



SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

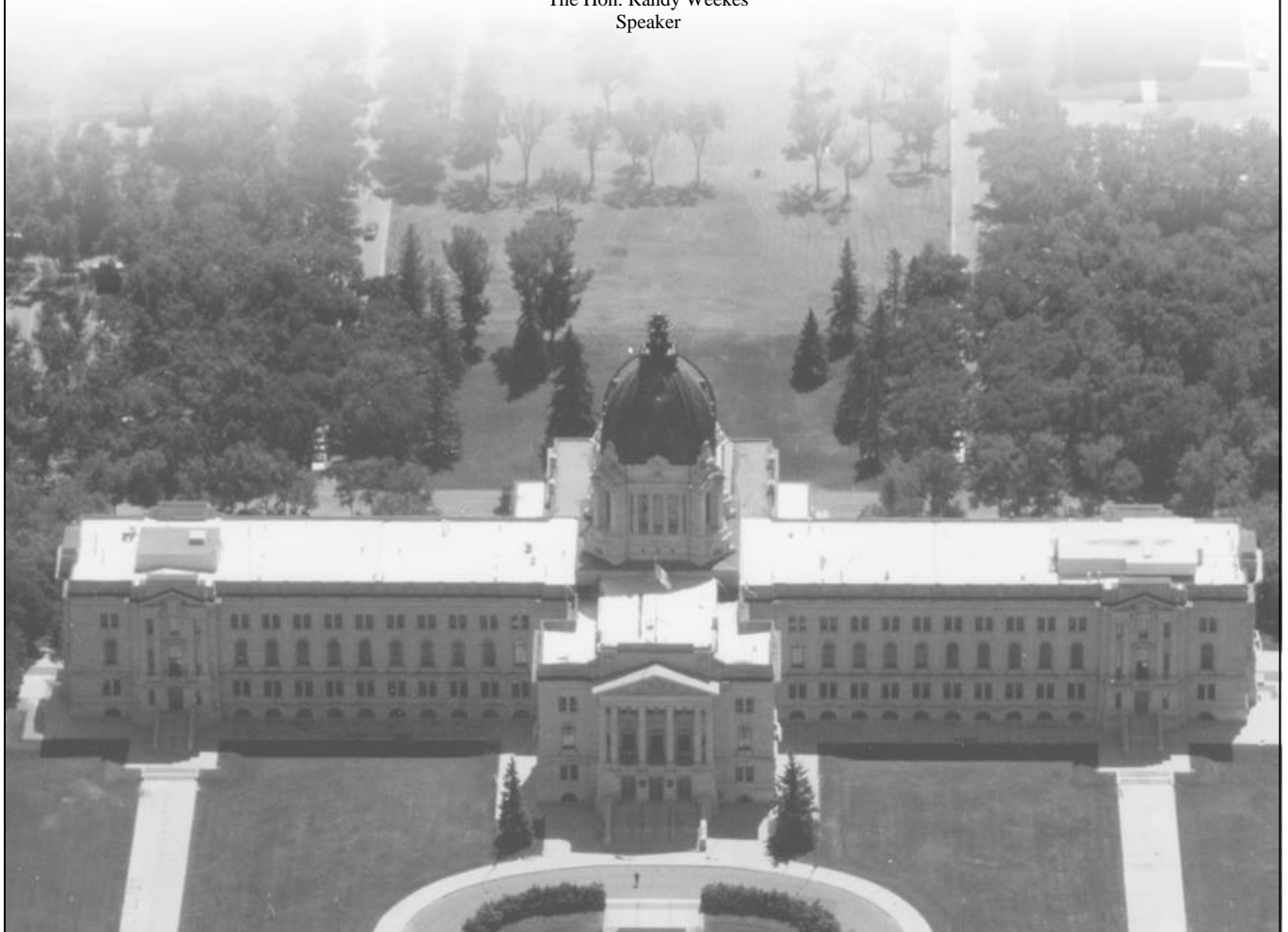
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Randy Weekes
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

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

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

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to grab your attention there quickly for an important introduction and an individual that I don't think has been introduced in this legislature. So I would ask for leave for an extended introduction, please.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, every day members on both sides of this House, we show up to work in this Assembly on behalf of the people that we collectively serve across this province. Every day we are joined by members of the press gallery, and they have the unenviable task of, first of all, trying to figure out what it is we actually are doing down here on the floor of the Assembly, and then secondly trying to explain what that is to the people of the province.

At times there's even members of the press gallery that have, I would say, job duties that go beyond what even could be expected. For example, this week I know there was elected and unelected people that have requested members of the press gallery to help them with, for example, renewing their Postmedia subscription, Mr. Speaker. That is above and beyond what I think we would expect from members of the press gallery, but they most certainly are there to help everyone, Mr. Speaker.

One of those journalists is a gentleman by the name of Arthur White-Crummey, political reporter for the *Regina Leader-Post*, as we know, Mr. Speaker. He's no stranger to anyone in this Assembly for sure. And today is Arthur's last day, Mr. Speaker, covering politics in what we all believe is the greatest province in the nation. Mr. Speaker, Arthur is going home. He's heading back to Ottawa tomorrow after spending a number of years in Regina and also up in Prince Albert, where I first met Arthur in his career in journalism, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to anyone that Arthur has a real passion for journalism that really can't be taught, and I don't think it can be learned either. Either you have it or you don't, and Arthur most certainly has it. And I think we all agree on that. He's blessed with the things that you need to do a good job at what he does. He has this intense curiosity, and we've all been witness to that. He has a very strong writing ability, and he has a tremendous work ethic, tremendous work ethic. And he ensures that he keeps calling people until he gets all of the facts correct in his story, Mr. Speaker. We may not agree with how that story is portrayed, Mr. Speaker, but most certainly I think we can agree that Arthur always makes the calls to ensure the facts are correct.

Many people in this province, myself among them, are saddened to see Arthur going home, but likely also I would include among them are his editors at the *StarPhoenix*, as he filled many papers over his time here with some very quality, quality media. And for that we are grateful.

None of these were one-source wonders and none were knock-offs. None of Arthur's stories ever were. He always made the effort to not only ensure that the stories were solid but to ensure that they had often an added dimension to them. He would seek out yet, you know, additional interviews to provide detail, but also additional interviews just to provide some colour to the story, which he did often.

Mr. Speaker, the great gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson, he said there was no such thing as objective journalism. And he said the phrase itself is a pompous contradiction in terms. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether that's true or not, but I do know there's such a thing as fairness in journalism. And I do know that Arthur most certainly aspired to that in each and every story. Mr. Speaker, there is no debate on that. He's extremely fair. When you're serving in public life, I think that's all you can really ask of any journalist.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take a moment this morning and ask all members in this Assembly to join me to welcome Arthur White-Crummey to what is for one more day his Legislative Assembly in the province of Saskatchewan. And I also want to wish him the very best in all that life delivers to him.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to join the Premier in welcoming and recognizing the work of Arthur White-Crummey. You know, it's a bit of a tale as old as time when it comes to journalism in Saskatchewan. Often people come early in their careers and we don't get to see them for that long, with the exception of one particular columnist. You know, often people come and give us those first early years, and then they move on to other places. And that's something that we get used to.

But I was so genuinely sad when I heard that Arthur was moving on, because Arthur is a very special person, somebody that I think we've all come to know as a remarkable journalist, someone who is committed to his craft.

And also, and I say this — I believe Arthur will understand that these are words of high praise — Arthur is a huge nerd, just a gigantic, gigantic nerd. The man has a Settlers of Catan bumper sticker on his car. He runs a monarchist newsletter, such is his love for our sovereign. And he is a polyglot who hones his skills by watching *Seinfeld* episodes in different languages. I apologize if I've broken any secrets there.

But this is someone who has such a fascinating brain and is such a curious and keen individual, and he follows the quirkiest of stories. One of my favourites was when he joined our former colleague Yens Pedersen to go on bee patrol one weekend and help out with the hives.

Arthur is a truly fascinating fellow, and he has written many,

many . . . I was looking at the paper the other day, and every story on the front page of the *Leader-Post* was all Arthur White-Crummey's words. The amount of ink that has been spilled by this man in the province in his time here is absolutely incredible.

And it's a funny thing, our relationship with folks in the press. Those of us who are in this profession, we make friends, but we also need to always, you know, keep those barriers that allow for objective reporting. But I do want to just say Arthur is my friend. He's a friend to many of us. He's a friend to Saskatchewan. We will miss him. We admire the work he's done, and man, I can't wait to see what he gets up to next.

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

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Ms. Eyre: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a special guest seated in your gallery. Joining us today all the way from Australia, Mr. Speaker, is the executive chairman and CEO [chief executive officer] of Foran Mining, Dan Myerson. Please give us a wave.

Dan has worked for other Canadian companies, including Glencore, and in Australia, for Morgan Stanley in its equity capital markets division. And I understand we're going to see much more of Dan in Saskatchewan, as he does unfortunately temporarily leave his wife and three-month-old baby in London. I understand he couldn't quite convince them to winter here in Saskatchewan; I couldn't possibly understand why. I also have reason to hope that Dan may become something of an honorary constituent, but more on that in the weeks to come.

Mr. Speaker, Dan is here to tour the McIlvenna Bay mine site where Foran intends to construct the world's very first carbon-neutral copper mine in northern Saskatchewan. Talk about building on our strengths, Mr. Speaker. And he is poised, and with this project, it is poised to be a great Saskatchewan story, success story, financially backed by another great Canadian success story, Prem Watsa of Fairfax Financial, often referred to as the Canadian Warren Buffett.

We are thrilled to see this investment flow into the province and that Foran chose Saskatchewan. It will mean increased mining diversity, jobs in northern Saskatchewan, and many, many more positive economic spinoffs.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in giving a warm welcome to Dan Myerson to Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through

you, I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to Dan Myerson of Foran Mining, welcoming him to the province, this great province that has such a rich bounty of mineral and critical resources here that will ensure that Canada and Saskatchewan continue to thrive as a centre of sustainable resource development, an industry that I am so, so proud to have been a part of here in Saskatchewan for many years.

I wish you all the best in your endeavours and also look forward to the day when your family can join you in our wonderful province that has so much to offer. And also extend a warm invitation to be an honorary member of the great constituency of Saskatoon Nutana. Thank you and welcome.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Environment minister.

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, and I'd like all members of the Assembly to welcome, seated in the west gallery, my deputy minister, Sarah Harrison, and her husband, Michael.

Mr. Speaker, regrettably this will be Sarah and Michael's last day in their Assembly here in Saskatchewan. Believing that we have adequately trained her for a job in the Ontario government, Sarah and Michael are moving to Toronto. Sarah will be the DM [deputy minister] for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture. I know this was a difficult decision for both of them to make, as they've called Saskatchewan their home for a number of years. Understandably they are moving back to be closer to family.

Sarah has been in the DM role of Environment from March of 2020 and has provided outstanding leadership to our very diverse group in the Ministry of Environment. Sarah's work has been recognized at all levels of government, including when she was granted the Saskatchewan Premier's Award in both 2016 and 2017.

Sarah will be known for her ability to mediate, facilitate, and initiate between ministries, stakeholders, and staff. She has an eternal optimism and good nature that makes her a pleasure to work with and to be around in the workplace. I know myself and the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy appreciated Sarah's very thorough understanding of her file, her attention to detail, and her incredible good nature even on the darkest days. We know she will be a tremendous asset wherever she will be working.

Thank you, Sarah, for your dedication and your service to the Government of Saskatchewan. We wish you the best of luck in your next adventure. Please wear your Rider jersey with pride in and around Ontario. And I'd like all members to thank Sarah and Michael for their contributions to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask for leave for a brief extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my deep pleasure and my true pride to welcome today to this, their legislature, my close friend Tiro Mthembu and his daughter Nandi who are seated in your gallery waving right now. Hello, Nandi. Hi. Mr. Speaker, Tiro is one of my closest friends here in the city. I probably shouldn't say how I met him, but I believe it was over many, many local beers, perhaps some sports, perhaps some gambling, backyard fires, and some late evenings.

And I do know at some point we will be lobbying the Minister of SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] for a local and very legal sports book called Better Bettors, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

But Tiro is a proud entrepreneur and business owner and activist here in Regina. Tiro's originally from Maple Creek, proud son of Doris and the eldest of three boys. And it goes without saying he is the best looking and the most athletic and the smartest of the three. Mr. Speaker, Tiro's a proud husband to Erica Mthembu, an engineer and an absolute force in her own right, in addition to being the proud owners of T-Box Concessions, which I'd encourage all members to patronize, especially when they open their brick-and-mortar later this year.

Tiro's incredibly generous. I've had the privilege of sharing space with him and working with him over the years, and there is not a family in need or an opportunity that presents itself where Tiro is not slaving over a hot stove, cooking up a giant pot of borscht or stew or something to help feed those in the community and to contribute what he can with his actions to building community, creating greater food security, or just lending a listening ear.

He's a proud champion of the Heritage community and Heritage Helpers, a wonderful grassroots organization aimed at building a more inclusive and equitable community in the core of our city. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me in welcoming Tiro and Nandi to this, their legislature.

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a moment to introduce my wife to you and through you. Sheila Keisig and I attended the Saskatchewan Order of Merit supper last night. It was a wonderful evening. And I just want to take a second here, and it doesn't matter which side of the aisle you sit on in this Chamber, there isn't one person in this room that serves alone. Whether it's your wife, your husband, your partner, your family unit, we all need support to serve the province of Saskatchewan. So please join me in welcoming Sheila Keisig to

her Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood and welcome Sheila to her Legislative Assembly. Sheila is the administrator for the RM [rural municipality] of Tullymet, and not only that but she's also the vice-president of the Rural Municipal Administrators' Association. So have a good working relationship with Government Relations, which is very, very important to have.

But I just wanted to mention to Sheila that there are a couple of former RM administrators in this House, actually my seatmate, the member from Rosetown-Elrose; as well as the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford. So I would just say to Sheila that former RM administrators make very, very good MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

And so if she ever wanted to maybe venture out and take a run at that job, Mr. Speaker, I'd say it would be very interesting because I'm quite sure I know which party she'd be running for. And we know as a party that contested nominations are the best nominations, Mr. Speaker. So if she ever chose to, it would make for a very interesting nomination meeting in Last Mountain-Touchwood, Mr. Speaker. Anyway I'd like to welcome Sheila to her Legislative Assembly and thank her for the work that she does, not only on the local level but on the provincial level. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member from Indian Head-Milestone making a pitch for municipal administrators. So it's my turn to stand up and make a pitch for lawyers. We need to have more lawyers in this building. We've never had enough on there.

So, Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today is Charles Reid, a former employee that worked in this building. He's seated with my chief of staff, Jared Dunlop. Both of them are lawyers — and in spite of what the members might say here — very, very good people. And we encourage them to advance their political careers.

Charles is from Tisdale. He graduated from law school in 2017. He's had an interesting career since that time. He's worked as a commercial lender for FCC [Farm Credit Canada] and Royal Bank of Canada and worked most recently with the McKercher firm before he came and worked in this building in '19, '20, and '21.

He is now working at CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. We hope that he uses his banking skills to try and keep the affairs of the province and bring money back, rather than going out. When he was growing up in Tisdale he was known as Chad; in law school, Chuck; but in this building he has always been known as Uncle Charles. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to welcome Uncle Charles to this building.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — Of late, petitions are going beyond explanation, are going into debate. I remind all members, according to rule 16(3)(b) in the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, when presenting petitions, a member may read the prayers and provide a general explanation of the subject and location of the petition. “No debate on any matter on or in relation to the petition is permitted.”

I recognize the member from Regina University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And hearing what you said about (3)(b), I will speak very quickly, but I did commit to a woman to read her story here today.

I rise today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for the funding of in vitro fertilization treatments in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, Nicole asked me to share her story here today. She’s a city of Regina employee who was diagnosed with endometriosis and was faced with a 10-year fertility battle trying to build her family, which included seeing 38 different practitioners to address the chronic pain and infertility aligned. A magnitude of medical expenses, a laparoscopic surgery, recovery, and sick time off work as well as experiencing two miscarriages, with the most recent one occurring, Mr. Speaker, after undergoing IVF [in vitro fertilization] treatments, losing their baby and their last embryo. And this resulted in an emergency D & C [dilatation and curettage] operation which required her to take several weeks off work due to the amount of blood that she lost. All of this, Mr. Speaker, took a toll financially, physically, and emotionally on their family which they are now no longer able to continue to grow.

Mr. Speaker, I’ll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately move to cover the financial burden of two rounds of IVF treatment for Saskatchewan people experiencing infertility.

The signatories of this petition, Mr. Speaker, reside in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present our petition calling for pay equity legislation. Mr. Speaker, many professions dominated by women are low paid. Further to this, and as reported by the Economic Policy Institute, professions that have become female dominated have also become lower paid. Research has shown that when women increasingly enter a field, the average pay in that field tends to decline relative to other fields. Mr. Speaker, the proportion of women in an occupation impacts the pay for that industry because work done by women is devalued.

Those who have signed the petition wish to bring to our attention the following points. Saskatchewan is one of only four provinces that does not have pay equity legislation. Saskatchewan has one of the highest gender-wage gaps in Canada, which is the result of systemic gender discrimination. Mr. Speaker, those who have

signed the petition today, they reside in Regina.

I will read the prayer first:

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

As mentioned, Mr. Speaker, the signatories, I’d like to just note, include the fierce Dr. Sally Mahood. Sally is a long-time proponent of women’s rights and incidentally the mother of the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville-Warman.

Mr. Jenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to continue its work in attracting large-scale capital investment projects to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, over the last year the government has attracted the following large-scale projects to our province: BHP Jansen’s potash mine with a total value of \$12 billion, which will create 3,500 jobs during construction and over 600 jobs once in operation; Viterra’s 2.5-million-metric-ton canola processing plant here in Regina; Cargill’s new state-of-the-art canola processing facility in Regina, valued at \$350 million; Richardson International doubling its canola crush capacity to 2.2 million metric tons in Yorkton; AGT Foods international in a logistics and processing hub in Delisle; Ceres Global Ag’s 1.1-million-metric-ton canola processing plant at Northgate.

Then there’s Red Leaf Pulp’s wheat straw pulping technology development and commercialization and eventual establishment of Canada’s first wheat straw pulp facility right here in Regina. Northern Nutrients’ 28 000-tonne sulphur-enhanced urea fertilizing manufacturing facility near Saskatoon. Paper Excellence . . .

The Speaker: — I ask the member to go to the prayer, please.

Mr. Jenson: — I’ll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan demand the provincial government continue its efforts to promote the province, encourage investment, attract new jobs, new opportunities, and drive growth for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition reside in Gray, Moose Jaw, and Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to be on my feet again to present a petition calling on this government to reform the SIS [Saskatchewan income support] program. The signatories of this petition wish to bring to the government’s attention that this new SIS program represents further cuts to

what was already an inadequate social safety net that has resulted in increased homelessness, evictions, arrears, and people needing to brave the elements across Saskatchewan just as we've had our first blistery storm, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I will read the prayer:

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

The signatories of this petition reside in Regina. I have a copy if the Minister of Government Relations wants to sign this petition. I do so present.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to the Government of Saskatchewan to fix the crisis in our classrooms. Those who've signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following points: that the 2021-22 provincial budget's failure to fully fund the teachers' contracts amounts to a cut; that the Sask Party government's cut means falling per student funding and fewer student supports for students as they recover from a pandemic; and that after years of underfunding, school divisions have nowhere left to cut that will not impact student learning; and further, that the Sask Party government's cuts leave educators and support staff without the resources that they need to support a pandemic recovery; further, that the government's failure to invest in our classrooms is having serious consequences.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call upon the Sask Party government to immediately fix the crisis in our classrooms by providing stable and adequate funding for public education in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition today reside in Moose Jaw. I do so present.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise again to present this petition. The west lawn has become a de facto site for Indigenous expression.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government to recognize the west lawn of the legislative grounds as the Chief Piapot Cultural Learning Grounds, a designated site for cultural celebration, education, Indigenous ceremony, and peaceful demonstration.

The signatories of this petition reside in Broadview, Lestock, and Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan against the \$150 electric vehicle tax.

Mr. Speaker, residents of the province of Saskatchewan wish to bring to your attention that the newly imposed surcharge on fully electric vehicles, which took effect October 1st, imposes an unfair access surcharge to EV [electric vehicle] owners to utilize Saskatchewan's road network.

[10:30]

The government's flawed rationale is that the annual tax will help pay for the wear and tear on provincial roads and highways, but leading economists assert, rather than contributing to maintenance of road infrastructure, this tax is economically inefficient and will barely cover the administrative costs of the tax and do nothing to encourage Saskatchewan drivers to adopt electric vehicles.

What is also concerning is this . . .

The Speaker: — Member, please go to the prayer.

Ms. Ritchie: —

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the provincial government to cancel the \$150 tax on electric vehicles and invest in charging stations to encourage electric vehicle use in Saskatchewan.

This petition is signed by the residents of Saskatoon. I do so here present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Expansion of Individualized Funding Program for Children with Autism

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce the expansion of eligible services under the individualized funding program for children with autism.

Mr. Speaker, it is vital that children with autism receive the therapies and life skills they need to learn, grow, and thrive. We never want cost to be an impediment to families obtaining these specialized services for their child, Mr. Speaker.

The individualized funding program already provides up to \$8,000 per year for families to access a range of eligible therapeutic and support services, and now, Mr. Speaker, we have added to that list. Now eligible for coverage are important life-skill programs like swimming, tutoring to help them achieve their educational goals, day camps and summer programs, as well as equine therapy. All of these, Mr. Speaker, promote skill development as well as physical, occupational, and emotional

growth. These services can help children with autism build independence in ways that are best suited to them.

During the last provincial election, we made a commitment to expand autism individualized funding to help cover the costs for children with autism between the ages of 6 and 11. I am proud to say that we followed through on that commitment with \$6 million this year.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing the supports necessary for the children of our province with autism to grow and thrive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Regina Food Truck Gives Back to Community

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize T-Box Concession for their impactful commitment to their community. T-Box Concession, a food truck often operated in my constituency of Regina Douglas Park, is owned and operated by brothers Tiro, Manny, and Thabo Mthembu.

Although T-Box undoubtedly makes and serves some very delicious food, they are truly so much more than your typical food truck. The brothers give back to their community daily. From providing free hot meals to the former Camp Hope's residents or hosting a pay-what-you-can barbeque, the brothers are always finding new and creative ways to ensure that people do not go hungry in the community. Their efforts help keep food on the shelves in Regina's community fridges.

Mr. Speaker, the owners of T-Box recognize that food insecurity is a serious issue in Regina and in Saskatchewan as a whole, and unfortunately it is an issue that is only increasing with increased homelessness and poverty. It means more and more people are accessing food banks and community fridges than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members please join me in recognizing T-Box for their work, for bringing awareness to food insecurity, and for giving back to our communities in such a meaningful way. I know that their work has impacted so many within my constituency and beyond, and we are all looking forward to their brick-and-mortar location opening soon in the Heritage neighbourhood.

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

Regina Woman Receives Saskatchewan Order of Merit

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Order of Merit recognizes citizens who have shown excellence and outstanding achievements in a variety of fields. Contributions include volunteer service, community leadership, agriculture, research, business, arts, industry, and public service.

Mr. Speaker, one of this year's recipients is Regina's very own Mavis Ashbourne-Palmer, a respected health care worker, civil rights activist, and wonderful singer. Born and raised in Jamaica, she immigrated to Canada and moved to Regina in 1971. Since then, Mavis has selflessly dedicated her life to serving her community and her God.

Mr. Speaker, Mavis is not only an active board member of the Regina Open Door Society, but she is also one of the founding members, has opened her doors and hosted families new to Canada. She is the provincial secretary for the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, founder of Saskatchewan Caribbean-Canadian Association, and till this day serves as their public relations officer. She devotes her time to serving this great province of Saskatchewan that she loves. That same devotion is what led her to receive a Jamaican High Commissioner's Award for community leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I now ask all the members of this Assembly to please join me in congratulating Mavis for the tireless efforts she has displayed serving her community and our great province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Okihtcitawak Patrol Group Serves Residents of Saskatoon

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — I stand today to recognize a group in my constituency doing amazing work. I won't say the Cree word for it. I don't want to chop up the word. The OPG patrol group [Okihtcitawak Patrol Group] patrols in my constituency. Community safety is paramount to OPG. They also connect folks to necessary housing, mental health, addictions resources, and more important, they keep watch for johns targeting our young people.

This group delivers culturally relevant support for the intentionally ignored people in Saskatoon. On Fridays OPG has an inner-city booth where they offer donations like food, beverages, clothing, and hygiene products. Other than a couple of small grants secured through Prairie Harm Reduction and others, OPG operates completely on donations. With only one paid employee, they continue to do all this work and more.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud Saskatoon Centre is home to the local heroes of the OPG patrol group. I ask all to join me in thanking this incredible group for all that they do for Saskatoon Centre. miigwech.

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

Okanese First Nation Woman Receives Saskatchewan Order of Merit

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Order of Merit is a prestigious recognition of one's contributions, achievements, and commitments to this province and the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier as one of this year's celebrated recipients.

Marie-Anne was elected at the age of 26 as chief of Okanese First Nation, a position she held for nearly 40 years. She has the record of the longest serving female chief in the nation.

Mr. Speaker, Marie-Anne has worked tirelessly for her people with an aim to end violence against Indigenous women and girls, ensuring they have the right to participate at all levels of

governance. A founder of many organizations such as the provincial committee on missing persons and the Saskatchewan First Nations Women's Commission, Marie-Anne became a leading voice for the advancement of First Nations women's and children's rights in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to highlight women in politics like Marie-Anne who continue to pave the way for the future generations. Marie-Anne is a prominent voice to her people and her invaluable contributions led to her being awarded the Order of Canada. I now ask all members to join me in congratulating Marie-Anne Day Walker-Pelletier for her contributions to the preservation of Indigenous culture, language, traditions, and on being awarded the Saskatchewan Order of Merit. Thank you.

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

Raymore Community Volunteers Support Miniature Golf Course

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing like the game of golf to bring people together. Just a little north of Regina, in Raymore, sits an 18-hole miniature golf course unlike any I've ever seen before. Complete with beautiful sand bunkers, thick rough, rock outcroppings, and meticulous greens, this newest addition to Raymore's complement of family attractions is awesome, to say the least.

Mr. Speaker, Marshall Greens is more than a minigolf. It's a rallying point for a growing community. At the centre of this growth, Mr. Speaker, is the Raymore community initiatives committee, a committee comprised of unrelenting individuals from the area that constantly ask, why not here? And then puts its head down to make it happen. The Marshall Greens minigolf is truly a dream made a reality from the sweat given from countless volunteers.

Speaking of giving, Mr. Speaker, the outpouring of financial support and spirit of giving from Raymore has been staggering, to say the least, with over \$200,000 donated thus far for this exciting project. The town of Raymore epitomizes what it means in Saskatchewan to roll up your sleeves for your community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to help me recognize and congratulate the town of Raymore, and in particular the community initiatives committee, on their newly opened Marshall Greens minigolf course. And I challenge all members to a round here next summer. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Winter Camping Offered in Saskatchewan Provincial Parks

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many Saskatchewan residents chose to stay home and experience the beauty of Saskatchewan parks this past summer. So many in fact, that the provincial parks system had their busiest year ever with more than 1 million visits. In addition to those entry permits sold, there were more than 400,000 camping nights spent in the parks, surpassing the previous record of camping nights set in 2016.

Mr. Speaker, we are so pleased that more people are taking

advantage of the recreational opportunities we have right here in our own province and discovering all that our beautiful parks have to offer.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share with you that the team at SaskParks is continuing to plan and offer activities this winter. New this year, those interested in winter camping can now go online to reserve campsites at seven parks. Those parks will also have a plethora of winter activities and programs. Mr. Speaker, our beautiful and beloved provincial parks continue to contribute enormously to the quality of life we cherish in our province and have served as sources of recreation, respite, health, and wellness during a challenging year.

So get out and experience a Saskatchewan provincial park at any time of the year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Coverage for Medical Procedure

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're joined in the House again today by Kirsten Finn and by representatives of The Isaac Foundation. Will the Premier inform the House today, will his government do the right thing and reimburse the medically necessary life-saving care received by the Finns' son Conner?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the Minister of Health met with the Finn family, Kirsten Finn, a couple of days ago now. He has committed to looking into this particular case and he'll be getting back to Kirsten, Mr. Speaker, as soon as he's able to gather all the information that he needs to relook at this particular case, and he'll provide her with an answer, Mr. Speaker. It isn't going to take too long, but it won't be today.

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, once again the answer should simply be yes.

The Premier has spent the last few question periods trying to rewrite history, pretending that it was okay to ignore Dr. Shahab's recommendations, ignore the experts, ignore the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] for weeks. We're not talking about handing our homework in a few days late, Mr. Speaker. Every single day that this Premier chose to golf instead of lead, the virus spread more widely and more people ended up losing their lives.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier not see how much damage has been done by his choice to put politics ahead of people's lives? Or does he simply not care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well again, Mr. Speaker, it's just simply not the case. We did move. We moved in the middle of September

with substantial health restrictions, Mr. Speaker, with measures that were put in place. Those measures are proving to be effective.

As I've said many times in this House, our seven-day count is now down nearly 80 per cent; vaccinations up, just about 200,000 vaccinations. Likely we'll hit 200,000 today when today's report comes in. Early indications of today's numbers look again like our numbers are low again today, or lower, Mr. Speaker. Our hospitalizations continuing to decrease, and early indications are that our ICUs [intensive care unit] are continuing to decrease today as well and we'll have that information later today.

So, Mr. Speaker, the actions that this government had put in place, Mr. Speaker, yes, through consultation with our chief medical health officer, are working, proving to be effective. They're only effective because of what Saskatchewan people are doing. They're adhering to the public health measures that are in place. They're paying attention and changing their actions each and every day. And, Mr. Speaker, once again, not for the last time, but once again I want to say thank you through you to all Saskatchewan people for what they are doing. It is working here in the province and we need to keep it up.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition

[10:45]

Mr. Meili: — Four more deaths today, Mr. Speaker. Four more families mourning, and this Premier once again refusing to take responsibility and simply trying to spin away from the facts. Between July 7th and August the 24th, the Premier hosted zero availabilities on COVID-19. Forty-eight days, forty-eight days without addressing the public while the fourth wave raged throughout the province. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know that their elected leaders are on their job and working for them. To the Premier: will he release his schedule from July 1st to September 30th?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Like every other premier in this province, no.

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

Mr. Meili: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's comparing to other premiers. Well other provinces don't shield cabinet schedules from FOI [freedom of information] requests. That's how we know. That's how we know that Jason Kenney — by COVID numbers, Canada's second-worst premier — while he might have been having his best summer ever, he wasn't doing his job.

We also know that's the case for the Premier. If he doesn't think that's so, maybe he'll prove it and release his schedule.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I answered that question in the previous answer that I had provided, and I'll say, this again just shows that there's going to be significant differences, Mr. Speaker, between the opposition and the policies that they promote and the policies ultimately that the government of this

province moves on, Mr. Speaker. And we've talked about this in this Assembly a number of times.

And one of those differences, Mr. Speaker, is the recommendation — that yes, the government didn't act on — that was provided through a number of regional MHOs [medical health officer] here in the province, and that was the mandated vaccinations in order to attend school, Mr. Speaker. We don't believe that is correct. The NDP [New Democratic Party] have adopted that policy, Mr. Speaker. They have adopted that policy, moved on that policy as part of their . . .

Mr. Speaker, kicking kids as young as kindergarten kids, five-year-old kids, out of school is now the NDP policy. Not for something that child might have done, but, Mr. Speaker, for something that maybe their family chose not to do. It's not the policy of the government, Mr. Speaker. We're not kicking kindergarten kids out of school. The NDP may; they'd like to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're here to ensure they don't get the chance.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, it's a straightforward question. Will the Premier release his schedule? If not, what does he have to hide? What does he have to hide?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, like every other Saskatchewan premier, no. Mr. Speaker, I won't be releasing my schedule. Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Mr. Meili: — Nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker? He hid the modelling. He is hiding Dr. Shahab's recommendations, and now he's hiding his schedule. If the Premier really has nothing to be ashamed of, why does he keep so much in the shadows?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Nothing in the shadows, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this was a very busy government over the course of the summer. As the Minister of Energy and Resources had indicated the other day, Mr. Speaker, we were working. The Minister of Health was out a number of times throughout the summer, as was I, Mr. Speaker, a number of meetings. Yes, many of them were via Zoom, Mr. Speaker, to clients and to people and to potential investors into this province. And I would say that many of those meetings have come to success, Mr. Speaker.

We have a new potash mine being built here in the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I would say to all of those potash companies that are employing people, investing back into their communities, unlike the NDP we will not nationalize your industry this time.

We have four new canola crush plants being built across the province, Mr. Speaker, going to over double our ability to add value to our canola crop. Yes, Saskatchewan is the canola centre of Canada, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to add value to those products.

We see investments in excess of a billion dollars in the forestry industry in and around the Prince Albert area, an area of this province that they've forgotten about, Mr. Speaker. You're going to see this government continue to work — not only through this past summer, through this fall into the winter and as long as we have the honour to serve government on behalf of the people of the province — to attract investment and to grow the economy, grow our communities, and grow our opportunity in this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — This is the Premier who has presided over the highest COVID death rate in the entire country. This is a premier who decided, who decided that he would put the economy ahead of people's health and ended up screwing up both, Mr. Speaker. This is what this Premier has done. The worst outcomes.

So to the Premier, to the Premier: why did he ignore the experts? Why did he take the summer off? Why did he allow the worst fourth wave in the entire country to take the lives of Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, this is a leader of the opposition that comes into this House, tries to move a motion to adopt all of the medical health officers' recommendations, Mr. Speaker, and then walks out into the rotunda and distances himself from his own motion, Mr. Speaker. In that was to mandate vaccines to kids in school, Mr. Speaker. In that order was to mandate . . . Kids would not be able . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, this is a leader of the opposition that essentially would kick a five-year-old kid out of school, not because of something they did but because of something ultimately that their family had made a decision about, Mr. Speaker.

This is the Leader of the Opposition's policy. Mr. Speaker. We now see it from the former failed NDP candidate, the union president, has the same policy: kick thousands of kids as young as five years old out of their classroom, Mr. Speaker. This is an NDP opposition leader that ultimately, ultimately has adopted that policy.

Here the government, Mr. Speaker, in this province, what we want to do is we want to keep people in class. We see an opposition leader that wants to make two classes of students in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What an embarrassment. What an embarrassment to see a premier the day before, the day before we're going to see kids actually eligible for vaccines, he's choosing to create more vaccine hesitancy among parents. That's the wedge this Premier is going to play as he puts politics ahead of people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier doesn't want to talk about the things he hasn't done, about his inaction, and I can see why. He's left so many people behind. People like Blake.

Folks, Blake is with us today. Blake is two and a half. She has spina bifida. And Blake's been having a hard time. Her family's been having a hard time accessing the health care system. Because of this Premier's fourth-wave health care lockdown, she lost access to her spinal cord clinics. She's still waiting for a surgery, and her family still doesn't know what the impact of losing that care during this lockdown period will have been, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Premier think it's fair that kids like Blake have suffered because he took the summer off?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I welcome Blake to her Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, part of our resumption plan that we started at the beginning of this month was to make sure that we had those services back in place as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I have said it in this Assembly. The Premier has said it in the Assembly many times, Mr. Speaker. We had to shift our resources over because we had a large influx of people that were unvaccinated into our health care system. In order to take care of those people, Mr. Speaker, we needed to move our resources around.

Now that things have settled down in our health care system because of the measures that were put in place by this government, Mr. Speaker, we are moving those resources back — 50 per cent last week, 75 per cent this week, and 90 per cent by the end of the month. But, Mr. Speaker, I would be more than happy to meet with Blake's family after this to be able to discuss their specific circumstances. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're stuck with a premier who is happy to stand up and shout, happy to stand up with wedge politics, make noise all he can. But the moment we hear, the moment we hear from a family who is suffering the results of his actions, he hangs his head and shuts his mouth, Mr. Speaker. What is so cruel, what is so criminal about the policies of this Premier, about this Premier's . . .

The Speaker: — I would like to caution the member that making personal comments about another member are not in order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition not to make comments that may impugn or reflect on another member's character. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me be clear: I believe that the policies that this government put in place were cruel and criminal; that the choices that they made, these are policies, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — I'm not going to allow that word.

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, these choices, these choices cost

people their health care. They cost people their lives, kids like Blake in such a critical developmental window. These folks want to play word games, but the fact of the matter is these are kids. Every day they go without that help, they lose a step in their development. They lose a chance at a normal life, Mr. Speaker. How on earth can this Premier defend his actions when it's so clearly hit the Saskatchewan people he should be working the hardest to protect?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Health minister.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, that's why we put our restrictions and recommendations in place back in September because the numbers were rising, Mr. Speaker. And we were able to do that with the help of all the health care workers that I have to thank, Mr. Speaker, but also the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We were able to do this from the good hard work of the people of Saskatchewan.

As the Premier indicated, almost 200,000 vaccines have been in arms since that point in time, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing has been working and will continue to work, Mr. Speaker. We have no plans right now to remove any of these restrictions over the next few weeks, Mr. Speaker, into the Christmas season because they are working.

And again, Mr. Speaker, I understand that people have been . . . some people's appointments have been paused and some people have been displaced by this, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're putting the people back in their original positions, Mr. Speaker. Appointments are getting booked. We're starting to restart our health care system, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to continue to do that to be able to meet the needs of the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, Sarah reached out when Blake's spinal cord clinic was halted indefinitely. When the clinic was halted, it meant that Blake was no longer able to attend physical therapy, occupational therapy, or her appointments with neuro, ortho, and uro. Blake's mom, Sarah, talks about feeling disposable. She's scared and worried of what might happen if Blake needs another emergency surgery. The state of our health care system is not providing a lot of comfort. I can't imagine what Sarah has been through.

Can the minister explain why this family must live with the consequences of this government's inaction?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Health minister.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to welcome Sarah to her Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what I was just talking about, is why we're doing the resumption of services, Mr. Speaker, so we can get that back, so we can get those appointments and get people back into their critical care, Mr. Speaker.

But there are no emergency surgeries that are being cancelled right now, Mr. Speaker. I want to make that very clear. If somebody is in an emergent situation, they should come in and

seek health treatment right away, Mr. Speaker. Despite what the NDP are saying over there, Mr. Speaker, our health care system is working, Mr. Speaker, and it's working at the best capacity. And again, Mr. Speaker, I have to thank all of the health care workers out there that have been able to pivot from one job to another job to be able to make sure that the people of Saskatchewan have been protected through this challenging pandemic.

But, Mr. Speaker, this isn't unique to Saskatchewan. This has been going across our country and around the world. What Saskatchewan is experiencing isn't unique, but what is unique about our province, Mr. Speaker, are the great people that are on the front line being able to help out those who are in need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

[11:00]

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, Blake is still waiting on a surgery, and she's also waiting for an upcoming specialist appointment. Blake's therapies, surgeries, and special appointments have all been cancelled before because of this government's failures. Can the minister provide Sarah with assurances that Blake will be able to access her much-needed health care and that these services will never, never be cancelled again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Health minister.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I understand. I'm hearing from families. Members on this side and the government are hearing from families that they have had some challenges, Mr. Speaker. But this is why we had to do this, Mr. Speaker, was to move people out of their traditional positions to cover for an unprecedented pandemic. Mr. Speaker, something that our province has never ever seen, and hopefully, Mr. Speaker, will never ever see again.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we're moving people back. This is why the Premier and myself set out those target dates of 50 per cent last week, which we met, Mr. Speaker; 75 per cent this week, which I'm told we're going to meet; and 90 per cent by the end of the month. I understand that this is impacting people, Mr. Speaker. These were not easy decisions that we had to make, Mr. Speaker. And I've said it before, this is not a decision that I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker, but I felt I had to make in order to protect our overall health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Vaccine Requirement for Students

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, speaking of protecting our overall health care system, does the Minister of Education believe that children who are eligible to get vaccinated should?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if they, being a mature minor, make that decision or if

they're not, if their families make that decision, then I think that that's the appropriate decision for them.

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

Ms. Beck: — I'll try this, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister think that there are any good reasons why someone should not take their eligible child to get vaccinated?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I think we've been very clear as a government that vaccinations are the way through this pandemic, Mr. Speaker, and that's been demonstrated by the success that we've had in rolling out vaccinations, and that's why we are making vaccinations as accessible as possible, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to education, the question really that the member should be asking and perhaps answering for herself: should vaccinations be mandated for students to be able to attend school and to attend school-related events, Mr. Speaker? That's what we're talking about here, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, we are very clear. We don't believe that that is the case, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know the members opposite's answer on that.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, that minister has been in cabinet a long time and he should know how this works. We ask the questions; the government provides the answers. He's welcome to come sit in opposition any time he wants, Mr. Speaker. And with the way that he is pandering to anti-vaxxers and stoking vaccine hesitancy, he might feel more at home over here sitting with the member from Sask Rivers.

Why is this minister so intent in sending dog whistle after dog whistle to anti-vaxxers in his own party instead of making sure that we can get as many people, as many children vaccinated as we possibly can?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, let's remember that on the first day that the members had available to them in this House, they tried to move an emergency motion calling for the government to adopt all the recommendations of the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, order, order, order, order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Members should recall that they tried to move an emergency motion that would have the government accept all the recommendations from medical health officers that signed the letter to the Minister of Health, which would include that students would need to be vaccinated to be able to attend school, in class, and other activities, Mr. Speaker. And then the Leader of the Opposition, minutes after that, went in the rotunda and said . . . Well he agreed that school measures are "a very

controversial and serious thing to discuss." And he said he would want to further discuss the issue.

Does he believe that that caused vaccine hesitancy, Mr. Speaker? Does the doctor believe that he caused vaccine hesitancy, Mr. Speaker? He says one thing in this Chamber, one thing out in the rotunda, Mr. Speaker. One thing is clear. We have been clear on this side: vaccination status should not be a requirement for schools, for students to attend school.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, we have the lowest vaccine rates in the country. Why is this minister constantly pandering to anti-vaxxers and stoking vaccine hesitancy when schools are the number one space for COVID outbreaks? Seventeen current outbreaks in the south zone alone today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is consistent with *The Education Act*; it's consistent with the order by Dr. Shahab; it's consistent with a letter that was sent to the school divisions by the Ministry of Health, and obviously with the letter that I sent yesterday, Mr. Speaker. And it really gets to the heart of the question, which the members can't answer. Should vaccines be mandated for students to be able to attend school in class, in school, and other in-school activities, Mr. Speaker? We don't believe so. Is that what the members are calling for?

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

Ms. Beck: — The answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

Despite being responsible for 180,000 students, that minister has done nothing to encourage kids to get vaccinated and instead has encouraged vaccine hesitancy. Maybe he wants to talk to one of the former Education ministers on either side of him who have read *The Education Act*, Mr. Speaker.

He's talked a lot about board autonomy, but yesterday he chose to override boards' autonomy for extracurricular activities. Mr. Speaker, it's all about board autonomy when it suits him and he doesn't want to take responsibility. But when he gets a phone call at his office, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden he's ready to step in. Why is that minister so happy to let boards do all the work except when it starts rubbing anti-vaxxers in his own riding the wrong way?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, the member has the opportunity to make it clear. Should students require a vaccine to attend in school and other in-school related activities? Yes or no.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Government House Leader. Order.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Come to order. Order. Order. Order. I recognize the Government House Leader.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, today we witnessed an embarrassing and desperate performance from the Leader of the Opposition which continues with him having a meltdown in his seat, Mr. Speaker. That member, that member used profane language. That member cast aspersions on a whole host of members in this Chamber. That member said some abhorrent things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you need to . . . I would encourage you to stand and ask that member to retract those comments and to sincerely apologize to these members of this House.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the Government House Leader is referring to in terms of profane language. I would ask him to be specific, or I would request that you review the record and defer your ruling.

The Speaker: — I will rule right now. I asked the Leader of the Opposition not to use that particular word, and I ask him to withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Meili: — I withdraw the use of the word “criminal,” and I apologize.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 60 — *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2021*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 60, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety that Bill No. 60 be now introduced and read a first time.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 61 — *The Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Act, 2021*

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

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 61, *The Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Advanced Education that Bill No. 61 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Makowsky: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 62 — *The Dental Disciplines Amendment Act, 2021*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 62, *The Dental Disciplines Amendment Act, 2021* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 62 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Return No. 7

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to convert return no. 7 to motions for returns (debatable).

The Speaker: — Return no. 7 is converted to motions for returns (debatable).

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Programs to Encourage Investment

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise again in this House for today's debate, and I will be making a motion at the conclusion of my comments. Mr. Speaker, let this be a bit of a spoiler alert for all members present here today. Well I'm going to talk about some of the business tax incentives that this government has implemented. I will of course talk generally and then perhaps a little bit more specifically as well, and then I'm going to try and paint a picture on how these incentives fit in with and complement our government's growth plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after that I'm going to issue a challenge to the members opposite, so I would certainly invite them to listen carefully. And then of course a couple of my own colleagues are going to add their comments to this motion, and I look forward to hearing their perspectives today. So let's proceed.

Mr. Speaker, first I would like to discuss the oil and gas processing investment initiative. This is a program that offers transferable oil and gas royalty or freehold tax credits for approved projects for 15 per cent of eligible program costs. This is all about enhancing Saskatchewan's competitiveness in oil and gas development, but it also enhances our province's position in other industries that use existing oil and gas infrastructure, including our burgeoning helium industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many members of this House, including myself, were present here at the Legislative Building this past Monday morning when the Minister of Energy and Resources announced our government's helium action plan.

[11:15]

The minister was joined by representatives from two companies, Royal Helium and North American Helium, who have both made significant investment into the helium industry in Saskatchewan. It was a pleasure to have both companies here at the legislature this week, and we thank them both for their interest and investment into this province.

Now as it relates to the oil and gas processing investment initiative, North American Helium is one example of a participant in this initiative. They invested \$30 million into a helium purification facility in Battle Creek in the southwest corner of the province. And it should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that this is now the largest helium purification facility in Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another incentive undertaken by this government is the manufacturing and processing tax credit which provides companies in Saskatchewan with a refundable tax credit

on expenditures made on qualifying machinery and equipment to be used in this province. And now, Mr. Speaker, I have experience myself running a manufacturing business here in Saskatchewan, and our manufacturing jobs in this province are so important. They're good-paying jobs. They're dependable jobs for the people of Saskatchewan.

And we're seeing new manufacturing investments in this province like Clean Seed Capital Group in Saskatoon. But it should be noted that there are already hundreds of companies in this province who produce high-quality products in a variety of industries. And through this tax credit, Mr. Speaker, we are proud to support these companies as they scale up and work to be competitive in the global economy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to touch on the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive, or STSI for short. Now launched in 2018, the STSI is a non-refundable 45 per cent tax credit to Saskatchewan-based investors who invest in eligible tech start-ups. Now since inception, 44 different Saskatchewan companies have received an investment through STSI for a total of over \$40 million of private investment.

Now it's no secret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Saskatchewan has a fast-growing tech sector, and we all here recognize names like Vendasta or 7shifts. But the STSI is important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because how it is a very favourable incentive to invest in small, early-stage Saskatchewan tech start-ups. And we know that at that stage of the business, access to capital is a key determinant of success. And that is why the STSI is so important, because it helps connect Saskatchewan-based capital to Saskatchewan entrepreneurs. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would expect that we may very well see the next Vendasta or 7shifts come out of this group of 44 companies that have participated in the STSI.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, even some members of the opposition have given this incentive glowing reviews. The member from Regina University said the following about the STSI back in April of this very year, and I will quote. Let me put it on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

... when we have incentives like this that are truly focused on not just growing but developing Saskatchewan and giving people opportunities and the ways to truly build a future that they see for themselves and for their families, and then to take their profits and earnings and reinvest in other companies, Mr. Speaker, what a wonderful thing. And I wish, I wish we saw more incentives like this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, wow. Wow. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, given those comments and the wording of the motion that I'm going to move at the end of my comments, I sure hope that she will honour her words from April and support my motion today.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all these initiatives that I have discussed here today, as well as the others mentioned in my motion, are all important pieces of our government's plan to achieve our growth plan goals. But I want to point out something important that should not be lost in all of this, and that is that government investment in these projects in way of tax incentives follows the private sector making that upfront investment into operations here in Saskatchewan. And when we talk about

prudent use of taxpayer dollars, I think that's really important.

In all these cases, we see the private sector considering investment into Saskatchewan because there's a strong business case. And then our government tax incentives become part of their decision framework to ultimately make that decision to invest here in Saskatchewan. But those taxpayer dollars don't flow until these companies actually make that investment, and that creates jobs and economic activity in this province.

Now finally, Mr. Speaker, I think it's also important to discuss the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of our government's goals for 2030 is to grow Indigenous participation in Saskatchewan's natural resource industries. And when I look at our natural resource industries already happening here in Saskatchewan, we already see a high participation rate of our Indigenous communities in these industries.

And our growth plan talks of increasing even further our oil production, our uranium production, and our forestry sector in this province. And as we move forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say it's not just important but it is essential that our Indigenous communities are a part of that success. And that really is the impetus behind the Throne Speech announcement to create the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation. And we look forward to investing \$75 million to help Indigenous communities be a part of the province's growth over the next decade and beyond.

Now we're about halfway through our fall session here in the legislature, but perhaps my favourite part of the session so far was the Throne Speech reply from the member from Indian Head-Milestone and the Minister of Government Relations. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that reply he said, that there is no better time than the present to be a grade 10, 11, or 12 student in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, that really is a profound statement. And given that member's tenure in this Assembly, whenever he gets up to speak, I pay close attention to that.

But that member's statement is one that I think rings very true here in Saskatchewan. And when he said that, I thought of the young men that I've had the opportunity to coach at the North Battleford Comprehensive High School. And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you get to know these young men and spend weekends travelling with them, you get to hear about their dreams and their goals and their desires. And when I look around at the economic development happening here in Saskatchewan, I see a place where those young men, and young women of course as well, can live out those dreams right here in this province. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether they want to be a power engineer, a welder, an accountant, a tech entrepreneur, that opportunity exists right here in this province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we charge towards 2030 and achieving our growth plan goals . . . And I'll remind all members, two of those: we're going to be increasing the population in this province to 1.4 million people; we're going to add 100,000 new jobs in this province. Mr. Speaker, we are building a Saskatchewan where young people can stay, they can get a great job, and they can raise their family.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I often think about what the Premier

has said about our growth plan. And he talks about building strong communities and strong families to build a stronger Saskatchewan, and that's really what it's about. Strong families, stronger communities make a stronger Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to challenge the members opposite to help us here as we promote our province to be a great place to work and live. Mr. Speaker, it almost seems like the members opposite, they just froth at the mouth at the very thought of speaking or tweeting about a fifth wave of COVID or a new variant. And, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that COVID is a reality in our province, as in any other jurisdiction in the world, and certainly the fourth wave has been difficult for Saskatchewan and our health care system.

But despite that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is really the important part: when there are so many opportunities to talk about the promise and potential of Saskatchewan, what do we hear from the members opposite? Nothing. We hear nothing. Perhaps a few heckles with language that is unparliamentary, but other than that, Mr. Speaker, we hear nothing. Even in this session, those members opposite have talked about how it might be better for people to leave Saskatchewan. And I would challenge them to take back those words and instead talk about how our province is well positioned for the next decade and beyond.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, why do no members opposite promote the investments made into this province? Why do no members opposite celebrate the fact that the private sector has committed over \$10 billion to this province in the last six months? Instead of speaking about how this might benefit the million-plus residents of Saskatchewan, they seem more interested in talking about the Premier's summer schedule. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, well you know, based on the investments that have come to this province, I would suggest and I know for a fact that on this side of the House it was a very busy summer.

And so again I would challenge the members opposite to open their minds a bit and be willing to share and promote what is happening in our province's economy because it truly is good news, Mr. Speaker. Not even good news — it's great news for this province and the future of this province. And I do believe that their constituents and the people of Saskatchewan would be well served by a change in attitude over there. And so, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly recognizes the success of programs such as the manufacturing and processing tax credit, the Saskatchewan value-added agriculture incentive, oil and gas processing investment initiative, and the Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive in attracting opportunity to our province and supports in principle the introduction of further programs to encourage investment such as the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation.

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

That this Assembly recognizes the success of programs such as the manufacturing and processing tax credit, the Saskatchewan value-added agricultural incentive, oil and gas processing investment incentive, and the Saskatchewan

technology start-up incentive in attracting opportunity to our province and supports in principle the introduction of further programs to encourage investment such as the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into debate on this motion, the timing of which is maybe a bit odd on the heels of one of our worst months during this fourth wave, but I'll return to that in a moment.

I will be pleased to give some substantive remarks on this motion. And the focus of those remarks will be on Saskatchewan's technical start-up incentive, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is really an industry that's close to my heart. And I'm glad to hear the member from The Battlefords mention 7shifts. We've all heard about the significant successes of 7shifts, a company that has made real waves across not only the province but the country and beyond.

And the beginning of 7shifts was really the beginning of a love story for me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because my partner, Nick, I believe he has the distinguished designation of being hired as the first sales rep for that company back in 2014, I believe. And he moved up the ranks over time and spent several years with the amazing team at 7shifts. And we actually met shortly after he was employed there when I was living in Toronto visiting home during the Cathedral Village Arts Festival, something I tried to overlap with as much as possible. He was volunteering for the Rowing Club, working the bar at the Cathedral Neighbourhood Association, one of the fine community hubs in the great riding of Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Nick was actually born in Toronto, so it was interesting. But he was quickly charmed by Saskatchewan, the pace of life here, the history of this province, the warm people in the community that he formed here, including the community at 7shifts, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

After we met, he was able to actually take that position over to Toronto with 7shifts, and it allowed us to give us a try. And at the time I was still working as a lawyer in Toronto. But we both decided that we missed Saskatchewan, and we wanted to come home. And by then he did regard it very much as a home.

And I won't get into all the details about what brought Nick here in the first place, but the point is he stayed. And the point is we need more Nicks. We need more young people who can see a future here. And I fear that the actions and rhetoric of the government that we're seeing, especially of late, is actually driving young people away. And I know that the member for Regina University will have more to say on that, especially as it relates to the health care field.

[11:30]

Nick stayed in Saskatchewan mainly because of the fact that he found a good job in the tech sector. He was part of building something exciting. And his position allowed him to pay off his student loans, expand his social and professional horizons, and build a nest egg that allowed him to go back to school and

become a teacher here, something he'd always wanted to be. And he could stay here because of those economic opportunities.

I was attracted to come home because of the unique legal aid system we have here in Saskatchewan, something that prior progressive governments put in place here. In Ontario, if you want to do legal aid work, you have to take a certificate system. It doesn't pay well. Most private lawyers won't do it. So when I learned about the legal aid system here in Saskatchewan — that you could do this work, such important work, trial work for a salary, for no more billable hours — that I could focus on the needs of clients who had such high stakes, give back to my community, get decent pay, benefits, I was sold. And we came back.

And I think our story points to what makes a balanced and thriving economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one that has a good mix of sustainable private industries, attracting and keeping young people, and a social safety net that benefits all of us. And our story is really a reminder that an economy is not an end in and of itself, it's a means to an end. And it is made up of people.

So we can all agree on both sides of this House about the successes of the tech sector in Saskatchewan. And really this success is about the people behind these companies, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I personally witnessed Jordan and Andrée build that family business from the ground up. It was magnificent to see, with care and diligence, taking risks when they needed to, pumping the brakes when it made sense. People like Johannes, who was always a believer in treating his employees well, with respect, and building for the long term and giving back to the community around him. So let's not forget that it's the Saskatchewan people behind these companies and these initiatives that deserve credit.

And I understand the Sask tech start-up incentive has been doing tremendous work. Co.Labs incubators are contributing to growing this industry in amazing ways. And indeed the tech start-up boom in Saskatchewan is an example of how we can meaningfully diversify our economy. It offers protection from boom-and-bust resource extraction economies. It shows the promise of a truly diversified economy. It's an example of how public tax dollars can subsidize an industry, invest in it, and then reap the rewards. Coconut, 7shifts, Andgo, Vendasta, — thriving tech start-ups that employ probably close to 1,000 employees in this, a majority of them Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So the tech start-up incentive should really be used as a model for other industries, particularly in renewable industries, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are not fulfilling our potential there, not by any stretch of the imagination. We are actually ... This government is actually undermining efforts. And it's only due to their ideological blinders.

It's so disappointing to hear the member from The Battlefords talking about us frothing at the mouth when we speak about COVID when there was a two-year-old in a wheelchair earlier who had cancelled surgeries due to this government's handling of the fourth wave.

But I have to say that this choice of topic is interesting. I'm giving props where props are due, but this is really about changing the

channel on this government's handling of the fourth wave. And it is a bit tone-deaf to be celebrating these successes while this government appears to be doing what it can to kneecap our economic recovery, at least without being a bit more truthful about what this pandemic has meant for many of these actual businesses that we're talking about as they've tried to navigate the challenges of a fourth wave.

Beyond the incompetent Sask Party management of the pandemic, beyond the loss of life, the heartache of cancelled and delayed surgeries, beyond the harm to the economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are significant crises building that will have significant repercussions for Saskatchewan.

And when we're talking about an economy, you know what's not good for an economy? Growing inequality. And the new program, SIS, will continue to have appalling impacts on our economy and offset any of the gains that this government wants to take credit for. The ministry has the third-largest budget in the government. It keeps growing. These decisions have fiscal consequences, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not just for that ministry but for Education, for Health, for Justice. A colossal waste of public resources working against these incentives, and really consequences that will impact generations to come if this Minister of Social Services doesn't course-correct on SIS. Putting a floor under those hardest hit by COVID instead of pulling the rug out from under them is key to an economic recovery coming out of COVID, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another growing crisis that will hurt this province is the growing climate crisis. We are in the middle of a global climate emergency that will impact lives and livelihoods. Thousands of lives and homes lost in Western Canada due to a heat dome this summer. Lytton burned to the ground, and now BC [British Columbia] has declared a state of emergency, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Do we really not think that the climate emergency will have impacts for our economy? It will. It presents challenges for the economy far more than even COVID-19.

What is this government's plan? And I urge this government to look to the tech sector incentive and the diversification that took place there and apply that to the renewable industries so that we can have a robust economy going forward as we navigate the challenges ahead. And they are significant, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I really find it very interesting that one of the most educated members opposite is using the same old, tired talking NDP points through and through.

I'm excited to enter into the debate today. As a newly elected representative for Last Mountain-Touchwood, I'm continuously drawing on my experience in my previous careers. Working across this province in multiple resource projects, I've always believed it's the government's responsibility to create policy conducive to economic growth. Based on their track record in government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the concept of economic growth and job creation, it's a little difficult for the members opposite. I'm going to try my best to break it down for them.

Jobs and growth fund all the infrastructure and the social programs that we, as a province, all enjoy. The Minister of Energy and Resources the other day, she said it really good in question period. It's not about right jobs, wrong jobs, menial jobs, or green jobs. It's about jobs. To ensure job creation we must be diligent in growing our industries so that we remain a global leader in development. We want the international community to know that we are not the province we once were when the NDP were in power.

The mineral exploration tax credit, as well as the oil and gas processing investment incentive, can assist in enhancing the competitiveness by encouraging projects in Saskatchewan soil. The Saskatchewan technology start-up incentive, which officially launched in 2018, provides opportunity to early-stage technology that allows for job creation in this province. This incentive encourages investment, diversification, and economic growth, which is what the people of Saskatchewan deserve and expect from their government.

The exciting announcement that occurred the other day about our helium action plan is a perfect example of what good policy can do for our province. The helium industry is in a period of growth in this province due to market factors. The multiple ways in which helium is used is quite a long list. It's essential to note that it is critical for many applications. Its uses are growing and the use of helium is going to continue growing.

As a province, we've always been a producer of commodities, and it is an exciting time when we find we can keep adding value to our raw goods. Canola is a perfect example of this. When it first started being grown in this province, there was zero value added in this specialty crop. Fast forward decades and we will hit our long-term goal of processing 75 per cent of the canola grown in this province. This growth is billions of dollars of value added to our local economy. You really have to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this benefits rural and this benefits urban people.

Saskatchewan has over 40 million cultivated acres, most in Canada. We grow a vast amount of canola. Since the launch of the Saskatchewan value-added agricultural incentive, 12 projects have been approved for the incentive in the amount of 472 million. This incentive provides a 15 per cent tax rebated on capital expenditures for newly constructed facilities or facilities looking to expand.

Ask yourself this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why would these companies not build a canola crush facility in our neighbouring provinces like Alberta or Manitoba? They both have large canola acres. They grow it every year. They're good farmers. They've got the same growing conditions. They're building here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of this government's use of policy to spur investment in this 100 per cent renewable industry. Who wouldn't want to invest in this province?

And I talked about this in my Speech from the Throne, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it deserves repeating. Once these plants are built here, they have to be fixed. They have to be repaired. They have to be maintained. There's jobs for welders, pipefitters, sheet metal workers, equipment operators. I mean the list is on and on. The true goal of all of these policies put forward by this government is to help every Saskatchewan citizen.

I had an opportunity this summer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, joined by my colleague, the Minister of Environment. We attended the grand opening of the Kihew FabCo shop in Melville. It's a newly opened piping and structural steel shop in the old Babcock & Wilcox shop in Melville, Saskatchewan.

Now there's a lot of things I don't know anything about — tons — but when it comes to pipe fabrication shops, I know everything. This business is partnered with the Kahkewistahaw First Nations to provide opportunities for local band members. I met the chief, Evan Taypotat. He gave just a passionate presentation talking about how his band's future lies in economic reconciliation, section 92 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And he talked about the pride of providing for your family. It's empowering for all people.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Government Relations talked about this and, you know, it has to be repeated. This could not be a better time in this province to open a new small business in pressure piping. Their services are going to be highly in demand for the upcoming Jansen potash mine, the multiple canola plants, the OSB [oriented strand board] plant. I mean the list is on and on and on.

We produce products in this province highly valued by the global economy. We must realize we're competing on the international stage. That's why it's critical to have a competitive taxation policy in effect. We want these jobs here. We want these resources extracted here, and we want these royalties here. This economic growth that this policy will stimulate is what we need to pull ourselves out of this pandemic spending that was required.

It's essential to note here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know the members opposite talk about this federal funding and provincial funding and everything else, but we need it on the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is only one taxpayer. Programs such as the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Corporation has been encouraging news for First Nations throughout this province.

[11:45]

It's imperative that we work together with our First Nations to assist in their goals of developing their communities that they reside in. Together with the provincial government and our First Nation governments, we can work together by employing thousands of First Nations people and ensuring that First Nations entrepreneurs are involved in growing a stronger Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we want to see advancements in every corner of this province. We want to see communities strengthened, growing, and thriving.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Energy and Resources said it really good the other day at the helium action plant. Government money follows. It never leads. We need the private sector to attract capital, secure investment, and make it happen on a strict timeline. Private businesses are best suited to do this work, and this government will be there for them.

I genuinely believe we're on the cusp of a commodity super cycle. All indications show it. I mean the oil is rising, natural gas, uranium. Grain prices are just unheard of. Beef, pork, and even the future prices are rising today.

And we have to talk about the historical precedent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. 1918 was the last Spanish flu, the last pandemic that affected this province. And after that pandemic we hit the Roaring Twenties, and those were the best years this province had. The price of wheat was high. We had record immigration. It was great for the whole province. And I really see history always repeats itself, and it will happen again. The next decade is going to be great for Saskatchewan and great for all Saskatchewan people.

I'm running out of time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will be seconding the motion from the member from North Battleford and supporting it wholeheartedly. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into 75-minute debate this afternoon.

I thank the member from The Battlefords for the motion. I would say that I thought the remarks actually, quite a few of the remarks that I was around to hear . . . I didn't hear the full speeches, but I've heard quite a few good remarks from three members of this Assembly here today. So I'm not endorsing those other speeches entirely. I haven't gone through them with a fine-tooth comb. Stepped out a couple times.

But some good remarks that were brought by members and very good remarks that were brought by the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre. Kind of the whole picture of how we, you know, build a strong economy and how that's critical that we build a strong society and that we have the social programs and change that's needed to make sure that it's all about well-being and quality of life, and that the two go hand in hand.

I also heard a little bit of a love story there from the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre and her family's story, her partner's story in being there with one of those very early innovators that we celebrate as a success story in 7shifts. These are the kinds of stories that are worthy, that definitely deserve celebration, and I'm going to recognize some of that here today.

I guess where I would challenge the government a bit, I mean, certainly the motion is a very reasonable motion. The aims and objectives of the initiatives that are identified are aims and objectives that we support, and members opposite know that. Things like the tech start-up initiative is something that we pushed for, that I know I pushed for as a member of this Assembly, as Finance critic and Economy critic, over the years, in fact pushing that government to recognize the hope and potential of the tech industry in Saskatchewan. And certainly we see a blossoming industry on that front by incredible leaders who have taken on risk and done the hard work, and fantastic entrepreneurs.

And we see, you know, the incredible success of companies like Vendasta or Coconut Software. And then we see all those smaller start-ups that are working so hard, grinding it out to emerge. And you know, a place like Cultivator here in Regina or Co.Labs in Saskatoon, these are inspiring places with inspiring, creative people. And I love going in and learning from those entrepreneurs and those that are doing this work and listening to

their stories. And I know what they put into their work, and it's quite the thing.

And I would give a shout-out to folks like Jordan McFarlane over there at Cultivator and their whole team, their creative team, all those entrepreneurs. And Sean O'Connor who's organizing the venture capital in a significant way for these start-up opportunities through Emmertech and as well through Conexus, who's doing some really good work on these fronts.

I would say that we're here at a time right now where, you know, COVID has taken people's lives, where it's impacted our economy because of the failures, made so much worse by the failures to control it by that government. And you know, the fact that the tone of the motion suggests a bit that, you know, to sort of back-pat the government, as opposed to deal with the reality that we're facing, to deal with the economic consequences that Saskatchewan people are facing by the horrible failure of this government.

And of course here we are in a week where we've surpassed 900 deaths in Saskatchewan, four more here today. So Saskatchewan people know all too well the horrible human costs of COVID, the failures of that government, and as well the economic failures as a result.

On that front, I mean we've identified here this week and brought to this floor the reports from RBC Economics and TD Economics that have very specifically pointed at Saskatchewan and unfortunately downgraded our growth in a significant way — by almost 2 per cent this year — very attributable, right in the reports, to the mismanagement of COVID.

Now those are real dollars. That's a loss by way of revenues to the province of Saskatchewan. It's people's jobs, Mr. Speaker. And it was a consequence of a government that was unwilling to act when they had all the opportunities to do so, when they had the information that said that if they acted with common-sense measures they could have reduced ICU admissions by 75 per cent and they could have reduced infections by 50 per cent. It would have saved lives. It would have kept people working.

We would have had a stronger economy this year. We would have had stronger returns into our provincial treasury by way of the revenues that are generated from that economy. And we would have kept our health system operating, not kneecapping that health system and preventing those that so desperately need surgeries and organ transplants and procedures in this province from being put on the back burner, having those cancelled, Mr. Speaker, in a way that's been tragic for so many.

So I'd urge the government as well, when they're talking about motions like the one here today, to be real careful about giving credit where it's due and understanding the reality that we face. When we're talking about the good investments that are being placed in Saskatchewan, when we're talking about those things we can celebrate from that incredible new mine up at BHP — a significant investment, something so important for that region — that's capital being placed by that company. And it's something that we need to recognize and not try to have a government take credit for that, Mr. Speaker.

When we see the activities around canola crush and the value-add

sector and the new opportunities that are emerging based on the strengths that we have as a province, again we should say thank you to those that are placing those investments for their ingenuity, for their risk, for placing that capital, and for taking on those investments. The wheat straw facility, the OSB plant up in Prince Albert — so many good opportunities that are being advanced within our province because of the hard work and ingenuity of Saskatchewan people and businesses.

I think of our refinery here in Regina. I think of Federated Co-op and their plans around their energy roadmap and to reduce emissions and to capture carbon, importantly to invest in biodiesel and to leverage the relationship that they have with producers and Saskatchewan people and those members across Saskatchewan. These are important endeavours that we should be celebrating as a province.

When I think of all those opportunities in rare earth metals and I think of what's happening with Prairie Lithium — a real neat story — headquartered out just out of Regina here at Emerald Park but extracting lithium out of brine water down by Torquay. And a fine shout-out to the mayor of Torquay, Mike Strachan, who is one of the finest mayors in Saskatchewan. But these are good projects.

Not too far from that brine well, I think of DEEP [Deep Earth Energy Production Corp.], the deep earth geothermal and CEO, Kirsten Marcia, and the leadership there and the opportunity that presents.

I think of opportunities in and around hydrogen. I don't hear much from the government around hydrogen but this is, you know, an emerging space that the world is stepping up to. And Saskatchewan has tremendous opportunities on these fronts and we need to make sure that we have a strategy and an effort and a plan in place to capture those opportunities.

And I think of all the good things that are occurring, the leadership of Indigenous entrepreneurs, of Indigenous communities. I think of all those communities, all those First Nations in the Meadow Lake Tribal Council region that have been incredibly successful economic leaders with so many initiatives for so long.

I think of the diversification of the economy on Flying Dust First Nation, with the growing of vegetables, high-value crops, that we proudly have on grocery shelves all across Saskatchewan, and the jobs and employment and revenues that have been generated there locally, all value-add. And I think of what they're doing as well with road building and with gravel and, you know, the heavy equipment side of the equation and all of the training that they're engaged in. These are meaningful projects of folks across our province.

I think of Tom Benjoe and FHQ Developments and all of the economic leadership provided there and opportunities that are being extended. This is where the credit needs to go from an economic perspective. We need to continue to listen and learn and work with these economic leaders. We need to make sure the structures and supports are in place. We need to make sure things like connectivity is in place across the province.

I lost track of the clock here, Mr. Speaker, so I'm running out of

time. It's been my pleasure to enter in, albeit briefly here today. I could celebrate much more in this province, and certainly I could take the government to task with where they're dropping the ball economically.

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

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too support the motion from my colleague from The Battlefords. The Government of Saskatchewan believes, by creating an attractive business climate, businesses will look first to Saskatchewan, as qualifying businesses create jobs and drive the province's economy to 2030 and beyond. Business will invest capital dollars in a province that's willing to work with companies to develop Saskatchewan's resources. Saskatchewan has what the world wants and needs. We will supply the world with food, fuel, and fertilizer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the creation of the manufacturing and processing tax credits will allow companies in the manufacturing and processing industry to reduce their Saskatchewan income tax rate by 2 percentage points. Maintaining a competitive tax regime will attract greater investment to the province and keep Saskatchewan as a leading location for companies to build and grow. Assisting manufacturing and processing companies with expenditures, the province offers a refundable tax credit on qualifying machinery and equipment that is made available for use in Saskatchewan to an amount of 6 per cent of the value of the qualifying property.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, creating a jurisdiction with attractive investment opportunities leads to job creation and economic growth across the province. Saskatchewan is the desired investment destination and provides opportunities for companies to grow. Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture has always been a top industry in the province, and it will continue to be a key industry for decades to come. Saskatchewan has long been known for exporting commodities around the world. Capturing additional value from these commodities prior to exporting will keep additional jobs and investment in the province. Exporting a table-ready product makes agriculture even stronger.

Saskatchewan's value-added agriculture incentive program was launched in 2018. The program allows for a non-transferable 15 per cent tax rebate on capital expenditures over \$10 million. The rebate can be applied against corporate income tax paid and claimed over a 3- to 10-year period. Since inception, 12 projects have been approved with a value of \$472 million. Adding value to agriculture products adds value for Saskatchewan.

[12:00]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan is the second-largest oil producer in Canada. Western Canada is home to the third-largest oil reserves in the world. Our energy companies produce oil and gas in the most sustainable and environmentally safest way. In short, we produce energy better. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to enhance Saskatchewan's competitiveness in oil and gas development, government introduced the oil and gas processing investment incentive designed to increase value-added processing and increased infrastructure capacity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, under this program, North American Helium was approved for the \$30 million investment. Earlier this year, they constructed and opened the largest helium purification facility in Canada. This project will create employment in an area that was hit hard with the downturn in the oil and gas industry.

Steel Reef was also approved for two projects in North Portal area of southeast Saskatchewan. Both projects are anticipated to be valued at \$40 million. Combined, these projects will gather and process flared and vented gas in the area. These projects support our methane action plan, a plan to reduce methane-based greenhouse gas emissions by 40 to 45 per cent by 2025.

Ridgeback Resources will construct a \$12 million fractionation plant in the Innes field near Griffin, Saskatchewan. This investment by Ridgeback was also approved under the oil and gas processing investment incentive.

Gibson Energy expanded their heavy crude facility in Moose Jaw by approximately 30 per cent, from 17,000 barrels per day to 22,000 barrels per day — increased capacity with no increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, companies seek a strong and stable jurisdiction in which to conduct business. Saskatchewan is that jurisdiction. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the oil infrastructure investment program is designed to help increase pipeline capacity, to get energy production to export markets and reducing reliance on road and rail transportation. CO₂ pipelines are now included in this program. CO₂ pipelines are used for carbon capture utilization. This will encourage more enhanced oil recovery in our mature oil fields and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, supporting our energy industry and reducing our emissions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, supporting innovation in the petroleum and natural gas sectors through the Saskatchewan petroleum innovation incentive program. Providing business the opportunity to develop their ideas into reality, ideas such as Proton Technologies's process to extract hydrogen from existing oil reservoirs while leaving the carbon dioxide trapped underground. Projects that will turn flare gas to power, utilizing otherwise wasted energy while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Supporting lithium extraction like Prairie Lithium's first-of-its-kind technology to strip 99.7 per cent of the lithium from oil field brine, utilizing a by-product of the oil industry while supplying an increased market demand for lithium.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the targeted mineral exploration incentive program has been successful in attracting business to the province for exploration of precious metals — precious metals like gold, silver, copper, nickel, cobalt, zinc, and platinum-group elements — keeping Saskatchewan's global competitiveness strong, promoting our world-class resource industries, ensuring we remain a global leader in resource development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan has seen several investment announcements in the past year: a record investment of \$12 billion in BHP Jansen's potash mine, creating 3,500 construction jobs and over 600 operational jobs; numerous announcements this year by Ceres Global, Cargill, Viterra, and Richardson International announcing new and expanded canola crushing plants; AGT Food's logistic and processing hub at

Delisle; value-added opportunities to commodities grown by ag producers right here in Saskatchewan. We have seen growth and expansion in lumber and pulp mills near Prince Albert and Carrot River, Red Leaf Pulp's wheat straw facility in Regina, adding value to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan we are encouraging investment and developing our resources. Businesses investing in Saskatchewan, investing in Saskatchewan people, creating jobs across this province, good-paying jobs that will support families, families that will live in communities large and small, families that will support local business and community events and recreation facilities, growing and building Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise here today, my second 75-minute debate. I remember the last one being fun so I'm looking forward to today.

But you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the motion before the Assembly, it's an unusual one. I don't disagree with the value of incentives and credits, and I'm on the record lauding them. When I walked into the Chamber, the member from Cannington was saying oh, they're quoting you. And I was like, oh dear, what have I said now? But, Mr. Speaker, I'm on the record in this Assembly talking about the good work that these incentives have done. And you know, on the new incentive and the new support for Indigenous business in this province, it's great to see the government shaking off their dyed-in-the-wool neglect of Indigenous Saskatchewan.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, in terms of a 75-minute debate, there's not a whole lot to debate with this motion. And it's kind of odd, but it's a sad effort and a sad attempt at backslapping and self-congratulation from a government that's seeming increasingly complacent and entitled. As my colleague, the member from Regina Rosemont, noted, it's . . .

An Hon. Member: — Smart guy.

Ms. A. Young: — Yeah, very smart man, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And you know, it's increasingly in bad taste to see the members opposite stand up and take credit for the good works and the good investment being made by independent businesses and individuals in our fine province. It's a bad look, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, as happy as I am to talk about these, Saskatchewan does still struggle from record-high levels of unemployment during this pandemic. And that's bad news for everyone in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And even before the pandemic, the economy had stalled. They'd completely failed. And again, Mr. Speaker, to date they have no plan.

Any good news this government shares, which is good news . . . And whether we're talking about the investments by AGT or Big Block or BHP, Cargill, Red Leaf, Maven, Viterra, Northern Nutrients, One Sky, this is great news, Mr. Speaker, and I am happy to stand up and applaud that. But any good news this government shares comes at the risk, ingenuity, and capital of others. This is a government who's happy to say that this is as

good as it's going to get, and they pat themselves on the back for a job well done. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, a party that cut any mention of Enterprise Saskatchewan from their own party document. Wow, Mr. Speaker, talk about commitment.

And you know, day after day, Mr. Speaker, they stand up and they shout the press releases of investors, who I'd like to thank and who we've all thanked in this House, Mr. Speaker. But day after day this is a government that refuses to acknowledge the reality that we have the worst jobs numbers in the country and that businesses and workers are struggling, and that these members don't even have the integrity to stand up and say yes, there's work to be done and here's what we're going to do; here's our plan.

Yes, in Saskatchewan you shouldn't be out of work for years like Eden, who was here yesterday. She's been out of work for years because of her health, and she's lost all her money and now she's lost her housing. And she's looking at dialysis for eight years. And we should all be ashamed of that. That should not be the case in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there are many others out there.

And yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when there are jobs to be had in this province, we should not be flying in American contractors to work on our projects when we have good, hard-working tradespeople here in this province sitting idle. But no, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a party that's so convinced and so comfortable and so absolutely arrogant that when it's bad news, they think StatsCan is making it up. But only when it's bad news, Mr. Speaker, because when it's good news, they can't even pause to think critically.

We've seen them shout their increases in retail and manufacturing, which are good news, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're saying over last year it's up. Of course it's up over last year, guys. Do you not remember what the last two years have been like? Of course it's up. Give your heads a shake. Do you not remember what the last couple of years have been like for people in this province? Because these people remember. Do you not remember? Because you know what? It's hard to see what you're focused on, whether it's the economy or making sure our failed Health minister is reading his own COVID briefings.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all want a better future for this province, and we all believe that an energy future, an Indigenous future, a future grounded in entrepreneurship, co-operation, solidarity, and ingenuity will get us there. But this government cannot continue to bury its head in the sand. During, Mr. Speaker, the worst wave of this pandemic — the worst wave — the government did not proffer so much as one nickel to the business community. They could not be bothered to consult or disseminate information around public health orders until the day they were set to be enforced.

Mr. Speaker, even the most diehard Sask Party supporters think that this is baloney. Their business response team isn't provided with the answers, and these poor folks on the phone are asked to act as shields for this government. And you know what? The business community — or school boards, who also have to call the BRT [business response team], apparently — they've just given up calling. Because what's the point if there's no clarity because this government will not share information?

They were asked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to provide supports to businesses to help purchase devices for those having to check vaccinations or databases to maintain them, privacy measures. They were asked to provide something as simple as consistent government signage for SMEs [small and medium-sized enterprise] to help give the appearance of consistent information, solidarity, and leadership.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether this government is too scared of their own health measures or just too lazy has yet to be seen. But during this fourth wave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they could not scrape together a few red cents to help those industries that still remain deeply impacted by COVID. Mr. Deputy Speaker, federal support programs have wound down, and those that remain are accessible to businesses, only to those that have lost 50 per cent of their revenues — 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

What about a business scraping by at 45 per cent, 43, 35 per cent revenues down? Is that good enough for the members opposite? It shouldn't be, Mr. Speaker. We are one of the most entrepreneurial provinces in the country. In fact I believe we are the most entrepreneurial. For every 1,000 people in this province, Mr. Speaker, 124 are involved in small business.

And now the members opposite, you know, they like to heckle. They like to feel big and strong. And sometimes, you know, they'll yell at me about my own business, Mr. Speaker, and I can take it about as well as I can dish it. But when you yell at me that my business is small and sad and pathetic, that's fine. But that is disrespectful to the thousands and thousands of small-business owners in the province who have small businesses. It shouldn't matter whether you employ eight people or whether you employ 800. Every single one of those businesses matters, Mr. Speaker.

[12:15]

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a government that doesn't care about reality. Instead it prefers to read its own press clippings, send memes around their offices, laughing and congratulating themselves on their hard work and the struggles of others. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're not out of the woods yet, and I encourage all members to go out and talk to some of the small businesses that are still struggling because there are still many, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, business creditors, banks and landlords, they've been decent through COVID. They have not been as aggressive in advancing their claims as they could have been. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the federal subsidies wind down, I hope things aren't tough, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I hope at least one member on that side is listening. Thank you.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from The Battlefords, first of all let's be clear. I do not belong to you. I am no one's Indigenous person. This motion talks about supporting Indigenous investments "in principle." For many Indigenous people, "in principle" is code for no action. What specific action is this government going to take to ensure all Indigenous communities can be full partners in our economy?

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

Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. Certainly none of my comments indicated that anybody belongs to the government. So you know, we have incredible partnerships with Indigenous communities in our province. Look at the forestry sector, one of the highest participation rates across the country of any industry. That's something that as a government we're very proud of, and I hope the member can join me in being proud of that.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from . . . and I should know this.

A Hon. Member: — Arm River.

The Deputy Speaker: — Arm River.

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. BHP has committed a massive private investment to bring Jansen potash mine to production, meaning thousands of jobs for the local economy. K+S Potash started production near Bethune in 2017, making it the first new greenfield potash mine in the province in 40 years.

Mr. Speaker, private businesses don't trust the NDP because of their history. K+S was chased out of the province in the 1970s by the NDP. Can the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre guarantee that the Saskatchewan NDP will never use the powers of nationalizing private companies again? Yes or no?

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll remind the member opposite that the NDP built this industry, which is the most efficient potash industry in the entire country. And you know, what's going to chase away industry investment in this province is the extremist rhetoric of that Premier, who talks about capping oil and gas, something that the oil and gas industry supports, in order to drive further wedges and divisions in this province. Shame on you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the member from Last Mountain. His government sat by and didn't fix business risk management programs for producers this year, despite the fact that the federal government was at the table, despite the fact that producers were united. They left them high and then really dry during a time with a terrible drought.

Further, we now have a time where we've got calls from the livestock producers, specifically from the stock growers, calling for the threshold for the farm and ranch program, an important program, to be reduced to \$10,000 because right now the Sask Party's shut out so many small livestock producers with this program, and they need to extend the timeline.

To the member: will he fix business risk management programs? Will he commit to reducing that threshold? And will he commit

to extending that deadline so producers can get access to the water they need and deserve?

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

Mr. Keisig: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I can answer this question, no problem at all. I just need a second to compose myself. I'm doing a little bit of fanboying here. To get a question from the longest serving member in opposition to have never served in government is something that is very, very awesome to my heart, so thank you for that.

To the member opposite, our government will support our cattle producers through and through. We put \$119 million into that. The program has been very well received by our producers. It has been very cost-effectively used and we will definitely carry on supporting all the agricultural producers in this province. Thank you.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Saskatchewan has seen a surge in capital investment this year — 10 billion in new projects — representing a tremendous vote of confidence in our province, our people, and our future. It is really quite sad that just today the NDP show an ounce of enthusiasm for these investments, new jobs, and economic spinoff that it will create in communities across our province. They are minimizing the significance. The member from Saskatoon Nutana referred to these investments as crumbs. My question for the member from Regina University: does the NDP believe that \$10 billion in private sector investment is just crumbs?

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

Ms. A. Young: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, we've been here the same amount of time but a word of advice for the member from Saskatoon Riversdale: you don't have to read it just because they write it. And I'm not sure if he was outside twiddling with the moustache wax when I was speaking but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, short answer to the member was yeah. And I'd wish he had listened to my speech because it was great. It was fantastic. So you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, again we just see the same back-patting and self-congratulatory arrogance that, you know, made up the most salient and articulate parts of my speech. Thank you.

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Whether the successes of private industry or during COVID, this government is always quick to take credit when the going is good. But when things get tough, it leaves a lot to be desired. If this government loves supporting industries, including the tech sector, so much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why didn't it provide more supports to these struggling industries during the pandemic, including this crushing fourth wave?

The federal government accounted for 90 per cent of COVID

spending. Are these still the kinds of arrangements this government expects when we become a great nation within a nation?

The Deputy Speaker: — Next question. I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Ms. C. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The oil infrastructure investment program supports the increase of our provincial pipeline capacity. Pipeline capacity is one of the constraints that leads to lower prices for Saskatchewan energy producers, which means lower royalties for Saskatchewan people.

We also know Saskatchewan oil is produced with lower emissions than most foreign-produced oil. When the Minister of Energy and Resources announced the expansion of the oil infrastructure investment program to include carbon capture, utilization, and storage, it was another win for the environment.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP critic couldn't even bring herself to use the word pipeline in her response. So to the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre: does the NDP support the expansion of the oil infrastructure program, or would they shut down the program?

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

Ms. Conway: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it's one thing that I have learned from this government it's, you know, questions posed in this House are a bit like a red light in Rome. It's just a guide.

And given that I got a question on oil-gas, I will say that there's one thing that is concerning me about this government, and that is the increasingly extremist rhetoric that we're seeing from this Premier, who is outraged at the thought of capping emissions when the oil and gas industry has endorsed a cap on emissions.

This is the kind of divisive, extremist rhetoric that we find from this government instead of any kind of balanced approach to the challenges of this generation. Keep pointing your finger.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Saskatchewan has the best livestock producers around. Saskatchewan beef can't be beat but the . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The Saskatchewan value-added ag incentive shuts out the important investment in abattoirs and meat processors that we should have all across Saskatchewan. We should have a program tailored to build out this industry, to provide those opportunities for . . .

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 606 — *The Saskatchewan Employment (Paid Sick Days) Amendment Act, 2021*

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my privilege and my honour to rise today to speak about our private member's bill, Bill 606, which has been drafted to provide crucial support for Saskatchewan workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when Saskatchewan workers wake up in the morning with the flu or a sore throat, many are faced with a very difficult choice. Do they stay home for their own health, the health of their co-workers, and the well-being of their customers? Or do they head into work since they can't afford to stay home and lose a day's pay because they work for one of Saskatchewan's employers who does not offer paid sick leave?

This, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the unacceptable reality for far too many Saskatchewan workers. It is a reality that means many of our workers struggle to stay afloat and to thrive. It's a reality where workers must choose between their financial survival, their health, and the health of those around them.

These are the very same workers that, in the midst of the largest, most disruptive and ongoing pandemic, have shown they are essential to Saskatchewan's economic success. Every day they left the safety of their homes and have reported to their jobs — store clerks, gas attendants, janitors, and food servers, educational assistants, care aides, and so many others — so that we could all continue to live our lives and so our economy was able to function. To them we say thank you. To them we say, you are valued and we recognize your efforts as essential to our province's recovery.

But most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, beyond all the thanks and the platitudes we say, you deserve the dignity of paid sick leave and we will make this a reality for you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what responsible, forward-looking governments do. They protect their workers' rights to safe and healthy working conditions. They see workers not as a tool to be exploited but as an integral part of our province's economic structure. Our legislative amendment accomplishes this by creating a new employment standard for employers and workplaces in order to relieve workers of having to make the impossible choice between losing pay or working while sick. Paid sick leave would be available so that when a worker is feeling unwell, they know they will not be made to suffer financial hardship and they will make the responsible choice to stay home.

[12:30]

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that many Saskatchewan people work in unionized workplaces with access to paid sick time. We thank the labour movement in Saskatchewan for negotiating these benefits on behalf of their members. Some non-unionized workers also have paid sick time provided as a benefit by their employer. To those employers who of their own

initiative have done the right thing and provided paid sick leave for their workers, we thank you and offer our gratitude as well.

However we also know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that access to paid sick leave in our province is far from universal. Less than half of Saskatchewan workers have access to paid sick leave when they become ill, need to recover from minor injury, or self-isolate due to exposure to COVID-19. Often these are our province's lowest income workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of these underpaid and under-protected workers are the very same workers who have been lauded as the pandemic's front-line heroes: care aides, health care sector workers, cashiers, cleaners, servers, and so on. The very people who kept our economy functioning, going in to their jobs and risking their well-being so that Saskatchewan people could continue to access important and essential services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government's measures to assist these workers during the pandemic by providing unpaid days of leave for isolation, quarantine, or to care for dependants have simply not been enough. The truth is that Saskatchewan has been a laggard on this front. Five provincial and territorial jurisdictions implemented government-funded paid sick leave policies to address the gaps in the federal programs: the Yukon, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and Ontario. Some provinces provided financial support to help employers who offered paid sick leave programs. Saskatchewan was not one of these provinces.

Let's be clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. From an economic perspective there are many reasons why paid sick leave is a plus, not a drain on employers. Employers benefit from having healthy employees. Some of these benefits, Mr. Deputy Speaker, include improved attendance among colleagues who are less exposed to contagion; reduced absences for sick workers themselves due to faster treatment and better prevention; reduced presenteeism, where workers attend work when they are unable to fully perform their duties, thereby negatively impacting productivity; better staff recruitment and retention; enhanced business reputation; more profitable macro-economic conditions; and stronger public health outcomes, Mr. Speaker, particularly during a pandemic. Paid sick leave saves lives.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also know that the most common reason workers choose to go to work sick is because their employers do not offer paid sick leave. The fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that employees who are able to take time away from work to recover from sickness or injury return to full capacity sooner and healthier. And whenever a worker goes to work sick, there is a cascading impact. Sick workers are not productive workers, sick workers do not get well faster, and even worse yet, sick workers spread their illness among other workers and to customers.

So we can see that paid sick leave is more than a tool for infection control; it is also about creating workplaces that are healthy and economically proficient. Our economy suffers too when workers can't access paid sick leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Household consumption declines when sick employees lose a day of pay earnings that can never be replaced. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not better or stronger as a province, our businesses do not succeed, when being sick means Saskatchewan workers are forced to choose between the barest of essentials — buying

groceries to feed their families, or making their rent payments and avoiding eviction.

Let me also be clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the opposition is not without understanding for employers. We know that running a small business is tough. We know that managing costs even outside a pandemic can be difficult. We know that Saskatchewan employers have felt a deep economic bite these past two years due to the pandemic. Helping these local enterprises succeed is essential to our province's well-being, and we say your government needs to be doing more on this front.

Yet even as we understand the challenges faced by our small-business sector, we are acutely aware that failing to legislate paid sick leave unfairly puts the well-being on the shoulders of the economy on workers, not just during the pandemic but every day of the year. Our government must not build the success of our business sector off the backs of sick Saskatchewan workers who can't afford to take a day off to recuperate when they're ill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's be clear. Paid vacation days and public holidays are a commonplace government-mandated, employer-paid expense. Mandating employer-paid sick leave makes even more business sense. Paid sick leave must be a standard tool for creating healthy workplaces, for shaping a business environment that attracts the best employees, and where workers and businesses are both able to contribute to our province's economic recovery and future growth.

Mandating paid sick time also levels the playing field for those employers who are already providing paid sick leave benefits to their employees. Our government must support progressive employers who are doing their part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not employers who deny sick leave benefits to their employees as a means to cut costs. We also know lower-income workers make up the majority of workplaces where paid sick leave is absent. Women, immigrants, and young people are often those who are employed in these positions. Many times these workers are single parents, or come from low-income families, where workers are responsible for caring for children at home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, paid sick days are a key component of an equitable approach to decent work, especially for the most marginalized in our province. Many employers, large and small, have already chosen to create these healthy workplaces. They view providing paid sick leave as a pathway to their business success. They have consciously made respect for their employees' right to a healthy work environment a fundamental part of their business culture.

In Canada, Mr. Speaker, British Columbia is in the process of developing legislation mandating paid sick leave, which will come into force this approaching January. Quebec and Prince Edward Island already require employers to offer paid sick leave. Federally, also the Canada Labour Code provides currently three paid personal days for federally regulated workers. And on top of that, the federal government has committed, within the first hundred days of being elected of forming their new government, to implement 10 paid days of sick leave for all federally regulated workers.

Indeed most countries, Mr. Deputy Speaker, around the world

provide some form of paid sick leave. Some are even incredibly generous: Denmark, for instance, 30 days of paid sick leave; Germany, six full weeks. Even, Mr. Speaker, you might be surprised to hear in the United States, the hotbed of free enterprise and capitalism, 16 states and at least 23 cities and counties have enacted paid sick days and/or medical leave. And there are several other pending jurisdictions that are doing so as well. Mr. Deputy Speaker, contrary to paid sick leave opponents' dire warnings, in New York City, Seattle, and San Francisco 86 per cent of businesses surveyed indicated their approval — 86 per cent.

In return for providing paid sick leave for their workers, employers have benefited from increased productivity as well as loyalty from their employees. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has reported that paid sick leave policies implemented in cities like San Francisco and New York show that workers were not abusing sick leave policies, and they also showed that the costs ultimately to employers were minimal. At the same time, this research showed that paid sick leave benefited individual workers and their families immensely, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Further to this, new research right here in Canada from the Centre for Future Work has found that a proposed 10-day paid sick leave policy in British Columbia would increase overall business costs by just 0.21 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is also something that has been shown by this report will have no measurable impact on overall competitiveness or profitability. So these findings, you can see, completely discredit the unsubstantiated claims from business lobbyists that 10 days of employer-paid sick leave would lead to widespread bankruptcies and job loss. It's just not the case. It's been borne out and seen in numerous examples.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's time for this government to step up and show leadership in implementing this key element of progressive labour policy. This amendment crucially builds a stronger, more robust system of protections for workers. This amendment further represents a long-term, comprehensive, and equitable policy solution that shifts us towards an economy where workers will be enticed to move to our province and join our workforce.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this amendment represents a progressive economic future for Saskatchewan and for all people we have been elected to represent. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move second reading for Bill No. 606, *The Saskatchewan Employment (Paid Sick Days) Amendment Act, 2021*.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved that Bill No. 606, *The Saskatchewan Employment Amendment Act, 2021* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to thank the member from Saskatoon University for her second reading speech on this Bill No. 606 as well as all the work that she has put in and thoughtful, sincere consultations and research on this issue, which is absolutely the right thing to do. So thank you to her for all of her work. With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has recommended that this House be adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — This House now stands adjourned till 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:42.]

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