



SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

## Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

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# DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Randy Weekes  
Speaker



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**2nd Session — 29th Legislature**

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<b>Love, Matt</b> — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)	<b>Vacant</b> — Athabasca

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

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

**EVENING SITTING**

**The Speaker:** — Resume debate on the special order.

**SPECIAL ORDER**

**ADJOURNED DEBATES**

**ADDRESS IN REPLY**

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. A. Ross, seconded by Mr. Skoropad, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Love.]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this year's Speech from the Throne.

First I would like to say a few thank yous. Thank you to my friend in my constituency office, Mary Anne Telfer, and her husband, Don. Mary Anne has been a CA [constituency assistant] for 26 years. I thank her for her knowledge, her wisdom, and most of all her friendship. Her husband, Don, is our research man. If Don can't find it, it hasn't been written yet.

I would also like to thank the people of Batoche constituency. We're a mainly agriculture and small-business people. Mr. Speaker, you can't find a finer people.

I would also like to thank our Premier and the team that made this all possible. Thank them, and the people of this country should be thanking them for the great job they're doing in such difficult times.

Last, but definitely not least, I would like to thank my wife, my partner, my best friend. Mr. Speaker, today marks our 46th wedding anniversary. Like the songwriter says, she is the wind beneath my wings. So I thank her greatly, and I wouldn't be here without her.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many issues listed in this Speech from the Throne. The first one I want to talk about of course is COVID-19. We've all been under extreme pressure from people on both ends of the spectrum. One side, they say we are doing too much. Just move to herd health and the strong will survive. On the other side, they're saying, lock it down, lock it down. Both extremes go to the internet, and they hunt for someone who claims to be an expert with the opinion they are looking for. And they decide that's the gospel.

I had one person call me and claim he'd found evidence on the internet that if you drink your own urine, it'll cure COVID. I had another person tell me that him and his wife were each taking a drop of Ivomec — the stuff I put on cattle — once a week, and they would beat COVID.

My final story of COVID is when a gentleman told me he didn't want to get COVID, so the government should — and the term

he used was “nail it down tight” — nail everything down tight. When I asked him, what happens to a husband and wife who are both on minimum-wage jobs and have two children and rent a three-storey walk-up apartment, and their jobs would be lost if we nail it down tight? I said, what happens to them? His reply was, to hell with them. And he said it twice: to hell with them.

Mr. Speaker, that's not the Saskatchewan way. We need to work together to defeat COVID. We will win the war against COVID. What we do not need are opinions and criticism after something has happened. Yes, we could use advice and support before, not criticism after.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the old adage, it's a little late to close the barn door after the horse gets out. The naysayers yell, “You should have used a stronger rope. You should have given the horse more hay. Or you should have had a better barn door.” Well, Mr. Speaker, the same applies to COVID. We hear from the opposition what should have been done, but when it comes to what we should do, they remain silent. The one answer they did give is get more doctors and specialty nurses. Great idea, but where on God's green earth would you find them from? All the players are already on the field, so unless the opposition knows a magic wand, we're already there.

Mr. Speaker, today in question period, the Leader of the NDP [New Democratic Party] said that we have hundreds of deaths. Let's look on the positive side of that. He did not mention the thousands of lives that our government has saved by pushing the vaccinations. Thousands of lives we have saved. Mr. Speaker, in the war with COVID, we do not have an operator's manual. Saskatchewan, along with the rest of the world, finds itself in a situation no one could imagine. For sure one no one wants to get COVID. That is definite. But in order to keep the people of this province able to provide for themselves and their family, we need to keep our economy moving forward.

The economy flows like a river, and our lives are based on the trade and movement of goods. But the NDP want to dam that river by locking everything down and watch the economy dry up. We need support, not negative, political-based rhetoric. The first three rules of a successful province or country are the economy, the economy, the economy. Even if you were to move away to the wilderness all by yourself, then the land becomes your economy. And you receive your supplies from the land, thus the term “living off the land.” In order to sustain life and grow, we need an economy.

Saskatchewan was built on agriculture and is still growing in agriculture. The number of farmers in Saskatchewan is over 34,000. Another fact that I keep repeating and repeating, telling almost everyone I meet: Saskatchewan has up to 47 per cent of all of Canada's cropland. Our farmers are good stewards of the land. They care for the land. This is how they can grow crops year after year, and then hopefully pass the land on to the next generation.

There's one crop that has been the black gold for the Saskatchewan farmer, and that is canola. Canola that was developed by the University of Saskatchewan has risen to be the number one crop in Saskatchewan, and in fact has made us the canola kings of the world. Now with three new crushing plants

and a major expansion to the fourth plant, we will be processing an amazing 75 per cent of the canola grown in this province. Now that's value-added.

This past year has been an extremely tough one for farmers and ranchers. Their crop production this year in some places was down to as low as 25 per cent of last year's production. One farmer told me that his pea crop harvest was two bushels to the acre. Problem was he had seeded it at three bushels to the acre. How do you pay your bills with that?

Livestock producers are struggling as well. First they have to find enough pasture in this past summer's drought conditions, and now they need to find enough feed for the winter. In a lot of cases they can't get the feed and are forced to sell off part of their cow herd. The price you get when you sell those cows varies according to their weight but is roughly \$800 for a 1,300 pound cow. I'm told the beef processors sell the hide, the organs, and the bones, and they get \$800 for that. All the meat is profit, and you know the price of ground beef.

Mr. Speaker, I will now relate a story that I would like the opposition to listen to very closely. I know a farmer in my constituency who has always been a strong originally CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] and then NDP supporter. All his life he campaigned for the NDP and put up signs and worked at election time. He was also a strong member of the Farmers Union. He spoke against the size of the big farms and said that the size of farms should be limited. Last year he retired and sold his farm. Are you ready for the punchline? He sold to the largest farmer in the area. Where were all his words and rhetoric? When it came down to it, he shut his mouth and took the money. Mr. Speaker, actions speak louder than words. All his days that farmer professed socialist rhetoric, but in the end he took the big capitalist dollars which was out of reach for any of his Farmers Union friends.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture is a tough and risky business, and they need the support of all of us. Mr. Speaker, I've been in this House long enough to have heard the words of the then leader of the NDP, Mr. John Nilson. When he was asked where he would get the money for the project he was promoting — where would he get this money from if he were premier — he said he would take it from Ag. Is it any wonder, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party holds every rural seat in Saskatchewan? We have MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] that are actual farmers and ranchers, who know first-hand the risk and the pain that fellow producers experience.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also know the joy of the emergence of a spring crop, the birth of a newborn calf, the joy of a successful harvest, and the solitude of a winter night. Mr. Speaker, I believe there's no better place to raise a family than on a farm in rural Saskatchewan. God bless the farmer.

Two things are needed for rural Saskatchewan to grow and prosper, and that is highways and internet. These two things continue to be a major challenge. Per capita Saskatchewan has the most miles of highway in Canada. Good quality highways are needed to get our products to market. In order to meet that challenge, our government has already invested over 10 billion in rebuilding highways and related infrastructure. We're committed to building and rebuilding more roads, but a dollar

can only be stretched so far. When you combine health care, social services, and education, you have used up approximately 65 per cent of the budget. That leaves 35 per cent to cover everything else.

The internet is also vital to rural Saskatchewan. In order to be competitive we need to be able to reach our customers. This year SaskTel is erecting 200 more cell towers. That brings the total to over 1,000 towers.

Another problem greatly and seriously affecting rural people is the trespassing. I'm getting a lot of positive feedback on the trespass Act. Farmers have been wanting this and it's long overdue. When you hear of the damage to fields and private property caused by trespassers, it is enough to make you cringe and want to strike back. There have been crops ruined, hunting pits left open, fences cut, gates left open, and so much more. The damage runs into the tens of thousands of dollars each year.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to talk about rural crime. The damage and the theft done to rural farmyards and homes is beyond disgusting. They not only steal, they damage what they can't take. And I could tell you direct stories of damage done. Our government is taking steps to catch these offenders, but we could use a little help from the rural people. Write down licence plate numbers of strange vehicles. That is key to a lot of finding the perpetrators.

I would like to speak about another sector of our economy that has really begun to take off, and that is forestry. Saskatchewan has huge forestry potential. The challenge is getting our forestry products to market. At one time the saw mill at Big River, Saskatchewan, was the largest saw mill in the entire British Empire — not Canada, not North America, but the entire British Empire. What happened, you would ask. The most significant change was in 1998. The then NDP government allowed CN [Canadian National] to close the track and then remove the track completely.

In spite of all of that, under our government Big River is now up and running at full steam. Our goal is to double the forestry output by 2030, and we are off to a great start. We have forest companies expanding and building new mills. The list includes Paper Excellence, 850 million in P.A. [Prince Albert] mill; Dunkley Lumber company and Carrier Lumber expanding their mills; One Sky Forest Products building a 250 million new oriented strand board mill right in P.A. One Sky is also partnering with several First Nations to achieve this project. Nearly 30 per cent of the workforce in Saskatchewan forest is Indigenous, the largest in Canada.

[19:15]

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to touch on the pink gold of this province — potash. Saskatchewan has over 50 per cent of all the world's potash. Yes, I said all the world's potash. BHP Billiton is now preparing to open the potash mine at Jansen, Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this will be the largest investment in Saskatchewan's entire history. The price tag for the entire project from A to Z is 20 billion and will be the largest potash mine in the world.

I would now like to touch on oil and of course pipelines.

Saskatchewan is second only to Alberta in oil reserves. The question remaining is how to get our oil to markets. Oil to the south through the Keystone XL has been stopped by the American Democrats. Oil to the west coast has been stopped by the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. Oil to the east has been stopped by Quebec. There was a horrific train wreck carrying oil through Quebec. Would not a pipeline be much safer?

What we now have is oil for the refinery in New Brunswick arriving by ship from the Saudi oil fields. Mr. Speaker, am I not correct in saying that is blood oil? The oil tanker unloads their cargo of oil, and then they must fill the tanker with something to maintain ballast. So what's available? What do they use? Sea water. Yes, Mr. Speaker, sea water. These tanker ships return to their native land and then pump out the sea water. And of course any oil left in the bottom of the tank, which has now risen to the top, is pumped out into the ocean. Meanwhile back in Canada, we are refining offshore oil because we can't get our oil to the refinery. Where is the justice in that?

I would now like to close the door on the NDP yesterday and focus on the future of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan has more than 30 per cent of all the world's uranium, and now finally we are using it. Here in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, we are making medical isotopes for MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging], CT [computerized tomography] scans, and X-rays, and there's been a world shortage.

The next logical step we are taking is SMR, small modular reactors. We have signed agreements with Alberta, New Brunswick, and Ontario for the development of these reactors. This will be huge in Saskatchewan's future, in Canada's future, and in the world energy future.

I would now like to take you back in history to 1896 when gold was discovered in the banks of the Klondike River. The world went wild. People from all over the world came to strike it rich and fill their pockets with gold. Mr. Speaker, that same type of thing is now happening in Saskatchewan. Businesses, companies are flocking to Saskatchewan. We have had an unbelievable 10 billion in investments even while COVID was happening.

The following is a list of some of these investments: a new potash mine; three new canola crushing plants, an expansion to the fourth; Canada's first wheat straw pulp facility; a new urea fertilizer plant; a new oriented strand board mill; a revitalized P.A. pulp mill; expanding and upgrading several saw mills; a new cedar manufacturing facility. This equals a total of 10 billion.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, there is more. Prairie Lithium is on the ground and working. Lithium is used in our new age batteries, and surprisingly — and I hadn't heard this before — but for the treatment of bipolar disorders. In addition, companies are exploring for copper, zinc, nickel, cobalt, and other rare earth elements.

Employment has risen to 99 per cent of pre-COVID. Now with all these things happening, we have opened trade offices in Japan, India, Singapore, and China in order to sell all of our products on world markets. In order to expand these trade opportunities, we will be opening additional offices — London, Dubai, Mexico City, and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. All these investments during COVID signals that when COVID is over, here comes the

new face of Saskatchewan.

We are becoming the go-to place, the action place, a place with endless opportunities. Companies are not just coming because we have the resources; they are coming because we have a competitive business environment. We have the incentives to attract business along with cutting-edge technology from the University of Saskatchewan and the synchrotron. We are poised for a great future.

Before I conclude, I need to take one last jab at COVID. Please friends, please, get vaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to address the Speech from the Throne. For all the above reasons and many more, I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne, and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. God bless our Speaker, God bless our province, and God bless Canada. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

**Hon. Ms. Eyre:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll get the formalities out of the way and say that I will be supporting the motion and not supporting the amendment.

My intention tonight in this response to the Throne Speech is to relay in 15 minutes or so everything you need to know about Energy and Resources. And I won't say "but were afraid to ask" because colleagues here really have no choice in the matter. They're rather captive here this evening. But I will try to provide a snapshot of E & R [Energy and Resources] in relation to the Throne Speech.

For one thing, following delivery of the Throne Speech, I was pleased to hear that 52 per cent of Saskatchewan people in a recent Angus Reid poll supported our management of Energy and Resources. And certainly we are and I am very, very proud of our oil and gas, our mining and forestry sectors here in the province and everything that's been achieved and has happened over the past year because we've had some major successes and some very, very good news at a time of not such great news and certainly challenges.

Of course it's fair to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that no jurisdiction has been immune to the fourth wave. And I remember a few months ago seeing that patients were being airlifted out of Toronto to other areas in Ontario, and nurses from Newfoundland were flying in.

And in the UK [United Kingdom] where we have family, of course they were also facing a very challenging fourth wave in the spring and the summer, and Prime Minister Johnson faced criticism for lifting restrictions as part of freedom day as they called it there in July. But England has since been able to avoid renewed mask mandates and lockdowns and vaccine passports because vaccination rates are up well over 80 per cent, which of course is what we're aiming for here. And vaccination rates are up and we want life to return to a new normal as it's always called again.

And I'm certainly proud that our government has struck the

balances that it has. And I take a lot of comfort talking to constituents when they tell me, “You’re doing everything you can. The Premier has tried to strike a balance. And whatever you do you risk a criticism, so be strong.”

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a few shout-outs. To my still new CA Betty Anne Stevenson, who has been with me now for over a year and is a great, professional partner at a time when certainly constituency offices have been engaged. To my MO [minister’s office] staff here in Regina: Ashley Knisley, who’s joined us not too long ago, has been a real pleasure to work with, as well as Josh Hack, and Krista Heisler, who’s running things at the front so smoothly and so well. So I want to thank them very, very much for everything they do. And of course, Jeremy Brick, my chief for close to four years now in that role. Jeremy is a thorough, trusted, wonderful ambassador for me and for the government.

I want to mention my husband, Richard. And as always I want to say hi to my parents, my darling parents, if they’re watching, and my darling Max, who probably is not watching, especially because he just got a new car. But I think he’s actually studying for chemistry. And he’s also juggling things, juggling SRC [student representative council] and football and drama and always has many, many ambitious plans on the go. But I certainly am lucky to have them in my life.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to touch on some of the big themes and certainly good news over the past year, key developments, and then take maybe more of a behind-the-scenes look, if you like, at some of the things that we’re seeing, some of the ironies we’re seeing. And there are certainly a lot of ironies in this file.

Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear a lot about the so-called just or green transition. And there are many connotations to that word “transition” and some not so very positive. Because the cold, hard fact is that if transition occurs too quickly, too glibly, thousands and thousands of energy jobs will be lost. That’s just a fact. So what you do, and Saskatchewan is doing, is build on strengths, and not turn your back on our traditional sectors, and build on what these sectors are already doing well. Because they are doing so much well. Our energy and resource sectors are truly developing an energy ecosystem.

And as was quoted in the Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if every oil- and gas-producing nation in the world extracted oil and gas the way we do here in Saskatchewan, in Western Canada, global greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector worldwide would instantly fall by one-quarter. And add to that, let’s not forget this little-reported fact: that overall emissions from the oil and gas sector in Canada have been relatively flat in recent years because production increases have been offset by a 36 per cent reduction in per barrel emissions intensity since 2000. 2000 — that’s 21 years.

And when it comes to Saskatchewan’s leadership role in an energy transformation, evolution, pick your expression, I would ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what’s not green about made-in-Saskatchewan helium? Our helium here isn’t extracted as a by-product of hydrocarbon production, which is why we can support dedicated helium wells. And there are exciting things ahead in this sector, building on what is now the largest helium

purification facility in Canada, North American Helium. Ten per cent of the global helium market share by 2030, absolutely realistic.

I would also ask what’s not green about made-in-Saskatchewan hydrogen? Proton Technologies is using first-of-its-kind-in-the-world technology that leaves the CO<sub>2</sub> in the ground. Or lithium being extracted from oil well brine, courtesy of Prairie Lithium. Talk about a beautiful irony: lithium from oil well brine, fuelling electric vehicles in the future.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what’s not green about CO<sub>2</sub> enhanced oil recovery, a key part of our strategy moving forward on sequestration. Enhanced oil recovery wells create 82 per cent fewer emissions than traditional oil extraction methods, and we’ve been doing it here in Saskatchewan for over 30 years. We know it works. Leading environmentalists say the only way that Canada can get to net zero and the Paris — now Paris take two — targets is through EOR, enhanced oil recovery. And yet the anti-oil brigade companies such as Ben and Jerry’s — there are many of them — call EOR a dangerous distraction because they just don’t like the oil part, no matter how responsibly it’s produced.

And as we know, the federal government has excluded EOR from federal tax credits for carbon capture, utilization, and storage, or CCUS, despite stating in last year’s federal budget that Saskatchewan is poised to be a world leader in CCUS. And we agree. And we’re already seeing companies such as Whitecap energy and FCL [Federated Co-operatives Ltd.] recently formulate big plans around it.

We’re not letting EOR not be a part of this conversation, which is why we’ll keep impressing its importance as part of the wider carbon capture, utilization, and storage discussion on the federal government. Because how can you not include EOR if you’re really serious about net zero. Whitecap energy’s oil recovery facility near Weyburn sequesters half the 4 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered every year in Canada. How can you ignore that?

[19:30]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, generally speaking, in the energy and resources sector it’s been a good year emerging from a very tough year, but there are still challenges. Some energy workers feel once bitten, twice — or certainly more — shy about rejoining the sector, and as a result there are labour shortages. Some companies of course went under during the perfect storm last year. Other companies have debts they still have to pay. They’ve slowed down drilling. And quite a few major capital allocations remain on hold.

Pipeline egress of course is still an issue: Keystone XL cancelled by President Biden, Enbridge Line 5 still under threat. This as the Enbridge main line, which connects to Line 5, transports 70 per cent of Saskatchewan oil to national and international markets. We have Quebec, and it’s been referenced, coming out against hydrocarbon extraction, even though that province benefits directly from Line 5 to keep its citizens warm this winter and every winter.

And ironically, sales of SUVs [sport-utility vehicle], light trucks, and pickups have increased in Quebec. In fact 71 per cent of



ordinary Quebecers say they prefer oil from Western Canada, which gives me a lot of hope. Fifty per cent of the oil that Quebec uses is from Western Canada, so we can build on that. Overall though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite the ongoing, ever-present headwinds in the energy sector — and there are always headwinds — make no mistake, certainly it is stronger than it was a year ago. The price of oil alone speaks to that.

Similarly the mining and forestry sectors have been very successful over the past years. We've seen major developments, announcements that stretched into the summer. The last thing we did, to the opposition's charge, was take the summer off. And now into the fall, it's all about the jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. New operations, expansions, mills, and mines will create more than 9,500 jobs across all our energy and resource sectors going forward. And that includes 2,600 across new forestry mills, 360 construction jobs at Sask Mining and Minerals' expansion project, and 3,500 jobs every year during construction and 600 full-time jobs at BHP's Jansen project.

And BHP Jansen, that was a pretty big deal. Biggest investment in the history of the province. Biggest project of BHP's ever. Tens of billions in provincial royalties and taxes over the life of the mine, 9 billion in potash sales by 2030. That's in our growth plan. And it all just builds on the already formidable presences of Nutrien, of Mosaic, of K+S, and the 20 billion in investment in Saskatchewan in potash over the last 15 years. And make that 30 billion now with the BHP announcement.

Forestry was another big deal this year. And the former member for Athabasca, who really was the only fan of the resource sector over there, he used to say, he used to say, the North will rise again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it is rising. Stats Canada tells us that northern Saskatchewan is near the top of the list for recent job growth in Canada. A lot of that comes down to mining of course, traditionally also a key employer of Indigenous people in the North, but also forestry.

And our recent announced timber allocations to four mills — Dunkley, Carrot River, Paper Excellence, and One Sky — will further bolster the sector. They'll amount to \$1 billion in investment in the North and create more than 2,600 jobs, which signifies a huge renaissance for forestry in Saskatchewan.

Meanwhile in mining, uranium prices, which of course have been prone to volatility, are certainly on a tear right now. And there's lots of renewed interest in that sector, particularly as part of developments around small modular reactors. In other areas of mining, exploration activity in the province is strong. There's been something of a gold rush in Saskatchewan over the last year. Our targeted mineral exploration incentive reached an all-time high in 2021, attracting almost \$10 million of investment in 113 new drill areas for base and precious metals. Diamond, diamonds, gold, silver, nickel, cobalt, zinc, platinum companies — they've all participated in the targeted mineral exploration program. And copper, speaking of our sustainable Saskatchewan brand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're now selling to the world. Foran development is developing the world's first carbon-neutral copper mine in the province.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we promote that sustainability and all the great win-wins for the environment and the economy, other jurisdictions around the world don't adhere

to some of the same environmental standards, the same labour laws, you name it, which we do here. And that can of course be a source of frustration to resource companies here and pose a competitiveness challenge which we have to continue to address and raise awareness about.

And that is also where some of the ironies come in, and I alluded to that earlier. For example, the coal market around the world, including in China. The coal market is booming in China. And this recent headline jumped out at me: "Amid a green transition, soaring coal stocks highlight one of the great conundrums for investors." I'll say.

Of course in Saskatchewan we were mandated by the federal government to transition away from coal, but China is quite happy to take our coal. It produces the largest share of global emissions of greenhouse gases. By far the biggest producer of coal domestically, the largest financier of coal-fired plants abroad, with enormous coal power projects planned for the future. Irony within irony despite all that, China is currently facing coal and gas shortages, rolling energy blackouts.

And here's a quote from a few weeks ago, I believe it was in *The Globe and Mail*, from someone living in China right now: "Without power, taking a hot bath is impossible, eating a hot meal becomes a luxury. Are we really going to live like ancient human beings, read our books by oil lamp?" Which is a good question for all your friends who tell you we should transition immediately from conventional energy, and a good question for woke politicians everywhere. And I can think of a few.

Because here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it reaches minus 40 and has sometimes been colder than it is on Mars. Fossil fuels are a survival tool, which brings us to some of the current ironies around natural gas. We all remember that President Biden, yes, killed Keystone XL from a trusted neighbour and hasn't lifted a finger either to help us on Enbridge Line 5. But the president was quite happy to entreat OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries] to pump up production so that consumers in the US [United States] wouldn't be faced with exploding gas prices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should all be extremely conscious of, extremely sensitive to the importance of natural gas right now. In many countries it's nothing short of a matter of national security.

And I read from another recent headline from *The Globe and Mail*: "Blackouts, higher bills from Ontario ending natural gas by 2030." And I didn't know that Ontario was phasing out natural gas by 2030. But it went on: "Phasing out Ontario's natural gas power plants by the end of the decade is not feasible and would lead to rolling blackouts and soaring bills."

But keep this quote foremost in mind:

Oil-rich countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Russia provide massive fuel subsidies to keep domestic gasoline and electricity prices low. So do oil and coal importers such as India. Such measures are seen as necessary to maintaining social peace and providing citizens with the basic necessity. But we phase out coal and institutionally [as in federally] turn on natural gas.

I spoke today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the new federal Energy minister, telling him that now more than ever is not the time to bring in the federal clean fuel standard, which will hit gas consumers with what is a second carbon tax. I have asked him to please not hit our producers, truckers, rail transporters, manufacturers with millions in higher gas and diesel costs, or families, who need to heat their homes, businesses. Now is not the time.

Also in another geopolitical irony or hypocrisy, as we know, international gas supplies are short, including in Germany. And in the North Sea, where much of Europe's offshore wind is generated, it's been, as one report put it, "unusually windless this year." On a normal day Germany gets 30 per cent of its electricity from wind. Recently it's been about 10. So guess what? Germany is ramping up coal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can never take our eye off the economy. We might think that we can, but if we do, as so many are, empty shelves will come for us too. Let's remember that. Here in Saskatchewan we lead in the economy for a reason, because we are cautious and we are focused.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues whom I serve with every day, and certainly thank the Premier for his strength during this very, very difficult time. Mr. Deputy Speaker, here's to very bright days ahead for the province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Cockrill:** — Good evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you for recognizing me this evening and allowing me to speak to this session's Speech from the Throne. Before I begin, I would like to quickly recognize a couple of people.

Most importantly, I would like to thank my wife, Meagan. I know that our families and spouses, they don't necessarily take a seat beside us here in the House, but in many ways they serve alongside us. Meagan works full time, volunteers on a number of local boards, and contributes to our local church. She's passionate about The Battlefords and making our two communities better places to live, and that inspires me in my own work here as a member of this House.

I'd also like to thank my constituency assistants, Gail and Claudette, for their service to the people of The Battlefords. And at times the phone calls and the emails over the last year have been difficult. And even in those times, both Gail and Claudette have exuded the respect and resourcefulness to ensure that our constituents are served well. I truly could not do my job without them, and I enjoy working with these two fine individuals every day.

Now like many people over the last 20 months, I have had the sentence — or perhaps the gift, depending on your perspective — of spending a few days in isolation. And you know, even if you . . . I was thinking about it. Even if you consider it a gift, it's really more of a socks or underwear type gift than a gift that you asked for, right? Now despite that, I tried to spend a little bit more time in isolation reading. And one book that had been on my list for a while was Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. And I finally made the time to give it a read. And simply put, it is a

must-read and a book that I will hopefully read a few more times in my life.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a horrifying reminder of the pain and suffering that World War II inflicted upon our world, particularly from the Nazi regime and their concentration camps. And as Frankl recounts his experiences in the concentration camps, it's amazing he even survived — battling typhus, walking through Saskatchewan-like winters with barely wearing anything, and frequent abuse from the camp guards. And those are just the external forces. Imagine the internal mental battles to continue persevering when it was probably just easier to give up. Really and truly, it is an incredible story.

And as Frankl recounts his experience, he quotes the philosopher Nietzsche saying, "He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how." Simply put, if you have a why, then the how is secondary. The how is just the window dressing if the view is worth living for.

The last 20 months have certainly been a challenging period for our world, our country, and our province. I'm not aware of a place in the world that has not had to find some new ways of living throughout this pandemic. But despite the challenges that we have experienced and are still navigating our way through, we still have much to be excited for, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now I should stop here and make certain that my colleagues and the members opposite and anyone watching here tonight, you know, understand that I'm certainly not comparing World War II or the holocaust or concentration camps to the last 20 months and the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm not going there. The pandemic pales in comparison, quite honestly. I'm simply referring to a quote and a story that I find particularly motivational and encouraging in our current time and place in history.

So coming back to 2021 here in Saskatchewan, if we consider the why that is reason for the how, for me standing here today and for this government, it is the promising future that lies ahead for Saskatchewan. But our government knows it is not enough to just sit around and wait for the future. We must put the work in now to ensure that bright future is realized for our province. That bright and promising future for this province is one that will result in a stronger and safer, healthier, better-educated, and more independent Saskatchewan. And that is what this government is all about, and what our Premier and our cabinet and our caucus work towards every single day.

[19:45]

It is a stronger Saskatchewan that is positioned and open for business. And our Saskatchewan Party government makes no apologies for believing that the private sector is the engine of our provincial economy. Government creates the environment for significant investment, but it is the private sector that drives the economy in this province. And the members opposite don't seem to like that notion very much. But we never hear anything to the contrary that is either coherent or realistic. But I digress for now.

The Saskatchewan we are working for is also a safer Saskatchewan, where the rule of law is upheld, and where those who wish to commit crimes and profit from them will be held accountable and face consequences for their actions.

It is a healthier Saskatchewan that continues to increase accessibility to health care in all corners of this province. A healthier Saskatchewan that helps people dealing with addictions and builds in-province capacity in terms of recovery services. A healthier Saskatchewan that is prepared for the significant demographic shift that will see high demand on long-term care services in the coming years.

It is a better-educated Saskatchewan that continues to ensure that our educational facilities in this province are being properly upgraded. And a better-educated Saskatchewan is one where the learning occurring in those new or renovated facilities matches the quality of the buildings.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a more independent Saskatchewan that stands up for our position in the federation that is Canada. And a Saskatchewan that holds our federal partners accountable to live up to their agreements around health care funding.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleagues have and will continue to highlight the significant private investment that our provincial government has helped to attract over the last number of months. I won't further belabour the point. But I do want to take this opportunity to talk about a couple of these investments.

BHP's decision to move ahead with the Jansen potash mine is a major decision for both the company and the province. In fact, it is the largest private investment ever made in this province, as referenced by the member from Batoche earlier — 3,500 jobs over the construction period, and then 600 full-time jobs once the mine is operational. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my understanding that it is BHP's goal to have a gender-balanced workforce at the Jansen site as well as 20 per cent of their workforce coming from Indigenous and Métis communities. And this will help ensure that all Saskatchewan residents have an opportunity to benefit from this major project coming to Saskatchewan.

In Saskatoon, we have Clean Seed Capital Group working towards completion of a new manufacturing facility for their Smart Seeder Max product. And you know, the technology of this product is exciting in its own right for our agricultural sector, but the fact that that product will be manufactured right here in Saskatchewan is even more important.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's not forget that when companies like Clean Seed or Northern Nutrients with their new urea fertilizer facility in Saskatoon as well, when those companies set up shop in this province, that doesn't just provide benefits for those organizations or the Saskatchewan people they're going to hire. It's good news for the industrial supply store in the area. It's good news for the company that supplies and launders the uniforms that are going to be worn in that facility. And it's good news for the soup and sandwich shop down the street that's going to be a little bit busy over lunch hour. It's good news for the entire supplier ecosystem that will support the new businesses here in Saskatchewan.

That's the power of the private sector driving the economic growth in this province. Government creates a competitive business environment with the right incentives, and then our innovators and entrepreneurs get to work and fill the need in the

market.

Now one important, but I think it's understated, item from the Speech from the Throne is the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation. This initiative announced by our government last week will work to ensure that Indigenous communities and Indigenous-owned companies have increased opportunities to become equity partners in resource development projects in this province. Our Indigenous and Métis communities are key partners in Saskatchewan when it comes to this province reaching its full potential. And I look forward to working with and advocating for the First Nations communities in northwest Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to also highlight some of the public safety announcements made in last week's Speech from the Throne. The constituency that I represent and the entire northwest region of the province sees the effects of the illegal drug trade and gang activity on a far too frequent basis. Our RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachment in The Battlefords is one of the busiest in the province and probably in all of Western Canada.

And you know, I'll take this quick opportunity to recognize the men and women who serve in that RCMP detachment and our local community and public safety officers in Battleford and North Battleford for the work they do on a daily basis to keep our communities safe. And what I would like to highlight from the Speech from the Throne is the good work that the minister on this file has done in presenting a full-circle approach in trying to deal with crime in our province. And by full circle, let me just try and illustrate this because I do believe this can get lost. And obviously we have new officers coming in the form of new crime reduction teams in Moose Jaw, La Ronge, Lloydminster, and Meadow Lake, as well as new officer positions through the creation of STRT, the Saskatchewan trafficking response team.

But what makes this more of a full-circle approach are the other announcements made last week. The warrant enforcement and suppression team, WEST, which is going to focus more resources on targeting dangerous offenders who continue to commit crimes despite having outstanding warrants. The announcement made through the Ministry of Justice regarding increasing prosecution capacity is also an important piece of this overall strategy as it would make sense that with more policing resources on our streets, we're going to have more criminals to prosecute and hold accountable for their actions. The changes that our government is planning to bring forward regarding *The Seizure of Criminal Property Act* combined with the collaboration of investigators, lawyers, and analysts at the Ministry of Justice is going to make the drug trade business significantly more difficult in Saskatchewan. And the drug trade is one business that we don't want to prosper here in Saskatchewan.

So with these resourcing announcements combined with the legislative changes that our government is going to put forward, we're going to be better prepared to catch criminals, prosecute them, and ensure that they cannot profit from their actions. And that's the full-circle approach that I'm referring to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now having been elected by the people of The Battlefords just over a year ago, I'm incredibly proud to represent these two great

communities. There have been some significant government investments over the last year in both communities. The largest project, and it was part of last year's budget, was the announcement of a major renovation project at John Paul II Collegiate. And that project is still in planning and design phases, but once complete, the facility will be better equipped to educate many of our high school students in The Battlefords.

One project that is currently in progress that many of our residents may have noticed is an upgrade and addition at one of our affiliate-run long-term care facilities in North Battleford, Villa Pascal. The project, which is being led by a local Saskatchewan contractor, will see significant upgrades to the kitchen and multipurpose areas. There is also going to be the addition of a family suite specifically designed for palliative care, and personally I'm really thrilled to see the addition of more palliative capacity in our community. And our government was a key partner in that project with a contribution of a quarter-million dollars in last year's budget. And we look forward to the opening . . . or the reopening, I should say, of Villa Pascal in the new year.

Now residents on the Battleford side of the North Saskatchewan River will have seen a variety of crews working at the Court of Queen's Bench on 23rd Street for the last number of months. And in this current year's budget, the provincial government has invested over a million dollars to upgrade the windows and replace the roof, which helps preserve a very historic building in our community and one that is very well used by the Ministry of Justice. These are just a couple of the areas where The Battlefords have seen provincial dollars over the last year, and our government looks forward to investing more in these two communities.

And speaking of which, before I finish that thought, we're really looking forward to the rehabilitation project for the five-span bridge that crosses the North Saskatchewan River connecting Battleford and North Battleford. It was approved under the ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] program last year, and residents of both communities are really excited to see that project go forward.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to COVID-19, we're not out of the woods. Although our case numbers have decreased significantly in previous weeks, we still have a number of Saskatchewan people fighting for their lives in our hospitals. I spoke with one of my key campaign volunteers this last weekend, and he let me know that his wife is currently in an ICU [intensive care unit] here in Saskatchewan. A gentleman from my church has been in an ICU for a number of weeks now, and fortunately for him it looks like things are turning around.

I think often of these two people and their families as they try to keep hope amid some challenging days. I think often of the health care workers that are working so hard to provide them and many others care, and I'd like to thank them for their hard work and dedication over the last 20 months.

Now as our government continues the fight against COVID-19, I believe that vaccination is our best tool against the virus. I made the choice to be vaccinated and I encourage my family and friends and constituents to do the same.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not a great sleeper in normal times, but over the last few months I've tossed and turned a little bit more. But perhaps not about what you'd expect. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what troubles me is the level of discourse in my community and perhaps by extension my province. And over the last few months, I've seen a troubling rise in what I consider to be the dehumanization of others over their choice to receive the COVID vaccine or to not receive the COVID vaccine. I have seen people in my community not only question each other's decision but go to the extent of demonizing the individual, their family, and in some cases even their business for making that decision. And let me be clear, this reality exists on both sides of receiving the vaccine or not. Both sides.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there's anything that I want to put on the record here in this fall session, my hope is that we as the people of Saskatchewan can rise above the division around the decision to be vaccinated. And let me repeat again: I believe that vaccination is our best tool against COVID-19. I made the choice to be vaccinated and I've encouraged my friends and my family and my constituents to do the same. The data is quite clear. Unvaccinated people have a higher likelihood of being hospitalized and requiring intensive care.

Now one of my favourite parts of being seated where I am in this Assembly is that I'm in close proximity to one of two beautiful carvings of the crest of Saskatchewan. And when I look over on a daily basis, I'm always reminded of our provincial motto: "from many peoples, strength." "From many peoples, strength." And I'm no expert in grammar, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but many peoples, that's plural. It means that there are more than one type of people the motto refers to. It doesn't just refer to people of one race or one creed or one religion or on one side of an argument. It means that we are stronger when we include everybody, even if we disagree with them. Many peoples. And I encourage my colleagues in this House to take that seriously. We must find a way to live that sentiment in this House and then model that in our constituencies.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as I conclude my remarks here this evening, I'd like to remind this House and the people of Saskatchewan that despite the challenges of COVID-19, and that the challenges and how they've presented to our world and our country and our province, I do believe that we have a bright future ahead of us here in Saskatchewan. It's a future that's going to see Saskatchewan be stronger, be safer, be healthier, better educated, more independent. And we are well-positioned economically to be a key player that is known around the world because of our natural resources. But I do believe that we are even better positioned because of the people of this province, people that are resourceful, people that are hard-working, people that face challenges together, whether it's a bad storm, a tragic bus crash, a tough harvest, or a pandemic. We face that together. Let's never lose that.

[20:00]

And so in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support our Premier. I support the Speech from the Throne as presented last week. And I will not be supporting the amendment brought forward by the member from Saskatoon Eastview. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Regina

Elphinstone.

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's good to be on my feet to respond to the Speech from the Throne. The people of Saskatchewan have been needing to rely on their support system like never before, so I want to begin by thanking mine — my family, my partner, Nick, the light of my life, Lew, and the two strong women who have been helping the people of Regina Elphinstone-Centre, Cora Sellers and Sawyer Nast. These two women have brought their significant gifts and abilities to bear on the issues afflicting the people of my constituency who are navigating increasingly desperate times. So I want to thank them for their work and acknowledge the difficult toll that work often takes.

I've had the privilege of sitting in this House now for a year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've seen the seasons change their manner once and watched my baby boy transform from a passive, garbling angel to a chatty, stubborn, going concern. I'm trying hard to raise an easy, compliant child who will defy the things that harm people and fight for a world that helps them. Basically the kind of kid that will do what I say, but question everything. No small feat. And I find myself filled with joy to be expecting my second child early next year, despite all of the uncertainties of the world. Because despite everything, the future is bright.

That's perhaps the one thing I agree with members opposite about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The future is bright. But never in my wildest dreams could I have predicted that I would rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne in the midst of what we're observing today in Saskatchewan. These are dark times. These are hard times. And for the most part, these were avoidable times, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The fourth wave has overwhelmed us. We boast the highest death rates in the country. Our testing rates are dropping off. Our vaccine rates are the lowest in the country. While you wouldn't know it listening to that side of the House, it's not all good news here in Saskatchewan. Not at all. And no matter what spin the Sask Party wants to put on the current state of affairs, members of the Canadian Forces have come to our aid, something that was delayed for too long for political reasons, Mr. Speaker. And intubated patients are being evacuated across the country to receive care they can't access here.

All of this is happening, I should add, while that Premier beats his chest and squawks about greater independence for Saskatchewan. What a joke, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what a joke. And sadly that's the kind of arrogance and doublespeak we have come to expect from a man that is pathologically unable to show humility and self-reflection.

Hundreds of lives lost. Intensive care in crisis. Surgeries and life-changing treatments cancelled or put on hold. Meanwhile our front-line health care workers pushed to the breaking point, working long, stressful hours in environments they could have never been trained for, only to be spat on, attacked, harassed by those who don't believe in the realities of a pandemic, a lowest common denominator in whom this government found allies and pandered to — the misled, the alone, the confused, often the hateful. This government gladly took its cues from this motley crew, content to make a mess of things all in the name of not alienating their base.

My heart goes out to each and every person affected by the fourth wave and every wave before. We didn't need this. We did not need to be here.

A stronger Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well I guess that's an improvement, a small acknowledgement that not all is right in the province of Saskatchewan. The Sask Party slogan has been tempered ever so slightly, I suppose to account for a few undeniable realities like that Saskatchewan now finds itself facing the highest death rates in the country.

And indeed, never has this Sask Party slogan fallen more flat than it does today. Frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many Saskatchewan people would have preferred an honest apology, some transparency, some course correction, some indication of what this government actually intends to do about the fourth wave. Because the only strength that Saskatchewan is showing out there right now is in its people, of which I heard precious little mentioned in this speech — strength that is on display, not because of this government, but despite it.

And people are angry. They're angry at a government, a Health minister, and at a Premier that refuse to apologize, take responsibility for their part in this crisis. People's pain and stress and struggle deserve some acknowledgement from their elected leaders, not to mention the collapse of a health care system that has been our pride and legacy.

They're also angry at a band of silent Sask Party MLAs that have not found their voice or a backbone through what has been, without a shadow of the doubt, the most challenging crisis of their political careers. Shame on each one, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have the enormous privilege of a seat at the table and a voice that they did not use.

I have always believed in a strong separation of church and state, of the right of everyone to practise their own faith. But last week, on the day that the Hon. Lieutenant Governor laid out the priorities of this government, there were but two voices that appeared to be speaking common sense in this House: the voice of Archbishop Bolen who spoke to our sacred duty as leaders, who petitioned us to address the challenges, the injustices and equalities which are part of our common life at this time, and reach out to those in greatest need; and the voice of Elder AJ Felix who asked for allowances so that his people need not wave placards on the steps, but they'd be given a place in this House, that their priorities be reflected in this government, that they be extended a piece of the good life so their children can be healed and we can all seek a good way of walking together on this land. These calls, for all their wisdom, find no response in the conduct of this government.

Last session, every single one of us on this side warned this government that it was flirting with disaster — doctor doom and the naysayers. Everything we predicted came true. And still the Sask Party continues to preach its stale gospel of strength. It continues to pat itself on the back instead of rolling up its sleeves.

The truth is, this self-congratulatory Throne Speech showed that the political will to address the hardships of everyday people is absent. It was an ideological manifesto in personal responsibility — more of an excuse for why this government failed in its sacred duty to the collective than a plan. A manifesto that pushes a

tough-on-crime approach discredited decades ago, and one that appears to be partly in response to the death of Colten Boushie, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A victim, when a good number of members on that side have been convicted of criminal offences. Another dog whistle designed to divide and conquer, to keep us chasing our tails. Do as I say, not as I do, eh boys? It's not a road map to anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a distraction, a defence, and a dereliction. And beyond the incompetent Sask Party management of the pandemic, beyond the loss of life — some of them children — the heartache of cancelled surgeries and treatments delayed, beyond the harm to the economy which this government so often forgets is a means to an end, not an end itself, there are other massive crises building, heartaches and injustices to which this government has turned a blind eye.

We are enduring a period of economic uncertainty, and a rinse-and-repeat list of private-sector investments that this government seems to think it can take credit for isn't going to change that. We have the lowest wages in the country. People can't make ends meet working multiple jobs. People are leaving the province. Doctors are threatening to jump ship. Young people increasingly don't see a future here.

We are in the middle of a global climate emergency. Lytton, BC [British Columbia] burned to the ground this summer. Thousands of lives and homes were lost in Western Canada under a heat dome. We had a historical drought. And there is no acknowledgement of the scale of the task ahead despite the fact that it presents a challenge of far greater magnitude than even COVID-19.

I want to talk a bit, as is customary with a response to a Throne Speech, about the strength of my constituency, which is presently being tested in unimaginable ways. Prior to this pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one in four children were living in poverty rates far higher in Regina Elphinstone-Centre. We had some of the worst social ills in the country: soaring HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] rates, highest rates of incarceration, drastic surges in food bank reliance.

But in Regina Elphinstone-Centre, these statistics take on life and colour and unspeakable heartbreak because they play out in the lives of real people — thinking, breathing, feeling human beings. And the stories of the families losing the battle to stay afloat are only growing, stories that prompt me to ask myself on a daily basis, well, for whom is Saskatchewan strong?

There is a community of people living in tents in the heart of our great province's capital. Regina Elphinstone-Centre is home to Camp Marjorie, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Camp Marjorie began with just a few tents and now has more than 60. Over 170 people call that place their home. This is not unique to Regina and some of the solutions are right there before our eyes. They're actually being provided for free by volunteers because this government won't step up — front-end supports; food and housing security; evidence-based, wraparound services.

The new SIS [Saskatchewan income support] program has seen deep, deep cuts, cuts the minister responsible has not even acknowledged exist. She was asked last week by the media; she said that SIS does not represent cuts.

SIS has meant that the housing crisis, which predated the

inauguration of SIS, has significantly deepened. Poverty rates which should be the shame of our province have now been further entrenched. The outcry from the public has been heartening to see, but people are wondering how long until this government listens, learns, and then acts.

But not one mention of this issue in the Throne Speech. Not one mention in the Minister of Social Services' response — not one. So I will be spending the remainder of my time on it because these people deserve a voice. They deserve to be heard in this legislature just as much as the CEOs [chief executive officer] of Viterra and Nutrien, the leaders of the tech sector, the chamber of commerce. They are the citizens of this province and our fate is tied up in theirs.

An effective social safety net has so much to offer. Done well, it will decrease poverty and inequality, stimulate the economy by ensuring more people are contributing to it, and foster better outcomes for everyone by supporting struggling families and mitigating the worst impacts of social exclusion. But the Sask Party doesn't seem to see it that way. Fourteen years into a conservative government, what do we have to show for it? The outcomes are grim: higher rates of inequality, growing rates of people relying on social assistance despite a boom, a stagnant child poverty crisis, empty social housing units peppered across the province as people freeze in tents. Curiously, the Social Services budget increases annually while people on social assistance are expected to rely on less and less as the cost of living goes up.

This ministry oversees the third-largest overall budget. It has spent \$73 million on an IT [information technology] program designed to improve child protection. Has this massive transfer of public funds to the private sector actually helped outcomes? No. There are more children in care now than at the height of residential schools, growing numbers of child welfare deaths, and a rising proportion of Indigenous kids in care.

It shelled out 400,000 to an Ontario company to train its social workers in the art of motivational interviewing. It is not uncommon to hear of front-line ministry social workers with hundreds of open cases, horror stories of beginning the day with 45 voice mails from struggling clients. Even with much of the administrative work of SIS being allotted to impersonal and deprofessionalized call centres, Ministry of Social Services workers are overworked and they lack the necessary tools to support folks.

[20:15]

So I'm wondering how staff is going to motivate thousands of people out of poverty when there's no money to work with and they're drowning in casework. It's no surprise that turnover is rising and some of the loudest voices speaking out against this are former ministry staff. That ministry is spending unprecedented amounts but the outcomes are getting worse, suggesting there is no other ministry more thoroughly displaying this government's combination of fiscal waste, ineffective policy, and contempt for the most vulnerable.

SIS is this government's recent attempt to rearrange the deck chairs, and it is a catastrophic failure because it actually undermines people's ability to become independent, because it is

not developed with a knowledge of what happens on the ground, because the supports are objectively inadequate, and because it is built on the mistaken premise that the main cause of poverty is low-income people themselves. With some coaching maybe they'll be a little less lazy, stand on their own two feet, make better choices. The supports are there. Right, Minister? If only they were willing to get them.

The rhetoric embraces a crude, individualistic lens we've come to expect from this lot. And it comes at a time when the systemic barriers associated with social assistance are well known, from mental health and addiction issues to systemic racism, disability, and the very inherent structures of our economic system. In the wake of horrifying revelations about residential schools and the impacts of intergenerational trauma, we should be especially aware that the social determinants of poverty are complex.

Perhaps the most baffling change under SIS is the removal of the option of direct payment of rent to landlords and utility companies. This is bad news for Crowns and it's resulting in increased evictions. The number of households in arrears is staggering. Evictions are up. Why was the direct payment option so important, Mr. Deputy Speaker? In a letter written by a former staff member of the Ministry of Social Services just this week to the minister and I — who's been volunteering at the camp, I should add — she rightly points out this option was put in place years ago to eliminate the exact situation that we're facing now — evictions and utility cut-offs for non-payment — in other words, to better support people in the long term to achieve the increased independence they so crave.

Some SIS recipients have addiction and mental health issues for which cash is a trigger. Some have acquired brain injuries that make it difficult for them to handle money. Many navigate a hierarchy of immediate needs — food insecurity for one — that subsume concerns of the eventual threat of eviction. I've spoken to women who found the direct payment option to be a source of stability and protection from their abusers. Now intimidation and threats by family members, they no longer have control over those funds and they risk losing the one stable thing they had, a roof over their head. Many landlords now openly say they won't rent to SIS people. It's right there on craigslist: SIS recipients need not apply.

SIS represents cuts to school supplies, disability benefits, security deposits, clothing and furniture grants. It comes on the heels of cutting the rental housing supplement, of making the Canada housing benefit unavailable to these people. And worst of all, the deepest cut, it removes the guaranteed coverage of utilities. \$575 must now cover rent and all utilities. It's impossible. No amount of positive visualization or penny-pinching could stretch these amounts to ensure running water, heat during a biting prairie winter, and a roof overhead. \$285 to cover food, furniture, clothing, not to mention maybe a bus pass, the cost of printing your CV [curriculum vitae], getting a nice outfit, so the maximally motivated SIS recipient can pound the pavement looking for gainful employment, because that's the point. Right, Minister?

Two hundred eighty-five, if you can avoid dipping into your 575 for utilities, which you can't. And that amount, 285, is the same if you have no kids, 3, 5, or 10 kids. Pity the child in Saskatchewan born into poverty. This government has lost its

way. I challenge the minister to live like this, to pull this off, or at the very least, take a word out of the book that so many on that side claim to read. What of raising the poor from the dust, lifting the needy from the ash heap? You bow your heads each morning in prayer in this House. You talk of worshipping Wednesday mornings. Why haven't you opened your hearts to the message behind those words?

Housing security, in addition to being a chief determinant of health, pays for itself. It means folks don't end up in the ER [emergency room] at a cost of \$10,000 a month; in a jail cell, 4,000 a month; in a shelter, over 1,300 a month. The short-sightedness of SIS is so spectacularly self-defeating and it comes at a much greater cost to the public. When the Saskatchewan Landlord Association, community-based organizations, poverty advocacy groups, and recipients are speaking with one voice, surely it's time for this government to show a little humility, and course correct.

People don't want a handout. They want a hand up. And instead this government is kicking sand in their face by cutting supports at a time when the cost of living is rising and everyone is struggling more than ever with the economic effects of the pandemic. But at the root of all this is a government that continues to sing from an ideological song that doesn't work, a government that worships at the altar of individual responsibility except when it comes to them. Cancelled surgeries, airlifting patients to Ontario, highest death rates in Canada, exodus from the province — apparently they don't have anything to account or apologize for.

Instead of addressing the challenges of our times, this government quickly turns to excuses, blame, abstention, even when the policies that could make a real difference to people's lives are so obvious, digging in even when the course proves disastrous for the people they have a duty to serve and represent.

But I started by saying that the only meeting of minds between myself and that side is hope for the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The future is bright and I hope that it is. And hope doesn't exist; I believe it has to be created. So while I'm pretty hopeless at the prospect that the Sask Party will stop pursuing these kinds of fiscal and policy failures that have come to be a mainstay, and what appears to be quite an entitled and tired, old government, I do believe that the best is yet to come. We are a province of strong communities, warm people, of decency, resilience, and opportunity. The vast majority of Saskatchewan people are right-thinking, fair-minded, and they will not forget, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So with that it is my pleasure to support the amendment moved by the member from Saskatoon Eastview who's been, I have to say, quite on fire these last few days. And I want to thank you. I've gone a little overtime. Good evening.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Martensville-Warman.

**Mr. Jenson:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And before I begin with the reasons why I'm going to be supporting our government's Throne Speech tonight, I just want to acknowledge some of the people in my life who've been instrumental in my past year and my first as an MLA.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to begin by acknowledging my beautiful wife, Angela. She's carrying the torch back home and runs the family business while also taking care of things around the home while I'm working here in Regina. She's an absolutely amazing lady that I'm so lucky to raise our two kids with.

Our son Asher is our 14-year-old son and he's an absolutely intelligent, witty, athletic, caring, and thoughtful young man who's pulling some really good grades in high school, Mr. Education minister. Mr. Speaker, in just a few short weeks he's turning 15 and he's going to have his learner's licence. His mom and I are really looking forward to the day when he trades that in for his driver's licence, and it will be us sending him to the store at 9 o'clock at night for milk.

Then there's our daughter Kolbie. Mr. Deputy Speaker, she's going to be eight in February and she seems to have endless creativity and no off switch. Whether it's the chalk art on the driveway or scavenging through our kitchen recycling bin looking for building materials to satisfy her imagination, she won't stop until she's completely happy with her work. She's a beautiful and smart young lady and we're so proud of her.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a saying around our house and it's maybe a little bit like our caucus too: a little bit loud, a little bit crazy, but a whole lot of love. That's what our family is in a nutshell, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm so blessed in so many ways by having such a loving and supportive family to come home to each day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as much as Angela, Asher, and Kolbie wanted to be here in this incredibly majestic and amazing building for the Throne Speech last week, we just weren't able to make it happen. But I'm happy to say they'll be visiting with us soon to watch all of us do the honourable work that we've been elected to do. I love my family and going back to spring session, being away from them for six straight weeks was probably the most difficult six weeks I've ever had to endure. And they would no doubt say the same thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At least I hope they'd say the same thing. I'm not entirely sure.

I did however have the honour to have my parents Roland and Denise here last Wednesday as well as my aunt Donna and uncle Clarence. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was a very special day for me, and one that I'm always going to be remembering. When we entered the Chamber and I took my seat and looked up into the gallery, there they were waving as proud as could be. I'm sure their smiles under their masks they had on were as big as mine. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been in this desk for a year now, but seeing them in the gallery for the first time made it all feel so real. I'm sure most, if not all, my colleagues on both sides of this House can relate to what I'm saying.

I'd also like to give thanks to the Premier, all my colleagues in caucus, as well as the caucus staff for being such a great team and great leaders. I'd like to think I'm a fairly likeable guy among my colleagues and the building staff, but it was my dad who kind of stole the spotlight a few times last week. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he's not just an ordinary Saskatchewan guy anymore. He's now affectionately known as the guy who sold one of his airplanes to James Bond. If you give me a couple of minutes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll quickly tell the story of how this came to be.

So for those who hadn't heard or read about the story, my dad bought an older Cessna 185 airplane a couple of years back. He and his staff spent some time one winter refurbishing it inside and out. He flew it to their winter home in Arizona, and all that was left to do was put the striping on the airplane. It was then that he decided to put it up for sale.

Lo and behold, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he got a phone call almost right away from a potential buyer. He had a British accent, and he told my dad that he was very interested in seeing this airplane. So not long after that, my dad took him up on his offer, flew to Lakeland, Florida, and after the standard presale inspection, the deal was made.

But before leaving the airport, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my dad asked the buyer where this airplane was going to be based out of. He figured well, maybe it might be ferried back to the UK or somewhere else, but the buyer said it was going across the tarmac to the paint shop where the paint was going to be stripped off, the aluminum was going to be polished up, and it was going to be flown to Jamaica.

By now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my dad was a little worried. It had just received a fresh coat of paint, and he began to think this airplane was going to be maybe used for some rather nefarious purposes. But the buyer handed him a business card and told him it was going to be used in a movie. Curious to know more, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my dad asked about it, and the buyer said they were going to be using it in the new James Bond movie called *No Time to Die*.

[20:30]

Now my dad always says he's been born at night, but it wasn't last night. And as Ronald Reagan used to say, trust but verify. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what he did. Back in Arizona, he's got friends that have friends in the entertainment business, and they verified to him that this was a legitimate company that was procuring props for movies. So as it turns out, an airplane that he owned and sometimes used to punch holes in the skies over Saskatchewan is now a part of pop culture history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not going to bore you with any more airplane stories, so I'll just keep moving along here by thanking my constituency assistant, Whitney Friesen. Now my colleague from Batoche has a CA that's been 26 years. I'm proud to say Whitney has been I think the longest serving CA in the province at 28 years. And he's also — for my colleague from Arm River — the best CA in the province. I'm really fortunate to have Whitney's knowledge and skills in the office, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** — He's our candidate.

**Mr. Jenson:** — Yeah, he might be. Rosemont, maybe . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It's a he.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to express my appreciation to you as well as the Speaker and congratulate you on your recent election as Deputy Speaker. This place can get a little fiery and heated at times, but you and the Speaker do an admirable job of making sure things stay on the rails, and for that we all thank you.



And it goes without saying, Mr. Speaker, that it's great to be back to almost normal in this Chamber. Whether it's having people in the galleries or Pages making things easier for us by delivering paperwork, or the fact that the Plexiglas is gone and I can see the member from Yorkton and not have to lean around the glass to talk to him . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, that's right. Maybe there's days where I don't want to do that. It is a nice feeling to have some normalcy in the Chamber. I'm hoping like everybody else we can get to the finish line very soon and return to absolute normal in this building.

As I've said before and I will continue to proudly say, Mr. Speaker, I represent the best constituency in the province. The people of Martensville-Warman are incredibly good to me, and I wake up each day honoured to work on their behalf to make their lives better. Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking back I can't help but be proud of our government's work in my constituency and throughout the province this last 14 years. I represent two of the fastest growing communities in the province, and our government has responded with new schools; new overpasses; additional infrastructure funding for lagoons, parks, highways; not to mention the substantial revenue-sharing increases for our municipal governments so they can make their own decisions and provide the things they feel are important to make their communities better places to live in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these investments have been made because our government believes in the very people we serve. Being in business for 25 years prior to being elected, I always made sure I provided my people the tools they needed to succeed and got out of their way. Our government is no different, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Good infrastructure, sound fiscal policies, and a belief in the people of our province to use their talent and knowledge is the recipe for success.

So while the members opposite hypocritically pose for selfies in Pil Country, record videos maskless in COVID wards, and perch themselves on pedestals in the rotunda like it's recess time at a school playground, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleagues and I in government will continue to do the heavy lifting and hard work. We will continue to do what's best for all people by building a stronger, safer, healthier, a better-educated, and more independent Saskatchewan.

Under this government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our province has experienced success over the past 14 years unlike any time in our history. We now have more people calling this province home than ever before. We're among the leaders in wholesale trade, employment, take-home pay. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, our government has demonstrated fiscal responsibility by being the province with the lowest debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio in the entire country. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic, we're going to keep up the good work that's been done since we formed government in 2007 by creating more good-paying permanent jobs; increasing our population; building more schools, more hospitals, more long-term care facilities; and well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ensuring this province continues to be the best place in the country to live in.

Just in the last number of months, over \$10 billion of new investment has been committed to fund new and expanded canola crush plants, a new potash mine at Jansen, which I might add is

the single largest capital investment this province has ever seen — Jansen — plus a new wheat straw pulp manufacturing plant, a new urea fertilizer facility, and the list goes on.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Eastview likes to recite lists of opinion headlines written by the daily media. So to keep things in perspective, I'll keep going with the list of important developments that are happening in our fine province under this government. Clean Seed has announced they will be building a state-of-the-art seeding and planting equipment plant in their new facility. Brandt Group is expanding their workforce by 1,000 people. There's a new OSB [oriented strand board] plant being built in Prince Albert. Upgrades are going to take place at pulp mills and saw mills that will result in hundreds of more new, skilled jobs being created. Our government has a plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a plan for growth. Nothing to be ashamed of. It's a plan that the people of this province believe in. It's a plan that grows our economy, provides a better way of life for all, and it's a plan that we will work hard to fulfill.

While I'm proud to sit with my colleagues in government, Mr. Speaker, I'm more proud to be a lifelong Saskatchewan resident. To see what we've been able to accomplish in 14 years is truly amazing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that really stands out to me in this Speech from the Throne is our commitments to the Indigenous community. Our government understands the long overdue need for reconciliation. In September, I was privileged to meet Tony Stevenson, a residential school survivor who has dedicated his life to helping other survivors on their healing journey. To those who have never met Tony or have heard his story, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's one of the most courageous and moving accounts I have yet to hear. From a distance, Tony could easily be mistaken as just another person walking through a shopping mall or sitting in a restaurant or in the stands at a Roughrider game. I was moved by Tony's story from his seven years at Qu'Appelle Indian Residential School in Lebreton. Tony is just one survivor with stories to tell, and I commend the work he is doing for those who choose not to speak or are no longer able to.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that our government is moving forward with initiatives to continue the journey of reconciliation and healing. Two million dollars will be used to assist FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] in their work to identify and investigate undocumented deaths at former residential schools across the province. Money helps, but reconciliation happens in so many other ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Bringing children home to their people is now happening at Cowessess and I'm hopeful other First Nations will follow the lead of Chief Delorme and his people. Programs that offer culturally appropriate child welfare services to Indigenous families that need the support are being expanded, Mr. Speaker. Highway signage is being planned to signify Treaty 4 and 6 boundaries along our major roadways so it can be a visual reminder of the historic lands we share and which we call home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, reconciliation goes much further than visual education and reminders. Indigenous people need additional opportunities to become full participants in our province's economy, and our government recognizes this. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 30 per cent of the timber supply in

Saskatchewan is allocated to Indigenous businesses, by far the largest allocation anywhere in Canada. No other province in the nation has a gaming agreement with First Nations as successful as the one we have here with the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are doing more to create wealth for Indigenous people and communities by providing up to \$75 million in financing for equity investments and resource development projects throughout the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation. Our government is supporting and growing Indigenous involvement in forestry, energy, mining, tourism, and the work is continuing to make sure all people benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been a very challenging 20 months with people around the world grappling with COVID-19, and I just want to say thank you to all the people working in our health care system. I also want to recognize the contributions made by our business community who continue to evolve and adapt in a rapidly changing environment.

I also want to take a moment to thank the 87 per cent of eligible people in our province who've rolled up their sleeve and have done the right thing by getting their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. We are so close to reaching 80 per cent of our eligible population being fully vaccinated, and I am fully expecting we eclipse that milestone tonight.

Vaccination is a choice, and for some in the 12 per cent left yet to receive it, it comes with difficult discussions and decisions. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know this was the case in my family, and it's quite possibly the case in many others as well. But with each passing day, more and more Saskatchewan people are doing their part by getting vaccinated to help us exit this pandemic and return to the normal way of life that we all love. These are difficult times for all of us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but as we've always said here in Saskatchewan, we will pull through and we will persevere.

While we're dealing with COVID-19, work must continue to drive our province forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last Tuesday, I was shocked and very saddened to learn of the sudden passing of a good friend that my colleagues from Melfort, Swift Current, and Melville-Saltcoats also knew very well. Gord Dmytruk was the embodiment of the Saskatchewan can-do spirit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Gord brought the Melfort Wellness Centre to life. He helped develop shopping centres in Melfort and Warman and was working on a few other projects in my home community of Warman on behalf of the Avatex Group of Companies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I met Gord for the first time a number of years ago when the Stonegate Shopping Centre sign went up in a bare field at the north end of Warman. He sat down in my office and we talked about the project and how it was going to play a role in creating more employment and more opportunities for our region. I remember that first meeting very vividly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. His smile was infectious. He was confident, and most of all he was genuine. It would be the first of many meetings over coffee that we would have in the last number of years. Every time we met, I walked away a better person for that experience, and I can't thank him enough.

I spoke with Gord on the phone the day before he passed away, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He sounded more excited than usual as he shared some very exciting news about a particular project he was working on. We agreed to meet later in the week when I returned home from Regina, but sadly that meeting wasn't going to happen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's the Gord Dmytruks of this province that make Saskatchewan the special place that it is. To him there was no such thing as a barrier that couldn't be overcome. He understood the need for patience and imagination in everything that he did. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the constituency of Martensville-Warman lost a true treasure and community builder on October 26th. I just wanted to express my heartfelt condolences to Pat, children Ryan, Jillian, and Nicole and all the grandchildren as well as all those who were blessed to have had him in their lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look through our plan for the next year, I'm encouraged and excited about what lies ahead for our great province. Every initiative that is contained in this year's Throne Speech will benefit the province in many, many different ways. I've touched on the economy and reconciliation, but there's so much more that our people will benefit from.

Mr. Speaker, a lack of moisture made for a very tough year on many of our farms. But our government responded by working with our federal counterparts on programs that support our producers in the wake of this drought. To that, \$119 million in direct support to livestock producers; AgriStability interim benefit payments were increased from 50 to 75 per cent; crop insurance relief for producers who converted their crops to feed; a tripling of funding for dugouts, wells, and pipelines, and so much more.

[20:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government can't control the weather, but during times of adversity and crisis we have been there and we will continue to be there for the people who produce our food, that feed the people around the world. We will be there to help sustain our province's economy and the ag sector with jobs on the farm, in manufacturing facilities, in research and development, and in technology.

Off the farm our government has set aside \$3.2 million to fund a new engineering biology centre at the Global Institute for Food Security in Saskatoon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is part of an overall plan to ensure Saskatchewan producers remain global leaders in agriculture research and development. Additionally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've committed more than \$30 million to support institutions and specific research projects, expand scientific capacity, and assist in the commercialization of agricultural research happening right here in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I talk to constituents, they are happy to have a government that is creating the environment for people to succeed. But there is so much more work to be done to protect our residents from criminal activity, to improve supports in mental health and addictions, and continue to ensure children and young adults receive an education that will give them the tools they need to succeed in today's ever-changing and demanding world.

I'm very happy with the approach that we've taken to making our province a safer place to live, and one that will target the criminals who put the illegal drugs and guns in our streets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I've stated before, this pandemic has caused tremendous stress for some people in our province, and that's resulted in added mental health and addiction problems in our communities. We're going to meet these issues head-on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with additional in-patient addiction treatment beds, a new overdose awareness and prevention campaign, and the pursuit of further opportunities to add an additional 150 treatment spaces in our province over the next three years.

Saskatchewan people are creative, resilient, and adept at overcoming challenges and adversity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our government's plan to grow our province is charting a course that will set us up for success as we emerge from this pandemic. So for all those reasons, Mr. Deputy Speaker — I've been so fortunate to be able to speak to some of these today — I will be supporting the motion made by the member for Prince Albert Northcote, seconded by my colleague from Arm River, and will not be giving any consideration to the amendment put forth by the members opposite. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. Friesen:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'd like to wish you congratulations on your new role.

It is once again an honour and a privilege to rise today representing the great constituency of Saskatoon Riversdale. I as well would like to start with a few thank yous. I'm not normally someone that uses a lot of acronyms, but I'm hearing them all the time so for clarification, my constituency assistant, or CA, has been an amazing asset for me, and I don't know how I would do this job without him. To the member from Arm River, my constituency assistant was actually Saskatchewan's smartest radio listener. I'm not sure if one of your CAs has that on their resume. So Terry Bubnick, thank you for your genuine care and concern for the constituents of Riversdale and surrounding communities. I think we make a great team.

I'd like to say some very important words of gratitude to all the people that have supported me. This year has had many challenges. I'm very thankful for all the great people in my life. I'd like to thank Robyn, my kids, my family, my friends, and the people in the background that are always there to support me. To Saskatoon Riversdale constituents, thank you for reaching out to me to voice your concerns and sometimes offering words of encouragement going through these tough times.

I do not want to forget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleagues. Thank you for all your words of wisdom, encouragement. And I would say we have the best caucus in the country. It really is like a family. Appreciate all your support, mentorship, and friendship. The Premier, I'm proud to be part of this team and thank you for your leadership.

They say time flies. I don't know who they are, but they say a lot of things. They say time flies. It's hard to believe it's been over a year since the election. This year has absolutely flown by. Just over a year ago friends, family, colleagues, and new friends gathered for weeks and some months going door to door, meeting

people, and reminding them to go vote. I'm so very grateful for all the people that believed in me and for the residents of Riversdale for their votes to make this a reality. It is an honour to serve and make the voices of Saskatoon Riversdale heard.

In January this year, I was able to purchase a garage with a house attached. It's a car guy's dream. I've been looking for such a garage in the Riversdale area for many years. And I had to take possession on April 1st just before coming to Regina for spring session, only to be locked in Regina for the next six weeks. This was no April Fool's joke although many of you that know me, know that I like to play the odd joke or two. This however was the reality that my family faced, and they did the majority of the move without me even being there. Some might think I asked the Premier for us to be locked in, but it wasn't the case.

Robyn, my kids, my family and friends made this happen without an issue. When I came home, I realized that I'd moved next door to a friend of mine that I actually went to high school with. It has been really great getting to know some of my neighbours better when out for a walk, a bike ride. Or some just stop by when we're out in the yard doing some cleanup or come into the garage when the doors are open, and we have some really good conversations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I've said in this House before, my parents were a driving factor in my political career, and my interests only grew from there. There's hardly a day goes by in this building that I don't reflect and think of how amazing it would be for them to be sitting up in the gallery watching. I do know they are watching.

I had the privilege of having two of my three children here last week for the Speech from the Throne — Christopher and Morgan. And what an honour that was for me, and I think for them as well. The Speech from the Throne is so full of good things, it's sometimes hard to touch on all the amazing things going on in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about what has been happening over the last year as an MLA. It has been very busy, despite what I'm hearing from the Leader of the Opposition saying several times that we have taken the summer off. Nothing can be further from the truth. We have been very busy in our office with phone calls, emails, casework. And sometimes we get calls that turn into meetings where we are able to help some seniors take advantage of some provincial and even federal programs to take a little more pressure off of their day-to-day lives.

I've been attending many events and had the honour of speaking at several of them. Sometimes they let me know I'm speaking right when I get there. Sometimes sending birthday or anniversary greetings on behalf of the government, I remember very fondly when my mother would get these greetings or get these birthday wishes, and she was so proud of them. Now they're coming out of my office.

Sometimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I meet some people that are full of zeal and very passionate about their beliefs, quite often actually. Some of them are just tired of the pandemic, but all of these people deserve to be heard. And I have been very busy and look forward to having all of those future conversations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some meetings look different than others. Many have been Zoom meetings. Over the last few months, it's been an absolute pleasure for me to have more face-to-face meetings, some in our office and some out. I've had the chance to have coffee on numerous occasions with several people in the area, supporters and non-supporters alike.

I was invited to be part of an Optimist Park cleanup day, and three of us went out with a half-ton. We got placed in an alley and this young man had walked by and walked up to the house that we were cleaning the backyard of, in the alley. And we had probably filled about four half-ton loads already. This young man came by and we asked him if he knew who the owners of the place were because nobody was around. He did, and we had asked him if he wanted to give us a hand.

This young man helped us out, and after a couple of hours he started to open up to me and he was down on his luck. He had got into some trouble with the law, lost his job because of a curfew. He was really quite depressed and hoping that he wouldn't get into something bad again. I was able to spend a fair bit of time with this young man as we cleaned the yard, and I got him some temporary work after this just to get him kind of on his feet and feeling like something. And within a week, I had him an interview with a local contractor, which I understand he got a job with.

This brings me such great joy as so many out there . . . Working with youth for a lot of years, there's so many out there that just want a hand up. Maybe just lend them an ear. Just listen to them. It's not surprising sometimes how fast they'll open up.

I've been involved in several community-based organization meetings and was able to help out one move a shed from one community to another. Lots of little things like this has been a real joy and a pleasure to be part of.

This spring and summer, myself and several volunteers ran a program again seeking used bicycles and fixing them up for kids that don't have bikes. This year was an overwhelming success. We got over 200 bikes out to children this year that didn't have bikes, and we got another approximately 160 to 170 bikes that are ready for next year's spring to fix and get them out again.

I was asked by a community-based organization in the spring if I would run a bike repair clinic for the adults and some of the kids in the community. This turned into a couple of clinics which were a big success. Some of these parents and some of the adults that came were interested in doing their part and fixing kids' bikes in the community, so they wanted to learn how to fix one themselves.

Some of the other things I've been doing, I was appointed to the board of directors at Meewasin Valley Authority and have since been appointed to the Meewasin Valley Authority steering committee for their revenue generation department, as well as sitting on the governance committee. I also sit on the red tape reduction committee — which I love a lot, getting rid of red tape — and Public Accounts, which is also a great pleasure. I can even handle the Chair, the member from Rosemont. I absolutely enjoy my career and all of its challenges. It's an absolute honour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatoon Riversdale is a very diverse

community with many different needs. One thing I was very excited to hear is about our community wellness buses. In August of 2008, the hon. member from Indian Head-Milestone introduced a primary health care bus pilot project partnership in Saskatoon with Saskatoon Regional Health Authority and M.D. Ambulance, primarily serving Westmount, Meadowgreen, Pleasant Hill, Riversdale, and King George neighbourhoods, all of which are in my constituency.

The bus parks in designated locations, and at each stop people can access a variety of services from a registered nurse, paramedic, and dentist on the bus. In the first six months alone in 2008 over 1,000 clients used the service. The bus was designed to reduce barriers faced by some people in accessing health care services. This project was a massive success, making it easier for inner-city residents to receive primary health care services.

[21:00]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a little over a month ago I had the pleasure of viewing the bus and seeing first-hand some new buses, as well as designs of our new buses coming soon. We have three new buses like this coming, and this is very exciting.

Even more importantly I was able to speak first-hand with some of the nurses that work on these buses. They shared many great experiences and several tough ones as well. All in all their commitment to this project was incredible, and I would like to thank all involved that made this such a success and that want to continue moving this forward and doing better. So pleased that we are extending this with another three buses. They will also include more extensive dental work, harm reduction supplies, mental health supports, and significantly expanding the service areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another thing that touches close to home are the urgent care facilities in Regina and Saskatoon, currently under the design phase, which will offer urgent care for illnesses and non-life-threatening injuries still requiring immediate attention. And these facilities will include mental health supports as well. This will free up some space in our emergency departments.

We are also funding eight new projects to improve patient flow and help reduce emergency wait times. Part of our commitment to this province to help reduce the drug overdoses is making it a lot easier to access test strips and naloxone kits, adding pharmacies to where we're able to get these naloxone kits. We have just added new in-patient addictions care beds in Swift Current and Estevan, and a commitment to build 150 more beds over the next three years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, working with kids for over 30 years and seeing a lot of history of addiction and abuse of drugs, these surrounding services are welcomed and needed. I have seen first-hand how much these are needed, and I'm so happy that we continue to expand these services. The 811 HealthLine for 24/7 crisis support is another welcome addition, as well as Kids Help Phone, Farm Stress Line, all operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Working with kids and youth for a lot of my life, it is very important to me that options like these are very easily accessible. This is only part of the record \$458 million investment into mental health and addictions supports and accounts for 7.5 per

cent of the entire Health budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one thing that I don't believe gets near enough attention is Pillars for Life. This suicide prevention strategy does not get talked about near enough, and if you haven't already heard about it, I urge people to check it out. Suicide thoughts and discussion happen a lot more often than people know. I recently took a few courses on this end as youth and mental health are very close to my heart, and I have lost loved ones and many connections and family as well.

Shifting gears a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a business owner for over 25 years, I love talking about our economy. Economy is the biggest driving factor and without it we have no money for health care, infrastructure, mental health supports, and the list goes on and on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan has recovered to over 99 per cent of our pre-pandemic level. We have laid out a growth plan to the year 2030, and our efforts are showing with recent announcements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not a farmer and I will leave the details of the great things in agriculture to some of my colleagues. However with the recent announcements of three new canola crush facilities, I don't have to be a farmer to know that having the ability to crush 75 per cent of our own canola is a great thing in building our Saskatchewan economy and sustainability. And I cannot speak to the list like the member from Stonebridge-Dakota but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our energy and mining sectors account for almost 15 per cent of the national gross domestic product. The province's energy sector has contributed nearly 244 billion to the economy since 2007.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are proud to announce Canada's largest helium purification facility right here in Saskatchewan. This \$32 million facility owned and operated by North American Helium will be located in the southwest of our province near Battle Creek.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we were all overwhelmed with the announcement from BHP that they're going ahead with the Jansen mine, investing seven and a half billion dollars. This investment represents the largest single economic investment in our province's history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Jansen mine alone will create 3,500 jobs during construction and 600 full-time jobs once it's up and running. This will add 4.35 million tonnes of potash per year, increasing the annual value of potash sales to over 9 billion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have some major announcements in forestry as well with the revitalized Prince Albert pulp mill, expanded and upgraded saw mills, One Sky with its OSB production expected to produce up to 700 jobs. This is all great news. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are proud of the fact that nearly 30 per cent of the workforce in Saskatchewan forestry is Indigenous, largest in the country.

Another great announcement was the \$31 million investment to build a new rare earth element processing facility. This facility is under construction in Saskatoon and will be operated by the Saskatchewan Research Council. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these announcements and more, we are headed in the right direction of our goal to increase the population by 100,000 by 2030.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to touch on highways. This government has invested over \$37 billion on over 17 000 kilometres of highways since 2007. And we're not done yet, with plans of another 30 billion and an additional 10 000 kilometres of highways by 2030.

Shifting gears again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the honour of being part of a virtual Remembrance Day ceremony this past weekend. I was able to lay a wreath on behalf of the provincial government and listen to the different speeches. One of things they have been working on is recognizing veterans of recent deployments, as well as remembering the ones who made it back with life-changing injuries and recognizing the challenges they face every day. This is very touching, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was actually hard to get through some of the statements. I would like to thank all of our military and say how proud I was and honoured to be part of their ceremony.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will wrap up by saying I am humbled and honoured to serve the people of Saskatoon Riversdale. And I'm happy to be part of this government, building a stronger, safer, healthier, better-educated, and more independent Saskatchewan. I will be supporting the motion and I will not be supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured of course to stand here today and provide a response to the Speech from the Throne. First I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member for Prince Albert, and of course I am not supporting . . . and seconded by the member from armed river . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Arm River.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Member for Arm River?

**An Hon. Member:** — I thought you said armed river.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Well that would be appropriate. It is a humbling privilege to be standing here serving my constituents as their representative for over 12 years. I would also like to thank family and friends who have supported me for so many years and extend a very warm thank you to my constituency assistants, Jackie and Kirsten; my ministerial staff, Brayden, Shelley, Jalen, and Halle.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech spoke about a number of topics which I believe are important to the citizens of the province. This includes our continued efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic, but also our government's commitment to build a strong Saskatchewan by supporting the economic recovery now under way while ensuring life remains affordable for everyone in the province. It really is not an either-or proposition.

Our government is grateful for the dedicated front-line health care professionals and all those who are involved with planning, administration, and support in helping all of us fight COVID-19. Each and every one of these incredible individuals deserve our thanks. We are truly in their debt for what they have done in helping save lives and helping keep us safe, in particular during this last devastating fourth wave. Words of deep appreciation to

our front-line workers. How do you express that enduring gratefulness for our front-line nurses and health care professionals when they're delivering life-saving care to somebody that you love? Words can sometimes seem to be hollow. The only thing we can do is express our gratitude and give our thanks.

Our government has invested more than \$100 million to support COVID-19 efforts by providing health care workers with personal protective equipment, contact tracing, and our extensive vaccination program. This does not account for the effort, programming, and additional amounts spent across government in helping respond to COVID-19. Recently we launched the provincial emergency operations centre to assist in COVID-19 response and help in areas of logistics, organization, and wherever else support might be needed, as our government has been doing from the start of the pandemic.

Some people have asked why the provincial emergency operations centre wasn't operationalized earlier if it's such a great benefit. The answer to this is that, through each wave of COVID, our province has experienced its own unique challenges that we have had to manage as a province. Some waves have brought challenges around procurement of supplies, health care staffing, implementing and enforcing public health orders, just to name a few. Each of these has required a different response from our health care system, and different areas of government have helped provide the additional assistance.

For example, early on the Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency was asked to coordinate PPE [personal protective equipment] for government agencies. While we had a one-government approach throughout this pandemic, this fourth wave has brought a different challenge that has stretched the limits on how the pandemic was managed previously. It requires even further coordination of government services to make sure we are supporting Saskatchewan citizens through these very challenging circumstances.

Not every flood or forest fire or accident requires the activation of the emergency operations centre, as government agencies or municipalities can respond as needed. However when a tremendous event occurs that can significantly tax these services, the activation of the emergency operations centre allows a heightened, stronger, and more coordinated government response.

It can be difficult to demonstrate the importance and significance of this move, but it allows for the mobilization of government staff and services in a way we haven't seen previously. Responding to COVID-19 does not mean that other areas of need can be ignored or overlooked. Saskatchewan communities are facing historic economic, social, and public safety challenges.

[21:15]

Our government is committed to expanding health care services to provide better treatment options for individuals across the province. This includes a new CT scanner in the Melfort Hospital that will help reduce wait times; the approval, cost covering of Trikafta, whatever it is, to help treat cystic fibrosis — and I know that people that I know that are suffering with cystic fibrosis are indeed very excited about this — increased funding for

Saskatchewan Cancer Agency; and new urgent care centres in Saskatoon and Regina.

We will add another 150 addictions treatment and detox spaces throughout the province. This is on top of the additional in-patient addictions treatment beds in Swift Current and Estevan added in the last several years. We're moving forward with adding 600 new long-term care beds here in Regina, and further committing on new long-term facilities in Grenfell, La Ronge, Watson, and Estevan. These are just examples of why government will continue to focus on COVID-19.

But we need to focus on and make a determination — and I think we have as a government — on what will our province look like when we come out the other end of COVID-19. And we will. The path of course is not to rush to sweeping restrictions on instinct. The path is of course through vaccinations. More than 85 per cent of eligible residents are vaccinated. Makes no sense to take away personal freedoms, close down businesses to accommodate the 15 per cent of those who are not vaccinated.

These past 19 months have been challenging times for all within health care but also throughout the business community. Our businesses have faced multiple lockdowns, revenue declines, and staffing shortages due to COVID-19. We are now in a position in which our strong economy is recovering and being driven by hard-working individuals across this province. Our government is excited about the growth potential coming from private capital investments that will not only support new jobs but actually support entire industries. We will emerge from COVID.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that crime continues to be a concern for many. Over the past several years, we have heard from individuals, communities, and organizations who have emphasized the need for more policing resources. Saskatchewan citizens deserve to live in safe communities free from gangs, drugs, and others who may threaten that. That is why our government is taking significant steps to help address these concerns.

The Saskatchewan traffic response team will be working closely with policing services across the prairies to enforce laws specific to and gather intelligence regarding drugs, illegal weapons, and human trafficking. Our warrant enforcement and suppression team will target violent offenders, high-risk reoffenders, and gang members with outstanding Criminal Code warrants.

Along with the addition of these new officers, our government is going to create four new crime reduction teams in Meadow Lake, La Ronge, Lloydminster, and Moose Jaw. These new policing units will all help in very specific, targeted areas that will help address crime in communities across the province.

We all know that property crime in rural areas is fuelled largely by addictions and those affiliated with gangs, often by repeat offenders or those with an existing criminal record. We also know that drugs don't just magically appear in our communities. They are being brought in from outside of our province. Drugs bring harm, pain, and destruction to our loved ones.

We have attempted many times to encourage the federal government to recognize the severity of these issues and to take further action to limit interprovincial drug, firearm, and human

trafficking. Well we had to devise targeted initiatives, some which I just mentioned, as our communities are indeed suffering — drug overdoses, gang-related gun violence, etc. We will continue to work with our partners across Canada, in particular in BC, Alberta, and Manitoba, to join us in creating their own policing units to take action on these dangerous and growing issues.

The new provincial protective services branch will bring together conservation officers, highway patrol officers, Provincial Capital Commission, community safety officers, safer community and neighbourhoods officers, and deputy sheriffs. This new branch will allow for greater accountability and better collaboration with the RCMP and municipal policing services, allowing all of them to respond to a greater number of public safety incidents.

For example, previously when a conservation officer or a highway patrol officer pulled over an impaired driver, they would contact the RCMP to take the individual into custody after the initial arrest. Under this new model those conservation officers or highway traffic officers will now have the ability to see that investigation through from beginning to end.

Similarly, if a conservation officer attends a rural property to respond to concerns about poachers, they will have the ability to respond to other related offences they become aware of, such as stolen firearms, and work with the appropriate other agencies on a response. I want to be very clear though: the enforcement officers will not be required to respond to any incidents for which they are not properly trained. This is a move that will ultimately make greater use of existing government resources, build on successful programs, and lead to a safer Saskatchewan for all.

For a good number of years we have heard increasing concerns around the rising cost of the RCMP combined with service delivery issues. These are not unique or new to Saskatchewan. These have been concerns that provinces and municipalities have raised across the country for a number of years, including by the current federal government.

Contract policing by the RCMP is increasingly becoming a difficult model to manage. In fact, maybe it has been as deemed and described by some to be unsustainable. The RCMP is the only police service in the world that handles everything from municipal, First Nations, provincial, and national policing concerns. This is why it is now time to start discussing what is the best policing model for Saskatchewan communities. Is it the RCMP or another option such as a provincial policing service?

For municipal police services, salaries, cost, policies, training, and all aspects of policing, including oversight, are decided according to provincial legislation. With the RCMP most of these decisions are made in Ottawa. While we value the partnership with the RCMP, it makes it difficult to address structural issues with policing in our province.

We recognize and of course we want to thank all the RCMP and municipal police officers for the work that they do in protecting our communities. These discussions are not reflective of anything except that we as a province must ensure that we are providing the people of the province the best, the most suitable policing service. But the dedication of the front-line men and women that serve in our communities will not go unnoticed. It

isn't unnoticed and we thank them very much for the work that they do.

It's also important to state that the RCMP will continue to be the provincial police service under the terms of the current provincial policing service agreement. We cannot ignore, however, discussions and concerns being shared by communities and the larger national discussion that is occurring around the future of the RCMP. Our government will ensure that Saskatchewan communities are well prepared for the future of policing, whatever that may look like, and that their policing needs are being addressed, regardless if that police service is based in our province or not.

Mr. Speaker, let me finish with this: this Throne Speech supports Saskatchewan's growth plan goal of building a better Saskatchewan, a Saskatchewan that is stronger, safer, healthier, better educated, and more independent. Our government is committed to managing the province's finances carefully with targeted, careful investments to improve the well-being of Saskatchewan residents. This Throne Speech focuses not only on the COVID response, but also on other critical areas that deserve attention and support as well. This is how we will emerge out of the COVID pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, once again, I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member for Prince Albert Northcote, and I will not be supporting the motion put forward by the members opposite. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the Minister of Education.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise this evening and put my comments, on behalf of the people of the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, on the record as it relates to the Throne Speech that was delivered last week. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to congratulate the Deputy Speaker from Prince Albert who was recently elected by this body to serve in this role. And I know that the member from Prince Albert will do a great job while he is in that position, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also do want to recognize a colleague who's no longer with us, and that's Buckley Belanger, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this House has lost a little bit of its liveliness because Buckley Belanger is no longer a member of this House. I feel like I should do my remarks to the Throne Speech with one wing up, just in honour of him, but I won't. But in all seriousness, I said from my place in this Chamber at one time that I hoped that I was a member as long as he was because I enjoyed hearing the member speak. And I enjoyed particularly entering in debates like this right after he spoke because it was always ... the audience was always enthused, and you could always kind of ride a bit on his coattails to follow up. But I, in all sincerity, I want to thank Buckley Belanger for his service to the province of Saskatchewan and to his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to speak to some items in the Throne Speech as it relates to my constituency and to the portfolio that I have the honour of being responsible for. And I do though want to begin by putting a few remarks on the record as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. And I've been sitting here thinking about

what to say because I'm not sure what to say after 20 or 21 months of going through COVID-19 as we all have been going through it. And it has certainly, I know, affected a lot of people in this province. And certainly my condolences to those that have been personally affected, to those that have either lost a loved one, like my family, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have a great aunt who lived in Alberta and was double vaccinated living in a care home and unfortunately had a breakthrough case and passed away at the age of 89, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so we as a family have been affected by this. And certainly to those families that have been affected by this particular fourth wave, I can say with all certainty that — I think it's cliché at this point — but this is unlike anything, certainly, we've all experienced, certainly I think as MLAs that we've all experienced. For those that are new in this and in their first year as being an MLA, it isn't normally like this, both in terms of this Chamber . . .

I think there have been at least one, maybe two members of my own caucus who this summer at a caucus retreat was the first time I'd ever seen them without a mask. There's people that I work with, who I had worked with for an entire year, and I had never seen them without a mask on. And obviously that is the least of concerns.

But to those especially new members, who I think like me . . . And I don't know what the members opposite, what the phone calls are like in their office. Maybe the phone calls are all, the government needs to do more and more and more restrictions, and I'll get into that in a little bit.

[21:30]

And I get those calls, but those aren't all the calls I get. And I'm sure those aren't all the calls that my colleagues receive as well. And they're all two-hour phone calls, and at the end of them I just don't know what to say any more. And I, for everybody's reasons for why they would want to contact me, and for anybody back home who's — I'm sure they're all tuning in to this — to those I haven't gotten back to, I apologize. I am behind on getting back to my constituents. It's because every phone call is two hours long.

So we're working through the backlog of getting a hold of the people that have called to ask the government to do more and to ask the government to do less. And so we will earnestly try to get through those phone calls, but I will . . . Just, I thank the constituents for whatever reason they have reached out, for whatever argument that they're trying to make, or whatever concern they're trying to get across. I know they do it because that's what they believe, whatever side they're phoning about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But you know, as you can see, I don't take a lot of notes about a lot of things. But I don't journal and I should. It probably would be helpful. And I kind of wish . . . You know, I'm probably thinking in a few decades from now I wish I would have been because the calls and the emails, you know, there have been some passionate, reasoned, logical on every kind of angle from this that you can take.

And then I have seen people and I've witnessed my constituents

disintegrate in front of my eyes. And you know, I won't get into specifics because I want to protect people's confidentiality, but I have spent time . . . Spent an hour with a guy who I would trust him with my kids' lives. And through this pandemic, and I know it has affected everybody, but how this has affected his life, I just didn't know what to say. Sorry, I won't get into . . . I can't get into the comments.

But you know, I will never forget early on when we were through the series of lockdowns and I got an email from a guy who is about my age, runs a business in Weyburn, has kids my age. And he didn't ask for anything. He just said, I want you to know, for whatever it's worth, every time I hear that Dr. Shahab or the Premier are going to make an announcement, I get sick to my stomach because I don't know how much more savings I can put into my business. What do you say to that? What do you say to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

And I say this with all due respect to . . . For the reasons that I understand, for physicians to be calling for what they are calling for, if the only job of government was the protection of people, personal health, this would be easy. This would be easy. If our only job was to protect people's personal health, this would be easy. And I understand why those calls come from where they do because that is their job. That's their job. They don't have to worry about the free flow of goods. They don't have to worry about commerce. They don't have to worry about any number of areas.

And so I, you know, I want to thank my constituents that have reached out to me, for the few that have kind of said keep it up and keep with it and stick with it, and just for how, despite difficult circumstances for everybody, how this province — and we have a ways to go — but how we as a province have pulled together.

I want to thank my staff in this building, those that work for me in my ministerial role, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank, and I should have right at the beginning, I want to thank Marcie Swedburg. She has been the constituency assistant for Weyburn-Big Muddy since 1999, about seven years before I showed up on the scene, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I can't express enough the job that she does on behalf of the people of the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, especially during these trying times.

I think we know as MLAs that for every call that we get, our CAs are probably getting 5 or 10. So for every constituent that has my personal phone number . . . They all have a phone book. I don't know if we use phone books anymore, but I think you get the point. And so Marcie has done a tremendous job on behalf of the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy. And I'll say on the record as I say to her almost every time I see her, I'm not doing this job without her. So if she's planning on going away any time soon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I'll be following her.

I want to thank my family. Jack is in grade 2. He's seven years old. I'll say on the record, in full disclosure, if he asks one more time if I can extend the hours of recess at his school, I promise he will register as a lobbyist. We will follow the rules that are set out. And Ephram is four. He's in preschool and he is becoming quite a prolific little artist. And we're having lots of fun. And Penelope is two years old, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I could go on about these three, but I know my time is pretty limited.



And I also want to thank Amanda who, I think, Mr. Speaker, who keeps reminding me that there is no joy because there is no sacrifice. And she is sacrificing a lot, and the reason why we are focusing our lives more on joy rather than happiness. And joy is becoming the focus of us as a unit, a family of five.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to mention . . . And I'll look to the Whip to keep me on track for time because I didn't look at the clock when I started, but I want to mention as we're getting close to Remembrance Day, and I want to note the passing of one of our veterans in Weyburn, Don Goranson. He passed away this summer. He was 99 years old. He was a veteran of World War II and I am just . . .

So Remembrance Day, I'm looking forward to it. I have been to every Remembrance Day service in Weyburn since I was elected except for one when I went in Radville to speak at their Remembrance Day. And Don Goranson has always been a fixture at our Remembrance Days I think right from the beginning from when the Weyburn Legion formed and we started celebrating Remembrance Days.

And I'll say that one of the greatest honours that I have ever experienced — and I feel the same way every year, and I think it'll be one of the signs that I know that it's time to go is when I don't feel this anymore, and I hope I never get to that point. I should just clarify. I hope there's a time where I feel like it's time to go. I hope there's never a time where I don't feel this way that I'm going to describe, and that is parading with the veterans on Remembrance Day.

So we will line up, as part of the dignitaries for our Remembrance Day, and we'll line up on 4th Street behind the Legion and we'll parade down to, just a block down to Souris, and then we'll turn on Souris and come back up 3rd, past the old McKinnon department store building, which is now the MNP Place. A number of businesses are there. And we'll parade back to the Legion. Our Legion is on 3rd and right across from the Legion is the cenotaph and then we'll do the outdoor portion and then we'll do the inside portion.

And not surprising, my first year as the MLA, there was a good mix of veterans from peacetime, and from Korea, and there were World War II as well. But after 15 years I think this last year that we held the service, I think it was Don Goranson and Howard Schmidt were the last two from World War II.

The old McKinnon building is a landmark in Weyburn. It was built in the early 1900s, about 1910, and the pictures of the South Saskatchewan Regiment as they paraded back through Weyburn, after they returned from Europe, and they paraded down that same street. And so you can see pictures today, black and white photos, of the South Saskatchewan Regiment and the McKinnon building in the background. And I still get a chill.

So it's the veterans, and then they'll have members active service, and then they'll have the cadets, and then they'll have myself, the MP [Member of Parliament], and the mayor, and then a bunch of kids that they picked to join us. And just to be that close to people who have laid it all on the line is a great honour. And so I do want to, just on the record, express my condolences to the Goranson family, and I'm looking forward to seeing Howard. Howard will be 97, I think, this year, and if he's able,

I'm sure he'll be parading. And it will be an honour to parade with him once again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to talk a little bit about the Education portfolio and some of the initiatives that are in the Throne Speech. First I do want to thank certainly all of our teachers and teachers' assistants and administrators and school board members and bus drivers and custodians and everybody that makes the school system operate, and doing so in certainly very difficult times. And they all should be commended for the decisions that they've made and the hard work that they have put in. And I know that it has not gone unnoticed from people around the province and certainly from the government.

Last, I guess it was a week ago, I was honoured to be in Weyburn to open a brand new school. Legacy Park Elementary School opened to about 700 students that will call that school their home. And attached to that facility, to that school, is a city of Weyburn facility that is a beautiful, \$25 million indoor field house that has a half-size FIFA [Fédération Internationale de Football Association] soccer pitch and a walking track on the second level, an art gallery. The city has just done a great job and I want to congratulate the city on opening that facility.

I do also want to put on the record a program that has actually come to both St. Michael's in Weyburn and Sacred Heart at Estevan. And this is an interesting partnership partly because of the involvement of a Weyburn Hockey Association volunteer, Mike Weger, who happens to be a friend, and I know he's been introduced here in the House for the work that he's done for cystic fibrosis. Mike is one of the busiest guys. I don't know how he does it. He's a lawyer. He's got, I don't know how many kids, young kids. He's involved in Weyburn Hockey Association. He's involved with cystic fibrosis, makes tarts every year that I think members have purchased. That's just a few things that Mike is involved in in the community.

So Mike worked with Hockey Canada to bring a hockey program that will involve grade 6 kids at those two schools, St. Michael and Sacred Heart. And they will be doing two days out of a six-day cycle on-ice training, and a lot of their classroom time will actually be spent at the hockey rink where they will . . . And it's full; it's full Saskatchewan education curriculum. And I think it's, I think, a really great program that is in a couple of communities in Saskatchewan now. But Mike has done a great job and Holy Family in Weyburn has now brought that to our community. I know that there is a lot of interest in that. So I just wanted it on the record, congratulate Mike and the team at Holy Family Catholic School Division for bringing that program to our community.

[21:45]

I want to touch on the Throne Speech on a couple of initiatives. One is online learning. We have learned a lot through this when school shut down now two school years ago, two academic years ago. And you know, I found out at that time I could not be a kindergarten teacher. So in the division of roles and responsibilities in our household, I got assigned to do the online learning and be the kindergarten teacher. And I've quickly found out I was not cut out for that.

But we have a number of school divisions that have been offering

online school before the pandemic and we have a number that have been offering it since the pandemic began. And I would say it's been challenging for many and it has been successful for some, and some students have done well. We have some school divisions, in fact I know of one, Sun West School Division that has been operating distance learning, online learning for some time.

High school students in Lucky Lake, Dinsmore, and Marengo are taking animation. High school students are taking animation classes that are offered through the Vancouver Animation School, and their instructors are employees of Disney and Pixar. That's happening today. It's happening in rural Saskatchewan. It's happening in urban Saskatchewan. I know that they're partnering with other school divisions. So there has been some success.

And what we need to do though as a system is put together, I think, a more cohesive policy that not only reflects the reality of what we're experiencing today, but also that when the pandemic, whatever that looks like whenever it ends, that this is going to be a part of education in some form. Not for everybody; it doesn't mean every student is going to be succeeding or excelling or even attempting to do this. But there are, I think, lessons to be learned through the pandemic as well as best practices that we need to ensure are in place for every student that for whatever reason, for good or for pandemic reasons, are being educated online.

The Throne Speech talks about, and we don't have details to share at this point, but more support for in the classroom, particularly for those classrooms that have the largest number of students. And so I would just say to members that are interested in that to stay tuned. We are working on putting that together and looking forward to rolling out what that support might look like in the future.

The last initiative that I want to specifically talk about as it relates to education, I would say it's an awareness campaign that is going to start this fall. And I would encourage all members, including members of the opposition — I know you don't have any details so I can't ask you to commit today — but keep an open mind, I think, for a number of reasons. And some are timely in terms of news stories of how algorithms are used to drive people to different areas of social media and the problems that arise because of that. And so we're going to put together a campaign that will be aimed at everybody, but especially at students, of becoming more aware of the good of social media but also the downfalls. And I think we are seeing a lot of what the negative side of social media can be.

So the campaign will be coming soon, and so I would ask people to, especially members of the opposition, to keep an open mind on what this looks like. This is not saying social media is completely bad or bad at all, or that students shouldn't be involved in social media. I have taken a sabbatical from social media and it just has happened to have lasted six years now. That's not for everybody, and I'm not saying that should be for everybody. But there is a healthy use of social media and there's an unhealthy path when it comes to social media, and we just want to make sure that kids are aware of what both look like. So that's coming this fall. Stay tuned.

On that, I'll maybe just finish my remarks talking a little bit about

mental health. I want to thank the Minister Responsible for Mental Health and Addictions for the initiatives that he has already been working on. I think this ties in nicely with what we're trying to do in the education system, and not just with what I've just previously referenced, but some of the mental health capacity building that we're doing in the system, the funding that we have provided to every single school division so that there is at least one adult in every single school in this province that has mental health first aid training.

We wouldn't send our kids to school without expecting that somebody knows first aid. A kid falls off the monkey bars — I don't know if we can have monkey bars any more; I think we can in schools, on playgrounds — but a kid falls in the playground and somebody there knows first aid. We should have the same expectation when it comes to mental health first aid, that there should be at least one person at a minimum, and I would advocate for more, but at least one person in every single school in this province that knows mental health first aid.

So there are initiatives that we're working on and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions is working on a number as well. So the in-patient addictions and treatment beds in Swift Current and Estevan, 150 beds, I know this is an issue that has touched every single life in this province. Ours is no different, Mr. Speaker. I was a pallbearer for the first time in 1994. I was 14 years old and my cousin died of a drug overdose. He was 18. So this has been something that has been a reminder of the difficulties that people all across this province encounter when it comes to addictions. And so I fully support the work of the member from Swift Current when it comes to addictions and when it comes to, generally speaking, mental health and mental well-being.

Mr. Speaker, maybe there will be a day when I will talk, maybe if I get to give a last speech in this body, I'll talk a little bit more personally about why the areas of mental health and mental well-being are an important one for me. That's from a personal level and maybe today is not that day. But from a professional level, I represent Weyburn and I'm proud to, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And there has been talk about the challenges that we're having in the health care system and how this may, and I've heard this a couple of times, somehow affect the legacy of health care in Saskatchewan. The American historian, David McCullough, says that history is an antidote to the hubris of the present. And so from a professional position, mental health is a priority because our legacy in mental health in this province is not very good.

And for me, a reminder of that is the fact that in 1921, a mental hospital in Weyburn opened. And in that facility — and it was a different time, but it is what it is — a lot of not-good things happened in that facility for a long period of time for people who at the time were considered less than: insulin therapy, hydrotherapy, electric shock therapy, lobotomies.

And so for me, because I represent Weyburn, there is a patch of land abut to the Hillcrest Cemetery in Weyburn that hold the remains of 1,425 people, and only 50 have a headstone. So I think it's incumbent upon us. We have an obligation to do better. Doesn't change the past, doesn't erase the past, doesn't change any of that. I have an obligation to do better as the member from

Weyburn.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity. And I will not be supporting the amendment, but I'll be supporting the Throne Speech. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Regina Lakeview.

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it is my pleasure to take my place in this Assembly and enter into this Throne Speech debate.

Unlike the member from Weyburn, the Minister of Education, who I think was speaking from a single piece of paper, I have sort of the opposite problem here in that I'm speaking from a lot of pieces of paper. And I guess I'm just going to acknowledge that I've really struggled with this response to the Throne Speech, in part because on one hand I want to reflect the anger, the concern, the frustration that I hear from people in my constituency, from those in my critic portfolios: early learning and child care, Labour, Education. And I think that those voices need to be heard here.

But I also want to be thoughtful about the discourse in this place. And you know, a lot of things I think have scared all of us over the last 20 months. But I'm not sure anything has scared me more than standing out in front of this building, this very important institution, and watching in real time the increasing polarization in our province.

So we're going to go on a little bit of an adventure together, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm going to try to ride the line between presenting the concerns that I hear in my constituency but also leaning into a bit of some of the things that I think are higher callings for all of us, concepts like grace and civility and leadership and co-operation.

I think as is customary — and I do think there may be some folks watching at home, although probably never the amount that we think are watching at home — I do want to make sure that I start off by saying some thank yous.

To those staff in our caucus office — we've had some changes recently and couldn't be happier with the calibre and the quality of folks that we have working there — Kat, our new chief of staff; Brock, who not only brought me in my speech at the last minute, came back and brought it in a bigger font because he noticed I didn't have my glasses on; Dave; Nat; Kelsey; and Cheryl and Jannet; again, Mitch . . . Now I'm worried that I'm forgetting someone. But you know, we literally could not do this without you.

To my constituency assistant, Cory Oxelgren, like I think many of our CAs, has been answering a lot of interesting calls, always but certainly over the last 20 months. And you can never take too many opportunities to express that appreciation.

[22:00]

To the people of Lakeview, my neighbours, who I got to see a whole bunch of last night, I just want to thank you for the faith and the trust that you've placed in me to stand here and bring

your concerns forward, and I will do my best.

To my family, my extended family, my mom and dad who were very excited this year after a bust of a season last year to welcome hunters again; my brothers in Meadow Lake and in Carnduff and their families; my father-in-law who is now a constituent of mine, and you know, he holds me to account; my sister-in-law.

And our family at home, or I guess not everyone's at home now. My daughter Hannah who's in her fourth year of engineering at the U of A [University of Alberta]. She had a good summer in her co-op program this summer working really long hours and picking up some interesting vocabulary that I understand is sort of par for the course. Our son, Nolan, who's working full-time at a lumberyard and playing football, and you know, living his best 19-year-old life right now. The Thunder has gone 8-0 and I think he's just happy to be part of that team. And our youngest, Maya, who's in grade 10 this year, really excited to be in-person learning and got her learner's licence this fall.

And you know, you just, I think we all do, we all just want to see our kids happy. We all just want to see our kids healthy. And you know, especially over the last 20 months, a lot of things fall away in terms of what we think is important and isn't important. You just want them to be okay.

And October is a really big month in our house. As I mentioned Halloween, which happens to be one of my favourite days of the year, getting to see the kids and the decorations around the neighbourhood. It's my birthday in October, and I don't usually bring that up. But it's also our wedding anniversary, and this year it really struck me that I have been married for exactly half of my life, 24 years this year. And you know, if I could imagine, you know, how impossibly young we were when we first got married. I'm not sure if that was a great idea to get married that young, but I want to say to my partner, Guy, who is patient and caring and lets me, you know, supports me in everything I do, if I had to get married that young and that clueless, I'm glad that it was him that I've been on this ride with for the past 24 years. Oh, I didn't think this . . .

And October 31st is also my grandma's birthday. And just again those things that COVID has sort of peeled away. I've started listening a little bit to that inner voice a little more. When you get busy and you often, you know, have that voice in your head. Yesterday morning I woke up on her birthday and I decided, you know, I'm going to get in the car — like everyone we had a million things to do — and I'm just going to go get her a cake and some flowers and go sit with her for a little bit. They moved into a seniors' apartment over the pandemic. And we had a really nice visit. And I was leaving, and I haven't always been affectionate in that way demonstrably, and you know, I turned and I gave her a hug and I said, I love you.

Anyway I'm being a bit personal, but I got word this morning that my grandma had a bad fall. And my mom's there with her now at the hospital in Moose Jaw. And you know, we're hopeful that things are going to go okay. But I'm really glad I took the time and listened to that voice to go spend that time with her. And I guess if you glean anything from this speech tonight, it's that: tell the people that you love that you love them and listen to that inner voice.

So I was thinking about that and thinking about all of those people in this province who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Some of the highest rates of COVID death in the country, and you know, October has been a really awful month. And just expressing, you know, the importance of condolences. It's important. And I think that it's incumbent on all of us to look to do better, to ensure that we have better outcomes not only for COVID but for all people in this province.

One of the things that often comes up is the desire to get back to normal, and I don't think that that's a partisan issue. I think we all want to see things get back to normal. That's a bit, you know, it's a bit of a struggle. On one hand — and I understand the desire — I've heard members on this side, on the other side, you know, talk about brighter futures. And we all want to get there. But I think that the frustration that you hear reflected on this side is that we're not through the impact here. We want a brighter future, but I think people also want to see some contrition, some humility.

At the beginning of this pandemic I thought a lot about the concept of grace and the fact that all of us were in something brand new, and there was no road map. In fact, and I remember early on being compelled, seeing the Premier in the parking lot, to go up and just acknowledge, you know, he'd been away from his family for a long time, and acknowledging that the weight of the world really, you know, was on his shoulders, and I think all leaders, not just in Saskatchewan but right across the country, certainly across the world.

I'm reminded of a quote attributed to Maya Angelou that goes something like this: when we know better, we do better. The expectation is not that we know everything. But there is an expectation that when we know better that we take that information and improve the outcomes. And I think that's a lot of the frustration about the pandemic response in the last few months.

In July we saw this government declare that COVID was over and, man, we all really wanted that to be the case. But we know now that there was modelling in hand that showed them that we would essentially be in the place that we have been for the last several months in this province. The deadliest October, some days having the same number of cases as Ontario with 14 times the population. And I think, you know, there's a suggestion . . . We've heard calls of being Debbie Downers, or you know, doctor doom or the doom dozen. You know, what we're bringing here is that reality. And I think there's some give and take. But the less we see contrition and the more we see arrogance, I think that frustration grows and grows.

You know, sometimes I think in these roles we get a bit of a skewed sense of politics. We don't always remember that not everyone is a partisan, a card-carrying member, and not everyone tunes into this Assembly every day. And I think many of us will find that when we're door knocking, you know, not everyone even listens to the news or reads the paper. Most people are just out there trying to make a living, trying to get by, wanting their kids to be happy.

And they don't care about the record of the NDP in 1991 or the record of the Sask Party in 2007, for that matter. They want to know that if they get into an accident, there's going to be health care. They want to know if their dad has a heart attack, that

there'll be room in the ICU. They want to know that if that kidney that they've been waiting for, for so long, becomes available, that they'll have the opportunity to receive that life-saving gift. And they want to know that their children who they're so concerned about, who need those therapies, who need that extra support, that they'll receive that care in this province.

And that's not about doom and that's not about NDP. That's not about the Sask Party. That's about the people of this province that every one of us here are called to represent and to serve. And that is our role as the official opposition — to not join in in clapping for the decisions of the government. It is our role to bring those concerns forward, to ask for transparency and accountability.

I spoke earlier about the concept of grace. For a definition: proactive acceptance; love and caring for our fellow human beings, person to person. Proactive acceptance, seeing the value and accepting our fellow humans without judgment. And I think that we could all use a little bit of that. I fear in this province a tendency to pit group against group, be that rural against urban, north against south, business against health care. And I think that gets us to a place where we dehumanize others in this province, because I cannot think of any other reason that any of us could be okay with the fact that there are fellow citizens of this province living in a tent city in Regina, in ravines in Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

So when we talk about hope, and I want to echo the comments of my colleague from Regina Elphinstone-Centre, I do see hope in this province. But it's not going to fall in our laps. We're going to have to lean into it. We're going to have to fight those forces of polarization. I think we can all agree that we want to see a stronger, a safer, a healthier, a better-educated Saskatchewan.

But I do take exception with the concept of that being around independence, because when I think about the problems that are facing this province — crime, addictions, climate change, COVID, reconciliation — these are not problems that can be solved by polarization, by wedge, by pitting one against another. These are problems that need co-operation, the opposite of independence in some ways; national co-operation, provincial co-operation, local co-operation in some instances.

[22:15]

So I would hope that the members opposite and all members would understand the importance of not just saying words, not just saying thank you, but actually working towards solutions. One of the things that concerns me that I've heard over the past couple of evenings is, you know, this concept that, you know, 50/50, we hit it right in the middle so our decisions must be okay. Mr. Speaker, leadership is difficult, and it means not just taking the temperature or doing a focus group about where the politics are on something. With something as complicated as COVID, we need leadership.

Everyone's opinions, Mr. Speaker, are theirs and I know that they're deeply held. But it's a false equivalency to suggest that one opinion is the same as the other. There is such a thing as expertise, and this is a government that has failed to listen to that expertise in this instance, time and time again when it comes to our provincial ICU capacity but also when it comes to a road map for our schools, for example.

I'm going to spend the last little bit here talking a little bit about our schools because I do agree that one of the ways we get to a brighter future is through a stronger education system. But again, words and hoping won't get us there. Every day, 205,000 people are in our schools, a large portion of those who have yet to be vaccinated in our schools. Yet we still have not seen education and students get the attention and the respect and the direction that they deserve and we need them to have in order to keep them safe.

In August there was a road map presented to this government that outlined some basic measures that we needed to take to keep kids safe in our schools: seating on buses, regular seating on buses; enhanced cleaning; clear provincial rules for testing and tracing; special attention to the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] students who are not yet vaccinated; and accommodations for students and staff with compromised immunity; better ventilation; and masking.

Unfortunately we didn't see that direction, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At certain points during this pandemic, we've seen up to 33 per cent of the new cases in that unvaccinated, under-12 population. We've seen, tragically, three children die in this province. We've seen day after day of notices of classrooms with positive cases. And what we see belies the fact that every single positive test can take hours and hours for those in those schools to contact-trace.

Mr. Speaker, education is important, but just saying those words is not going to make it so. We have to acknowledge the stress and the strain that our schools have been under over the last three years — three years of disrupted classrooms, three years of added anxiety, concern, extra work. I'm thankful that we're going to see additional EAs [educational assistant] and I hope that that number is large, but it's a frustration that it took a pandemic, really 20 months after a pandemic, for that announcement to happen.

We know that over the course of the last number of years, 10 years, we have seen the greatest decrease in per-pupil funding in the whole country, of all the provinces, right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So when I say that we all want to go back to normal, I want to correct that a little bit. I want things in this province to be better than they were prior to the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, we had three times the national average of mortgages in arrears; the lowest minimum wage; largest pay gap; some of the highest rates of domestic violence; too many people, even before SIS, who could not pay their bills, who were facing homelessness. Addictions and mental health issues certainly have been exacerbated during the pandemic, but these were epidemics in our communities even before this pandemic.

And I want to caution, Mr. Speaker, reaching for easy answers to some of these problems because I do believe this: I do believe that every member here cares about these concerns in their community — mental health, addictions, crime. But the fixes are not easy and they're not always cheap, and they require an honest look at the systemic reasons that we see the rates of addictions and mental health issues that we have. To understand that crime is not about good guys and bad guys simply, and only putting more enforcement resources towards it. It's looking at the systemic reasons that we see the rates of crime that we see.

So I guess that's where it's incumbent on all of us, is to think about the type of work that we want to do in this Assembly. If we want to see short, divisive policies or do we want to lean into thinking about what we could be as a province, the kind of province that we want our kids to grow up in?

The other day my youngest daughter was coming to one of the rallies outside the Assembly, and for the first time — my kids have been to many rallies — I thought for a second about whether I wanted her to come because that's how polarized things have felt out there. I don't know that I've ever been to rallies prior to this year where I have felt such a strong . . . such a sense of intensity and polarization, I guess, is the best way to say it. And that isn't the type of province that I want any of our kids to grow up in, or grandkids.

So I guess that's the type of speech we got today, Mr. Speaker. There are no easy answers. And this isn't always easy, but this is the job that we're elected to do. We can choose to do what's easy, and that's to torque people up and pit them against each other because the short-term politics of that, you know, get us where we need to go. The harder job is how we unravel this, how we lean into the things that we do share in this province. That comes from language of . . . I've heard things in this House like, he's not one of us, or suggestions that, you know, if you don't hold certain political beliefs or attributes, that you're not from Saskatchewan; you're not a real citizen of this province. And that's really dangerous language, Mr. Speaker.

So I hope that over the coming days we hear some humility from the Premier, that we see some contrition, and we see some willingness to not wedge and look at short-term solutions, but really be thoughtful about what the future holds for our province.

And I'm going to end today — and I think this might be sort of an inconvenient place to end — but my very first speech in this Assembly held this quote, and I want to end tonight by quoting it again. And it's this: "A society grows great when old men and women plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in."

With thanks as we come up to Remembrance Day, when we think of all that we have in this province and in this building, all that was built before us, to all of those who planted those trees . . . And may we all here get busy not cutting down trees and leaning into short-term. Maybe think about the kind of trees, literally and figuratively, that we might all plant for children in this province, under whose shade we will never sit in; but that those children, those who come after us, that their lives will be made better by that shade that we had the foresight to ensure they had. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

**Ms. C. Young:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know I'm only going to get a couple of minutes here and then sat down, but I will begin. And as many of my colleagues have done, I too would like to take a few minutes to express my appreciation and thank you to some very important and valued people in my life before giving my response to the Speech from the Throne.

Since the beginning and throughout the pandemic, people's

anxiety, frustration, and uneasiness about daily living has grown. And as been noted, many phone calls to our offices have not always been easy conversations to have. But my constituency assistant, Tracy Patterson, has been there to handle them with a voice of reason and as best she can. You are a rare gem, Tracy, and I couldn't do this job without your support. Thank you, Tracy, for your calm, kind, caring, and very, very patient response when receiving calls from some individuals who are less than respectful and sometimes downright rude and obnoxious.

I've taken many of these calls myself and know how hard it is to listen to negativity, to try to provide the right information, and try to calm their anger and fear into reason. It's not an easy job but it's a very important job. And it's something that I take very seriously and ensure that I return my phone calls and listen to folks as much, and maybe not for two full hours as the member from Weyburn said, but as much time as I can give them.

I also want to take this time to extend my thoughts and prayers to those families who have had to endure the loss of a loved one during this pandemic. It has been a very trying time, especially for those families, and our thoughts and prayers are with them all the time.

I want to thank my many, many constituents who have acted responsibly throughout this pandemic, first by following health restrictions and secondly by getting vaccinated when it was their turn to do so. They chose to show that caring about their health, their family's health, and the health of others, and acting on it was the most responsible thing to do and have helped us all greatly throughout these very trying times in the history of this province. Thank you for acting like true Saskatchewanians and being there when you are . . .

**The Deputy Chair of Committees:** — It now being 10:30 p.m., this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 22:30 p.m.]



# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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