficult decisions, Madam Chair. These have been very, very difficult decisions, as they should be. Are they necessary decisions? Yes. Have they helped? Yes. But they have been difficult. And they are not decisions that we ever, ever took lightly. Nor will we in the days ahead.

Governments should only come to decisions like we have had to make over the course of the past year reluctantly because of the impacts that these decisions ultimately have: impacts on our communities, impacts on our families, and the impacts ultimately on the people that we represent.

Now, Madam Chair, we've reached a time where we are going to return to normal. We are going to return to enjoying the personal freedoms that we have taken for granted for all our life. We are seeing Saskatchewan people again rise to the occasion not just by following the public health orders that are in place, but they are rolling up their sleeves and they are truly sticking it to COVID each and every day as we speak.

We were the first in Canada to reintroduce our road map to reopening, a three-step plan, a very simple plan. It's not just a reopening plan, it's a plan that also will encourage people to continue to follow those public health orders and encourage people to most certainly go out and get vaccinated. And this is how we are going to find our way back to normal.

With respect to the budget, I'm very proud. A very challenging budget as well, but very proud of the budget that the Finance minister has tabled in this Assembly. And I want to take the opportunity to thank her, thank the treasury board that we have, as well as thank all of the officials over at the Ministry of Finance that put an awful lot of work into that annual process of delivering a budget on behalf of the people of this province. This budget most certainly will protect families, it will build our communities, and it will help grow our economy in Saskatchewan.

As we look ahead, we look at the world that is going to exit COVID in the months ahead, over the course of the next year. We most certainly want to be part of that global recovery, and I think Saskatchewan is poised to take part in that global recovery in a very big way. Our province has what the world needs to lead, and we will lead in the global economic recovery. And our government is going to do everything in our power to create an environment that fosters that economic growth right here in this province, this budget being a start of that, the plan for growth being the targets that we have set.

In this spring alone we have seen some tremendous investments in the province. We have seen Saskatchewan now become the canola crush capital of the world, over doubling our capacity with three significant investments of Cargill, Viterra, and Richardson.

We're seeing helium, the helium industry start and continue to expand. We're seeing ag manufacturing expand with a Clean Seed facility moving their head office here. And we're seeing a continued expansion in our fertilizer industry with a Saskatchewan Mining and Minerals fertilizer investment. These are real jobs not only in construction but are real jobs for years into the future for Saskatchewan people.

In this province, in this great province of Saskatchewan, Madam Chair, we have a plan. We have a plan, yes, to get people vaccinated. We have a plan, yes, to reopen our province. And we have a plan to continue the growth that we have enjoyed for over a decade now in Saskatchewan.

I'm very proud of this budget as being a step, a rung in the ladder if you will, to that ultimate plan in Saskatchewan. It was introduced by the Minister of Finance, and I'm very confident that it contains the investments that will protect, will build, and will grow our great province, and will see us ultimately through the COVID pandemic, support our families through the COVID pandemic, and allow that economic recovery to occur as we exit.

So thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to some questions from the Leader of the Opposition.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the official Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I appreciate you being here for us today to chair this important discussion. Thank you, Mr. Premier, for your opening remarks. Thanks to the officials for being present here today. I will take a quick moment to thank some of the other folks who are always working hard for us: the folks at Hansard that somehow manage to turn the gobbledygook that comes out of our mouths into full, complete sentences. The folks who keep us safe: Sergeant, and all of the team in security. The Table Officers who have done so much to adapt, and the Speaker's office as well, and the Speaker himself, to adapt to these unusual circumstances. It's been a very strange year and a very strange session, but I really appreciate the work done by so many to make it work.

And that includes the folks who I have the fortune of working with in our caucus office including our chief of staff, Sally Housser, who does an incredible job leading our staff team and keeping me in line. I also want to thank the colleagues in this House. I want to thank the members who are here with me today and those in the empty seats as well who have been stepping up

in remarkable ways. In particular, we've seen the veteran MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] showing the way for the new folks, and the new folks really stepping up and looking like they've been at it for a long, long time.

And I want to also thank the colleagues from the Sask Party as well. Now I will admit there's been some moments in this House in this session that are worse than I've seen before, and the behaviour of some of the senior ministers, Health and Economy, are remarkably poorly managed, Mr. Speaker, and it's hard to see. But those are outliers and they are outliers among members that I have seen perform in much, much more respectful and gentle ways, and even seen some remarkable collaboration between members on our side and our neighbours. And so I'm very grateful for that.

[14:45]

I'm grateful as well for some of the members on the other side who have come up to me personally or reached out personally when we were having some health problems with my father. I really do appreciate that very generous outreach in those difficult moments. A little update for the House: Dad moved from the hospital here in Regina to Moose Jaw a couple of days ago. He's more present and with us every day, and we have a great deal of hope.

I want to share with the Premier my thanks to the people of Saskatchewan. And he showed some emotion here, and I share that emotion. This has been a difficult time for every family, for every person in this province, and I know it's been a difficult time for him as well. And I want to thank him for the acknowledgement that, you know, we were one of the families who had a hard time, seeing a loved one bearing a health emergency. And you know, we were at a moment where we thought my kids, who hadn't seen their grandparents since the summer because we were being real careful, might never see their grandpa at all. And we're really grateful that's not going to be what happens.

But we know that so many families have had experiences exactly like that, and people have given up so much. And that those choices are difficult in leadership, public health and political leadership. They're not easy decisions. That's also why it's so important that we get those decisions right.

And we have seen, sadly but truly, this government let the people of Saskatchewan down. We've seen choices made too late and ineffectively, insufficiently. And as a result, I heard the Premier talk a lot about the difficulties and inconveniences and drawbacks of the public health measures, and I share those. They are truly serious sacrifices that people have made. But there was very little mention of all of the people who've been sick, all of the people who've died. And we cannot forget that we didn't get it right. We didn't get it right when it came to keeping people safe. We didn't get it right when it came to making sure that those sacrifices did what they were intended to do and making sure that they were as brief as possible.

So, Mr. Speaker . . . Madam Deputy Speaker; pardon me. I'll try not to do that too many times. I do want to share the thanks to the Saskatchewan people for all of the work they've done, all the sacrifices they've made, and add a special thanks to those who've

been working in health care, working in public health, working delivering vaccines, in emergency rooms and our overwhelmed ICUs. I know how burnt out and tired you are. Please let's hope that this is the end. And hold on for a little longer. Keep working hard. We see you. We thank you. We know how much you have sacrificed.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll move into some questions. And we'll start with a bit of a discussion.

These are estimates, of course, for Executive Council. In terms of those estimates for Executive Council, there is a 2.5 per cent increase. What is behind that increase year over year? Are there any changes in the civil service side of Executive Council or in the Premier's office side of the Executive Council expenditures?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to go through, we're up 2.51 per cent with our Executive Council budget this year. What that consists of is \$150,000 of that increase is for one FTE [full-time equivalent]. It's to rebuild the intergov relations unit that we have, to ensure that the unit can continue to support the Executive Council Premier's office.

Now intergov unit has been extremely busy over the course of the past year as well. Busy actually a couple of years ago when we hosted Council of Federation, which I believe there was a spike in the budget that particular year specific to hosting the Council of Federation meeting. And then into the COVID pandemic, which began last year, which we chaired for an extended period of time beyond our June time frame when we would have handed off to Premier Legault in Quebec. So we did chair the Council of Federation, I believe, until sometime into the fall, and then handed off to Quebec at that point in time. And ultimately this summer they will hand off, I believe, to Manitoba next.

So we were up two and a half per cent. One of those FTEs is to support the weekly, biweekly Council of Federation calls that we have . . . the intergovernmental relations department. But that would be calls that we have through the Council of Federation that are now weekly or biweekly, as well as our First Ministers' calls that also are one, two, sometimes three a month.

So that's the first \$150,000. The other 160,000 increase was just simply for the economic adjustments to salaries which is consistent with the increase received by all government employees across government.

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. The Ministry of Trade and Export Development is the lead ministry when it comes to the trade offices in China and other countries that have been announced and are under development.

What is Executive Council's role in coordinating with these offices? What role does Executive Council play in determining which countries would see offices open, including the offices in China? And what role does Executive Council play in deciding who will be the personnel leading these offices?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — And so Executive Council's interaction with the trade offices on a, you know, official financial basis isn't existent. These are funded through the Ministry of Trade and Export. We have a number of offices around the world now. We

ran on this. I ran on this in the leadership campaign to ensure that Saskatchewan was being properly represented in those countries where we are doing business — not just economic business, but also immigration is flowing back and forth. Post-secondary students are attending in many of these countries as well.

So what we have here is China is one of the offices that we do have . . . Let me back up. Each of these offices are then staffed by qualified public servants that are hired like any public servant is. Many of them are co-located with our embassies, with our High Commissions, with our consulates in those areas, do work very closely with the Canadian consulates, the Canadian embassies as well.

And it is very beneficial, both from a cost perspective as well as from an operational perspective, where we are able to co-locate with our Canadian counterparts but ensure that Saskatchewan is being represented, ensure that Saskatchewan is . . . And these folks will work on various trade missions, whether that be myself arriving, whether that be the Minister of Trade and Export arriving, whether it be the Minister of Agriculture. We have other ministers also that have travelled into these countries and they do receive the support from these offices.

So one has been in China. We are up in 2020 with our exports to China, just over \$4 billion. Japan is one of the more recent offices that has been opened. We're up in our exports to Japan, just over \$1.2 billion. India, up over 100 per cent in India, back up to \$1.2 billion. India is one of the offices that we have opened. And today we — I believe it's today — we announced Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam, London, and Dubai.

Brazil, we are doing great trade in Brazil, up 300 per cent year over year to just under \$1 billion. Saskatchewan is exporting just under a billion dollars of exports into Brazil. Much upside opportunity there, as well as Mexico. In particular with the tripartite updating of the NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] agreement to the USMCA [United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement] or the CUSMA [Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement] or whatever you want to refer to that agreement with, we worked very hard on alongside many other provinces and our federal government. But Mexico is up almost 100 per cent in our exports to just over \$700 million.

There are two other avenues that we use for contacting and working with foreign governments as well as, you know, whoever we may want to, you know, line up an appointment, have a discussion with in other countries. And those are two consultants that we do also procure through the Ministry of Trade and Export. One is Harper & Associates, and with that we have access to discussions with the former prime minister. The second consultant that we have used now for a number of years is in the USA [United States of America] which would be our largest exporting nation that we work with which is absent from that list that I read earlier, and that's because we do use Nelson Mullins and associates.

The former ambassador to Canada is an individual that we work with quite closely on our relationship with the US [United States] government at all levels, whether it be the Senate, Congress. We've met with secretaries to the president in years gone by, as well as lined up a number of meetings with governors across the



nation. And yesterday I was, for example . . . Well we go back a week or two, for example, the relationship with Doug Burgum in North Dakota that we have fostered over time and part is due to the relationship and the efforts of a group like Nelson Mullins.

So we have felt that in a number of countries around the world, the trade offices have served very well not only in allowing and helping and organizing trade missions where we will arrive, but in ensuring that Saskatchewan is in touch with our customers of interest in between those said trade missions as well.

**Mr. Meili:** — We've seen troubling developments in China in recent years, speaking of some of the places where we have these independent offices being formed. We've seen genocide against religious and ethnic minorities and hostage diplomacy against Canadians in China. The House of Commons recently unanimously voted in favour of declaring those actions a genocide. What is the position of the Government of Saskatchewan when it comes to whether or not the Government of China is engaging in genocide against the Uighur people?

[15:00]

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Just before I begin this answer, Madam Chair, I'll just correct myself. Albeit our exports are up in Brazil, we did not open an office in Brazil. Mexico, Vietnam, London, and Dubai were in the announcement here today.

With respect to our office in China, we've had an office in China for, I'm going to say about a decade now. That office continues to exist and is open. However we have not been in China over the course of the last quite some time and not planning to go in the near future.

And the Leader of the Opposition is correct. There's been some troubling events that have occurred in China over the course of the past while. Saskatchewan has not been immune to some of the consequences of that event, nor has Canada for sure. But Saskatchewan has not been immune with some of the trade sanctions that have been placed with respect to some of the agricultural products that we do and hopefully continue to send into China.

With respect to foreign policy, Saskatchewan doesn't have a foreign policy. We support the policy of the federal government.

**Mr. Meili:** — Just to clarify. That means the Premier does agree with the parliamentarians who voted unanimously that genocide has been committed in China?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Yes.

**Mr. Meili:** — Thank you very much.

We had an election a few months ago. It's come up a few times in the House. One of the things that the Premier liked to talk about on that election trail was a balanced budget by 2024-2025. He talked about this all the time. In the debate he came out, and you know, was quite aggressive in making a big deal out of us not making that same irresponsible claim, knowing that it wasn't possible, given the reality of the fiscal situation of Saskatchewan, the reality of the economic impacts of COVID-19, and yet he made it over and over again — that false pledge. And he made it

again in January. And then suddenly when we get in here and he has to show real numbers, that pledge, pow, it's gone.

So to the Premier: what changed? What happened? Did you actually think that was going to happen and something changed, or were you simply telling people what you thought they wanted to hear in order to get their votes?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Madam Chair, with respect to the data that we were using to formulate our budget commitment during the campaign, at that time the data that we were using was from the second-quarter financials of the province of Saskatchewan. And those are prepared, obviously, by the Ministry of Finance. So based on the available information that was released here in the province at that point in time, understanding there was much uncertainty, we discussed that through the last session prior to the election, the last session in this House.

As we made our way through December, January, February, March, April, there has been the pandemic — in fairness, not just in Saskatchewan, but across this nation. It has gone on longer and has run deeper and has required additional significant measures, not just here in Saskatchewan. But as we look across the nation today, there are significant measures that are continuing to be implemented in other provinces and in other areas of the world. We look at the, you know, very tragic consequences that our friends in India are facing today for example.

So the data that we used at the time of the budget formulation as we led into this spring, quite honestly, it had changed. The data that was prepared by the Ministry of Finance had changed. And so that has caused us to change our balanced budget estimates from what was originally 2024-25 year out to the '26-27. We believe that is very prudent, a prudent estimate. We believe it's a very conservative estimate.

That being said, we are doing today quite well here in Saskatchewan, with finding our COVID numbers continuing to decrease over our seven-day averages. Our hospitalizations are continuing to decrease over the course of the past month, and for that we're grateful to the people of this province.

But we will, as Saskatchewan . . . We mentioned in the earlier answer, we have trade offices around the world. The reason for that is we are a big, large participant in the global economy. We produce, make, and ultimately manufacture goods for people all around the world. We do need the global economic recovery to begin as well. We need the global economic engine to start to rev its engine so that Saskatchewan can ultimately participate in that global economic recovery.

And so we believe the estimate that we have here before us today is based in the most recent data that we have from the Ministry of Finance officials, and we believe it is a very prudent estimate. It's one that we may be able to improve on should some of the talk about, you know, commodities prices continue to increase over the course of the next number of years. That is going to bode very well for Saskatchewan.

And we're starting to see a number of companies invest in Saskatchewan, in our strengths that we have in our province, canola crush being one of the most notable ones. It's not only going to create jobs here, but I believe that when you look at the

literally billions of dollars these companies are investing in infrastructure in Saskatchewan, that they feel the future is very bright for us participating in that global economic recovery.

So we used the latest data last year using the Q2 [second quarter] data. We used the latest data here more recently as we moved into the budget. In that budget we fulfilled all of our campaign promises, the commitments that we'd kept to Saskatchewan people.

And as a result of that budget, the bond rating agencies and those involved have had some reasonably strong comments, quite strong comments with respect to the budget that was delivered by the Minister of Finance. And I'll read just a couple of them, and I quote from RBC Economics: "Saskatchewan is deploying the resources to fight both the pandemic as well as bolster the recovery." RBC Economics went on to say that "Harpauer's 2021 budget charts the course for Saskatchewan into the strong recovery that will follow."

Madam Chair, that is the answer to the question that was asked, is we used the latest available data last fall and we used the most recent data this spring.

**Mr. Meili:** — You know it's comical to hear someone stand up and say we've completed all our campaign promises on a question that was about the biggest promise that he clearly did not complete, the number one promise. He didn't go out there and say, we hope to be able to balance the budget, we might be able to balance the budget by 2024-25. He said, I will balance the budget by 2024 or '25. There was no uncertainty. So he was certain, perhaps, or he was certain that that's what people wanted to hear. And he was willing to tell them whatever he needed to to get their votes.

But the fact is he made that promise. He made that promise loud and clear, and then he went on to completely mismanage the second wave doing huge damage to our economy, making that promise impossible. So to the Premier: does he regret going out there saying day after day that he would do something that was never within his power to achieve?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Madam Chair, no, as I said in the previous answer. And we used the data that is available to us, as I'm sure the opposition party does as well, in formulating their budget. If I remember correctly, they forgot to count all of the expenditures and the commitments that they had made with respect to their campaign. We did not, however; we'd fully costed the campaign that we'd had. We used the latest available data at that point in time.

As I said, the COVID pandemic has ran longer and deeper than people anticipated, including ourselves, at that point in time. We see it continuing to run long and deep in some of our neighbouring provinces. Most particularly we see Manitoba, we see Ontario, we see Alberta having some very challenging numbers, and you know, being faced with making some very difficult decisions. And my heart goes out to all of those people in leadership positions as well as those in the medical field and the people that are ultimately abiding by the measures that are put in place.

Mr. Speaker, in saying we go through this today, I think this is

maybe an opportune time for us to . . . I'd just be very clear on what we have heard over the course of the last number of weeks in this House, and quite frankly, you know, what we're likely going to hear in here over the course of the next couple of hours. And I think it's the difference between the two sides that was actually reported on and stated quite clearly in the post-mortem of the opposition party that was published. The name was "Sask. NDP completes autopsy of election loss." That's not a good title for a political party. But in the article the Leader of the Opposition he says, and I quote, ". . . his party needs to campaign 365 days a year . . ." And he goes on to say, "The campaign is on now."

The NDP is campaigning 365 days a year. The campaign is on now, according to their leader. And that means that each and every day in this House he is campaigning. He is campaigning here today over the course of the next couple of hours. You know, through the actual campaign they had talked about putting people first, and now we're in this House they continue to campaign. They're actually putting politics first in many ways, Madam Chair.

The fact of the matter is is that the members on this side of the House and a few of them over there, the government members, Madam Chair, we don't have time to be campaigning. The campaign is over. Our side is busy governing. The campaign occurred last year; we did campaign throughout that time period. And that means that, you know, we are governing. We are doing the hard work that is necessary to ensure that we are passing a budget in this House that protects our people that we represent, that builds our communities, and ultimately continues to grow our great province of Saskatchewan.

It means that we have had to make decisions to manage through this pandemic, this COVID-19 pandemic. Yes, that means implementing measures that are very difficult but effective at times, and now it involves us governing to lead this province out of the pandemic, the first province to put forward and charting our course on how we are precisely going to do that. We are able to do that because of what Saskatchewan people have done in following our public health measures and what they have done in allowing us — moving, making their appointments, getting in line to get their vaccines — allowing us, through the hard work of the Saskatchewan Health Authority and other health care workers, to lead the nation in our vaccination rollout here in Saskatchewan. That has allowed us to have the very first and I would say one of the . . . well the only reopening plan in this nation at this time.

So this side is governing. The opposition continues to campaign. It explains a lot. It explains why throughout this session we have seen a government that is very serious about the issues that are at play and we've seen quite literally, you know, an unserious opposition that has hurled very childish names and insults across the floor of this legislature. And I think it says a lot about what we're going to hear in the days ahead as well.

[15:15]

**Mr. Meili:** — The Premier loves to talk about campaigns. Well he made a lot of promises on this recent campaign. Promises he's gone on to break and spectacularly so. That big promise of a balanced budget, that was never real but he talked about it every

single day.

There's another promise that he made. He promised to invest in long-term care. Promised to Saskatchewan people that he'd be adding 300 CCAs [continuing care aid] to care for seniors this year. Not over a handful of years, not when the money managed to be around, not when the Premier gets around to it — this year.

When we asked about it in the fall, knowing what we were facing with the second wave, the minister for rural and remote care, the Minister for Seniors said, no don't worry it'll be in this budget. We should have had it in the fall, should have made those investments then to protect long-term care, but no it was coming in this budget. The Premier repeated this over and over again. And it would've never done enough to address the chronic short-staffing in our health care system, but you'd think he would at least keep his word when it comes to 300 people that he promised to hire.

As recently as the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, just days before we started in this House, those 300 care aids were still coming in the first, in the first year. Three weeks after that convention he broke his word. Now he's acting like it was always the case. But people in Saskatchewan aren't stupid, Mr. Premier. You can't . . . How do you say with a straight face what they can see with their own eyes in your own platform document why you went back on this promise?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank you for the question. We discussed the, you know . . . We're going to discuss a number of the commitments that we've made to the people of the province here over the course of this answer.

We discussed the data that we used for the balancing of the budget here in the province with respect to the 300 new continuing care aids. There is much effort in the way of ensuring that this will come along as quickly as we most certainly can, effort that is being put into training for our continuing care aids here in the province to ensure that the training is matching the hiring needs that we have into the future.

The commitment, yes, is 300 new continuing care aids in the province. That's one new continuing care aid for about every 50 residents in long-term care. Long-term care, our long-term care residents and families have been through a very trying year this year. But that will result in about 180 continuing care aids to support our long-term care residents in our long-term care facilities. There's a total then, to get up to 300, of another 120 continuing care aids that will allow us to strengthen our home care service in communities right across Saskatchewan. Sixty-three of these CCAs will strengthen home care services across the province, and 57 CCAs will be targeted towards expanding home care services in remote areas, including providing after-hour service on weekends, evenings, things of that nature.

So this year the investment is \$6 million to do about 108 of these CCAs. There will be additional investment as we go into next year. And we're going to hire as many as we most certainly can to ensure that we are fulfilling the commitment of CCAs that we made to the people of this province, which was among a number of commitments that we made to the people of Saskatchewan that

were very focused on their family affordability, focused on ensuring that we are not only making life more affordable for families here in Saskatchewan, but also creating that environment where investments like we see arriving now can occur and ultimately achieve the targets that we had put forward in our plan for growth.

But we had the home renovation tax credit going to be passed here shortly, if it hasn't been already; the 10 per cent rebate on our power bills in the province delivered as well; the increase in the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship by 50 per cent for our youth that are also having a very challenging year. We reduced small-business taxes to zero. That will over the course of the next two years come back to 1 and then ultimately back to 2 per cent, still a very competitive small-business tax rate here in Saskatchewan.

We restarted the active families benefit, and \$6 million a year has been provided to expand our autism funding here in the province. We've expanded the insulin pump program for those living with type 1 diabetes, and we're covering the cost of continuous glucose monitoring also for those that are living with diabetes. We reduced the maximum cost of ambulance calls by 50 per cent — that's down to \$135 a call — and we eliminated the cost of inter-facility ambulance charges.

We increased the seniors' income plan yet again in this province; it's up to \$360 a month. We talked about the 300 continuing care aids, which 108 are included in this budget, and we'll continue to hire those to support our family members in long-term care homes. We increased the supports for our Deaf and Deaf-blind residents here in the province. And we restarted the community rinks affordability grant.

But back to health care for a minute. You know, this is an area of particular interest to myself and I know it is to the Leader of the Opposition as well, as he's spent his career in health care. I also spent some volunteer time — a lot of volunteer time — prior to coming into politics, advocating and working on our local health facility in the community where I live — and which you know very well, Madam Chair, as you are adjacent to that community as well — where we were fortunate back in I believe 2008 or 9 when we had the announcements of 13 long-term care facilities across the province.

The community where I live, the community of Shellbrook, was fortunate to be one of those 13 communities. I myself was very involved as Co-Chair of the local fundraising committee, worked with communities not only in Shellbrook but surrounding communities as well to ensure that we had our contribution to that particular project, a project that had been worked on, started work at the community level in 1991. It was successful finally in securing an announcement and ultimately construction of that facility under a Saskatchewan Party government. A facility at the same time was also committed to in Prince Albert.

A record of this government is to invest in long-term care: Tisdale, Kelvington, Watrous, Biggar, Kerrobert, Rosetown, Kipling, Radville, Redvers, one in Regina, Saskatoon, and Swift Current. We also did a partnership with one of our faith-based groups shortly after that in the city of Saskatoon, Madam Chair. Since then, we are now working on an additional facility in Meadow Lake. There's one in La Ronge. There is Grenfell. We

have Estevan, as well as a significant investment in long-term care that is going to occur right here again in our capital city of Regina.

This has been a priority, not just in the capital investment, but as we began this conversation with increasing our continuing care aids. We have invested in capital, continue to invest in capital, right up to and including this most recent budget that was introduced. And we are investing in the people that are working in those facilities providing that ever so important care, whether it be a hospital, whether it be long-term care facility, or whether it be in our communities offering home care to our family members as well.

**Mr. Meili:** — It is an insult to the intelligence of Saskatchewan people for this Premier to stand up and say that black is white. He said it; the minister said it. It was in the platform in black and white. There had to be a reason. Why did the Premier promise 300 continuing care aids in the first year and then go back on that promise immediately after the election? It's a simple question.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — As I, Madam Chair, as I said in the initial answer, really there's an all-hands-on-deck effort with respect to how can we source these 300 CCAs. And if we were able to source them today, we would find a way to . . . we would certainly find a way to employ them in Saskatchewan here today. There is a shortage of continuing care aids, not only in Saskatchewan, but across the nation. I referenced in my earlier answer that we're . . . Part of the investment in this budget is to expand the training for our continuing care aids here in Saskatchewan so that people, youth, can — well anyone — can ultimately choose that career, get the training here, and ultimately find employment here for years into the future.

I'll just reference a personal conversation that I bore witness to as we went through some of our Council of Federation meetings and some of the discussions that we had with our neighbouring provinces across the nation. We all know . . . And I spoke in my opening comments about some of the most difficult decisions that we made with respect to the measures that we put in place at our long-term care facilities, and the impacts that those measures had on families and our family members that are residents in those facilities. But we saw what happened when COVID got into our long-term care facilities in Canada. Not as much in Saskatchewan, but in Canada. And we saw the resulting fatalities from that.

We saw the challenges in sourcing people to provide that care during what was a very challenging time in a couple of our largest provinces, in Quebec and Ontario. And I can remember there was a time when Premier Legault had publicly stated they needed 10,000 continuing care aids or people that can do that work immediately. There is a need for continuing care aids, not just in Saskatchewan, across this nation. We saw the army ultimately go into many of these care homes. We saw Premier Legault take nurses and doctors and ask them to go in and do continuing care duties to take care of Quebecers' family members that are in those homes as well.

So, Madam Chair, what we are doing is we are putting forward as aggressive as a hiring program as we possibly can here in Saskatchewan. One hundred and eight of these positions are going to be made; every effort and funding has been provided for

those to be filled. If we can go beyond that, we most certainly will. And in the meantime, we're also expanding our training opportunities so that Saskatchewan people or others that are moving here can ultimately take their training and fill one of these 300 positions as well to provide care to our Saskatchewan family members.

**Mr. Meili:** — In that election campaign, the Premier also promised that there would be no cuts to key services. Yet here we are staring down another round of cuts to classrooms. Saskatoon Public has an \$8 million hole in their budget that they're trying to dig out of because this government continues to starve the education sector. Overcrowded classrooms, complexity in the classroom without the supports for kids who need it, and now kids are going to have to do so much work to catch up after a year in which school has been disrupted in so many ways.

And yet this budget . . . the news release comes out and says \$19.2 million — sounds like an increase, sounds like a lot — but there was no footnote saying that \$23 million was already dedicated to paying the teachers' salary increase, so it's actually a cut of nearly \$4 million to our schools overall.

We're seeing different cuts across the board, but what you are going to see is school boards across the province cutting teachers, cutting programs, and students paying the price. Does the Premier regret saying that he wouldn't cut education and then turning around and doing exactly that?

[15:30]

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. Again we see campaigning at play in this House.

The fact of the matter is, is that Saskatoon Public received a \$4.6 million increase this year. I'm going to run through a significant number of dollars across the education sector as a whole, not specific to Saskatoon Public, but Saskatoon Public would be one of the larger, if not one of the largest school divisions here in the province. And so they would be a participant to much of what I am going to run through here in the next couple of minutes as well.

First this year's education budget is \$2.66 billion. That's a 2.3 per cent increase over last year. That builds on many increases over the course of the last number of years, not only in operational dollars for our school divisions, which are up 39 per cent since 2006-07, since we formed government. Enrolment up about 13 per cent in that same period of time. We've hired more teachers in our schools. Over 1,500 more teachers have been hired in our schools. In fact there's been a new teacher hired for about every 11 children, every 11 students in our schools.

So the investment not only in capital projects, which is significant in Saskatchewan — 85 major school infrastructure projects; 57 of those are actual brand new school builds in many communities, one I believe going in Weyburn, the Minister of Education's home community, as we speak. I had the opportunity to tour that last year.

But of the increase this year and in addition to the actual increase this year, let me back up to the \$155 million that was made

available throughout last year's school year. And some of that, yes, is being carried over into this year's school year as well. And that came as a subsequent conversation from the Council of Federation table and the First Ministers' table with the Prime Minister present, where we had brokered the Safe Restart program, which was about a 19-and-a-bit-in-change-billion-dollar transfer from the federal government to the provinces.

We added an education factor onto that where . . . And I can't remember the exact amount. It was a few billion dollars. Saskatchewan's share of that was about \$75 million if I remember correctly. We added that \$75 million into already existing supports that were being provided by the provincial government to the school divisions to ensure that our classrooms were as safe as they could possibly be, given we were managing our way through this COVID pandemic, for a total of about \$155 million that was then available.

Twenty-one million of those dollars is actually being carried over to this new school year. So the school divisions this coming year have \$19 million in new dollars, operating dollars in the increase in this budget. They have \$21 million that has been carried over from last year to this year from what is the Safe Restart fund. They have a 3 to \$4 million lowering of their power bills this year due to the campaign commitment that we had made and followed through with in this budget.

One other point of note is that every year there are estimates that are put forward on our student population, and the funding formula is then put through with those estimates. And then as the school year progresses, those estimates are then formalized with what actually occurred in each of our school divisions. We haven't reallocated those dollars. We've allowed everyone to keep the dollars that they had in our original estimates to ensure that there's, you know, full and ample supports for our school divisions across Saskatchewan.

So that includes the Saskatoon Public School Division who, as I said, received a \$4.6 million increase this most recent year. In addition to that they will have a significant share, likely in the neighbourhood of a similar amount, that will be available to them from the \$21 million that was carried over from the Safe Restart fund. That Safe Restart fund was worked on quite closely with the Minister of Education and the school divisions. I believe that STF was involved with some of those discussions as well, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

But \$71 million of those dollars, of the 155, went to ensure that there was additional janitorial staff that could be provided to ensure that we're getting the cleanliness and sanitation that's required; there's equipment and furniture that was purchased; there was supports put in place for immunocompromised students in our schools, including 531 additional teachers and staff that were provided to ensure that our classrooms were as safe as they could possibly be; there's technology upgrades that were provided; there's independent school enrolments where there was funding provided; and there was additional staff supervision that was required and was provided; as well as a number of mental health and community supports that were put in place, for a total of about \$71 million.

Just under 21 million of the \$155 million was put in place for

interventions for grade 1 students who did not attend kindergarten, for example. And we spoke in our opening comments of having two graduating classes that had not had the opportunity to celebrate. We had a class that maybe didn't quite have the opportunity to attend kindergarten, and we needed to ensure that we had supports in place for those students, supporting our early years students, grades 1 to 3 that may have fallen behind slightly with their reading levels. These dollars are put in place to ensure staff are there to provide those supports for those students.

There was some one-time capital funds that were provided, over \$10 million in one-time capital funds where those capital projects would have been needed to ensure the safety of our students across Saskatchewan.

There was much PPE [personal protective equipment] that was bought, paid for by the school divisions, even prior to the funding being flowed from the federal and even the provincial government. And part of this fund actually went to backfill some of the invoices that the school divisions had so that we could keep the school divisions whole, keep the funding that they do receive focused on the students, and ultimately the student learning experience.

**Mr. Meili:** — The Premier seems to be accusing the folks at Saskatoon Public who wrote a letter out to all of the parents telling them about the \$8 million that they were going to be short, about the fact they'd have to let teachers go, that they'd have to cancel programs. He seems to be accusing them of misrepresenting the reality.

But, Madam Chair, that's not the case at all. The case is exactly here in the ministry's own table. The school divisions of Creighton, Holy Trinity, Light of Christ, Living Sky, Northern Lights, P.A. Catholic, Sask Rivers, South East Cornerstone all saw a decrease in their operating funds that they're receiving from the ministry this year. Chinook, Good Spirit, Lloydminster, North East, Prairie South, Prairie Valley all 1 per cent or less in the increase. The inflation in that period is 2.4 per cent.

The Premier actually pointed out some of the greater challenges that schools are facing right now. Why when schools are facing greater challenges, why when the Premier promised that he wouldn't cut funding to schools, are schools seeing millions of dollars in shortfalls? Why are you putting schools in the situation where they'll have to cut the supports that kids need at such a crucial time?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect again to the question specific to Saskatoon Public School Division, their lift was 1.9 per cent. It was \$4.625 million. In addition to that lift, like all the other school divisions, Saskatoon Public and all the other school divisions had \$6 million that was provided in the estimates last year on the student populations that are attending schools. When that wasn't re-based . . . the accounts were done, there was about \$6 million that was made available for students that did not attend school or were not in the classrooms. That was not pulled back as it would have been in, you know, years gone by to re-base the student population count that we have. And those dollars are as well carried forward. They were provided last year, carried forward again through this year. So that's \$6 million among all of the school divisions.

In addition to that, Saskatoon Public, as well as all of the other school divisions, will be receiving as of this week an SGI rebate for the vehicles that they ultimately have licensed, which will be significant. As well, as I said, there's 3 to \$4 million that is being saved this school year due to the reduction in the Saskatchewan power bills. And in addition to all of that, Madam Chair, there's \$21 million from the Safe Restart fund that was negotiated by this province and other provinces with the federal government.

[15:45]

Twenty-one million dollars of that original \$155 million that was provided, flow-through to our school divisions through the Ministry of Education, has been pulled forward to this coming year. So a number of dollars that are available to all of our school divisions, and including the Saskatoon Public School Division.

**Mr. Meili:** — I guess all those school divisions that are facing cuts, that can't keep up with the cost of inflation, that are cutting teachers, cutting programs, should just be grateful that it hasn't been worse under this government.

Mr. Speaker, while the Premier was too busy making promises he had no intention to keep on the campaign trail, he also stopped planning for the second wave. As he was out campaigning in September, the Premier proclaimed on Twitter, "Even though Justin Trudeau has recently said Canada is now in the second wave of COVID-19, I remain confident we can avoid a significant second wave here in Saskatchewan." As if tweeting would make it true.

He took this magical thinking so far as to make a campaign promise that there would be no more lockdowns. Well he may have stopped trying to address COVID, but surely health care leadership continued to examine what was going on, continued to do the modelling necessary to see what was happening.

To the Premier: was that modelling shared with him during the election? Did he continue to watch what was happening? And if so, why did he make that foolish no-lockdown promise that he knew he'd break only a few days after the election?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going to walk back through again, through the course of the past year. I picked a couple of points in time where the modelling was provided to the Government of Saskatchewan, the people in the province. It was provided in a very public way. If I go back to when this pandemic began, the very first modelling that I saw and that anyone saw in this province and the opposition members as well was pretty stark.

If you think back to that very first modelling presentation in March of 2020, it said that there would be as high as 300,000 cases in Saskatchewan. About 30 per cent of the people here almost would ultimately have COVID. It had predicted about 45,000 hospitalizations in the province; 15,000 of those would be in our intensive care units. And 9 to 15,000 fatalities due to COVID-19 was the first modelling numbers that were made available. I looked at that modelling, and I think I said at the time that there isn't a health care system available that is going to be able to address these challenges or these numbers that were put forward in the modelling, the very first modelling exercise that had went through in this province.

Thankfully to, yes, some very difficult decisions, but more so to what Saskatchewan people have done over the course of the past year, none of this has come to be reality — 300,000 cases predicted in that modelling. We're at about 43,673 cases today. That's about 85 per cent below what the modelling had initially projected. It projected 45,000 hospitalizations, and we have about 2,000 hospital beds or a little better here in the province. We have over the course of the last, just over a year now, about 1,763 total hospitalizations. That's about 96 per cent below what the modelling had put forward in those early days. It had projected about 15,000 potentially in our intensive care units. We have achieved just under 400 — 397 people have been in our intensive care units. Some yet there today. That's about 97 per cent below the modelling.

And it had predicted, you know, very starkly, 9 to 15,000 fatalities here in the province. Every fatality is a family member. It's not a number, it's a family member, Madam Chair. We understand that and we mourn and grieve with our Saskatchewan families that have lost a loved one to COVID-19. We have had that occur 508 times in this province, each one of those tragic. Far lower than the 9 to 15,000 that was predicted by the modelling — about 95, 94 per cent lower.

As we went through the months, January there was some modelling that was also provided. As predicted, it got tighter, in fairness, but it still predicted in January that there would be between 9 and 1,600 cases a day by the end of January. Again thankfully to the actions of the people of this province and the vast majority of people following the public health measures, a few of them at that point in time starting to get vaccinated, we did not see anything near 9 to 1,600 cases a day. In fact our seven-day average peaked at our highest point at about 321.

They also predicted between 70 and 170 people would be in ICU by the end of January. We did peak in our ICU at about 52, a number . . . about a month ago now, so nowhere near where the modelling was projecting in January, again thanks to what Saskatchewan people have done each and every day.

And most recently, the modelling that was provided in this March predicted that our ICU patients would continue to grow in numbers between 90 to 140 a day unless we implemented very drastic and significant additional measures on top of the already significant measures that have been in place for some time. ICU patients did go up a little bit after that point in time, but they've stabilized.

And thankfully now over the course of the past month, not only have our seven-day case counts been on a fairly consistent decline, and we want that to continue into the future, but our hospitalizations and our ICU numbers have also been declining over the course of the past month.

And so when you look at the modelling as to what potentially could have occurred in Saskatchewan, and when you look at what actually has occurred in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan has performed as well as many other provinces across Canada, better than some. There's others that have taken a different approach. But Saskatchewan people, I think, most certainly have rose to the challenge that has been presented to them.

Our per capita number of cases is up a little. It's up about 8 per

cent over the national average. Our per capita fatality rate is 34 per cent below the national average. Our current rate of active cases in Saskatchewan is 15 per cent below the national average, and our seven-day average is 5 per cent below the national average. Again I said that's been dropping over the course of the past month, and we want it to continue to drop, and again thanks to the people of Saskatchewan.

When you look a little more broadly across North America, Saskatchewan's case rate is lower than 49 of 50 US states. Hawaii is lower than Saskatchewan. So if we're on the mainland, Saskatchewan is doing very well relative to the US states. Saskatchewan's fatality rate is lower than 48 of the 50 US states; only Hawaii and Vermont are lower than Saskatchewan. Our case rate is lower than 39 of 48 countries in Europe, and our fatality rate is lower than 41 of 48 countries in Europe.

Vaccinations, and we've talked many times about vaccinations in this Assembly and outside, it is ultimately . . . The path for us in Saskatchewan through this COVID pandemic does run through one of Saskatchewan's vaccination clinics. We have received . . . We have administered well in excess of half a million shots here in Saskatchewan, leading the nation. I believe Quebec may have edged us out by a couple of vaccines here today on a per 100,000 basis. I've informed the Minister of Health that I trust he'll have that corrected by tomorrow. But we are, you know, in a very, very strong position with 45,555 vaccines delivered per 100,000 people. It is, as I said, for the first time in some period of time the second-highest vaccination rate in Canada, very soon to be the highest again, as the Minister of Health has assured me. Over the past week as a matter of fact there was just under 70,000 doses of vaccines that were delivered to Saskatchewan residents.

They are most certainly rising to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic here in Saskatchewan. They have over the course of the past year by following the public health measures. They continue to do that today, very proud of what Saskatchewan people have done and most proud on how quickly Saskatchewan people have realized the path through this pandemic is for them to take the first vaccine that is offered to them. We've seen Saskatchewan people line up at drive-throughs in this city, in Saskatoon, in Prince Albert, North Battleford, Lloydminster, Estevan, Yorkton. Thank you. Thank you to Saskatchewan people for how you've conducted yourself over the course of this COVID pandemic. And thank you for what you're doing today and what I know you're going to do as we find our way through.

**Mr. Meili:** — As we know, modelling has been presented occasionally and it has become much more accurate as those doing that work better understood the impacts of public health measures and the spread of the virus. We have seen modelling that very accurately predicted the second wave and very accurately predicted the rise of variants. The Premier looked at that modelling and chose not to act in both cases. In fact when it was the variants, he chose to relax restrictions, giving them a head start against the vaccines.

But the question was very specific. We know that the Premier and the Health minister are shown the modelling much more frequently than the public is. It's very sporadically shown to the public. It is shown much more often to the leadership.

The question to the Premier again: at the time that he made that foolish promise of no more lockdowns, a promise he'd go on to break — not for a little while but since November in this slow-motion, interminable lockdown that his half-assed measures have had us stuck in for that entire period — my question once again, did the Premier see modelling during the election at the time that he made that promise?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of comments on some of the preamble to the question as well, as we discuss the most recent campaign that we both participated in and ultimately the most recent campaign where the people of Saskatchewan made a choice on who was going to govern this province over the course of the next four years.

With respect to the modelling that was provided and the comment about they got better as they went along, the modelling is a tool that is utilized by Dr. Shahab and others in public health I'm sure. And I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition knows this likely better than me. But the fact of the matter is it is one of the tools that public health and our chief medical health officer will use to determine ultimately what potentially could happen here in the province. It's thanks to Dr. Shahab's judgment with respect to measures that he, you know, works through on behalf of Saskatchewan people here and implements under his signature, that we didn't achieve these numbers in any of the cases and have not achieved any of the modelling predictions that have been put forward, in particular, some of those very early modelling cases that were close to 100 per cent out on many of the projections ultimately that were there.

With respect to looking at modelling during a campaign, I was campaigning. I wasn't looking at modelling that may or may not have been available through the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] presented at . . . I believe much of this modelling as well is presented at the doctors' town halls that are operating. I believe they operate on or get together on a weekly basis to share information around what is occurring here in Saskatchewan.

[16:00]

I will say though, if there was decisions to be made from that modelling or the other avenues of information that our chief medical health officer, Dr. Shahab, has, he would have made those decisions during the campaign and he would have implemented them under his signature. In fact on October the 13th, he did. We had an active-case count of 238 people in the province, and he reduced gathering sizes to 15. And that was effective right during the campaign — effective October the 16th, announced on the 13th. And he had brought in masks strongly recommended to be worn in all public locations. And you know, both the Leader of the Opposition and I were inadvertently photographed, both of us, in a place where we quite likely should have had a mask on and did shortly after, I can assure you.

So with respect to during the campaign, Dr. Shahab would continue to look at the information that he was provided with. He actually did implement measures under his signature during the campaign and had he chosen to implement more, I would have supported that.

**Mr. Meili:** — The modelling that predicted a second-wave surge was released three days after the election. We don't know if the

Premier saw anything prior to that. But we saw that come out publicly, that predicted exponential growth in the number of cases, and the Premier chose not to act. He chose not to do anything for days on end. He rejected the call from over 400 physicians here in the province to bring in a circuit breaker, to act quickly to get things under control and bring that second wave. It didn't happen. Instead we've had the slow-motion lockdown, interminable measures introduced too late and too little.

Or what were the numbers? The Premier used a strange term. He said we didn't "achieve" the numbers that were predicted. Well let's talk about some of those numbers that were achieved. Only 25 people had passed away from COVID-19 prior to the election. Twenty-five more died in November, 100 in December, 150 in January. We're now at over 500 people who have died in Saskatchewan since COVID-19 started, almost all since that election when the Premier was promising no more lockdown, the Premier who has kept us in a slow-motion, interminable lockdown ever since.

So to the Premier: when you think of all those deaths and you think of all those families whose lives could have been saved by quicker, more serious action, when you think of the impact to our economy from the failure to act in a serious way, do you have any regrets? Or would you still say you wouldn't change a thing?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the modelling and, you know, the . . . Most certainly the Leader of the Opposition is campaigning each and every day, 365 days a year. He's taken the advice from his post-mortem study to heart, and we hear it every day. He comes in and paraphrases in quite a misleading manner things that I or the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier, or others of the government ultimately have said.

So when he asks that, you know, as to we got no answer, that the Premier, did he see modelling during the campaign? I answered that question in the last answer. No, I did not. I was campaigning to be the government, for our party to be the government to represent the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to circuit breakers, of which the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition party have called for likely in excess of 50 times — the last count I was at was some time ago, it was 39 times — they had asked to lock down communities. Again they asked to lock down Saskatoon specifically today in question period and asked for, you know, a circuit breaker, a lockdown, whatever you want to call this, Madam Chair.

And I had referenced in my opening statements that there are significant consequences to those decisions. And where we have seen decisions made by other governments in Canada and other areas of the world where they have chosen a circuit breaker, some of those areas are in a very challenging situation right now with respect to the COVID rates that they're experiencing.

So will it buy you some time? Yes. Will it buy you, you know, a . . . Are there challenges associated with a wide-scale lockdown of our communities? Yes, there most certainly is. And will it get rid of COVID? No. We are seeing, you know, some challenges in Nova Scotia today, about 150 active cases in Nova Scotia

today. We're seeing, you know, a number of challenges in provinces much closer to Saskatchewan, some of which had put in place two-week circuit breakers that lasted three, four months in many cases.

So ultimately this government has taken a different approach as we find our way through this COVID pandemic, an approach that is continuing to decrease numbers, the active case counts here in Saskatchewan, decrease the daily infection rates, and is continuing to decrease, ultimately, our hospitalizations here in the province as well.

That, alongside with the tremendous effort of Saskatchewan people and how they have conducted themselves each and every day, following the public health orders, going out and getting vaccinated when it is their turn, we have been able to put forward the very first charting our course, Re-Opening Roadmap — call it what you will — on how we are actually going to exit this pandemic here in Saskatchewan. And for that I am forever grateful to the people of the province.

Back to the campaign, the never-ending campaign . . . There's a never-ending story; now we have a never-ending campaign with the Leader of the Opposition not only in here asking questions, but he's tweeting away as we go through estimates.

And in the same way that he at times will misrepresent what I ultimately say, or disregard what I ultimately say in this House, they're doing exactly the same thing on social media as well, Madam Chair. The graphic that they just put up is taken from a health authority, a Saskatchewan Health Authority PowerPoint. It's not a representation of time as it is indicated to be in the tweet from the Leader of the Opposition, but it's actually a representation of hospitalizations by age groups.

And we know, and we have actually . . . Our entire approach to our vaccination priority has identified that challenge of severe outcomes in our more elderly age groups. And that is why we had the age-based priority system that we had put forward. And for most of the . . . up until today . . . And the Minister of Health says that we might even be ahead by this evening and back leading the nation with our vaccination effort. We have prioritized those with the most severe outcomes of COVID-19.

We are leading the nation with that vaccination effort. We most certainly are making every vaccine that we receive available to Saskatchewan people as quickly as we are able. I don't know of another area that broadly across the province is down to the age category that we are at today, which is 26 today if I'm not mistaken. We'll be dropping again tomorrow or the next day or the next day, Madam Deputy Chair. And you know, very proud of also what our Saskatchewan Health Authority staff have done.

Madam Deputy Chair, we'll wait for their next question. And we'll continue to, you know, find our way through the never-ending campaign.

**Mr. Meili:** — Madam Chair, the Premier mentions Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia — I looked at the numbers today — Nova Scotia has had 71 deaths in the entire pandemic. We've had that many since this session began.

At what point did the Premier start looking at the level of



avoidable death — 500 people lost in our province — and say, we're okay with that? That's our idea of balance. What does he think it says to every person who's lost a loved one in this province, when he says he doesn't regret a thing, that he wouldn't change a thing? Think for a moment, Mr. Premier, about the people in this province who have lost someone and stand up and tell them that you wouldn't change a single thing.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. With . . .

[Interjections]

**The Chair:** — Order. Would the members come to order, please?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — You know, again with respect to paraphrasing what I may or may not have said, I don't believe at any time have I ever stepped forward and said I would not have changed a thing. And with respect to the fatalities, families that have been faced with a fatality in this province — I've said many times, and I'll say it again today — we mourn and we think and pray of not only your family but the other over-500 families that have experienced loss, and many others also going through battles with COVID-19, whether that be currently in the hospital or recently in the hospital and continue to have ultimately symptoms of COVID-19.

My point with respect to Nova Scotia was, yes, Nova Scotia had significant measures in place for a significant period of time, as a few other provinces did as well. My point being is that measures that you put in place, whether it be a full lockdown or some degree of measures that are put in place, are a temporary attempt at controlling COVID-19 infections. The permanent fix for COVID-19 is ultimately vaccinations. We have seen other areas in Canada that have cycled between various levels of lockdowns, some with full levels of lockdown, and some are having some very challenging COVID-19 infection rates here today.

[16:15]

And you know, we most certainly are thinking of our neighbours to the east and to the west of us, with some significant numbers I hear today. And I think it just again goes to show that, you know, COVID-19 is waiting, is always waiting and ready to most certainly infect people, given the opportunity if they are not vaccinated, which is why in this province we have focused so much on ensuring that the vaccines that we do receive are being provided ultimately to Saskatchewan people.

You know, as we look back over the course of the past year, and I've touched on this a little bit in question period, there is an opportunity for us to look at, you know, how were we prepared as a health care system, as a province going into the COVID-19 pandemic, and to build the ultimate resiliency of our health care system for when we may face something like this again.

You know, so are there things that we look back on and think, you know, could have we done better in those areas? Yes, there is. You know, I would point to our Saskatchewan Health Authority and our affiliates across the province performed very well, given the supports they were provided, so that they were able to cohort in facilities and not work in multiple facilities to keep our family members safe from COVID in our facilities. But we did have outbreaks in our long-term care facilities, most

notably one here in Regina with severe outcomes, very severe outcomes for many families.

Madam Chair, I point towards, you know, the investments that we have made in long-term care. Some of those are coming into the city of Regina here in this year's budget. But with respect to that outbreak specifically, we have asked the Ombudsman to look into that particular outbreak. And then we will be looking very closely at the recommendations that he may or may not come forward with and be looking to act on ultimately those recommendations as soon we're able to receive them. But we will allow the Ombudsman to do his work, and we most certainly will be looking at that once that work is completed.

When we do look back as well — and I'll just come back to how can we ensure that we are looking back at over the course of the past year with an eye to building that health care resiliency — I'd point to some positives that have occurred over the course of the past year as well. You know, a significant investment, a couple of times actually, in VIDO [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization] in Saskatoon ultimately is going to be a very significant piece to the next time we may be faced with a pandemic, not only in Saskatchewan but ultimately across Canada.

The investments that this province led on in negotiations with the federal government, worked with Dr. Gerdtz and various federal ministers to ensure that the investment for not only the research facility and research work that happens at VIDO that is ultimately has been historically funded by the provincial government, has now vaccine development capacity, thanks to a \$15 million capital fund from the provincial government followed by federal funding. And they have the ability also, with federal-provincial funding, now to produce ultimately the vaccines that they research and develop into a marketable form. So that will be a positive as we exit the pandemic and will be a strength for Saskatchewan and for Canada, should we be faced with something similar in the future.

But there is an opportunity for us to look at, you know, our personal protective equipment supply here in the province and how that flows through into our facilities. And is it enough, should we be faced with questions around providing our school divisions with personal protective equipment in very short order. That is a way for us to look at our health care system using the information we have, looking back to look forward and to ensure that we have the resiliency in our health care system, should we face this again.

What type of contact tracing testing capacity are we going to need into the future? And we're going to be augmenting our rapid-testing capacity here as well. On a call I had with the Premier of Nova Scotia, who had put together a fairly effective plan, as it looks, on how they are utilizing the rapid-screening devices, they aren't actually tests, the rapid screening devices that are available. And our Minister of Health has been in touch with, I believe, it's Minister Churchill, the Minister of Health in Nova Scotia as well so that we can share some of the best practices that are occurring across this nation, and ultimately, again as we look ahead, use the information and the experience that we have had in the past number of months to ensure that we're building resiliency in our health care system as we look ahead.

Came up in question period today, the surgical capacity and the surgical wait time that we have in Saskatchewan, which has grown over the COVID-19 pandemic. It hasn't grown just in Saskatchewan, it's grown across the nation, in many other parts of the world. The Minister of Health had referenced a \$20 million surgical investment, an investment we had made in surgical capacity in last year's budget that carries over to this year's budget. We obviously weren't able to use it during our addressing a global pandemic, but those dollars are there and will be utilized to ensure that we can begin to address the surgical backlog that we will have and will very quickly be working on as we exit the COVID-19 pandemic and ramp our health care system up, as well as our economy and our activity in our communities.

We will also add to that again, negotiated through the Council of Federation table and the first ministers' table, the investment — the appreciated investment, I might add — from this federal government was in the billions of dollars that will be provided to provinces to address just that, the surgical capacity wait, the surgical wait times that we have, and ultimately the capacity that we will have over the course of the next number of years to ensure that we can get, in our case, Saskatchewan people in for the needed surgeries that they require. I had raised this on a number of first ministers' calls for some time. And we're appreciative that the federal government has also identified that they . . . haven't identified precisely what the provinces have asked in becoming a significant and equal partner in health care funding with the ask increases to the Canada Health Transfer.

But our coming forward with some of these interim funding, interim funding provisions to ensure that we will be able to have, you know, a very fulsome and real conversation around how we are going to shorten that surgical wait time here that we have in Saskatchewan, I expect that it will be the topic of a number of first ministers' calls, Council of Federation calls in the months ahead. I also expect it'll be on the agenda of many of the FPT meetings of the Health ministers across the nation. And I would trust that the Health ministers are having that discussion now as to how we are going to ensure that we have the capacity to provide the surgeries that have been, in many cases, on pause for some period of time now across our nation.

**Mr. Meili:** — The Premier said that he didn't say he wouldn't change a thing. Here's the headline: "Premier Scott Moe says he wouldn't change a thing about coronavirus response." The direct quote from the Premier: "I just don't know that, as I reflect on them, there's a different decision we could have made in that point in time, given what we knew." He later said, "I haven't doubted decisions."

And then today he stands up and says, and then today he stands up and says, that he regrets outcome. He regrets what happened. He regrets how many people died in long-term care. But he doesn't identify the fact that he made choices that led to that. Let's talk a bit about some of those choices.

We knew, and the Premier's already referenced, he saw what happened in Quebec. He saw what happened in Ontario, and he knew the state of long-term care in Saskatchewan. The member for Weyburn-Big Muddy, the member for Indian Head-Milestone, the member for Rosetown-Elrose — they'd all seen the reports year after year after year that said our care homes

were understaffed, they weren't able to respond to infection control, that they were overcrowded, and they chose to do nothing. And when in May, when things were going terribly in Quebec and Ontario, when the military was coming in and reporting what was going on, those ministers must have heard those reports and said, that's exactly what they tell us about our long-term care homes. They would have to because the stories sound exactly the same.

The Premier, however, when asked about that, what did he say? He patted his book of guidelines and said, we've done very well in Saskatchewan. He said, these guidelines are working. They're literally saving lives. More than 120 seniors died in long-term care homes, 41 in a single facility. Now that the Premier recognizes that he didn't get everything right, does he understand that if he'd acted in long-term care, he would have saved lives?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Madam Chair, with respect to Extendicare, I referenced this in an earlier answer as well. We asked the Ombudsman, asked her to look into what occurred specifically with Extendicare, understanding a very tragic situation that did occur there.

You know, as we look more broadly across the province and some of the initiatives and efforts that were put in place by the Saskatchewan Health Authority, I mentioned cohorting in an earlier answer, where we ensured and provided funds so that our staff weren't working in multiple facilities. We ensured that they were working only in one facility to just reduce the risk of transporting COVID-19 in and out of our facilities or between.

Ultimately facilities put many protocols in place. I referenced in my opening comments some of the most difficult decisions that we had made with respect to families, visiting their family members in long-term care facilities. And one fatality is tragic to any family. And I would just again say that these are not numbers; these are family members that pass, Madam Chair.

But understanding that, when we do talk about how Saskatchewan has fared, specific to our long-term care facilities compared to the rest of Canada, Saskatchewan has fared relatively well. And that is due to the effort of our Saskatchewan Health Authority staff, all of those staff that are working in our long-term care facilities across this province. It's due to the effort of families, the sacrifice quite frankly of all of those, including the family members that are in the long-term care homes.

In February of '21, CIHI [Canadian Institute for Health Information] had released a long-term care report here in Canada. And the Leader of the Opposition referenced the very tragic consequences and events in Quebec. And I talked to Premier Legault during that time on some of the challenges he was having with finding CCAs and other staff members to take care of their long-term care residents, given the COVID infections that they had.

I remember one conversation. I believe they had over 600 facilities that had, you know, active COVID outbreaks in those and needed 10,000 continuing care assistants and other staff immediately they could put into their facilities — a very tragic and dire situation.

Quebec actually suffered severe fatalities, rates of fatalities

during that time period. In fact during COVID in the long-term care facilities, Quebec has suffered 91 fatalities per 100,000 people. The Canadian average is about 40 fatalities per 100,000 people in our long-term care facilities. In Saskatchewan, we're at seven, about seven fatalities per 100,000 people. And again the credit goes to the hard-working staff in those facilities, the families, the sacrifice that the families have made, and the residents, the sacrifice the residents have ultimately made.

[16:30]

Credit goes also to the Saskatchewan Health Authority, the Ministry of Health, Dr. Shahab, various ministers of Health for prioritizing our vaccines' availability to those in our long-term care facilities. First, not one but two doses, whereas now I believe we're over 90 per cent of those in our long-term care facilities have not one but two doses of the vaccine, are fully vaccinated. They're the one part of our population that ultimately is fully vaccinated. And we're not having serious consequences to the degree that we did a few months ago in our long-term care facilities.

We never did have quite the rate of serious consequences that we saw in other provinces. Again credit to all of those involved, but credit to the vaccine priority system that we had provided in the very early days of receiving those vaccines. And I had said many times that, had we received those vaccines a month or maybe two months earlier like they did in the United States, we'd be in a very different situation even today and we'd be having a very different conversation about some of the challenges that we had through January and ultimately into February in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we again are in the never-ending campaign. We see the Leader of the Opposition continuing to campaign each and every day, including today in these estimates. And we however, as I said, are taken with the responsibility of governing at the moment. We are the governing party of this province, and we will most certainly govern on behalf of the people that elected us, the great people of Saskatchewan.

But we're running a little bit of a campaign of our own as well. It's a vaccination campaign. Government is working very hard to ensure the resources are in place so that the vaccination campaign in Saskatchewan will continue to lead the nation, save for one little hiccup today which will, I have been assured, be corrected in very short order.

Madam Speaker, we are leading a vaccination campaign that includes running ads. We have, for example, the Saskatchewan Roughriders that are in the ads, both past and present. I don't know if the Minister of Advanced Education has made it into one of those ads as of yet, but we see George Reed, we see Dan Clark. We see, you know, some of our Saskatchewan Roughriders encouraging Saskatchewan people to get out and ultimately get vaccinated. We're running those on social media, we're running them . . . advertising in all sorts of internet . . . as well as internet avenues as well as on television.

You see the stickers that are handed out when you receive your vaccination. I got one for my first vaccination. And you see all of the selfies that are occurring. I'm generally not a huge fan of selfies, actually, but you see all of the selfies which are a good thing. People are proud that they have achieved the . . . People

have never been so proud of their age as what we've seen in the last couple of months and they talk about it. And quite often, because your age is when you ultimately are eligible to go and receive your vaccine. And we see all of these selfies with the stickers on them. People are so very proud to do their duty to keep themselves safe and ultimately to keep those around them safe.

And you've heard myself, Minister of Health, you've heard our chief medical health officer, Dr. Shahab, you've heard so many in the Saskatchewan Health Authority and really so many across the province, you know, say stick it to COVID. Let's all get vaccinated; let's stick it to COVID. We are going to stick it to this virus. We are going to find our way through this COVID pandemic. We're going to do it through the vaccination campaign that this government is working on, has been working on, continues to work on into the future. That's the campaign that the governing party of this province is interested in.

**Mr. Meili:** — Well we can certainly agree on the importance of vaccines. That's one thing there's no disagreement . . . Every member on this side has had their vaccine. I hope the same is true for every member on that side. I've been very proud to be able to be part of vaccine campaigns myself, be out vaccinating folks at Merlis Belsher and at Lighthouse. It matters. And I'm amazed at the way that health care workers have stepped up, at the way that people across the province have stepped up to come and get their vaccine. It's great. But those vaccines will not bring back the people that are lost through mistakes made by this government. And the most glaring one is the one that this Premier just avoided acknowledging again.

He talked about the CIHI report which did describe how much worse things were in the first wave in Quebec and Ontario than they were here in Saskatchewan. We were lucky and that's a wonderful thing, only we failed to learn. We failed to learn. We didn't learn a single thing. We watched what was going on there and we had Health minister after Health minister after Health minister after Seniors minister would see report after report saying that things were in a terrible state in long-term care, that we were at high risk. What did the Premier do? The Ombudsman said about the guidelines that exist, the guidelines that replaced the scrapped minimum care standards, the minimum care standards that this government chose to eliminate and replace with guidelines that long-term care homes can follow if they feel like. And they ignored report after report saying that those guidelines were not doing the job. The Ombudsman said — the Ombudsman that the Premier references as doing work now and we'll see what they say, but there's answers that are clear — we need minimum care standards. The Ombudsman has already said the guidelines are non-specific, high-level, such that they're open to wide interpretation.

The Premier, what did the Premier do? He patted those guidelines in a press conference, said we're very fortunate these are working; they are literally saving lives. That's what the Premier said. They're literally saving lives. More than 120 people died in long-term care in Saskatchewan because this Premier looked at what was going on in the rest of the provinces, looked at what was going on here in our own care homes. It was well known to all of the ministers he's worked with, and he chose to watch it go by. He chose to allow the circumstances that led to many people losing their lives.

Vaccines won't bring them back. Does the Premier at the very least, is he willing to acknowledge that he made a huge mistake?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Madam Chair, let me start by saying that I hardly believe that the residents of this province are lucky with respect to the results that we have with our response to the COVID pandemic. The Leader of the Opposition says that the people of Saskatchewan are just lucky with respect to the numbers that I had read out of the CIHI report, which was from February of 2021.

I would ask the Premier, or the Leader of the Opposition . . . They're not the premier yet and if we most certainly have our say, never, Madam Chair. But that'll be discussed in another three and a half years when we get to another campaign, an official campaign where we ask the people of this province for . . . We will ask the people of this province for their support once again.

But I would challenge the Leader of the Opposition to say to the people that, you know, sacrificed so much when they weren't able to go over and visit their family in different households when we brought in the household gathering size restrictions. It was hardly lucky that we were able to drive down our COVID rates in this province because of the sacrifice of Saskatchewan people.

I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to say those folks that had to worship in a different way, whatever their faith may be, had to worship in a very, very different way, often alone, often alone. They're hardly lucky when we see the COVID-19 numbers and hospitalizations start to decrease this month. That's hardly luck, Madam Chair.

The youth in our communities, our kids that forgone the opportunity to play hockey, forgone the opportunity to play lacrosse, to play the sports. Some days they weren't able to go to school. They did all of that to keep themselves safe and to keep those around them safe, most notably their parents and their grandparents, those that were elderly and more susceptible to severe outcomes from COVID.

It was hardly luck, Madam Chair. That was sacrifice, sacrifice by individuals, sacrifice by Saskatchewan families, a sacrifice that I most certainly am eternally indebted to and appreciate in this province. Mr. Speaker, we had families that weren't able to see their family members in long-term care homes to ensure that they were kept safe from this virus. That's hardly luck. That's a decision and a sacrifice that Saskatchewan families made. It's not luck, Madam Chair.

With respect to vaccines and vaccines saving lives, they are saving lives, not just in Saskatchewan, they're saving lives around the world. Vaccines are literally saving lives around this world day after day after day. We've seen it in the UK [United Kingdom]. We've seen it in the USA where they had very large COVID infection rates, and those have been continually dropping in large part due to very early access to vaccines in many states. We now see, thankfully, North Dakota is offering vaccines to Saskatchewan residents that are crossing the border, our essential workers that have been crossing the border delivering goods to, and keeping the lights on, and keeping fuel in our vehicles throughout ultimately this pandemic.

Madam Chair, yesterday, Dr. Shahab had shared some information with respect to the efficacy of these vaccines, that I again will say are saving lives and do work. The efficacy of even one shot of these vaccines — and these are the Saskatchewan numbers that he was referring to — is over 99 per cent, even with one shot. That's an extremely high efficacy of vaccines. Vaccines do work.

Physicians across this province are most certainly saying that these vaccines do work. That's why they say you should take the first vaccine that's available to you because they all work very, very well. They not only prevent in many cases you contracting COVID, but they prevent the severe outcomes of COVID — hospitalization and ultimately fatality. Vaccines are saving lives. Dr. Shahab had talked, spoken to the efficacy of those vaccines yesterday. Physicians across the province believe that vaccines ultimately are the solution to the COVID-19 pandemic that we have been facing.

The Leader of the Opposition is a physician. I would hope that he would agree that vaccines are ultimately key in us exiting the COVID-19 pandemic. I'd like to hear him again to say that Saskatchewan people most certainly are not lucky. They have provided great sacrifice in helping us control COVID-19 in this province and beyond, Madam Speaker. And most certainly they understand that these vaccines work; they save lives. That's why they're lining up to get theirs.

**Mr. Meili:** — No disagreement. Vaccines save lives. They won't bring back the people that have been lost because of this Premier's choices. People in Saskatchewan have worked very hard. And when we have done well, we've done well despite this Premier's mixed messages, despite this Premier's half measures. And we have done far worse than we could have, if this Premier had been willing to show leadership. That question was about the choices made in long-term care. There was no answer, and there's a reason for that — he didn't make any. He didn't do anything, and people died as a result.

And it's not the only very clear choice where this Premier ignored what was right in front of him. Look at what the SHA physicians' town hall slides told people for days. This is March the 5th. Slides showed people that Saskatchewan, at the time, had among the highest COVID-19 case and death rate in Canada. There was a slide that said, "Urgency: increase in variants of concern detected in Saskatchewan." We need testing rates higher and test positivity that will lower. Faster spread. That there was a potential for severe illness for younger age and vaccine escape. The slides talked about an accelerated and unpredictable pace and spread with variants of control if we can't control community transmission.

The Premier saw the same information. The Minister of Health saw the same information. We all did. And yet what did they do? They went out and said, let's relax restrictions. Let's get ahead of ourselves. Let's say vaccines are the eventual answer. Let's pretend we've already got there. This Premier and this Minister of Health looked at the finish line and sat down when we needed to keep running.

To the Premier: you saw that same information. Why did you look at the same information that every doctor in Saskatchewan looked at and said, "Holy, man, we need to do something now,"

and you said, let's relax restrictions? And as a result we've had over 100 people die since that time.

[16:45]

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Madam Chair, that's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous. With respect to what this government has done, let's start with we made the decision where families for months on end were not able to visit their loved ones in a long-term care facility. If this government had done nothing, just think about that for a minute, the fortitude that this government had taken, along with the chief medical health officer as well as all of those in public health, to have the courage to make that decision. We didn't allow people to see their family members in a long-term care facility for months.

We added to that, Madam Chair, many other . . . I spoke of the cohorting to ensure that we provided funding so that our staff was only working in one long-term care facility to ensure that the safety of residents — that aren't a number; they're a family member — in that facility most certainly was provided.

We offered occupational health therapists to go into those facilities to ensure that the PPE that was being worn was fitted and was being worn correctly in those facilities. There was visits by the Saskatchewan Health Authority. Inspections were ramped up to ensure that all of our long-term care facilities were following the protocols that were in place to keep the residents safe.

SHA managers were provided to support daily rounds, and regular physician support was also provided. Point-of-care testing, some of our rapid testing is what . . . Point-of-care testing and the rapid tests have been provided for staff, for residents, for all of those in our long-term care facilities. Infection controls and protocols were looked at in our long-term care facilities to ensure that they were up to the standards required to protect, again, those residents in those facilities.

We prioritized, in our vaccination program, our long-term care residents first — our health care workers, a number of health care workers, and our long-term care residents — and we gave them not one but two shots of the vaccine to ensure that they're fully vaccinated to have the maximum amount of safety, which what we're hearing today, the efficacy of the vaccines is very high even after one dose, but certainly after two doses. We prioritized our family members that are in long-term care facilities to ensure that we would prevent the severe outcomes from COVID with those family members that we care about so deeply.

So for anyone to stand and say that this government did not take action with respect to protecting those in our long-term care facilities, there's nothing further from the truth.

**Mr. Meili:** — After 120 people had already died in long-term care facilities, and eventually vaccines got here, you did something. And we all agree getting those residents their vaccines first was the number one thing to do. You had all summer to prepare; you didn't.

But the question was about why you looked at the data, the data that had every doctor in this province very worried about the rise of variants, the variants that have resulted in a third wave, that

have killed 70 people during this session, 50 more in the months before that. Doctors across this province said we need action, and this Premier, what did he say? Let's relax restrictions. Explain that move.

[Interjections]

**The Chair:** — I'll just remind the member: through the Chair, please. Through the Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Madam Chair, we've seen, you know, various measures in Saskatchewan over the course of the past year, stricter measures at times. At times those measures have been relaxed in some degree. We're hoping to get to a point, here in the near future with our high vaccination rate, where we'll relax the measures completely and get back to, you know, appreciating and enjoying the personal freedoms that we all, two years ago, likely took very for granted.

With respect to the decisions that we've made throughout our response to this pandemic, we've made those decisions with the information that's been provided, and not just to myself, but to our chief medical health officer, Dr. Saqib Shahab. Always worked with Dr. Shahab on the measures as they are being implemented here in the province. We even saw, as we referenced in an earlier question, where we were out on the campaign and Dr. Shahab had implemented some measures around gathering sizes under his own signature during the campaign without myself or members of the government being involved in that.

We are seeing other provinces that have gone — as to the member opposite's, the Leader of the Opposition's question — have gone into full-fledged lockdowns at times for a number of months; three, four months we've seen here in Canada and abroad. We've seen some of those jurisdictions now struggling with some very high numbers, higher numbers than what we've experienced in Saskatchewan in case counts, fatalities as well, much higher numbers in some cases than what we have experienced here in Saskatchewan.

If you look over the course of the past month with the measures that we do have in place, which largely been in place for, since, I'm going to say sometime last November, early December for the most part, a little bit increased here in Regina due to the concentration of variants of concern. But we are seeing our active case count drop over the course of the past month. We are seeing our daily seven-day average of case counts drop over the course of the past month. We are thankfully seeing our hospitalizations, ICUs in this province continue a downward trend over the course of the last month. Our measures are effective. They are working. They're working because Saskatchewan people are, the vast majority are adhering to those measures.

But also playing into this equation in a larger part, and this is referenced most significantly in our long-term care facilities, the very aggressive, ambitious vaccine campaign that this government is focused on is also having an impact on our daily numbers here in the province. We're running down through the ages — 26 and over are eligible for their vaccine in this province here today. That is the most ambitious vaccine campaign that I'm aware of that's occurring in the nation of Canada. It's effective.

Vaccines work, as we discussed ultimately yesterday. And I would encourage everyone, if you are on the fence in any way about whether or not you should receive a vaccine, I would say that you shouldn't be. The way to keep yourself safe, the way to keep those around you safe, ultimately the way for us to get back to some degree of normal is for you yourself to go out and get vaccinated.

**Mr. Meili:** — That was a pretty direct question, and the Premier didn't go anywhere near it. And there's a reason for that. He's accused us of playing politics with the pandemic, but this is what he has done at every point: mixed messages, playing to the anti-mask base, refusing to be clear about anti-maskers from the beginning. Oh, they can just stay 2 metres away; it's no big deal.

In the second wave, promising no lockdowns before an election, giving people a false impression about what was really happening, failing to act in time or in any seriousness to prevent the deaths of the second wave, politics every time, because he was so committed . . . And the minister can chirp from his seat but he too has been so committed to pretending this was over, to downplaying it, to imagining that they were the heroes and they'd won.

Well as a matter of fact, they lost because Saskatchewan people lost, because we all lost loved ones. We all saw damage to our economy, damage to people's health. The question is very simple. And without an answer, the only answer we're able to come up with is that the Premier was just playing politics.

So once again, why? When the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association], when 400 doctors, when experts across the province were saying we're facing variants of concern that are a serious problem, this Premier chose to lift restrictions. It was a deadly decision. Why did he make it?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Couple of things I'll address in that question. With respect to being easy in any way on, you know, those that are, you know, breaking public health orders or guidelines themselves, or even worse than that, encouraging others to do the same, I believe it was yesterday or the day before in this Assembly I condemned those folks and the government condemns most certainly those actions. Those actions are unsafe.

And I believe I also said that if you truly want to take your mask off and get back to normal, you should be the first one in the lineup at the vaccination clinic. Because it's ultimately you getting vaccinated, each of us as individuals doing our part, doing our civic duty, doing our duty as humans in our community and in this province and in our families to go out and ultimately get vaccinated.

There's been a lot of talk with respect to, you know, this government's response to people that are gathering and breaking these public health orders that are in place. I believe, and I know this from media reports — I haven't had a briefing of any type on it — but from media reports I read there's over 30 tickets, in excess of 30 tickets that were handed out to individuals in both Regina and Saskatoon at a number of these rallies. Those are significant tickets that these people receive. If the police officers do use their judgement, which we allow them and trust them to use, they can increase that fine and that charge ultimately to a more formal charge that could result in as high as a \$75,000 ticket

as well.

So most certainly, Madam Chair, there are enforcement mechanisms that are in place, provided by this government, for the police officers and our enforcement officers to utilize and to utilize at their judgment. There has been many gatherings for various reasons over the course of the COVID pandemic. Many of them have been in violation of the public health gathering orders that are in place that Dr. Shahab had adjusted during the campaign. But the law enforcement officials have always used their judgment on, you know, where they are providing those tickets and where they are not. I think in fairness, the Leader of the Opposition had attended one of these rallies, and I don't think the police had provided him with a ticket for attending that rally. I think quite the contrary, actually. I think the law enforcement officials were also attending that rally. That's an example of our law enforcement officials using their judgment, and we ask them to continue to use their judgment into the future.

[17:00]

With respect to the . . . And I've answered this I think three times now, two for sure. With respect to the measures, the public health measures that are in place, during the campaign Dr. Shahab had put measures in under his own signature. They're all in under his own signature actually. But the measures that are put in place are a collaboration of . . . but are always put in place with the consultation of the chief medical health officer in this province. That is who we work with on measures and that's ultimately who would sign those measures into law in this province.

We have seen, and the Leader of the Opposition referenced, a number of physicians that have, you know, varying opinions. And we've seen varying opinions across this nation on, you know, what measures should be in place and to what level; other opinions around, for example, our national advisory council right now. NACI [National Advisory Committee on Immunization] had some varying opinions on who should be eligible for which vaccine and really has been somewhat problematic in not being clear with respect to the guidance that they have, in particular for the AstraZeneca vaccine that is there.

So we do see varying opinions of physicians across Saskatchewan and across the nation of Canada. The physician that we work with quite closely, whether we're implementing new measures, whether we're relaxing potentially the measures that are in place, is Dr. Shahab. Every move that we have made over the course of the last 14 months or so in addressing COVID has been in consultation with our chief medical health officer. It will continue to be into the future.

With respect to playing politics, there's nothing of the sort. We consult with Dr. Shahab. We don't play politics and we don't ask Dr. Shahab to play politics. Nothing of the sort with the response that this government has brought on behalf of the people that we represent.

However, if we again reference the post-mortem discovery and the never-ending campaign that is going on by the opposition party and in particular the Leader of the Opposition who is playing politics each and every day in this Assembly, admittedly by his own admission, he's accepted — and this is a quote from the post-mortem story — he's accepted that his party does need

to campaign 365 days a year until the next election. And I quote the Leader of the Opposition, “The campaign is on now.” Madam Chair, it most certainly is. We’ve seen it every day in question period and we’re seeing more of it here today.

**Mr. Meili:** — What a damning indictment from someone who’s clearly playing no politics today whatsoever. The fact of the matter is he didn’t answer the question. He didn’t answer the question and there’s a good reason — because it was a deadly decision. It was a terrible choice to relax restrictions when every advisor would have said the opposite. Now he tries to pass the buck to Dr. Shahab when he makes the call. He makes the call. He knew very well the variants were rising and he still went ahead and did it.

Madam Chair, we heard from the SMA in the fall asking for more measures. This government didn’t follow and many people lost their lives. The same thing happened this spring. The Canadian Medical Association put out a paper yesterday talking about the risk of a fourth wave because we do know that if we do not get everyone vaccinated that young people are at risk, people who are in workplaces are at higher risk. And here’s what they asked for . . . The minister wants to complete the blanks, but I’ll let him know what they said needs to happen: paid sick days. Paid sick days are essential to make sure that anybody who’s got symptoms, anybody who’s at risk of passing on the virus to others can stay home without any risk to their income.

BC [British Columbia] is bringing in paid sick days. Nova Scotia has announced four days’ paid sick leave today. Quebec, PEI [Prince Edward Island], Canada Labour Code already have. Ontario, Manitoba have some version of this. This government, this Premier has no interest whatsoever in making sure that people aren’t forced to make the choice . . . The minister of the Economy is chirping from his seat because he wants people to make the decision of whether or not to stay home when they might have COVID or be broke as a result when so many people are struggling economically right now.

We had some, you know . . . The heat has been high in here today and that’s going to happen. But we had some co-operation this session. We had some co-operation on a suicide prevention bill. We’ve got a paid sick leave bill in front of us that’s very reasonable, sensible, and would protect working people. Will the Premier commit to working with us and introduce paid sick leave for all workers before the end of this legislative session?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. If we go back, with respect to . . . Well first of all, let me just answer the first question again to ensure that . . . I don’t want . . . yet once again I get the Leader of the Opposition get up and say, the Premier said, because very seldom have I seen those comments be factual.

But any time we implement restrictions or relax restrictions, those decisions come and we go downstairs and announce those decisions. I referenced, you know, I referenced how challenging some of those decisions have been over the course of the past year, in my opening comments. But those decisions are always consulted on and worked with, with our chief medical health officer.

I said there’s varying opinions of physicians across the nation, and that’s fair, but the physician that we are listening to is Dr. Shahab.

He’s our chief medical health officer in this province, and when we increase or decrease the measures that are in place, we do that alongside the work that we do with Dr. Shahab, and we’re going to continue to do that into the future.

So there’s the answer as to the smoking gun, if you will, with respect to how the decisions ultimately are made in this province. I meet with him frequently as does the Minister of Health, always by video for the last some time.

With respect to paid sick leave, very early in our response to this pandemic, Saskatchewan had come forward with what was called the self-isolation support program. Self-isolation support program, I believe, was \$450 a week, if I’m remembering correctly, for up to two weeks for people that may have had to self-isolate if they were a contact or ultimately were symptomatic to COVID. We had provided that to ensure that they did take that opportunity, did not have to go to work for financial reasons. We would provide that to them.

So we did that very early. First in the country, I believe, that did that. There were some others that did also do something similar. And I believe if I’m not mistaken, Nova Scotia may have moved on a program similar in the weeks after we did. Again we’d worked with Nova Scotia on sharing some of our best practices.

During the negotiations on the Safe Restart program between the Council of Federation table and the Prime Minister . . . I’d referenced in an earlier question that I had extended Saskatchewan’s chairmanship of that Council of Federation table for a number of months due to COVID. And so we had led . . . and myself was involved as Chair of the Council of Federation.

During that negotiation with the Prime Minister and then Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Minister Freeland, they were very forward, the federal government was very forward with respect to sick pay. They wanted to bring in a sick pay program across the nation. They wanted to move into this space, most certainly, and include that as part of the Safe Restart funding that they were providing to provinces. I believe it was in excess of a billion dollars that they had provided for the Canada recovery sickness benefit, which was part of that Safe Restart Agreement which I referenced earlier, was just north of \$19 billion, a transfer from the federal government to the provinces. Then went over \$20 billion, 21 billion, I believe, when the education factor was added into that.

So the federal government had made no qualms and no secret of the fact that they wanted to move into this area. And when they did, we then terminated the self-isolation support program and allowed people then to access the Canada recovery sickness benefit, which provides \$500 a week for those that require to use that program, rather than the \$450 a week that the self-isolation support program did provide, which was a provincial program.

So we’re grateful again and thankful that the federal government had moved into this space. My understanding is they’ve used not quite half of the dollars that they had allocated for this space, so the program is still available to Saskatchewan people, and all Canadians quite frankly. And that program is there by way of the negotiation between all of the premiers and the Prime Minister, being provided by the federal government.

When we look at the supports more generally that has been provided by this government to the people of Saskatchewan throughout this pandemic, there's about \$2 billion that was provided in last year's budget directly to communities, to people across Saskatchewan to ensure that we have the resources at whatever level they are necessary in supporting Saskatchewan residents through the response to COVID, as well as supporting the safe environment that they are ultimately going to work in, going to school in, the safe environment that they are entering each and every day given this new and somewhat challenging, very challenging virus. \$2 billion was provided last year in addition to what we had originally planned for.

This budget that was introduced in this House here just some short time ago, of which I feel pretty strongly that we'll be passing in the not-too-distant future, another billion and a half dollars provided to again communities, Saskatchewan families, provided to, you know, everyone in this province to ensure that not only are we continuing to be safe from spreading this virus between ourselves and in our communities, but we are setting ourselves up for a very robust economic recovery and an opportunity to participate in that, ultimately, that global recovery.

It won't happen right away, and that's why as you look into the out years, we have another \$1.3 billion that will be provided over the course of the next couple of years to support all of those that are, you know, going to work each and every day, those that have been impacted by COVID, whether it be in an economic way or personal way.

There is going to be trailing support dollars that will trail out for the next couple of years in the amount of about \$1.3 billion. And you know, may ask where that funding goes. A lot of it goes into health care. And you know, I talked earlier about as we look forward, how do we ensure, knowing what we know from the past, do we ensure that we're building that health care resiliency, building that service that we provide to Saskatchewan people, from the patient's perspective ensuring that we have the resiliency to have a stronger health care system in the future? And I mentioned the VIDO piece. I mentioned the opportunities we may have around the surgical initiatives as we move forward.

But there's 90 million that was provided to health care in last year's budget just simply for testing and personal protective equipment for those folks that are working there. We referenced 155 million that went to our school divisions across the province, flowed through to ensure that our classrooms were safe, built on already record funding that had been provided year over year over the course of the time that we have had the honour to serve the people of Saskatchewan as their government.

Referenced the VIDO piece. And the temporary wage supplement also going to many of those continuing care assistants that are working in our health care facilities across Saskatchewan as well, that provided them with a wage supplement during a number of months as they were, you know, showing up for work each and every day, doing so in a safe environment and creating a safe environment for our long-term care residents in those homes.

[17:15]

So, Madam Chair, that's some of the history on how the Canada

recovery sickness benefit came to be and how it ultimately replaced the self-isolation support program that we had implemented here in the very early months of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, had implemented to support Saskatchewan residents. Now that support is being provided by the federal government.

**Mr. Meili:** — The Premier is making it clear to the working people of Saskatchewan that he is one of the vanishing numbers of premiers who doesn't think that working people deserve paid sick leave, that he thinks they should be out of pocket if they get sick at any time, and even willing to say that and do that in the middle of a pandemic.

But this is consistent with a Premier who sends a very clear message to the working people of Saskatchewan with the lowest minimum wage in the entire country, \$11.45 an hour. Among the least generous when it came to who got the wage top-up, the period of time, how much that wage top-up was distributed.

This is how this government looks at the working people on the front lines. And when it comes to the CCAs, the restaurant workers, the grocery store clerks, he's sending a very clear message that they're not worth as much as workers in any other province. What does the Premier think that says to working people who've put up with so much this last year?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Madam Chair, again we have the Leader of the Opposition paraphrasing things that I've said, to me. And I'd just appreciate if he would speak for himself. I'll speak for myself. And we'll leave, we'll just, you know, leave that agreement at that.

With respect to working people in this province, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the Leader of the Opposition would bring that up. Where this party or this government sits with respect to working people is we're going to make every effort, throughout this pandemic, we have . . . As we exit this pandemic, we're going to make every effort to ensure that the hard-working people of Saskatchewan have the opportunity to continue to have their jobs and continue to be working people in the province of Saskatchewan.

We have seen the impact of what any lockdowns have done in other areas of the world and other areas of Canada on the job statistics that are currently available, and it isn't good. Here in Saskatchewan however we're very fortunate because we have not only the strongest employment rate in the nation — just this last report showed that Saskatchewan had increased our jobs in this province by 9,500. That is a good thing, Madam Chair. That's in stark contrast to, you know, the opposition party.

And if you read through their post-mortem on, you know, their most recent campaign that now has turned into the never-ending campaign, they talk about working people and their failure to connect with the working-class voters in this province. They talk about, and it's quoted in here from the panel, that "too many working people no longer see the NDP as their party." So it should be . . . Maybe it just changed here recently as of the last few minutes but I doubt it, Madam Chair. I doubt it highly. And I think in fairness the reflection of the seats in this House I think are an indication of where Saskatchewan people's thoughts are with respect to who should be making the decisions when it



comes to managing our way through the COVID pandemic and ultimately . . . [inaudible].

I've walked through in my previous answer with respect to paid sick leave for hard-working people in this province and across the province. I've walked through how the federal government had wanted to have that space of providing the Canada recovery sickness benefit. I failed to mention some of the other supports that we have put in place in addition to the self-isolation support program in the early days.

But it was also, Saskatchewan led Canada in providing the three hours of paid leave so people can go get vaccinated. We want everyone to get vaccinated. And I spoke yesterday at our update with Dr. Shahab. I spoke directly to employers and I implored on them to provide that three hours to their employees. It ultimately will keep their employees safe, not just the one that's going and getting vaccinated but all of their employees, for a nominal fee of three hours of work, keep their employees safe. It will keep their customers safe. It ultimately will keep our communities safer if higher numbers of people get vaccinated.

We are encouraging the public service to utilize these three hours of paid leave so that they can go and get their vaccine as soon as they become eligible, and many have. And we would encourage . . . and we have and I have. We have as a government asked the deputy minister to the Premier to send that word out to the public service here in Saskatchewan. Use the three hours of paid time to go get your vaccine when it is your turn. It does keep you safe. It keeps your workplace safe, ultimately keeps your family and our community safe, and is going to allow us to find and chart our course through this pandemic.

Many other provinces have followed with respect to providing those three paid hours so that people can go get vaccinated, understanding the value, the value to all of the employees and the employer that is running the business. It's a very small price to pay for the safety of so very many. So I again would ask all employers in this province to encourage their employees to take the three hours of paid time, go out, get vaccinated when it's their turn. That's how we're going to stick it to COVID and that's how we're going to find our way through this pandemic.

**Mr. Meili:** — The question of course was about the minimum wage, the lowest in the country that keeps people in poverty in this province, hard-working people even during a pandemic. No response about that, but what we instead heard was something that is a very ugly look on a government — a government that says, we won an election six months ago. Five hundred people have died since that election but we won, so we don't have to do a good job. We won, so we don't have to be accountable. We won, so it's perfectly okay for us to hurt people with our choices. This is the answer that we get over and over again.

And this is what we saw today: we saw a Premier who made it clear. The Premier today made it very clear that he will never acknowledge a failure, that he will never admit that he's made a single mistake. He will always blame others. He will always be perfect. He will always be great because he won, so he doesn't have to answer because the winning means never having to say you're sorry. But he should be sorry.

We all say thank you to the people of Saskatchewan, but there's

one man in this room that owes the people of Saskatchewan an apology. He owes the people of Saskatchewan an apology and he owes the people of Saskatchewan answers. People deserve answers. People deserve answers. The people who have lost their family members deserve answers. The people who've lost their jobs deserve answers. People deserve answers and they want them.

So my question to the Premier: it's very clear we're never going to get those answers from him. Will we get an independent review? Will we see a public inquiry of the government's management of COVID-19? There have been so many failures — so many failures — the health response, the public health orders, the failure to be serious on masks, the failure to protect long-term care. Hundreds of people have died. This Premier isn't going to ever answer the questions on his own. Will we bring in a public independent inquiry?

The UK introduced their plan for an inquiry today. The Premier likes the plans out of the UK. Well maybe he'd be willing to look at what Boris Johnson has in mind, where they'll have an independent oversight body look in. Or will it just be the Premier saying, we want to answer the questions ourselves?

Mr. Speaker . . . Madam Chair, I was going to do that a few times. Madam Chair, this has been a difficult three hours because this is a Premier who refuses to acknowledge a single moment of his own failures, refuses to acknowledge the pain that his choices have caused Saskatchewan families. Will he at the very least recognize that he owes them answers? Will he commit to a public inquiry into his failings into COVID-19?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Leader of the Opposition's question, the answer is no. With respect to the comments about the most recent election, I think when you look at the makeup of this Assembly that the people of this province have chosen who they trust to not only manage our way through the COVID-19 pandemic but for certain to manage the ultimate economic recovery, the reopening of our communities, and the opportunities that we will have collectively across this province over the next year, the next decade, and really set ourselves up for a very strong decade of growth. Madam Chair, I think the people of the province spoke in the last provincial election that we had after a hard-fought campaign that has now turned into ultimately a never-ending campaign.

[17:30]

The Leader of the Opposition referenced the last three hours. I've had a pretty good three hours. While we've been in here, the Saskatoon drive-through vaccination clinic opened again today. They are vaccinating roughly 100, or a little bit better, people each and every hour while we have been sitting in here debating the work of the government and ultimately the budget, at times, in here over the course of the last three hours. In the Saskatoon vaccination clinic alone, over 300 people have been vaccinated. When you combine that with all of the other clinics that are operating in communities right across this province, there's likely thousands of people that have been vaccinated in the time that we have been sitting here, which takes us a step closer to ultimately reopening the opportunities, regaining those freedoms that we yearn for in our communities and in our life.

A few other things that were noted in the question that I want to address, save for if I don't, the Leader of the Opposition will get up and say, the Premier said this; the Premier said that. And then he will go on to debate what he said I said throughout his answer. And we get into quite a debate about things that have never been referenced by the Premier, Madam Chair. So we've heard it throughout his ongoing campaign the last number of days in question period since we've been here in this session, and we've heard it most assuredly for the last three hours as well. I expect we'll hear it at least for a couple more days in person here in our capital city.

The Leader of the Opposition and the opposition members well know a number of years ago our minimum wage in this province was fixed to an indexation formula. That was done for predictability for our employers as well as our employees here in the province. That's been well conversed and discussed in this House. With respect to the affordability, wage is one part of your overall affordability matrix for people and families that live in this province.

But we've been very focused on ensuring that Saskatchewan people have every opportunity to live a very affordable lifestyle here in Saskatchewan. To lower taxes, for example, has been very much a priority of this government, this current Finance minister as well as Finance ministers that have gone before, to lower taxes on hard-working Saskatchewan people. Maybe that's part of the reason that this party resonates with so many hard-working Saskatchewan people in the province. And we see the postmortem indicating that the opposition party is having some challenges there.

But we have been very focused on lowering those taxes in particular for those families that are in lower income categories. In fact, 112,000 people now are completely off the provincial tax roll here in the province since we have taken government. Madam Chair, that most certainly is a commitment to increasing the affordability for Saskatchewan families, in particular those families that need to have that access to a more affordable lifestyle. We've reduced, and we have, the lowest personal and corporate income tax rates in the country. We're very proud of the efforts and the priority that this government has put towards that. Our personal spousal and child exemptions have increased twice just in the last decade.

The most recent campaign that we had referenced that seems to be ongoing in some people's minds in this Assembly, we had put forward that we were going to reduce families', people's, individuals' power bills by 10 per cent. That is in place as we speak. Saskatchewan drivers, as we said, are going to receive a \$285 cheque from SGI here. That was announced as well this week, again delivered by the Saskatchewan Party, the government. With all of these rebates factored in, Saskatchewan people will pay the lowest rates in the country of anywhere on the bundle, the suite of utilities that they purchase. We have the lowest cost of utilities of anywhere in the nation.

We introduced other incentives as well. Yes, to kind of spur the economic recovery along, but also give people an opportunity to improve, you know, their home. We introduced the home renovation tax credit, for example. The low-income tax credit was enhanced as well. And as I mentioned earlier, we increased the seniors' income plan, which is now being quadrupled, will be

quadrupled by the year 2024.

The fact of the matter is, and this is where the rubber meets the road, if you will, this is the impact on real Saskatchewan people: a single person in Saskatchewan makes \$40,000, pays \$744 less income tax and PST [provincial sales tax] in 2021 than they did in 2007 under the NDP. \$744 — that's a single person making \$40,000.

A family of four making \$50,000 in this province today pays \$2,404 less in income tax and PST in 2021 than they did in 2007 under the NDP. A family of four making \$75,000 — maybe a little bit more dollars coming into that household — but in this province they pay \$1,844 less income tax and PST than they did under the NDP in 2007. And if a family of four would be in that \$100,000 income range, they still pay \$1,918 less in income tax and PST than they did under the NDP.

Madam Chair, we continue to make efforts with respect to, yes, increasing the minimum wage here in this province — increasing everyone's wage by providing jobs. Most notably that opportunity has increased. We have seen the investments that have been announced just over the course of the last number of weeks, really some significant investments centred in and around our capital city of Regina with Viterra, a significant investment in the canola crush industry. Cargill as well, it is a significant investment in the canola crush industry.

We see Saskatchewan Mining and Minerals making an investment in the fertilizer refinement industry. In Yorkton we see Richardson making, yes, a significant investment in doubling their capacity at their canola crush facility in Yorkton.

We see the helium industry starting to make significant investments as we build that industry here in the province. We see the uranium industry starting to pick up again and hire people and bring them back into their mines in northern Saskatchewan, with interest in additional mines throughout the province as well.

We see the potash industry continuing to do strong and continue to operate safely throughout the course of the last year. We see the manufacturing industry, in particular the agricultural implement manufacturing industry, doing a great business here in Saskatchewan. And we see now people that are setting up shop in Saskatchewan in the manufacturing industry.

Madam Chair, we did go through a campaign last fall. The people of this province have spoken. They have chosen who they trust to, yes, navigate our way through the COVID-19 pandemic. They have put their faith in a Saskatchewan Party government to do just that. They have put their faith in a Saskatchewan Party government to ensure that we are going to find and chart our course through this pandemic. They have put their faith in a Saskatchewan Party government to ensure that as we exit the COVID-19 pandemic, that Saskatchewan, our province, and Saskatchewan people that we collectively represent in this Assembly are going to have every opportunity to participate in, as the global economic recovery begins.

Saskatchewan is going to be there. The bell is going to ring, and Saskatchewan people most certainly are going to be there to participate in the global economic recovery. It's going to create jobs in this province. It's going to create jobs right here in this

capital city of Regina. Mr. Speaker, I have never been more proud or thankful to represent the people of this province, how they have responded to the challenges over the course of the past year, and how I know they're going to respond to the opportunity that lies before us.

Great days ahead, Mr. Speaker. Much better days than we've experienced over the course of the past year. Thank you to the people of this great province.

[Applause]

**Mr. Meili:** — Well I saw the standing ovation. And we won't make any comparisons to circus animals today. But we see a group that's willing to stand up and applaud something as empty as that, stand up and applaud cowards, complete cowards. A Premier who, when asked if he was willing to show his work, a Premier who was asked if he was willing to put his choices to the light of day, he said no. Just like he said no when he needed to stand up to anti-maskers. Just like he said no when he was asked to go visit our overwhelmed ICUs. I had a flash of *The Wizard of Oz* and the cowardly lion in this room today, as I saw somebody who says, "Put 'em up, put 'em up," but when the fight comes to him, he doesn't want to take it.

And the fact of the matter is, if this Premier was truly proud of the choices he has made, he would have no problem putting that under the light of a public inquiry. Because the people of Saskatchewan deserve answers. They deserve the chance to know what really went on. And the fact of the matter is we're in a very difficult moment here.

We have opportunity ahead. That's one thing I agree on. But that opportunity only comes if we don't pretend that this didn't just happen, if we don't try to forget the reality of the pain and suffering that has been caused by the failures that led up to this moment. Because COVID-19 has displayed so much of what is broken in our health system, in our education system, in our approach to the economy and to working people. It has revealed so much of the failures of the Sask Party to make us truly strong, to make us truly strong.

And the fact of the matter is choices made by the Sask Party have weakened Saskatchewan, have resulted not only in 500 people losing their lives, not only in thousands more being sick than should've been sick, not only in tens of thousands of people being out of work, but in a true, true risk of a very difficult future. But we don't have to take that difficult future. We don't have to stick with the Sask Party's approach. We must come together now.

And this is my message to Saskatchewan people: you deserve answers. You deserve better than this. You deserve a government that takes what you have dealt with seriously. And you deserve a government that will work with you to look right now at what did we lose, what did we lose in this time, and what can we gain going forward. What have we learned? How do we learn the lessons of COVID-19, and how will we come together truly as people across the province and build a healthy future in which we can all learn these lessons, come out of this truly stronger? Not the kind of weakness and cowardice we've seen today from this Premier and the Sask Party.

or are you concluded?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I guess all I would say is I just have a few very short, brief closing comments here today. We have been elected to govern on behalf of the people of this province, and we most certainly will, Madam Chair. What we see across the way is an eternal campaign. They can continue to campaign throughout the next however many days they choose to. We are going to govern and govern responsibly on behalf of the people that have elected us. And we're very honoured to serve on behalf of Saskatchewan people.

Madam Chair, I would just begin . . . I assume I'm doing just some closing comments here. Madam Chair, I would first of all and foremost take the opportunity to thank you for conducting the committee meeting here this afternoon, the final committee meeting, as we now will ultimately get on with the business of government, have a vote on our budget at some point here very shortly. I'm pretty confident that we're going to pass the budget this year yet again, shouldn't shock anyone in this Assembly.

I would also take this opportunity to thank all of the opposition members. Not just for today's committee meeting, but for the work that they do to hold the government to account. It's an important part of our democratic process. And I would just take this opportunity to thank each of the opposition members for the work that they do on not only behalf of the constituents that they ultimately represent in their constituency, but all of the people of the province. An important piece to a healthy democracy is to have an opposition that is asking questions on behalf of Saskatchewan people, holding government to account. And you do do that each and every day, and for that I am very grateful.

I would also offer the same gratefulness to my colleagues, the members of the government caucus that normally are on this side of the House but, as we say, we have a few that are over on the other side of the House in this physically distanced, distanced session.

I want to thank each of my colleagues in the government caucus for . . . First of all, everyone in this House, for many of us are away from home for an extended period of time here. The sacrifice is far deeper than you as an individual. It's your family that has been sacrificing throughout this session. Please pass on my appreciation and my thanks to your family, to your family members as they have provided the opportunity for you to be here.

Please, all members in this Assembly, accept my thankfulness that you are here playing your role, whatever that might be in this very important democratic process that we have. And to my colleagues in the Saskatchewan government caucus, I want to thank you, in particular, for all that you have provided in the way of guidance, in the way of providing what you were hearing from your constituents, at our caucus meetings, in our one-off meetings when we have the opportunity to chat. And Saskatchewan people can know collectively, Madam Chair, and I say this again to all members of this Assembly, Saskatchewan people are very well represented by all of the MLAs in their provincial Assembly. They can be very proud of the work that does occur, the honourable work that does occur on their behalf.

**The Chair:** — Premier, do you have any other closing remarks,

[17:45]

I also want to take the opportunity to thank all of the officials. There is a lot of work that goes into budget, that goes into a session, for a session to perform. I want to start with Cam Swan, the deputy minister to the Premier, a true friend of the Premier, I would say, as well. Thank you, Cam, for the honour and integrity that you bring to your job each and every day in leading the public service of this province. It's greatly appreciated how you lend your experience, your personality, your very, you know, your very pragmatic and caring approach over the course of the past year, and of course your time serving in multiple governments, not only in Saskatchewan but across the nation. Thank you and please pass on my appreciation to the entire public service in your discussions over the next number of weeks.

All of the other officials, Michelle and her team in House business, all of the officials with the Ministry of Finance that work very hard alongside treasury board to put forward a budget each and every year. And most notably this year, a very challenging process on its own, but ultimately the decisions that had to be made this year in supporting Saskatchewan people, supporting them through the COVID, the COVID-19 pandemic, and ultimately setting ourselves up for that opportunity to participate in this global economic recovery. Thank you to the Minister of Finance and through you to the Finance officials and all of those involved in formulating the budget that we have been debating here for the last number of weeks.

To all of the officials in this Assembly as well — the Clerks, the Sergeant-at-Arms, all of the people that allow us to do our work each and every day in this great building, the Hansard staff that have been working day in and day out, the broadcasting staff that we've been relying on for what I affectionately call our Dr. Shahab show on Tuesdays and all of the work that they do to ensure that people can tune in to the Assembly proceedings, the committee proceedings at will across the province; and of course all of the other staff in the ministers' office throughout the building in this very, very beautiful Legislative Assembly. I'd say the most beautiful Legislative Assembly in the nation, in Canada.

To all the building staff that are working in here each and every day ensuring that we are able to do the important work that we do in here each and every day — thank you. Thank you for what you do. Thank you for what you have done over the course of the past year. And thank you in advance for what I know you're going to do in the, you know, in the next while as we find our way through the last of this pandemic.

Last but not least, thank you to our health care workers, all of those that are working so very hard in our facilities across the province, providing vaccines as we sit here today.

And most certainly thank you to the people of Saskatchewan.

**The Chair:** — As we are now going to vote off the estimates, I'll ask the officials to leave please.

Is subvote (EX01), central management and services in the amount of \$6,031,000 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Is subvote (EX03), communications

office in the amount of \$1,000,094 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — \$94,000. \$1,094,000 is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Is subvote (EX04), cabinet planning in the amount of \$1,118,000 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Agreed. Carried. Is subvote (EX05), cabinet secretariat in the amount of \$512,000 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Subvote (EX06), members of the executive council in the amount of \$139,000. This is a statutory amount so no vote is required.

Is subvote (EX07), Premier's office in the amount of \$492,000 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Is subvote (EX08), House business and research in the amount of \$248,000 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Is subvote (EX10), intergovernmental affairs in the amount of \$2,283,000 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Is subvote (EX12), Lieutenant Governor's office in the amount of \$725,000 agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2022, the following sums for Executive Council: \$12,503,000.

Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — This motion is carried. There being no further business before the committee, I would invite a member to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. J. Harrison:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. 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.

[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 progress and ask for leave to sit again.

**The Speaker:** — When shall the committee sit again?

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

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting. It now being past the ordinary time for adjournment, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:55.]

# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

## CABINET MINISTERS

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**Hon. Scott Moe**  
**Premier**  
**President of the Executive Council**  
**Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs**

**Hon. Fred Bradshaw**  
Minister of Highways  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency

**Hon. Lori Carr**  
Minister of Social Services

**Hon. Dustin Duncan**  
Minister of Education

**Hon. Bronwyn Eyre**  
Minister of Energy and Resources

**Hon. Donna Harpauer**  
Deputy Premier  
Minister of Finance

**Hon. Jeremy Harrison**  
Minister of Trade and Export Development  
Minister of Immigration and Career Training  
Minister Responsible for Innovation  
Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

**Hon. Everett Hindley**  
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,  
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health

**Hon. Warren Kaeding**  
Minister of Environment

**Hon. Gene Makowsky**  
Minister of Advanced Education

**Hon. David Marit**  
Minister of Agriculture  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation

**Hon. Don McMorris**  
Minister of Government Relations  
Minister Responsible for First Nations,  
Métis and Northern Affairs  
Minister Responsible for the  
Provincial Capital Commission

**Hon. Paul Merriman**  
Minister of Health

**Hon. Don Morgan**  
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety  
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation  
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Government Insurance  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Power Corporation  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Telecommunications  
Minister Responsible for  
Saskatchewan Water Corporation  
Minister Responsible for the  
Saskatchewan Workers' Compensation Board

**Hon. Jim Reiter**  
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement  
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission  
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor  
and Gaming Authority  
Minister Responsible for The Global  
Transportation Hub Authority

**Hon. Laura Ross**  
Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport  
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

**Hon. Christine Tell**  
Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety

**Hon. Gordon Wyant**  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General