



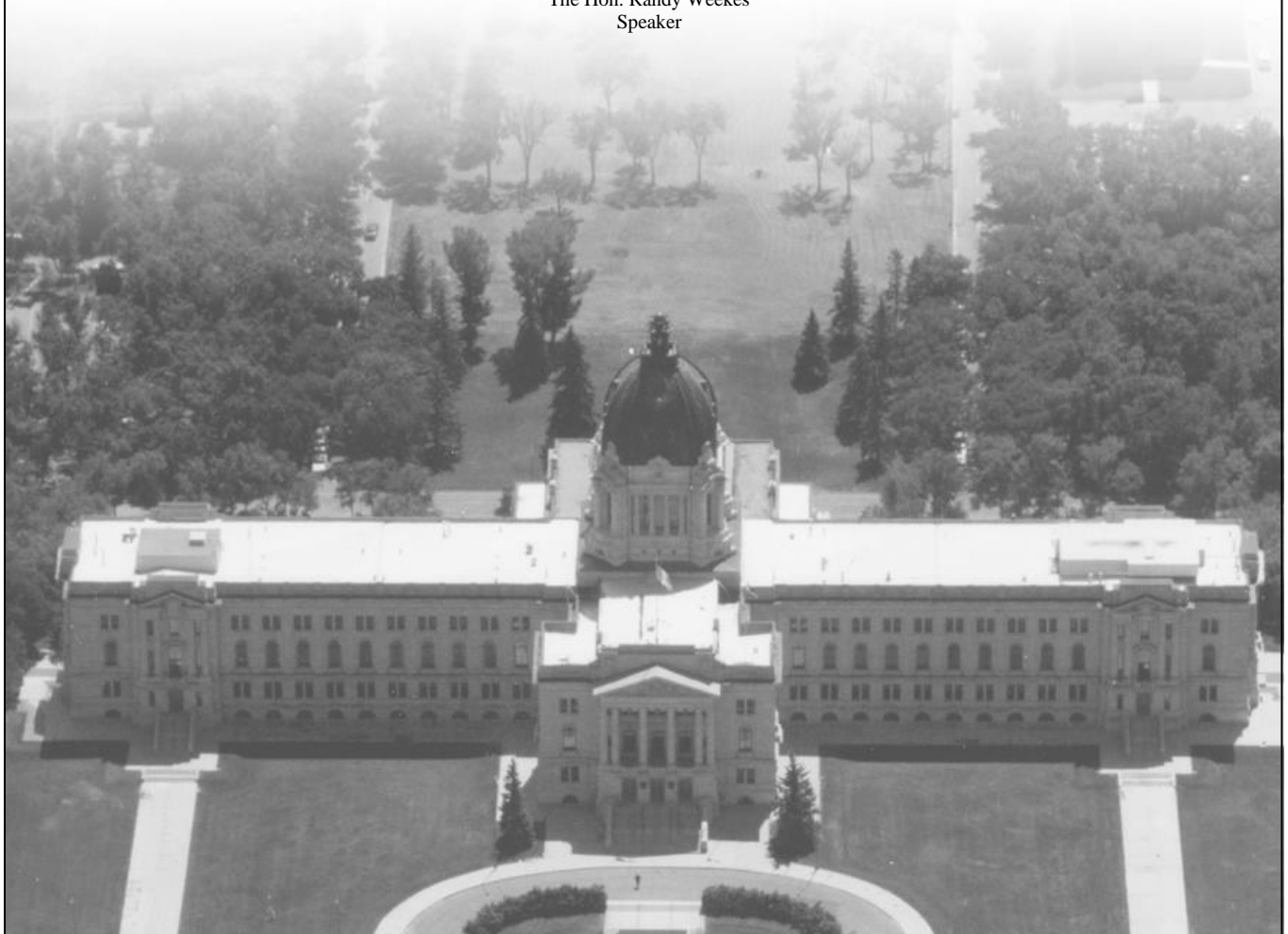
SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

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

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 47; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Independent (Ind.) — 1; Vacant — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

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

Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyak

Sergeant-at-Arms — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask for leave of the Assembly to move a motion regarding the rules of the session.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move a motion to modify the Legislative Assembly's rules, procedures, and practices for the remainder of the fall sitting period. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Government House Leader may proceed.

MOTIONS

Sessional Order

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And at the conclusion of brief remarks, I'm going to move a motion for consideration of the Assembly with regard to the modification of the *Rules and Procedures* for this particular sitting.

Before I do so, though, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a couple of comments on some of the substantive elements of that motion. But firstly I want to say thank you to the Opposition House Leader very sincerely for her professionalism and dedication in what have been some lengthy discussions, but I think very, very productive, done in very good faith and done confidentially. And I want to thank her very, very much for that commitment, and I think we have made some very good progress with regard to the conduct of another sitting which will be much out of the ordinary from those which we have experienced in past years in this Chamber.

And on the vast majority of items, Mr. Speaker, I can say we have consensus between the parties about what that path forward is. I won't get into all of the details of what those are — they will be laid out in a motion — but things that touch on the ability of members to participate even if they are in mandatory isolation owing to COVID-19, and a number of the other rules of the Assembly which I'll lay out in that motion.

There are two areas which I would characterize where we had differences of view, and I know the member opposite is going to be putting that on the record — and I appreciate the conversation we were able to have yesterday about how we would handle this in the Chamber today, so I want to thank her for that — one of which is around masking.

And you know, we are putting in the motion to the House here today that members and those participating, from both the staff element and officials if we're in committee, when participating in debate would be able to participate without wearing a mask. All other occasions members would be required and those who

are not participating in that discussion would be required to wear a mask, but this would be very much in line with how we conducted our session last spring and I think that is very much in line with how other legislatures and the House of Commons have conducted their business where members who are on their feet and speaking would be able to do so without a mask. I know we have a difference of view on that, but the government will be putting forward in the motion the provision that members who are on their feet would not be required to wear a mask.

The second item is a significant one, and that has to do with the provision reflecting the public health order that those members participating in this Chamber would have two options. And those two options would be vaccination — which we have all members, save one, who are fully vaccinated in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker — or proof of a negative COVID test.

And I know the members opposite are going to be . . . Well I don't want to anticipate what they're going to be suggesting, but if they were to suggest that there would not be an option for a proof of a recent negative COVID test, that's something that we do not agree with on the government side, Mr. Speaker.

And there are a number of reasons for this, the first being that the opportunity to show proof of negative test is in line with the public health order that governs public servants, for example, who have that option. And I think it's been deemed a fairly standard practice in most other jurisdictions, not just within Canada but around the world, where those who are unvaccinated can provide a proof of negative test as an alternative. So that would be one reason.

The second reason really goes to something more profound about what it means to be a member and what it means to be a representative of your constituents sent here to represent those constituents. And we've looked back, Mr. Speaker, about the examples, and there's one example where a member by a vote of this House has been precluded from participating as a member of this House. And let's be under no illusion. What the motion that will come forward would do would prevent a member from taking her seat in the Chamber and participating as a member. That's what this is actually about. And that was about 40 years ago, Mr. Speaker: the House changed a statute to prevent a member from participating, subsequent to being convicted of a very serious criminal offence.

And we believe that by vote of this legislature, there would be a very dangerous precedent set if the majority of this Chamber could, on the basis of policy differences, prevent members from participating. And for that reason we will not be supporting any motion that would change that.

We profoundly disagree with the member — profoundly disagree with the member — and the position that she has taken with regard to vaccination, Mr. Speaker, but that member was duly elected. That member should have the opportunity to participate in this Chamber and not be banned from participating in this Chamber by vote of a majority.

So you know, it really is kind of that central question, Mr. Speaker. Despite the fact that we do significantly disagree with the member's position, we will not be supporting any amendment

to preclude proof of negative test being a negative requirement for participating in the House.

So again I'll conclude by saying thank you to the Opposition House Leader for a very good discussion. And with that I will move the following motion:

That the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly and its committees be subject to modification due to the ongoing and evolving context of the COVID-19 pandemic as follows:

1. Members of the Legislative Assembly are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours to attend and participate in all forms of legislative proceedings;
2. The Speaker is authorized to determine the standards for verification of vaccination and negative COVID-19 testing;
3. Members of the Legislative Assembly shall wear a mask at all times in the Chamber and committee room except when speaking during proceedings after being recognized by the Chair;
4. Employees of the Legislative Assembly, government officials, media, and public observers shall wear a mask at all times in the Chamber and committee room except when required to participate in proceedings;
5. Rule 2 shall not be applicable to any member unable to attend a sitting for reasons of self-isolation due to exposure to COVID-19;
6. Proxy voting for recorded divisions as specified in section 3(d) of the Standing Committee on House Services fifth report of the twenty-ninth legislature and the associated designated proxy form contained in appendix 6 shall apply to any member unable to attend the sitting for reasons of self-isolation due to exposure to COVID-19; and

That this sessional order shall be enforced by the Speaker and presiding officers for the duration of the fall period of the parliamentary calendar.

I so move.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved a sessional order. Would the Assembly take the motion as read? I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I too would like to thank the Government House Leader for many conversations about what keeping safety in this Assembly looks like over the past few weeks. Let us be clear that this is a matter of public safety. This is a matter of public health. And so there are a couple of areas that will come as no surprise to the Government House Leader. There are a couple of areas that we take issue with in the motion as presented.

The first is that we disagree with the exceptions for proof of

vaccination for MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in this Assembly. The only exception that should be made for MLAs in this Assembly is for those small number of individuals in our population who are medically ineligible and are deemed medically ineligible by a physician in this province. We need to hold ourselves to a higher standard as elected officials, and now more than ever in the depths of this fourth wave is that of utmost importance. We need to hold ourselves to that higher standard, we need to follow the science, and we need to set the example as elected officials in this Assembly.

The second issue is around the removal of masks while speaking, Mr. Speaker. We believe this Assembly should follow at least the same standard of rules that are set out in the public health order as a bare minimum. In the public health order, it stipulates that there are exceptions for removing masks in public spaces if there's a 3-metre distance between individuals. This is presumably designed for folks on a stage who are quite a distance away from other members. We know that we do not have the ability to retain that distance between individuals in this Assembly. And so we will, at the conclusion of my remarks, be moving an amendment that will make it so that members have to keep their masks on while they are speaking. Again this should come as no surprise to the members opposite as this is the position that we took in the last sitting, and one that is following public health advice at this time.

So accordingly I would like to move the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting section 1 and replacing it with the following:

1(a) Subject to 1(b), all members of the Legislative Assembly who are eligible to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 must present a proof of vaccination to the Speaker to attend and participate in all forms of legislative proceedings;

1(b) Members of the Legislative Assembly with a bona fide medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination verified by a physician licensed to practice medicine in Saskatchewan shall be permitted to participate in legislative proceedings after providing a copy of their physician's verification and daily proof of a negative COVID-19 test to the Speaker. Proof of a negative test must not be more than 72 hours old; and

That section 3 be amended by deleting the words "except when speaking during proceedings after being recognized by the Chair"; and further,

That section 4 be amended by deleting the words "except when required to participate in proceedings."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has moved an amendment. Will the House take the amendment as read?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

Some Hon. Members: — Yes.

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

[The division bells rang from 10:19 until 10:20.]

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — All in favour of the motion can stand.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

[Yeas — 42]

The Speaker: — Standing vote? Call in the members.

Moe	McMorris	Reiter
Harpauer	Morgan	Duncan
Wyant	Tell	Bradshaw
Eyre	J. Harrison	Merriman
Hindley	Kaeding	Cheveldayoff
Docherty	Marit	Makowsky
Carr	Stewart	Cockrill
McLeod	Fiaz	C. Young
Hargrave	Ottenbreit	Bonk
Grewal	Skoropad	Jenson
Keisig	A. Ross	Meyers
Dennis	Buckingham	Kirsch
Lambert	Goudy	Steele
Nerlien	Domotor	Friesen

[The division bells rang from 10:14 until 10:15].

[10:15]

The Speaker: — All in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 11]

Meili	Sarauer	Mowat
A. Young	Vermette	Bowes
Conway	Beck	Ritchie
Love	Wilson	

The Speaker: — Is the member from Saskatchewan Rivers speaking in favour of the motion . . . or voting in favour of the motion? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, she is.

The Speaker: — All those opposed please stand.

[Nays — 10]

Clerk: — Ms. Wilson.

Meili	Sarauer	Mowat
A. Young	Vermette	Bowes
Conway	Beck	Ritchie
Love		

Ms. Wilson: — Yes, thank you. I believe in democracy and I don't believe in . . .

The Speaker: — Just the vote is all we're having right now. Will the members against the amendment please stand.

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 42; those opposed, 10.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion carried.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

[Nays — 42]

Moe	McMorris	Reiter
Harpauer	Morgan	Duncan
Wyant	Tell	Bradshaw
Eyre	J. Harrison	Merriman
Hindley	Kaeding	Cheveldayoff
Docherty	Marit	Makowsky
Carr	Stewart	Cockrill
McLeod	Fiaz	C. Young
Hargrave	Ottenbreit	Bonk
Grewal	Skoropad	Jenson
Keisig	A. Ross	Meyers
Dennis	Buckingham	Kirsch
Lambert	Goudy	Steele
Nerlien	Domotor	Friesen

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly, it's indeed my pleasure to introduce an individual that many in this Assembly do already know, in your east gallery, Pastor Fred Hill.

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amendment, 11; those opposed, 42.

Pastor Hill is a lifelong resident of Regina. He grew up here and in fact spent a lot of time around this building. He recently retired as the pastor of Celebration Church in time to take on the full chaplaincy role in the Legislative Building, supporting members and employees in this building on behalf of Leading Influence Ministries.

The Speaker: — The amendment is lost. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

It's a non-partisan role, Mr. Speaker. He supports all members and staff, again, in this building with his services if they so wish. He's become a good friend and a good support and a confidant and a mentor, I think, to myself as well as others, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

And in fact a group that I've been involved with since I've been here for, you know, going on 15 years — and it went on for about 25 years before I was here, for sure — gathering Wednesday mornings in this legislature to reflect and have some fellowship and pray, Mr. Speaker, for our province and our people. And I've

The Speaker: — On division. Standing division. Call in the members please.

had the honour of being involved in that, and Fred's recently joined our group and has taken on that impact through that group as well.

So just a very valued asset to have in this building as a friend and a mentor again, Mr. Speaker. So I just ask all members of this Assembly to welcome Pastor Fred Hill, chaplain of the Saskatchewan legislature, to his Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join in with the member opposite in welcoming Pastor Hill to our Assembly. And I know that he has went out of his way to meet the members, make them feel welcome, talks to them about the services that he offers. And I want to thank him for his contribution to our community in this space, as well as his willingness to offer those services to folks who will be interested in having them, Mr. Speaker. So I will ask all members of this Assembly to join me in welcoming Pastor Hill.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce 27 grade 12 students from Balgonie that are seated in the west gallery, as well as on the floor of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. They're accompanied by their teacher, Melissa Marley; EAs [educational assistant] Angela Martin and Lana Kreutzer, Mr. Speaker.

Welcome to your Legislative Assembly. You're kind of a very unique group because we haven't had a school group in this Assembly for about two years. So it's the first time . . . We're kind of maybe a little rusty on our introductions because we haven't done one for two years. So thank you for being here on the very first day, and I'm looking forward to meeting with you in a little while to talk a little bit about what you're going to see in the Chamber here.

But I will tell you before we even meet that what you saw already is kind of groundbreaking. We've never had to have a motion like that before in this Assembly. We've never had to have those conversations before because we're in such a unique time not only here in this Chamber but in the province and in the world. So, you know, you may remember this trip to the legislature for the first time you've been here, but probably more importantly you're going to remember it for the time and space that we're in in this world. So looking forward to meeting you in the next half-hour. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of this Assembly, I rise here today to recognize my first guest who is graciously seated in your gallery — a proud westerner, an Albertan, and unfortunately a Stampeder fan. This gentleman is a proud immigrant, having moved to Canada in 1966. A U of A [University of Alberta] graduate, he went on to be a leader in radio broadcasting with *As It Happens* with Barbara Frum, *Morningside* with Peter

Gzowski, 10 years at *The Journal*, and dozens more as a war zone correspondent travelling the world in places such as El Salvador, Nicaragua, Bosnia, Sri Lanka, and the Amazon.

He worked alongside the rock band U2 as part of the rebuilding efforts in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. He served as executive producer of the Olympic games in Vancouver and London, a consultant for Facebook, Instagram, the Government of Canada. He's a father of three, a great squash player, a bad banjo player, and a worse poet. He's the recipient of three Gemini awards, a Canadian Screen Award, and an Emmy. And he also knocks doors, puts up signs, and avidly volunteers for candidates he believes in.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in welcoming a regular legislative broadcast watcher, first-time observer, an accomplished Canadian, and my dad, Don Young.

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

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and all members of this Assembly, I would like to introduce to you my oldest son, seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Rob is my oldest of three boys and is a great support to me. He accompanied me down here because he was worried about me driving after a very long day. So I am very proud to have him in my life and I would like you to help me welcome him here today to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, I'd ask members to join me in welcoming my wife's parents, Kevin and Liz Driedger from North Battleford. And my mom is here today from British Columbia. And we've all talked at length in various Throne Speech replies about how important the support of family is. And like the member opposite, my family was also very instrumental in the election campaign about a year ago. So I would like to ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming Kevin and Liz and Alyson. Thank you.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, I'd like to introduce my fiancée. I had the pleasure of her coming up with a couple of my kids and a friend of my sister yesterday. And like has already been mentioned in the House this morning, they were all very supportive in campaigns, not only in the last one in 2020 but in 2016. So just very happy to have you here and join us. They had the honour of being here for the Throne Speech yesterday as well, and this is also their first time in the House. So thank you.

[10:30]

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

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you

and through you and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my pleasure to introduce my wife, Noella, presently seated in the Speaker's gallery on my left-hand side. We've been married for 28 years now and she's been my best friend, supporter, and ally through not only our married life together, but also for me entering into this new endeavour to represent the constituents of Cut Knife-Turtleford. She accompanied me yesterday for the Throne Speech and was interested in attending today's session to show her support. This is just one example of how she's been encouraging to me in my new role. Without her support and her keeping me organized, more or less, this would not be possible, and for that I am forever grateful. Mr. Speaker, will all members join me in welcoming her to the Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be back in the Chamber once again presenting a petition calling for pay equity legislation. Pay equity legislation requires employers to pay female-dominated jobs the same as male-dominated jobs when they are of comparable value.

The signatories would like to bring to our attention the following points. Saskatchewan is only one of four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation. Saskatchewan has one of the highest gender-wage gaps in all of Canada, which is the result of systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work that must be corrected by pay equity legislation.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has recommended proactive and comprehensive pay equity legislation, which has not been pursued by the Government of Saskatchewan.

I'll now read the prayer:

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

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

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on the Saskatchewan income support program or SIS, a new social assistance program that has been rammed through by the Sask Party government contrary to the advice and appeals of affected stakeholders, from landlords to recipients to the organizations that support them on the ground.

Initiated in 2019 by the then Health minister, SIS fully replaced all pre-existing programs as of last month, and the results have been truly tragic. A family of four living in Regina is expected to live on less than half the poverty line. A family with three mouths or five mouths or seven or nine mouths to feed receive the same amount. How can that be?

SIS represents cuts to benefits that were already inadequate. Predecessor programs paid directly for rent and utilities. That is no longer the case, Mr. Speaker. Utilities were guaranteed to be covered. That is no longer the case, Mr. Speaker. SIS represents cuts to school supplies, moving allowance, guaranteed security deposits — all gone, Mr. Speaker.

It's no surprise that yesterday's rally received national coverage. I hope it is news to no one that Camp Marjorie, located here in the heart of our province's capital, is now home to over 60 tents. Over 100 people live there, Mr. Speaker, and this is not unique to Regina. SIS is actively aggravating a preventable housing and homelessness crisis, and it is making it harder for recipients to make ends meet. Winter is coming and we are waiting for action from the minister responsible.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully respect that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to restore direct payment of rent and utilities for income support plans.

I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A year ago as we headed into the second wave, we called for measures that would protect people, protect their health, protect their jobs. The Premier downplayed the risk, ignored doctors' advice, and hundreds of people died. In the third wave we were in a race between the vaccine and the variants. The Premier chose to give those variants a head start, relaxing restrictions just as cases rose. He downplayed the risk, ignored doctors' advice, and hundreds of people died.

And here we are today in the worst fourth wave in the entire country. Our hospitals are overwhelmed to the point of sending Saskatchewan patients halfway across the country because we can't care for them here. Once again he's downplaying the risk, ignoring doctors' advice, and hundreds of people have died. It's a disturbing pattern of a Premier who ignores all the signs with increasingly deadly results: 827 deaths already, the highest death rate in Canada. Health care workers burned out to the point of leaving the province. Thousands of surgeries and therapies cancelled, and no sign of remorse, no sign of responsibility from this Premier.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have been betrayed. They deserve so much more than a Premier who constantly puts politics ahead of people's lives.

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

Respiratory Therapists Make Saskatchewan Safer

Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Respiratory

Therapy Week we are reminded of how fortunate we are to have a wide range of highly trained health care providers in Saskatchewan. It's hard to imagine a time when we've been more aware of the role they play as we face a communicable disease that attacks the lungs and threatens the health of our citizens. Mr. Speaker, these therapists work in emergency departments and intensive care units, helping people deal with conditions that affect their ability to breathe. They evaluate, treat, and maintain the lung and heart functions of their patients.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget provides an additional \$334,000 to expand the capacity of the Victoria Hospital. This means 24-hours-a-day respiratory therapy coverage for the hospital's acute care services. This enhances the level of care for all patients across northern Saskatchewan who receive care in Prince Albert. Additional COVID-related funding this year expands respiratory therapy coverage to support our acute care surge plan.

Additional respiratory therapists are also a part of our ongoing investment to increase adult intensive care and medicine beds at Royal University and St. Paul's hospitals. Mr. Speaker, these initiatives are working. The number of respiratory therapist positions in Saskatchewan has almost doubled since 2007-08. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in recognizing the critical role of respiratory therapists who help make Saskatchewan a safer place to live. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Deputy Leader.

Remembering Those Lost to COVID-19

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today in remembrance of the 832 people lost to COVID-19 and to express my deepest condolences to the grieving families and loved ones. When this House met last spring, our province had a total of 515 deaths. More than 300 people have died since then.

Mr. Speaker, these are not just statistics. These are children, parents, grandparents, friends, and neighbours. The heartbreaking grief our province has experienced, especially during the fourth wave, is devastating. My heart breaks for those in mourning, and it saddens me to know that more people will lose their lives to COVID while we battle this fourth wave.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue our important work as MLAs let us remember that the choices we make in this House have the potential to lessen the suffering inflicted on this province. Members on this side of the House have a duty to hold this government to account. We have always been willing to work with members opposite to ensure Saskatchewan's COVID response is as impactful as possible. Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that spirit of co-operation. The stakes are too high for anything less than a full commitment to tackling the COVID crisis together. I ask that all members pause to remember the 832 lives lost to COVID so far and commit to doing everything we can to stop the loss of life in this province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

Care and Support for Breast Cancer Patients

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October is Breast

Cancer Awareness Month and sadly, one in eight women will be diagnosed with this disease during their lifetime. My mother was one of those women. Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women. The good news is that Saskatchewan is helping lead the fight against this horrible disease.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the University of Saskatchewan's College of Medicine has spent over 30 years researching how this cancer developed and why it spreads. Mr. Speaker, these investments in research are improving care and treatment options while making a difference for people in our province and across Canada. The Cancer Agency's breast cancer screening program has provided mammograms for women over 50 since 1990. Three out of four breast cancers diagnosed through the screening program are found in their early stages, and fortunately, Mr. Speaker, prospects for treatment are excellent.

Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to provide financial support to assist the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. This year the agency received a \$7.6 million increase to a total of \$204 million, the highest ever.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and send best wishes to those affected by breast cancer. I also want to thank the health care providers and charities working tirelessly to provide care and support to patients and their families. This service and dedication are invaluable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Foster Families Provide a Safe Home

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to recognize October as Foster Families Month in Saskatchewan. Nearly 500 foster families currently provide care for children and youth in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there's no more thoughtful way that I could think of for a family to give back to their community than becoming foster parents.

Foster families create a safe, warm, and caring home for children and youth in a time of crisis in their life. Mr. Speaker, we hope that parents who are separated from their kids for a time can take some comfort in knowing that their children are safe and that they are cared for while they work with us to create that same safe home environment for their children to return to. Mr. Speaker, until that happens we know that with every school drop-off, every hot meal, and trip to the park, every bedtime story, and every late-night talk, our foster families are providing that loving care in helping change children's lives for the better.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to invite all members of this Assembly to please join me in thanking our friends and our neighbours, the foster families of Saskatchewan, for opening their homes and opening their hearts to the children and youth in need, and as well to the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association for their vital service to this great province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Cattle Farmers Embrace Change

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Corey Bloder, a

26-year-old cattleman farmer from Unity, was featured in a recent issue of the *Canadian Cattlemen* magazine. Corey and his girlfriend, Maxi Biederstadt, met while studying animal science technology at Lakeland College. Together they manage the operation of Blushrose Simmental Farm alongside with Corey's parents, Alan and Heather Bloder. The Blushrose Simmental Farm has been in the Bloder family, Mr. Speaker, for over 42 years now.

Corey's passion for what he does comes through as they use artificial insemination and embryo transfer on their farm to use only the best genetics from around the world. Blushrose Simmental Farm sells cattle across western Canada and into the US [United States]. Blushrose also diversified to allow them to produce hay and grain for farm use and marketing.

Mr. Speaker, Corey credits his knowledge and passion to years of working alongside his dad and grandpa. He says, learning to adapt and change while not being afraid to try new techniques is a key of progressing. You don't ever get ahead without taking risks. And if you take care of the land, for the most part, it will take care of you.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members please join me in congratulation Corey, Maxi, Alan, and Heather on their successful adventure and for pursuing their dreams right here in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

[10:45]

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

Prince Albert Monument to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past summer our missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls monument was unveiled on Prince Albert's riverbank. The monument, Mr. Speaker, is a collaborative effort spearheaded by the P.A. [Prince Albert] Grand Council Women's Commission and is designed to bring awareness.

This beautiful north-facing monument is a place for families to come and pray. The two feathers with faces on both sides is symbolic of how missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls affects every generation, from babies to elders. The sculptor, Lionel Peyachew, crafted the work designed by James Smith Cree Nation artist Tristen Sanderson. It was designed to look like eyes that are peering back at you, Mr. Speaker.

The day following the unveiling, a walk to remember missing and murdered Indigenous women and children was held with a special We Rise ceremony. These events serve to keep these issues top of mind, keeping residents aware and mobilized, and importantly to help families begin to heal.

Mr. Speaker, our work isn't done. There are relatives still grieving the loss of loved ones, while others are still searching. I now ask that all members stand with me in remembering and honouring the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in our province. And I ask members to stand with me in support of their families who seek answers, healing, and peace.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October the 20th, Dr. Saqib Shahab, our chief medical health officer, became understandably emotional when describing the increasingly distressing situation in Saskatchewan health care. He said on that day, and I quote, "It's up to government to answer what my formal recommendations have been for the last few weeks." So to the Premier: what are those recommendations?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Throughout this pandemic all of the decisions that this government has made and the public health orders, the public health recommendations that have been made have been done in collaboration between the government and our chief medical health officer as well as some other representatives in the Saskatchewan Health Authority, ultimately the Ministry of Health.

And yes, Dr. Shahab does provide recommendations to the Government of Saskatchewan, and then ultimately the government makes decisions on how we move forward with whether it's a public health recommendation, whether it's a public health order, Mr. Speaker, that would go out under the chief medical health officer's signature.

That's exactly how we have the significant measures that are in place today: masking indoors, for example. Mr. Speaker, that's how we have the significant measure in place, the proof-of-vaccination policy as well. I would put forward that both of these measures are proving to be very effective. Our cases are dropping — 52 per cent down from the peak, Mr. Speaker, our seven-day rolling average is. I believe our active cases also are down about 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

And our vaccinations are up, nearly 150,000 vaccines have been delivered since we implemented those public health measures. Saskatchewan people now are . . . 85 per cent of those have done the right thing, gone out and got their first shot. We would expect they'll get their second shot very shortly. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people once again are rising to the challenge that this virus has presented to us.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The lowest vaccination rate in the country, the highest death rate in the country, over 800 lives lost. And the question was, Mr. Speaker, what have Dr. Shahab's recommendations been in recent weeks, and what are his recommendations right now? Will the Premier release those?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — As I said, Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that Dr. Shahab makes ultimately to the government are reviewed

by the government.

And ultimately we have moved forward through many of the discussions that we have had with Dr. Shahab on the proof of masking, Mr. Speaker. We've moved forward on the proof of vaccination or proof of negative test across the public service, including this place where we serve as well, Mr. Speaker. We've moved with that policy for patrons in a number of different business venues throughout the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's also a number of recommendations that Dr. Shahab has put forward, recommendations to the people of this province as to what they can do to ensure that they are keeping themselves safe. Recommendations to keep our contact circles small. Recommendations as to keep those contact circles among vaccinated people, Mr. Speaker, as ultimately vaccines are very much keeping people safe, the strongest tool that we have had in this battle against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government of Saskatchewan is also working with Dr. Shahab as well as other health officials to ensure that we are providing all of the tools that we have available that can keep people safe, keep people out of hospital, making those tools available in our communities across this province, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to do so in the future.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier makes the decision. His decisions have cost Saskatchewan people their lives. Saskatchewan people deserve to know what information he was acting on. Will the Premier release Dr. Shahab's recommendations?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, those recommendations have been acted on either through a public health order or through a public health recommendation. And those recommendations, I would say, are highly effective as we look at them today and we look at where we were a short time ago, just over a month ago here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Our vaccinations are up nearly 150,000. We have 85 per cent of people in this province that have went out and done the right thing. Our active case count, Mr. Speaker, is down 50 per cent, and our seven-day rolling average is down 52 per cent in this province from our peak. Mr. Speaker, this is because of what Saskatchewan people have done and, yes, because of the significant public health orders that are in place, and the public health recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier, you're going to see a divergent path between the government and the members opposite. The members opposite are looking to put in sweeping public health measures across the province even though 85 per cent of people in this province have done the right thing. Mr. Speaker, this government is putting in place all of the tools that we have available to keep people safe, to keep people out of hospital, but also to respect the personal freedoms that we have and enjoy in this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, this Premier's choices to act too little, too late have made those personal freedoms further restricted and have cost people their lives. It's been the pattern throughout the pandemic. And what people need and deserve to know across Saskatchewan is why he's made those deadly choices. Will he release Dr. Shahab's recommendations? If not, what is he trying to hide?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, just let me begin by expressing my most sincere condolences to all of the families that have grieved and had loss throughout this pandemic, not even just in Saskatchewan but across the nation of Canada, as a fellow Canadian.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question, the collaborative discussions that we have had with our chief medical health officer, you're seeing much of that is in place today. We have significant public health orders in place that are working. They're dropping our case numbers here in the province, ultimately starting to drop our hospitalization numbers as well.

Mr. Speaker, you are seeing significant public health measures in place that are pushing our vaccination rate up. And you're seeing, Mr. Speaker, a number of public health recommendations that are also in place that Saskatchewan people are paying attention to, and that is helping in our battle with the fourth wave of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately the most effective tool that we have in our tool box . . . And we have a number of tools today that we did not have a year ago. We have some early intervention treatments. We have rapid self-tests that have been provided to communities right across this province. We have private testing providers that are providing testing, Mr. Speaker.

But ultimately the most effective tool that we all have as a person in this province to keep ourselves safe, to keep those around us safe, keep our family members safe, keep our communities safe, Mr. Speaker, is to go out and get vaccinated. Eighty-five per cent of this province's residents has done the right thing, and we are going to do everything that we can to provide them with the tools to further keep them safe. But we're also going to have respect, Mr. Speaker, for the personal freedoms that we have in this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier seemed to suggest that somehow he is following Dr. Shahab's recommendations. That doesn't appear to be the case based on huge discrepancies between public statements from the Premier and the chief medical health officer.

So once again, what are the current recommendations? And will he release the current recommendations and all of the recommendations throughout the pandemic so that Saskatchewan people can truly understand why he's made choices that have cost people their lives?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the recommendations, the public health orders that come to place come about from a collaborative discussion that this government has, a number of government members with Dr. Shahab, our chief medical officers, as well as with other folks that are, Mr. Speaker, very involved in the public policy in the area of public health within the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, those measures that are in place as a public health order are the proof-of-vaccination/proof-of-negative-test policy — very effective. Nearly 150,000 vaccines have been taken by Saskatchewan folks since that has been implemented just over a month ago.

The masking order, Mr. Speaker, has been in place and is helping us, a part of why we're able to say today we're down about 52 per cent on our rolling seven-day average on our case counts here in Saskatchewan. And I expect that trajectory to continue in the days ahead as these public health measures and the public health recommendations that are in place are proving to be effective, proving to be effective because of how seriously Saskatchewan people are taking this virus. Mr. Speaker, 85 per cent of them have went out and done the right thing. We expect that type of compliance, that type of ambition to continue in the days and weeks ahead.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let the record show that instead of being straight with Saskatchewan people about the recommendations he's received, the Premier is instead trying to spin the worst fourth wave in the entire country, the highest death rate in the entire country, as good news.

Mr. Speaker, recently released modelling from June foresaw a fourth wave that would overwhelm Saskatchewan hospitals if all health restrictions were eliminated. That's what happened, and that's what did occur as a result. To the Premier: having seen that modelling at the time, why did he remove any and all public health restrictions in July, creating the conditions for that fourth wave?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I'd just correct the record very quickly with respect to where Saskatchewan is with the measures that we have in place. We have the masking measure, indoor masking mandate in place. We have a very robust proof-of-vaccination or proof-of-negative-test policy in place across the public service, across many private businesses that have moved with that policy as well, Mr. Speaker. As well as a number of different patrons now are having to comply with that policy to enter a number of different restaurants and other areas in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

And we have recommendations around the gathering sizes and whether or not those gathering size are vaccinated, Mr. Speaker. And this has come about through very collaborative discussions with our chief medical health officer.

And, Mr. Speaker, again this is where we are going to see contrasting paths and contrasting, really, policy views between the members of the opposition, the Leader of the Opposition, who

do feel that we should be imposing sweeping restrictions across the mass population in Saskatchewan even though 85 per cent of Saskatchewan people have went out and done the right thing and they have gotten their first shot.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that is putting in place all the measures and all of the tools available to Saskatchewan people to ensure that we can keep them safe. And all the while we're going to continue to respect the personal freedoms, Mr. Speaker. The measures are focused on the 15 per cent that have not made that decision to go get vaccinated, and we're going to protect the personal freedoms of the rest of the Saskatchewan people.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do indeed have contrasting views. We would make the efforts required to save people's lives.

This Premier saw modelling in June that showed that his decisions would cause the deaths of more Saskatchewan people, and yet he went ahead with those actions. Will the Premier release that modelling and all modelling he's received and tell us why, knowing that more people would die, he went down that path?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, modelling that is available is one tool that I know Dr. Shahab as well as other health officials utilize in some of the conversations that we have about implementing public health restrictions, public health recommendations, Mr. Speaker. Vaccination rates is another tool that the chief medical health officer as well as others look at. And I would put forward that it most certainly has proved to be our most effective tool here in the province.

[11:00]

And here's some Saskatchewan facts to put on the record, Mr. Speaker. Of those that are unvaccinated, and to those 15 per cent in this province that are not yet vaccinated, they should know that they are six times more likely to contract COVID than someone that is vaccinated. They are 13 times more likely to end up in hospital. They are 28 times more likely to end up in the intensive care unit in one of our hospitals, Mr. Speaker, ultimately and unfortunately at times taking a bed from someone else that ultimately needs that bed, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we've moved forward with very stringent public health restrictions in the middle of September, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we have moved forward with the proof-of-vaccination policy that is increasing immunity in our Saskatchewan people across the board. We have 85 per cent of Saskatchewan people that ultimately have went out and gotten their first shot, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to support the rest of the people in the province, the 15 per cent that have not gotten their shot. They are, yes, our friends and neighbours in communities across this province. We are hopeful they will change their mind and make a decision to go out and get a vaccine. And what we're going to ensure is that vaccine is available when they make that choice.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about choices that cost people their lives. Why did the Premier look at that modelling, that modelling that has been shown to be deadly accurate, why did he ignore that modelling and proceed with actions that have cost people their lives? And will he release all the modelling he's seen throughout the pandemic?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, through multiple briefings over the course of the last, let's say, about 20 months now, there's been multiple modelling scenarios that have been, you know, talked, presented to, presented by the Saskatchewan Health Authority in conjunction with Dr. Shahab. And they continue to talk about modelling, up to and including, I think, just even this past week, Mr. Speaker. And that is one of the tools that our public health officials, including our chief medical health officer, do utilize in the conversations that ultimately then happen with government to put forward the public health policy in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, today that public health policy has a number of public health measures that I would put forward are some of the most stringent public health measures that have ever been in place in the province of Saskatchewan. That's to ensure that we are providing every opportunity to keep people in this province safe, Mr. Speaker, alongside providing all of the tools that we have available in communities in this province to ensure that people can utilize those tools to ensure the safety of not only them but their family, their friends, and all of them in their community.

Mr. Speaker, 20 months has been a long time, a long time for us to find our way through this COVID-19 pandemic. The fourth wave has been in . . . particularly tough on our province of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We're working very hard to ensure that we have the policies in place and we have the tools available to keep our people in this province safe.

Most effective of those tools, Mr. Speaker, is ultimately vaccines. I read the statistics earlier. They're very, very . . . most effective tool that we have had. Didn't have it in the early days. Required broader public health measures, Mr. Speaker. Today we encourage the 15 per cent of people in this province that have not yet went out and got vaccinated, to do so.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the 26th of August, the medical health officers across Saskatchewan released a public letter. They had a series of recommendations in that letter including mask and vaccine mandates, recommendations that would have saved lives if immediately implemented. Why did the Premier not enact those recommendations at that time?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I think today you see a number of those recommendations that are in place. This has been widely discussed. I've done a number of media interviews when we did those recommendations in the middle of September and since

then, Mr. Speaker. And I have openly said that the government likely should have moved a couple of weeks earlier with respect to the recommendations that we put in place.

They have proved to be highly effective. They are dropping our caseloads in the province: down 52 per cent on our rolling seven-day average; down 50 per cent on our active caseload here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

And ultimately, ultimately the public health measure that has the largest effect since that time, Mr. Speaker, has been the proof-of-vaccination policy. Nearly 150,000 Saskatchewan people have went out and got either their first or second shot. Mr. Speaker, we're up to 85 per cent of Saskatchewan people — up 7 per cent from when that policy was implemented — up to 85 per cent of people in this province who've went out; they've done the right thing. They've gotten their first shot. They've lowered their risk of not only getting COVID but ending up in a hospital. They're keeping themselves safe. They're keeping their families safe. They're keeping those that they love around them safe, Mr. Speaker. And we'd encourage the other 15 per cent in this province to strongly consider doing the same.

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

Mr. Meili: — A couple of weeks late, hey, Mr. Speaker. Those medical health officers said that they for weeks before being forced to release a public letter were making these recommendations to the Premier as the fourth wave was surging. When he finally took some action, it was over three weeks after that letter that we got mask mandates. Over a month later that we got the vaccine mandates.

This is not quick action, Mr. Speaker. Quick action would have saved lives. Why did the Premier ignore those MHOs [medical health officer] behind closed doors? Why did he ignore them when they made their letter public?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Why does the Leader of the Opposition want to always impose sweeping broad restrictions on Saskatchewan people when 85 per cent of people have went out and done the right thing, when our trajectory of our case numbers in this province are dropping? Fifty per cent down over the course of the last month. Mr. Speaker, sweeping restrictions across the vast majority of Saskatchewan people when 85 per cent, 85 per cent of Saskatchewan people have went out. They have done the right thing. Sweeping restrictions, Mr. Speaker, to accommodate really 15 per cent of the population.

That is why we have moved forward with the proof-of-vaccination policy, Mr. Speaker, a policy that has increased our vaccination rate, a policy that has increased our vaccination rate by 7 per cent, Mr. Speaker, since it was introduced just over a month ago.

Mr. Speaker, we have faith in Saskatchewan people to continue to go out and do the right thing, to get a vaccine, to ultimately follow the public health measures that are in place to ensure that they are keeping themselves safe and keeping the people they love around them safe as well.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again a premier who puts politics ahead of people's lives, trying to create division instead of taking action to save people's lives. We've been very clear and the MHOs have been very clear. We don't need very lockdowns. We need targeted measures. And this Premier ignored those measures and those recommendations for over a month, Mr. Speaker.

Once again to the Premier . . . If the members opposite would listen for just a second. To the Premier: why did you ignore for weeks on end the introduction of mask mandates and vaccine mandates? Two hundred people have died in the time that you were waiting.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, if I could speak directly through you to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, I'd like to say a few things, starting with thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to the people of the province of Saskatchewan for 85 per cent of you who've went out and done the right thing and gotten vaccinated and talked to your friends and neighbours about how effective that is. It is keeping you safe. Thank you.

Thank you to the people of Saskatchewan for following the public health orders that we have in place as well as many of the recommendations that Dr. Shahab has spoken to in great deal, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we are utilizing tools that are keeping ourselves safe, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for when you're feeling ill or unwell or exposed, going out and getting yourself a rapid self-test, utilizing that test, taking a private test, or ultimately going and getting a PCR [polymerase chain reaction] test, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for what you are doing. It is helping with our numbers here in the province of Saskatchewan, and it's helping us address the fourth wave of COVID-19. Our numbers are dropping, and it's because of what the people of Saskatchewan are doing. And for that, Mr. Speaker, I speak through you directly to them in saying thank you.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has acknowledged that it was a mistake to ignore those medical health officers. We don't know why he spent weeks waiting before he acted, but 200 people have died since that letter was written in this province. Those same doctors have written another letter on October 21st, recommending targeted measures to get the fourth wave under control. He knows it was a mistake to ignore those doctors the first time. Will he ignore them a second?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to a letter that has come from a number of chief medical health officers, that is included in some of the conversations ultimately the government has with our chief medical health officer that does advise the government, with respect to the public health measures that we put in place as a public health order under his signature, Mr. Speaker, as well as the public health recommendations that are in

place today.

And Dr. Shahab and others have spoken in great detail to what those public health measures are, around being aware of the gathering sizes, keeping your bubbles, your contact circles, as close and as low as you can, and understanding who in your contact circle is vaccinated and who is not vaccinated, Mr. Speaker. These are the public health measures and the public health recommendations that ultimately are in place.

Mr. Speaker, if you look back in the first number of months of this pandemic, we had to use widespread and sweeping lockdowns essentially in some cases, but public health measures to control the caseload of COVID that we had in our communities. Mr. Speaker, since the turn of the new year, we have had additional tools that have been available not only in Saskatchewan but across Canada and around the world, Mr. Speaker. The most effective of those tools is ultimately vaccines.

We now have 85 per cent of Saskatchewan people that have done the right thing. They have went out and got vaccinated. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, that is what is not only keeping them safe, it's keeping their family, their friends, and their community safe, Mr. Speaker. And again, we encourage the last, the other 15 per cent, the 15 per cent of Saskatchewan people that have not yet gone out and gotten vaccinated, to reconsider and do so shortly. We have a vaccine available for you.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to that second letter written by the same group of physicians that the Premier has admitted it was a mistake to ignore in August, in response to that letter, two days ago Dr. Shahab said that it was, and I quote, "closely aligned with many recommendations that I made to government."

Why does the Premier keep pretending that he's listening to Dr. Shahab when it's so clear that there is increasing daylight between those recommendations and his actions? Why is he so cavalier in ignoring the advice of public health experts and allowing Saskatchewan people to die?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, throughout the last number of months, up to and including the last number of days, we've all heard Dr. Shahab make a number of recommendations — recommendations, yes, to the government but also to the people of the province. And yes, there has been some recommendations with respect to limiting the size of our household gatherings particularly if not everyone is vaccinated, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that is a recommendation that is in place here today and there has been some . . . If the opposition will listen, Mr. Speaker, and yes . . . All right, Mr. Speaker. I'll go back to the fact of what Saskatchewan people have ultimately done in this province to address this fourth wave, Mr. Speaker. They have listened to Dr. Shahab. We have listened to Dr. . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the public health recommendation around the gathering sizes, particularly those that are unvaccinated, there is some discussion about making that ultimately into a public health order if the trajectory of our cases would change in the province.

Mr. Speaker, today the trajectory of cases in our province is decreasing. It's decreasing quite rapidly. We're down 52 per cent on our seven-day caseload. We're down 50 per cent on our active cases here in the province. That's because of what Saskatchewan people should do. Mr. Speaker, if that trajectory should change, obviously we would have a conversation with Dr. Shahab about what tools would we need to enact to change that trajectory.

Mr. Speaker, we are making all of the tools available, including early intervention treatments like monoclonal antibodies. We're making tests available in communities across this province for Saskatchewan people to ensure that they can keep themselves and their families safe.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: — Pursuant to section 67 of *The Legislative Assembly Act, 2007* I hereby inform the Assembly of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy, effective September 30th, 2021: Hon. Randy Weekes, Chair, Speaker; Hon. Jeremy Harrison, executive council nominee; Hon. Everett Hindley, executive council nominee; Terry Dennis, MLA, government caucus nominee; Alana Ross, MLA, government caucus nominee; Carla Beck, MLA, opposition caucus nominee; Vicki Mowat, MLA, opposition caucus nominee.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to rule 44, it is your duty at this time to elect a member to serve as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly. I now ask the Clerk to initiate proceedings.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

Clerk: — Members, pursuant to procedures specified under rule 43(1) and rule 46(4), the following members have declared their intention to stand as a candidate for election as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly: Mr. Joe Hargrave, the hon. Member of the Legislative Assembly for Prince Albert Carlton; Ms. Lisa Lambert, the hon. Member of the Legislative Assembly for Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood.

[11:15]

In preparation for the vote, I'll now ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to bring in the ballot box. The list of candidates will be posted in polling booths, and the ballot box will then be inspected and the sealed ballots opened.

[The members proceeded to cast ballots.]

Clerk: — Members, if there are any other members who wish to cast a ballot, will you do so now. Seeing none, we'll proceed to counting the ballots. The bells will ring shortly before we return

with the results of the ballot.

[The Assembly recessed from 11:30 until 11:40.]

The Speaker: — The Assembly will now come to order to hear the results of the ballot. Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to inform you that you have elected Joe Hargrave, the Honourable Member of the Legislative Assembly for Prince Albert Carlton, as your Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole Assembly.

The House will now proceed with the Orders of the Day . . . Oh, sorry. Would the member like to speak?

Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. I believe that the role of the Speaker is a very challenging one and requires a lot of support. I'm committed to providing support and assistance to the Speaker to ensure that the business in this Chamber is done professionally and respectfully.

I previously managed up to 75 staff, and I found being successful at it was about having mutual respect for each other and respect for the job that each one is responsible for. I believe proper decorum and respect are imperative in these chambers — respect for the tradition of the chambers, respect for the Chair, respect for all members and staff in the House, most importantly respect for the people that elected us to represent them. These are the values that I believe are most important in the role of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker, and they are the ones that I would hold to. Thank you very much.

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To request leave to move a motion regarding committee membership for the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move a motion regarding committee membership. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The House Leader may now proceed.

MOTIONS

Committee Membership

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Assembly. I would move:

That the name of Joe Hargrave be substituted for the name of Nadine Wilson on the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

I so move.

The Speaker: — The motion reads:

That the name of Joe Hargrave be substituted for the name of Nadine Wilson on the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

Pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — It is carried. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to request leave to move a motion regarding committee membership for Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has requested leave to move a motion regarding committee membership for the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The opposition leader may proceed.

Ms. Mowat: — I move:

That the name of Aleana Young be added to membership of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Opposition House Leader:

That the name of Aleana Young be added to the membership of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

[11:45]

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek leave under rule 61 to move a motion.

The Speaker: — Will the member briefly state the purpose of the motion and read the text of the motion. I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

MOTION UNDER RULE 61

Public Health Measures

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fourth wave of COVID-19 has hit us harder than any other. People are dying across the province. Our hospitals are full. Experts are crying out

for government attention, and this government is sitting on their hands. If leave is granted to debate this measure of urgent and pressing necessity, I would move:

That the Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of Saskatchewan to implement all public health measures identified by the province's medical health officers in their letter to the Minister of Health dated October 21st, 2021.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has requested leave to move without notice a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 61. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Leave has not been granted.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am truly humbled and honoured to be given the opportunity to be the first to address you and the members of this House, to offer my support and comments for the Speech from the Throne, but also to be given the privilege of moving the motion of support. I would like to first thank the Premier for giving me this honour. I am proud of what he has been able to accomplish during these difficult times. It is a great honour to have him as my leader and to serve in his caucus as the MLA for Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Speaker, I find it hard to believe that a year has passed since my election to serve the constituents of Prince Albert Northcote, and it's been a busy year. As a newly elected MLA from the northern part of Saskatchewan, I would like to thank my fellow MLAs, the ministers and their staff, our caucus staff, and everyone who works in this building for the kindness and assistance they have so willingly shown me in my first year of office.

I would like to thank my CA [constituency assistant], Patt, for her hard work. The kindness and patience she shows all people who call our office is wonderful. This job would not be possible without her. And thank you to Debbie, our casual CA, as well, who spells off Patt when she needs a well-deserved break. And thank you to my family for all the love and support that they have given me during this difficult year.

Mr. Speaker, I see hope in our future as our government works towards building a stronger, safer, healthier, better-educated, and more independent Saskatchewan. From education to truth and reconciliation, our government is working hard to help our seniors, our children, our grandchildren, our parents, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, and our neighbours and friends.

The challenge of COVID-19 has touched many lives, and to all those families who have lost loved ones during this time, please accept my heartfelt condolences. The challenge of this pandemic

has been at the forefront of health, not only in our province but in our nation and around the world. Our government has invested \$530 million this year for continued support of COVID-19 and the fourth wave of this pandemic that has challenged our health care system and provincial operations. Thank you to the people of Saskatchewan for caring enough about your family, your friends, and the citizens of this province to get vaccinated. To those who have not yet been vaccinated, I strongly encourage you to do your part and get the vaccine. Safe and effective vaccines are available across Saskatchewan.

The province has recently implemented the provincial operations centre as a joint command that will better coordinate communications, resources, administrations, and organizational support throughout all affected ministries in the battle against COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I have kept in regular contact with our hospitals in Prince Albert and surrounding area, and they keep me up to date on how they're managing. I want to thank all health care workers at every level for their tremendous efforts and the care they have provided to patients and their families during these difficult times.

This past week I have spent many hours with my dad in both the Shellbrook hospital and the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital. I can't thank the doctors, nurses, and the support staff at both hospitals enough. Their continuing care, kindness, and compassion that they have been giving my dad and our family is beyond all expectations, despite having to work with the added stress of the pandemic. Thank you to each and every one of them.

Mr. Speaker, at our constituency office in Prince Albert we hear from the parents who have autistic children, children with cystic fibrosis, people who have diabetes or have housing challenges, and I know our government is working hard to address all of these challenges.

Mr. Speaker, this past July, autism individualized funding was made available for children up to age 11, and an estimated 1,000 families will benefit from this expansion. The program gives parents funding for therapeutic interventions and family supports that best suit their child's individual needs. These may include respite services, therapeutic equipment, and training for parents and caregivers.

Mr. Speaker, this past June the province provided coverage for continuous and flash glucose monitors and related supplies, and this at no cost for children and youth under the age of 18 who meet specific medical criteria. And the insulin pump program will now cover type 1 diabetes for all ages who meet certain medical criteria. Both of these initiatives will help to improve the quality of life for the residents of Saskatchewan living with diabetes. And Saskatchewan is one of only a few provinces covering both devices.

Our government has also recently announced we will be providing coverage for Trikafta, a new cystic fibrosis medication. The CF [cystic fibrosis] community in Saskatchewan fought long and hard to get this drug in their hands. Access to this drug will mean longer and healthier lives for so many people and the ability to plan for a future that many feared they may not see.

Mr. Speaker, our government knows improvements, supports, and funding are key for our health care sector. The '21-22 budget is \$6.12 billion. A new CT [computerized tomography] scanner for the Melfort Hospital reduces wait time and travel. More funding for the Saskatchewan cancer centre for their new oncology drug program. Support for projects to improve patient flow and reduce emergency wait times. Also new urgent care centres in Saskatoon and Regina. A plan to develop 600 long-term care beds in Regina. In Prince Albert nearly \$3 million towards the expansion and resources for the neonatal intensive care unit. Public elevator overhauls, control upgrades, as well as upgrades to the material management building at the Victoria Hospital.

And, Mr. Speaker, the renewal of the Victoria Hospital is moving ahead. This will better serve the residents of Prince Albert and northern Saskatchewan well into the future. This renewal will include a new acute care tower, replacement of the existing mental health space, and renovations to the existing facilities. When the project is completed, the total number of beds will increase by approximately 40 per cent, with additional space to expand further as needed.

Mr. Speaker, this year Saskatchewan's provincial budget will invest a record \$458 million in mental health and addictions supports and services, accounting for 7.5 per cent of the overall Health budget. Our government will launch three new community wellness buses, including one for us up in Prince Albert. These wellness buses will provide services where they are needed. Support will be offered to the vulnerable and to those battling addictions and mental health issues. Our government will also work with organizations to expand our addictions treatment spaces over the next three years. Mr. Speaker, these investments include funding for youth-focused activities initiatives, suicide prevention, harm reduction, and addictions treatments.

We have new in-patient addiction treatment beds in Swift Current and Estevan for youth, available for youth across the province. A new overdose awareness and prevention campaign and website will provide information for those at risk. Our government, in partnership with charitable organizations and third-party providers, has a goal of adding 150 treatment spaces over the next three years. Pillars for Life, a starting point for Saskatchewan, is being built upon by governments and partners to improve and expand suicide prevention efforts.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, our economy is growing. This month our unemployment rate fell to 6.3 per cent, well below the national average. In September we gained 11,500 jobs, an increase of 2 per cent, with a goal of 100,000 new jobs by 2030. Saskatchewan is being seen as the province to invest in. This past summer, BHP announced it will invest a total of \$12 billion to complete the Jansen potash mine project. This marks the single largest economic investment ever made in Saskatchewan's history.

In May, Mr. Speaker, Ceres Global Ag announced to invest \$350 million US for an integrated canola crushing plant facility at Northgate. Two new canola crushing plants will also be built near Regina by Cargill and by Viterra. Richardson International will also be doubling the capacity of its Yorkton crushing plants.

And, Mr. Speaker, our forestry sector is booming, with over \$1.1 billion worth of forestry products sold in 2020, an almost 30 per cent increase over the previous year. Forestry is currently northern Saskatchewan's largest sector, supporting nearly 8,000 jobs and hundreds of businesses. Our forested land covers 34 million hectares, more than half of the province, and each spring approximately 7 million trees are planted in Saskatchewan. There are seven major primary forest product facilities that produce lumber, OSB [oriented strand board], and pulp, as well as over 200 secondary forestry product businesses. Hundreds of supply chain businesses also provide goods and services for forestry manufacturers, including in-road construction, logging, trucking, reforestation, and forest management.

Mr. Speaker, our government announced approval of timber allocations to support the restart of Paper Excellence pulp mill in Prince Albert for our community in the North. The restart of Paper Excellence pulp mill is expected to create over 1,650 direct and indirect jobs while enhancing northern and Indigenous economic and labour development opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert and the North were given a second piece of good news with the approval of timber allocations and the proposed One Sky Forest Products oriented strand board mill. One Sky's production facility is expected to create over 700 jobs for Prince Albert and the North. One Sky will be producing performance-grade OSB sheeting to use in building construction. This timber allocation will also support the growth of other value-added manufacturing in the forestry sector and within our province.

[12:00]

Our government is pleased to support Indigenous involvement in forestry, energy, mining, and tourism. In forestry, 30 per cent of the provincial timber supply is allocated to Indigenous businesses — by far the best allocation of any province.

All this, Mr. Speaker, is welcome news for Prince Albert and the surrounding communities. Saskatchewan has more than forestry to offer, though. We have agriculture, manufactured goods, potash, lithium, uranium, helium, oil, gold, and much, much more. Saskatchewan is attracting attention around the world. We have trade offices in Japan, India, Singapore, and China, and with plans next year for offices in London, Dubai, Mexico, and Ho Chi Minh City.

Mr. Speaker, our government will also create the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation to provide up to \$75 million to Indigenous communities and organizations who are interested in making equity investments in research development projects.

Saskatchewan is a world leader in the use of carbon capture and utilization technology in the energy sector, with more than 40 million tonnes of carbon dioxide sequestered, resulting in over 100 million barrels of incremental oil production. Whitecap Resources' enhanced oil recovery facility in Weyburn accounts for half the CO₂ sequestered in Canada every year. Our government plans to build on that success by attracting more than \$2 billion in new private investment for projects that will sequester more than 2 million tonnes of CO₂ annually.

Mr. Speaker, I think technology in Saskatchewan is probably one of our best kept secrets. I had the opportunity to attend the Conexus Cultivator event this past summer, meeting many successful young entrepreneurs, and learned about their successes in the tech industry. Our government will continue to support the technology sector through programs such as the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive and the Saskatchewan Advantage Innovation Fund. We will also continue our backing of Co.Labs and Cultivator, technology incubators located in Saskatoon and Regina.

This past July, Innovation Saskatchewan committed \$395,000 to the Red Leaf Pulp to develop wheat straw pulping technologies. Wheat pulp has the potential to be an environmentally friendly source for paper and single-use consumer packaging, as well as an additional source of revenue for our province's wheat growers.

Our government has provided \$15 million to support pandemic research at the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, VIDO, based at the University of Saskatchewan. VIDO is a world leader in infectious disease research and vaccine development and is in the process of developing a vaccine for COVID-19. VIDO was the first Canadian organization to isolate the COVID-19 virus, the first to develop an animal model of the infection, and the first university organization in Canada to have a vaccine in clinical trials. VIDO will be one of the few organizations in the world capable of researching, developing, producing, and marketing vaccines for both humans and animals.

Our agricultural community faced hardship this past summer, Mr. Speaker, but we are hopeful for a better growing season next year. Our government has provided \$119 million for livestock producers, increased the AgriStability interim payment by 25 per cent, tripled funding to improve and build dugouts, wells, and water pipelines, and provided relief for producers who used their crops for feed. Mr. Speaker, \$3.2 million for a new engineering biology centre at the Global Institute for Food Security in Saskatoon was announced. Our government is committed to ensuring Saskatchewan is a global leader in agricultural research and development.

Mr. Speaker, many children have taken part in online learning during the pandemic. This was a challenge for students, their families, teachers, assistants, and support staff. I wish to acknowledge and thank the tremendous efforts of everyone. Our government has provided more than \$30 million so students can learn safely during the pandemic. A new learning policy will be created to help students receive the best education possible if they study online. Mr. Speaker, there are new schools under construction across the province, including those in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Carrot River, La Loche, Blaine Lake, and Lanigan, as well as funding to enhance class support and hire educational assistants.

Mr. Speaker, this past August, Saskatchewan was the eighth jurisdiction to reach a Canada-wide early learning and child care agreement with the federal government, worth \$1.1 billion. Our government is providing more than \$3 million to the early learning intensive support program for the '21-22 school year through the Canada-Saskatchewan Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. By the end of next year, child care fees will be reduced by 50 per cent, and wages for child care workers will

have been increased up to \$3 per hour. By 2025-26 our government plans to reduce child care costs to an average of \$10 per day as well as create thousands of new child care spaces.

Mr. Speaker, through the Community Initiatives Fund, six organizations in Prince Albert received over \$120,000 in funding to help with programs that include early learning and child care, child summer day camp, summer horse camps, Métis fiddle programs, an afterschool and nutrition program, a moms' friendship circle, as well as replacing the HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] unit and repairing sidewalks and bathrooms.

Starting this September, Mr. Speaker, school divisions have another Indigenous language course that can be offered to high school students to expand their learning opportunities. The new provincial Nakota courses will be available at the 10, 20, and 30 levels, starting in the '21-22 school year. Nakota is the traditional language of the Nakota people, who are represented in Saskatchewan within Treaties 2, 4, and 6. These grants, Mr. Speaker, will allow school divisions, historical high schools, and qualified independent schools to work directly with Indigenous communities across Saskatchewan, to build relationships, and to continue to work towards addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.

And, Mr. Speaker, in Prince Albert the P.A. Catholic and Sask River school divisions partnered with the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan to preserve and revitalize the Michif language and culture. The early learning pilot project offers students the opportunity to learn a historical language and practise the culture.

Our province has renewed its efforts to increase spaces that are inclusive of Indigenous cultures, and our government continues to invest in cultural awareness training for public servants. Mr. Speaker, this past January, the Government of Saskatchewan increased the available funding for its First Nations and Métis community partnership program to \$400,000. This program centres on community needs and supports locally developed projects and events.

Mr. Speaker, this past July, Cowessess First Nation reached an agreement with our government and the federal government to assume jurisdiction over the child welfare for its members. Cowessess is the first Nation in Canada to do so. Our government will provide protection services for Cowessess children off-reserve until the First Nation's system comes online. And I'm also encouraged to know that three other First Nations have expressed an interest in doing the same.

The Ministry of Education recognized National Day for Truth and Reconciliation and Orange Shirt Day by launching a new one-time grant program to support students learning about truth and reconciliation. Provincial school divisions, historical high schools, and qualified independent schools can apply for up to \$5,000 to work with local Indigenous communities to implement actions to advance reconciliation throughout the '21-22 school year.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan recently signed an amendment to the government's gaming agreement with the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] that will increase the creation of

a new online gaming site to be developed and operated by the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority. Revenues generated by this gaming site will be shared by the province and the First Nations. As was said at the signing ceremony, FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron has called the agreement the first of its kind in Canada and reconciliation at its finest. No other jurisdiction in Canada has had gaming agreements with the First Nations as successful as those Saskatchewan has.

The Ministry of Highways will work with Saskatchewan's Office of the Treaty Commissioner to install signs that mark the boundaries between Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 to raise further awareness of the treaties in Saskatchewan.

This past summer I had the honour of attending the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls monument unveiling and the walk in Prince Albert. I was privileged to meet some of the families who were grieving the loss of loved ones and those who are still searching. My heart goes out to those families living with this grief. It is time for us to understand how missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls affects every generation from babies to elders. It was an opportunity to begin healing.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, our correctional facilities have a disproportional number of First Nations people within their walls. Our government will provide \$76 million to support safety and programming improvements, such as the construction of cultural lodges in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, as well as the renovation of Saskatoon's Urban Camp.

Our government has taken many steps to improve safety in Saskatchewan communities, with 60 new police positions and 11 civilian positions to support new law enforcement initiatives. New police and crisis teams, crime reduction teams, and a protection and response team have been created. The Prince Albert Police Service is receiving \$3.24 million through the municipal police grants program for 22 police positions for 2021 and an additional \$540,000 for three positions with the Combined Traffic Services Saskatchewan initiative. This is greatly appreciated in our city as we are dealing with activities related to illegal weapons, drugs, and property-related crimes.

Mr. Speaker, our government intends to introduce *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act* into legislation. This will help combat money laundering and hold accountable those who break the law. Further changes will be introduced this session to *The Trespass to Property Act* that will make it easier for property owners to seek damages, and an amendment of *The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act* to allow maintenance enforcement to act quickly for repeated and malicious holding of payment. This will be the first legislation of its kind in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Provincial Traffic Safety Fund, a total of 112 projects have been approved in 108 rural, urban, and Indigenous communities across the province. These road safety initiatives range from digital speed signs to speed bumps and sidewalks. In total, \$1.4 million is being spent to improve traffic safety in our province.

A \$2 billion stimulus program was implemented across the province to improve highways and safety for our motorists. This includes multiple passing lane projects on highways 2, 3, 5, 7, 12, 14, 16, and 39. Two major highways, 2 and 3, coming into

Prince Albert from the west and the north have seen numerous accidents and the unfortunate loss of lives. These passing lanes improve traffic flow for commuters to and from communities and parks in the Prince Albert area and the province's north. This is the first passing lane project completed under our government's stimulus program. Next summer, further plans are in place to twin 8 kilometres of Highway 3 immediately west of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, improving communications is also a priority. SaskTel installed 200 new cell towers in rural communities, raising the number to 1,000 cell towers in our province. SaskTel will also invest an additional \$100 million in fibre optic expansion for rural internet. This gives communities access to digital technology for learning, connectivity, and business opportunity.

[12:15]

SaskPower invested \$272 million for improvement to existing infrastructure across the province. SaskPower is looking to expand renewable energy projects, including an expansion of 585 megawatts of wind and solar energy projects with Cowessess First Nation, George Gordon First Nation, and Star Blanket First Nation.

To help our province's commitment of addressing climate change, our government has created a unit within the Ministry of the Environment to lead the planning of small nuclear reactors in our province. These SMRs [small modular reactor] will have the capacity to generate emission-free, reliable-based electricity for businesses, industry, and homes.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has taken over control of our firearms program with the appointment of the province's first provincial Chief Firearms Officer. And our government will be a focused participant in expected negotiations representing . . . to achieve a meaningful reform to federal equalization.

Mr. Speaker, despite the unforeseen challenges dealing with a worldwide pandemic, our government has achieved so much and plans to do so much more. A strong economy is vital to our province. It is vital in order to provide programming, infrastructure, and a strong social safety net for a healthy Saskatchewan. It is vital to provide resources to support our education system and educate our post-secondary students here at home. It allows us to focus on the safety of our province by supporting the health care, public safety, and policing sectors. And a strong autonomous economy gives our province the ability to expand and enhance the programming necessary to support the collective needs of our diverse population. Mr. Speaker, our government is working hard towards a stronger, safer, healthier, better-educated, and more independent Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for this opportunity and I would like to move the following motion, seconded by the member from Arm River:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

To His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for his gracious speech which Your Honour has pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

I do so move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. It has been moved by the member for Prince Albert Northcote, seconded by the member for Arm River:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Russ Mirasty, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for his gracious speech which Your Honour has pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Arm River.

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by thanking the Premier for the honour and privilege of seconding the motion so eloquently moved by my colleague, the member for Prince Albert Northcote. I would also like to recognize at this time that we are on Treaty 4 territory, the homeland of the Métis.

Mr. Speaker, I think all in this House would agree that life happens fast. I mean one minute you're worried about getting your own driver's licence and seemingly in a blink of an eye, you're consumed with worries about your children getting theirs.

Full disclosure, Mr. Speaker: I am nearly half a century old. But while these brief 49 years have seen a lot, I would argue that these 49 years have never seen a more challenging time for this province. Multiple waves of the persistent COVID pandemic coupled with widespread drought conditions have made for trying times, stressful times, times of hardship for many.

Our mettle has truly been tested over the course of these past 12 months since we were given the honour to form government, but we know that as the adage professes, the strongest steel is forged in the hottest fires. And our Saskatchewan mettle will prove resilient through the coming days and months, and we'll emerge from these challenges stronger, sturdier, and more prepared to position our province as a world leader.

As the Honourable Russ Mirasty noted in his reading of the Throne Speech yesterday, the people of Saskatchewan are indeed strong and resilient. That is who we are and that is who we will

continue to be. That is why the 2021 Throne Speech may be considered one of the most significant of its kind because it charts a path through and beyond the challenges of today. It lays out a map and strategy to create a stronger, safer, healthier, more educated, and independent home for our neighbours, our newcomers, our families, and our children. The Throne Speech that I have the tremendous honour to second, is true to our government's growth plan of 2030 and points with precision in the direction that makes the 2020s Saskatchewan's decade.

Mr. Speaker, before delving too deeply into my remarks, I do need to take a moment to acknowledge a few people without whom I would be lost. Let me begin by thanking and publicly recognizing my amazing constituency assistants, Donna Petit and Lavonne Lyke. Over the past year these two have continued to go over and above to serve the needs of constituents. Lavonne and Donna are the epitome of caring and professionalism and the essence of excellence in all they do. In a previous speech I made in this Chamber, I made the controversial statement that my CAs are the best in the province. Upon reflection however, Mr. Speaker, I've decided to amend the previous statement and now I proclaim that I believe they're the best CAs in all of Canada.

Speaking of the best, Mr. Speaker, my government colleagues are just that. They are generous with their time, their wisdom, their humour, and their support. And for each one of them I am truly grateful.

Mr. Speaker, since my last reply to the Throne Speech, much has changed in my own family. Noah has made the grand leap into high school and all the many changes that come with secondary school. As for Sol, he's quickly gone from small Sol to tall Sol. His foot size now matches his age, that being 13, and he now stands comfortably eye to eye with me.

Mr. Speaker, in regards to my wife, all I can say is that Terrill, well she continues to grow younger and more beautiful every single day. People continue to wonder now more than ever before, Mr. Speaker, how the heck she got saddled with a guy like me. But regardless, amidst all this monumental change in our house, my family persists in being my rock-solid foundation, my blessing, my compass, and my inspiration. Mr. Speaker, with two boys aged 13 and 14 and a wife who works as a student support teacher, you can imagine that education has a place of prominence in our home.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, plans to create a new funding pool to enhance class supports and initiatives such as the new parent-teacher home visit pilot project and Take a Break responsible social media campaign will be welcomed in my family and constituency alike. Further, unprecedented commitments to post-secondary operating funding and increasing funding to Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarships strategically place investment squarely on our province's future, that being our young people.

Speaking of young people, the youngest of our young have been and continue to be at the heart of what we do as a government and in this year's Throne Speech. Since forming government in 2007, we have increased the number of child care spaces by 77 per cent. The recently signed agreement with the federal government will see a reduction of child care costs and the creation of new child care spaces. This initiative is welcome

news, whether you be from Central Butte in the southwest portion of my constituency or from Raymore in the northeast. Education is and continues to be a priority for this government.

Mr. Speaker, prior to being elected to represent the good people from Arm River and alongside my work on the family farm, I have been blessed to work in education. And during my time as an educator I've learned that sometimes, at the most unexpected times, you walk into class with the intention of teaching and instead end up leaving class having been taught.

One of the most memorable lessons I learned, and it's relevant to today, came from a 14-year-old. This young man was new to Canada, only recently having arrived from Kenya about this exact time of year. Almost instantly he connected with his classmates, and I took him under my wing to ensure he comfortably settled into his new home. We couldn't wait to teach our new friend about snow and ice, as he'd seen neither being from central Africa. Maybe the joy of the snow lesson was more about watching the shock of a face new to a Saskatchewan winter when the cold bites and the snow flies and the wind howls.

At any rate, the weeks went by, the winter got colder, and school carried on. One morning this young man asked me if he could address the class prior to getting the day's lessons. Without hesitation I consented and what took place left a lasting impression on not only me but the other 21 souls in the room. He explained to the class, his new family, that while he indeed lived in and arrived to Canada from Kenya, he and his family originated from war-torn south Sudan. For the next 10 minutes we learned what fear was, what gratitude and appreciation are, and what true perspective should be. We were reminded in no uncertain terms of the blessings we possess, the opportunities we hold, the securities we at times take for granted.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the Throne Speech, this government's efforts to ensure we have safer communities in which to live and raise a family are spot-on. Safety and security are sometimes things that we take for granted. It's something that the people of Saskatchewan should be able to take for granted. That is something that our government will never take for granted.

The Throne Speech pointed to several initiatives to address public safety, particularly in rural Saskatchewan. The addition of six new police and 11 civilian support positions, in conjunction with the new provincial protective services unit, will do much to reduce and squeeze crime from our cities, our villages, our streets, and our farmyards.

Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, the Arm River constituency is a rural constituency. That is why the January 1st implementation of the changes to the province's trespass laws, placing the burden of responsibility from the landowner to the individual seeking access, will be well received.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to growing, building, and protecting the type of communities I want for my former student from south Sudan, the type of communities I want for my sons, Noah and Sol, and the type of communities we want for all who are fortunate enough to call Saskatchewan home.

Speaking of homes, Mr. Speaker, I would argue that no time in

our collective history has health been on the minds of so many people in so many homes. That said, a healthier Saskatchewan, one that navigates its citizens through the COVID pandemic, has been and will continue to be a priority for this government.

In addition to COVID, we are committed to continuing our work in other areas concerning health of our citizens. For example, we plan to better support those living with cystic fibrosis, and continue the battle against cancer through targeted funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the U of S [University of Saskatchewan].

Mental health and addictions continue to be a priority for this government as evidenced by the commitments to pursue additional addictions treatment and detox spaces in this province. And while with vigilance we attend to the healing bodies and minds of people across the province, we also recognize the relationships that also must be mended, that must be healed. To that end our government has taken substantive steps to advance reconciliation. In June we provided funding to investigate undocumented deaths and burials at former residential schools in the province. The following month we participated in a first-of-its-kind agreement to bring Cowessess child welfare under its own jurisdiction. Further to these, our government has worked to support Indigenous involvement in the economy from forestry to online gaming. And the creation of the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation will empower Indigenous communities.

Mr. Speaker, I have the good fortune to live in and represent the place I most cherish, and over the course of this past year I've done my best to come to know the towns and villages and RMs [rural municipality] I represent, and to come to know better the people who live there. What I've learned about Arm River is that while each community carries its own unique set of challenges and unique reasons for celebrations, what is constant is a compelling desire to leave roots firmly planted and the passion to cultivate a space where children and grandchildren can sink their roots, grow, and flourish.

[12:30]

Our government has and will continue to believe in this province. Since 2007 we have invested just shy of \$37 billion on critical infrastructure. Our growth plan as highlighted in the Throne Speech points to a deeper commitment. That is another \$30 billion commitment by 2030 to improving, expanding, and modernizing infrastructure in Saskatchewan. Plans to upgrade 10 000 kilometres of highways, enhance intersection safety, and continued work on additional passing lanes all serve to strengthen the veins and arteries that keep our economy moving and our families safe.

As for communication infrastructure, our technological roadways, we continue to make this economic keystone a priority. Through targeted investment and strategic collaboration with private providers, our government will work to meet the needs of rural Saskatchewan. These sinews of communication continue to bring us closer together and strengthen our position on a global scale.

Mr. Speaker, with two teenage boys in the house, the list of evening conversation topics is usually quite interesting, to say the

least. Of all the diverse themes we have covered, the subject of power generation has yet to make the hit list — frequently hunting and fishing, sometimes snowmobiling, but surprisingly enough, never power generation. Well that is until this past Monday evening. It was a windy one in Chamberlain that evening, and so with the wind rattling the soffits outside, Noah pointed to the window and commented, that'd be great for making electricity. I explained that SaskPower plans to increase the province's wind power capacity.

Then Sol piped up and asked about nuclear power, and we discussed the potential for small modular reactor technology. Almost bursting with parental pride at the level of conversation we were having and wanting to ride that wave just a little bit farther, I asked, so what else you guys thinking? To which Noah responded, do you think we'll be able to go hunting this year? While the significance of our conversation may not have been fully appreciated by this 14-year-old boy, the impact of these initiatives is immense. Our steps our government is taking to secure the cost-effective, reliable power is paramount in its importance to all people of Saskatchewan and necessary to support growth.

Mr. Speaker, it is through this government's commitment to laying the infrastructure foundation for growth that we'll continue to attract private investment. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that the people of Arm River will benefit directly and indirectly, because entrepreneurs from all over the corners of the province and country and globe see what we have always known, that there is no better place to drive a stake than in Saskatchewan.

The \$7.5 billion announcement in August from BHP regarding the Jansen mine will create 3,500 construction jobs and 600 full-time operating positions. On the east side of Arm River, Red Leaf Pulp's decision — a \$350 million decision — to establish Canada's first wheat straw pulp facility in Regina will benefit producers. The recent influx of private investment from Viterra, Cargill, Richardson, and Ceres in the canola crushing sector will impact producers across my constituency.

The story certainly does not end there, Mr. Speaker. Smaller but no less critical private investment is happening in Arm River because of our diligence to foster a competitive business environment. It was an honour to spend some time this summer with Stuart Thiessen, co-owner of the new Namaka feedlot under construction near Broderick. Once operating at full capacity, the state-of-the-art facility will handle 35,000 head of cattle and employ approximately 35 people.

Mr. Speaker, when I asked Mr. Thiessen, who hails from Strathmore, Alberta, why he chose this location, he explained that it was a deliberate, calculated process. Access to reliable water, irrigation, infrastructure, and attractive business climate were all key factors. He expresses gratitude for the timing of completion of Highway 219 as it is critical to his business. In addition to the Namaka feedlot, Highway 219 serves the village of Glenside and surrounding area. It means travellers from Saskatoon North can more easily access the popular Douglas and Danielson Provincial Parks.

Mr. Speaker, it is easy to sometimes overlook the essence of asphalt, what it means to the lives of the people we serve, its

ability to encourage and sustain industry. Its ability to support entrepreneurs like Stuart and his brother Bryan Thiessen, to pursue their business venture that will employ 35 individuals — people with families, people who help fill schools and rinks, and people who rejuvenate communities. It is more than blacktop, Mr. Speaker. It is blood and air for rural Saskatchewan.

Head south, Mr. Speaker, and you will land at the entrance of Sask Valley Processors' new facility under construction. Here you will find a trio of investors who have come from across Canada to converge on the town of Loreburn, intent on exporting value-added peas, lentils, and flax. In visiting with the owners of this innovative business a couple months ago, they stressed that a pillar of their business model was to add value to every bushel of product they handle, thereby creating jobs for the area and making the most of our world-class and in-demand commodities.

The Namaka and Sask Valley stories are compelling reasons why we must continue to proclaim our Saskatchewan story to the rest of the country and globe, because they are listening.

During yesterday's Throne Speech, Lieutenant Governor Mirasty spoke about the Diefenbaker project. In particular he discussed the government's commitment to the project and the impact it will have for the lives of the province. The potential for this project became clear after spending time with Harry Meyers, co-owner of Barrich Farms and True North potato company this summer. It was an awe-inspiring experience to witness, alongside the Minister of Highways, the potato harvest unfold. It was a symphony of movement as workers unloaded trucks, culled, cleaned, and stored mountains of the things. My biggest concern was that I would get in the way and break the well-choreographed flow.

Mr. Meyers walked us through the various processes, toured us through the \$1.5 million storage expansion project, and explained the technology used to store potatoes — enough potatoes to supply every man, woman, and child in Saskatchewan with a 50-pound bag each year — from 1,550 acres of land. Mr. Speaker, from these 1,550 acres spring 35 full-time jobs and approximately as many again during seeding and harvesting. This speaks directly to the potential that exists and the optimism that is generated by the Diefenbaker irrigation project.

The story of growth and investment does not end there. It is a long book. Community investment through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, or ICIP, continue to support rural Saskatchewan. Projects range from a lagoon expansion in Nokomis and lift-station upgrade in Kenaston, to a beautiful, new multiplex facility in Elbow. These projects are both welcome and necessary for rural Saskatchewan to thrive. Further intakes of the ICIP program announced from the Throne Speech are a pivotal chapter in the story of growth.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech spoke to a more independent Saskatchewan. To that end, we have recently taken control of our firearms program with the appointment of our first provincial Chief Firearms Officer and created a new provincial protective services to increase our autonomy. We will fully participate in future equalization negotiations and plan to investigate the possibility of assuming greater responsibility for the administration of corporate income tax.

Mr. Speaker, our Saskatchewan story is an exciting one. Owning our narrative and sharing it around the globe creates our independent voice. Trade offices in Japan, India, Singapore, and China open windows to the world. Next year we anticipate the operation of four more international offices in London, Dubai, Mexico City, and Ho Chi Minh City. There should not be a corner of the globe that does not know by heart our Saskatchewan story. A story that tells the challenges in adversity and of perseverance, resilience, and innovation. A story of people who have come together to build a stronger home. And, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that our best chapters are yet to come.

With that said, I am very pleased, honoured, and grateful to second the motion in support of the Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in this Assembly and offer initial comments from the Saskatchewan New Democrats in response to the Throne Speech. And as others have done, I'll start with a few comments of thanks to some important people in my life.

You know, it's been, I would say, affirming to hear members from both sides and on all three sides talk about their loved ones in member statements, recognizing guests. And you know, I think that that was something that was good for me to hear from other members, recognizing, you know, the families who are here seated in the gallery. And I remember spring session when we were all here. You know, I think we described it as being stuck here while we were forced to be away — many of us — from our families, our loved ones, and our support systems, and hoping that perhaps in this session when we have those people in our lives that we can have that place to go to recover from the tension and the conflict that often takes place here.

I want to start by thanking my support system: my wife Emma, and our three kids — Etta, Tom, and Myles. My wife Emma is an incredible person. She's the person I go to for wisdom, for words, often the words that I need to find to speak here. She's someone I go to for those things.

And I also recognize the work that she's doing when I'm away, the work that she did in the spring when I was gone for six weeks, and the work that she'll be doing throughout this session. She's doing the work of two people right now, along with running her business and the care she provides for our kids and the increased needs that they have due to the pandemic — the mental health impacts on our children, the impacts on their social lives, the impact in every area of their life in the pandemic. And I'm thankful that Emma is there to care for them.

And I also recognize the sacrifices that my children make. My children range from 4 up to 14, and they make sacrifices for their dad to be here too. And I know that many members in this Chamber would agree with that.

I also want to thank my constituency assistant, Katie. Katie joined me in July and she has just been an incredible addition to my office. Katie brings a background with a master's in community economic development and a decade working with

newcomers in Saskatoon. She's worked with the Open Door Society. She's worked with Mennonite Central Committee. And she is just the exact kind of person that you want there when folks come in through our doors in our office in Market Mall, where lots of seniors come by and visit with us every day. She's the exact kind of person you want to be there to welcome people, to treat them with warmth and compassion and a listening ear. And I thank Katie for all the work she's done so far and for holding down the fort while I'll be here in Regina for the most part over the next couple months.

I also want to thank our caucus staff team. We have just an incredible team of folks who work behind the scenes here, from our chief of staff, Kat Norton, through all of our staff members: Cheryl, Jannet, Mitch, Brock, David, Nathaniel, and Kelsey. They are just the most competent and committed group of people you could find. And every day that I come in and work here with them, I'm just incredibly impressed with the skills and the passion that they bring to this work. So thank you.

And finally I want to thank the people of Eastview. The people of Eastview a year ago elected me to be their representative here in this Assembly. And after a year on the job as an MLA, you know, it's still humbling to come to work here, but it's equally as humbling to be back home in Saskatoon in my office. When people of Eastview call or walk in our doors and they share their stories with us, Mr. Speaker, stories of hope but lately a lot of stories of concern, that work is humbling. And I know that members opposite hear those same stories of concern, and I hope that one day we hear those stories reflected in your speeches in this Assembly.

I want to acknowledge the amount of trust that it takes to put an X next to a name on a ballot, perhaps no more so than during a global pandemic. I take that trust seriously, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to speak up to the realities facing people in Saskatoon Eastview.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I move on, I also want to start my remarks off by speaking for all of my colleagues in the Saskatchewan NDP [New Democratic Party], something that I think should have been expressed yesterday. I want to express our heartfelt condolences to all of the families who lost loved ones, all of the 832 people who have died in Saskatchewan during this pandemic.

[12:45]

In particular, I want to be mindful of the 259 people who have passed away since the Government of Saskatchewan eliminated all public health orders on July 11th and ushered in the worst fourth wave in the country. These 259 people leave behind loved ones. They leave behind children. They leave behind parents. They leave behind grandchildren, spouses, partners, friends, and neighbours. I want to thank the members of the Assembly who respectfully observed a moment of silence earlier today when my colleague for Regina Douglas Park asked us to pause.

Mr. Speaker, one year ago we were coming out of an election. And in that election the people of Saskatchewan elected our Premier and the Sask Party government to lead us. We accept that.

[Applause]

Mr. Love: — Thank you for your applause. We accept that.

That Premier wanted to be Premier, but he has not shown that he wants to be a leader. One year ago the Premier gave a very clear indication of who he and his government would be listening to. And let's face it, there are many different voices in our province, Mr. Speaker. There are many different opinions. We get that, too. But he gave a clear indication, and I'll say he has stuck to that indication of whose voices would be considered. Just as the second wave was hitting our province, he did an interview following the election. Would he be listening to doctors? Would he be listening to scientists? Would he be listening to epidemiologists or public health officials? No.

The Premier turned to supporters of the Buffalo Party and to those within the government caucus who choose to live in an alternate reality. He did this to protect his political future. And he said very clearly to those extremist voices . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Those extremist voices who are taunting me right now. I will put that on the record, Mr. Speaker, that I'm being taunted by those voices right now. He spoke to them and he said, I hear you and I want to say that this government hears you. We share your frustrations and we share many of your objectives. We are not happy with the federal government, either.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier set us on a clear path. He set us on a path in which he would fight the federal government for political gain, even to the detriment of Saskatchewan people. He set us on a clear path of ignoring those with informed opinions, those with expertise, those with evidence, and he chose to make ideological, political, and sometimes petty choices. Where has this road taken us, Mr. Speaker? Where has this road led us? This is the current state of the province of Saskatchewan.

That Premier leads the province with the highest COVID death rates in the country. That Premier leads the province with the highest COVID death rates in the country. And when I say in the country, I mean the country of Canada, the country that we are a part of. And I have heard the Health minister and the Premier make ignorant comparisons to other jurisdictions. We are not in the United States. We are not in Mexico. We are a part of Canada. That is the country that we belong to, the country where our ICU [intensive care unit] patients are being treated and cared for in other provinces because we are a province in Canada. And of the provinces in Canada, we have the worst fourth wave in the country. That is the state of our province, and I have not heard it spoken here yet.

Mr. Speaker, the state of our province is one in which front-line health care workers are forced to plead in public for action while the Sask Party government is missing in action for months on end. Journalists in the province — and this is true — journalists had to literally go searching for the Premier on a golf course to get him to answer a question about COVID. They had to find him. He was not available for questions. They sought him out and found him on a golf course.

All of the evidence was there for this Premier and this Health minister. All of the evidence was there for the Premier and the Health minister. We found out this week that the modelling that they had in June predicted all of this. This is a crisis of that man's

choosing, Mr. Speaker. He opted for a Saskatchewan summer. That was the decision that was made and now we are stuck in a fall and winter of misery, and he knew it. He knew it.

What is the state of our province? Members opposite, you need to know this. The state of our province is that children are not getting the care that they need. Cancer patients are not getting the care that they need. Folks in need of an organ transplant are not getting the care that they need. Children who could walk before the fourth wave can no longer walk because they're not getting the care that they need.

What is the state of our province, Mr. Speaker? People are leaving. Stats Canada reported this year that for the third year in a row Saskatchewan led the country in out-migration. Since that Premier took office, 70,000 people have left Saskatchewan for other provinces and territories. And what are we going to do now to recruit people back here? We have doctors reporting that they will be leaving. We have nurses who were recently polled — 50 per cent of nurses said they were considering leaving the profession or leaving the province because they can't work in these conditions.

The state of our province is sadly, tragically, but perhaps best exemplified by a fully functioning tent city right here in Regina, and reports of up to 15 tent encampments in my city of Saskatoon. This housing crisis is of the government's making, and our current reality has all the warning signs that have become a hallmark of Sask Party policy failures.

Now one of the things that I hear a lot — and I'm surprised I haven't heard it today because I hear it a lot, Mr. Speaker — I hear from members opposite that the only ones who think the government is doing a bad job are the NDP. Well let's have a look at the facts. Let's have a look at what others say about this government's work, or lack of work, during the fourth wave. And, Mr. Speaker, I will be quoting headlines from the news. This is the news. I hope you read it.

We'll start with local news. CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] Regina says, "Sask modelling predicts unsustainable rise in ICU admissions without further public health orders." CTV Saskatoon on October 25th said, "Full blown crisis. Sask doctors' association calls for gathering limits to fight COVID-19." Discover Moose Jaw on October 22nd, "International embarrassment: NDP leader calls for better leadership from Sask government." CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] Saskatoon, "Dr. Shahab says pleas from health officers in line with his own recommendations to government." And yet our Premier couldn't answer that question today.

Let's move to national news, Mr. Speaker. The *National Post* reported on September 23rd, over a month ago. They said over 70 per cent of our ICU beds are being used to care for a single preventable disease. The Canadian Press, "Saskatchewan hospitals under significant pressure as fourth wave turns into a crisis on the prairies." Have we heard this crisis reflected from government members? No.

Let's move to international news. We are international news, folks. "Top Saskatchewan health official moved to tears by unchecked COVID spread." That's from the *Guardian*. From Reuters, "Hospitals in Canadian province Saskatchewan face

prolonged COVID-19 crisis, modelling shows."

Now I'm going to move to opinion columns, and, Mr. Speaker, I've intentionally left the opinion columns in a separate category because they reflect opinion and analysis of Saskatchewan voices. Here we go. From the *Leader-Post*, "Not listening to doctors will have long-term consequences." From Murray Mandryk, "Moe's alternate reality not helping the COVID fight." Again from Mandryk, "Shahab's plea for help met with no real answers from Moe or Merriman." Again from the *Leader-Post*, "Shipping out ICU patients a result of Moe government hubris."

I'll keep going. There's no end to this. "Saskatchewan COVID-19 crisis dogged by Moe and Merriman inaction." "Filled ICU beds the price we pay for Scott Moe's poor planning." And this one is especially alarming, from the CBC: "Tone deaf Premier is embarrassing Saskatchewan by ignoring doctors during pandemic."

Mr. Speaker, I could keep going. It appears that the only people who think this government is doing a good job are sitting right here in this room across from me. Some of them probably don't even agree. Some of them probably don't agree with the choices that their government has made, but they're just too afraid to speak up. This is the real state of our province right now, Mr. Speaker. This is the reality where my colleagues and I find ourselves fighting for things that really matter to Saskatchewan people right here and right now.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech was an attempt to change the channel on the realities facing Saskatchewan people, an attempt to distract Saskatchewan people from the crisis that this government created. There was nothing new in terms of our economic outlook as all announcements from the Throne Speech had previously been made. All of the announcements on investments had already been made in the spring to distract from their inaction at that time. In some cases, those announcements have been made over and over and over again. All of the long-term care beds that were announced in the Throne Speech were old announcements, in places like La Ronge and Grenfell and Watson. There was nothing new. This government has been critiqued openly for governing by press release, and what we got in the Throne Speech was a bunch of press releases about old press releases.

Well here's a bit of truth for the state of long-term care in Saskatchewan. More people have died in long-term care during the pandemic than have been hired in long-term care. This is tragic, but how can this be surprising when Saskatchewan has the worst COVID death rate in the country?

Now there were a few new ideas there, Mr. Speaker, but they were all NDP ideas. Protecting contract workers from sexual harassment — we've been standing up for that. Limiting protests outside of hospitals — we've been on that for months. Negotiating a fair deal for Saskatchewan in the equalization formula — this is something that we have stood firm on while the Sask Party took eight years off while their buddy Stephen Harper was in office, once again putting politics ahead of people.

Mr. Speaker, in this Throne Speech we heard the word "crime" 13 times, but we only heard COVID mentioned five times. In what reality is this government living, Mr. Speaker? We have the

worst COVID death rate in the country and the worst rates of ICU admission of any province at any time during the pandemic. That's the reality. And they want to focus on crime, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you, the real crime is the mishandling of the fourth wave of the pandemic.

The real crime here is the other 46 members of this government who stayed silent while the people who elected them are dying or getting sick and being sent across the country. The real crime here is that each one of those 47 members decided to protect their political buddies instead of protecting the people of Saskatchewan.

Now Saskatoon has been a hot spot throughout the fourth wave. Where have those members been? The member from Saskatoon Northwest, you've always been a voice of reason in the government caucus. Where did your voice go? The member from Saskatoon Southeast, you've been an MLA for a long time. Where is your moral compass when you can see with your own eyes that our health care system is failing? The members from Stonebridge-Dakota, Westview, Churchill-Wildwood, Riversdale, and Willowgrove, you know our city is struggling. You know your constituents need you to be the leaders that they elected you to be. Where have you gone?

And of course the member from Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland — you are the Health minister. You have the modelling. You saw the road ahead. You, of all people, knew what was going to happen. You knew what life would look like for those people who marked an X next to your name. They trusted you, and you disappeared for months. It's okay to say sorry. I hope he finds the strength to do so.

Mr. Speaker, collectively the silence from those Saskatoon members has forced our mayor and council into a position they never should have found themselves in. Elected municipal leaders in Saskatoon are having to find ways to listen to the recommendations . . .

The Speaker: — It now being the hour of adjournment, this House now stands adjourned until Monday, November 1st at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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
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Hon. Everett Hindley
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Minister Responsible for the
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Minister Responsible for
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor
and Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for The Global
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