



SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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**DEBATES  
AND  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Randy Weekes  
Speaker



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

**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

<b>Beck, Carla</b> — Regina Lakeview (NDP)	<b>Makowsky, Hon. Gene</b> — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
<b>Bonk, Steven</b> — Moosomin (SP)	<b>Marit, Hon. David</b> — Wood River (SP)
<b>Bowes, Jennifer</b> — Saskatoon University (NDP)	<b>McLeod, Tim</b> — Moose Jaw North (SP)
<b>Bradshaw, Hon. Fred</b> — Carrot River Valley (SP)	<b>McMorris, Hon. Don</b> — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
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<b>Cockrill, Jeremy</b> — The Battlefords (SP)	<b>Moe, Hon. Scott</b> — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
<b>Conway, Meara</b> — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)	<b>Morgan, Hon. Don</b> — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
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<b>Domotor, Ryan</b> — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)	<b>Nippi-Albright, Betty</b> — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
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<b>Fiaz, Muhammad</b> — Regina Pasqua (SP)	<b>Ritchie, Erika</b> — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
<b>Francis, Ken</b> — Kindersley (SP)	<b>Ross, Alana</b> — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
<b>Friesen, Marv</b> — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)	<b>Ross, Hon. Laura</b> — Regina Rochdale (SP)
<b>Goudy, Todd</b> — Melfort (SP)	<b>Sarauer, Nicole</b> — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
<b>Grewal, Gary</b> — Regina Northeast (SP)	<b>Skoropad, Dana</b> — Arm River (SP)
<b>Hargrave, Joe</b> — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)	<b>Steele, Doug</b> — Cypress Hills (SP)
<b>Harpauer, Hon. Donna</b> — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)	<b>Stewart, Hon. Lyle</b> — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
<b>Harrison, Daryl</b> — Cannington (SP)	<b>Tell, Hon. Christine</b> — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
<b>Harrison, Hon. Jeremy</b> — Meadow Lake (SP)	<b>Vermette, Doyle</b> — Cumberland (NDP)
<b>Hindley, Hon. Everett</b> — Swift Current (SP)	<b>Weekes, Hon. Randy</b> — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
<b>Jenson, Terry</b> — Martensville-Warman (SP)	<b>Wilson, Nadine</b> — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
<b>Kaeding, Hon. Warren</b> — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)	<b>Wotherspoon, Trent</b> — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
<b>Keisig, Travis</b> — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)	<b>Wyant, Hon. Gordon</b> — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
<b>Kirsch, Delbert</b> — Batoche (SP)	<b>Young, Aleana</b> — Regina University (NDP)
<b>Lambert, Lisa</b> — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)	<b>Young, Colleen</b> — Lloydminster (SP)
<b>Lawrence, Greg</b> — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)	
<b>Love, Matt</b> — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)	<b>Vacant</b> — Athabasca

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

**Clerks-at-the-Table**

**Clerk** — Gregory A. Putz

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

**Deputy Clerk** — Iris Lang

**Clerk Assistant** — Kathy Burianyk

**Sergeant-at-Arms** — Terry Quinn

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

### Presenting Petitions

**The Speaker:** — I have a statement concerning presentations of petitions. Yesterday was an extreme example of how the presentation of petitions has evolved beyond the limits set out in rule 16. I again remind members of the operative parts of the rule with respect to oral presentations of petitions. “The Member may read the prayer, provide a general explanation of the subject matter and location of the petitioners.” And “No debate on any matter on or in relation to the petitions is permitted.”

The rule sets no time limits for the presentation of individual petitions. It is left to the Speaker to determine when the presentation of a petition crosses the line from a general explanation to something more expansive or the equivalent of debate.

There are many examples of presentations well beyond the 90 seconds we set in the rules for statements by members. In fact many of the presentations have become statements rather than general explanations of the petition. This has been a matter of concern for the Chair for many years. In 2014 Speaker D’Autremont stated his concerns:

... some members have begun to provide more than a general explanation of the petition. In some cases, a substantial level of detail is provided in the explanation, and in other cases the commentary might be considered a provocation for debate.

This has been a concern for successive Speakers. Up to the extreme display yesterday, I had chosen to be more tolerant but at the same time made an effort behind the scenes to address the matter. It is clear from yesterday that the trend is going the opposite direction. For this reason, I’ve decided to set time limits for the presentation of the petition. Each member will have 90 seconds to orally present a petition.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Steele:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all the members, I would like to take this time to introduce a constituent of mine who happens to be the newly crowned CPRA [Canadian Professional Rodeo Association], the Canadian Professional Bull Riding Association, Jared Parsonage of Maple Creek.

Jared and his wife, Tulsa, live in the family ranch in historical Cypress Hills near Fort Walsh. When not ranching, you will find Jared travelling across Canada, pursuing his rodeo career. Jared will be forming the next three nights at the Maple Leaf Circuit Finals rodeos at Agribition. The entire Southwest wishes him all

the best.

I would like all the members to join me in welcoming Jared to his legislature. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to join with the member from Cypress Hills to welcome Jared Parsonage to his Assembly. We want to wish him well in the next few days here of competition. It’s an honour and a privilege to have a CPR champion, this CPR champion here in this Assembly.

We were out at Agribition yesterday, touring and meeting with everyone. It’s always such a special event and such an important week for Regina. We thank all those at the Agribition for making it such a success. But to Jared Parsonage, it’s an honour to have you in your Assembly.

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

**Mr. Bonk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, I’d like to introduce my wife and daughter, sitting in your gallery. It’s a pleasure to have them here. As everyone knows who serves in this House, it’s really your family who allows you to serve here.

My wife, Candace, she’s the newly appointed honorary consul of Hungary to Saskatchewan. It’s a new position created by the Government of Hungary. And I know she’ll fulfill her duties with her usual effortless eloquence and charm that she always takes to everything she does.

My daughter Emma, she’s a different matter. A bit of a force of nature, and I’m sure that everyone who knows her, I apologize in advance. She’s currently a grade 12 student. She’s taking grade 12 classes online with DLC [Distance Learning Centre]. She’s also taking preparatory courses through the University of Budapest for veterinary medicine, where she plans to be an equine cardiologist. She’s also a high school ... I guess she’s president of her high school. She’s president of the 4-H, regional 4-H — just a real go-getter. So I’d like all members of this Assembly to welcome Candace and Emma to their Assembly.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I’d be remiss if I didn’t join the member from Moosomin in welcoming my two favourite Bonks in the Legislative Assembly today. It’s always a good day when we get to see Candace and Emma here.

Candace is such an incredible ... not just a mother but a force professionally. And as the member mentioned, it’s her new role. She’s been taking it on with gusto. And I’ve followed her through social media and seen the work that she’s done there so far. Looking forward to seeing what happens next.

And Emma, my favourite Bonk, it’s always great to see her. I got the pleasure of meeting her a few years ago at an event. She spoke

very eloquently. I wanted to know who her mother was because I knew her father and I wasn't too sure where she was getting all of this amazing talent from, Mr. Speaker.

Emma is an incredible, incredible force. She is extremely eloquent. I keep trying to encourage her to rebel against her parents and come hang out with me every once in a while, and she hasn't quite taken me up on that offer yet, but the offer is always still standing. Not only is she an amazing speaker, a debater, an entrepreneur, but as the member opposite mentioned, she will be going to Budapest next year to take her studies further and hopefully be an equine cardiologist.

I believe what the member didn't mention on the floor but I believe he told me, she's also going there on a full scholarship, which I think is absolutely incredible and a testament to how brilliant Emma truly is.

So it's always a pleasure to see the both of you. You're always very welcome here. I'm glad to see that you're here to keep the member from Moosomin in check today in question period. And I'd like to encourage all members to join me in welcoming Candace and Emma to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Mr. Keisig:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I would like to welcome Lisa Grudnizki. She is a fierce hockey mom to Levi, a wonderful wife with Andy. They live in Southey, but she's a newly elected member to the Prairie Valley Board of Education. And we were elected into public service at very similar times so we've really bonded over our working struggles to be better servants to the province of Saskatchewan. So join me in welcoming Lisa to her Legislative Assembly.

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take a minute to briefly join with the member opposite and welcome Lisa to her Legislative Assembly. It is always a pleasure to see guests in our galleries and especially those locally elected leaders. I thank her for her service and invite all members to join with me in welcoming her to the Legislative Assembly.

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

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you today Deserae Kambeitz and Penny Ursu, seated in the west gallery. Deserae and Penny both work for the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety and are integral members of the ministry. Their dedication and hard work on a day-to-day basis is often unnoticed, unrecognized.

However on extraordinary days like today, we get to recognize their commitments to the people of Saskatchewan. It is my understanding that this is Penny's first time after a measly 36 years working in the public service. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to give Deserae and Penny a warm welcome to their legislature.

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

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you so very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members in this Assembly, it is an absolute joy to rise here today and welcome to their Assembly 36 grade 12 students from Campbell Collegiate seated in the east gallery. Hello and welcome. They are accompanied today by their teacher Erin Harlos, truly a force to be reckoned with, and parent chaperone Andrea Bilec.

Welcome to this legislature, your legislature. It's wonderful to see some familiar faces sitting up in the east gallery. And on behalf of all members in this Assembly, I promise we will not behave ourselves today. And I truly hope that you enjoy this opportunity to spend a day in this, your legislature. And I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming this wonderful class of grade 12 students finishing their high school education at a very odd time. Welcome.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

**Hon. Mr. Reiter:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to this Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce a couple of guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. We have with us Abby Rutko. Abby was a staffer in the building here for a number of years. I had the privilege of working with her for quite a while in the Health minister's office. Great person, and we miss her dearly.

And with Abby is Alex Kostenko. When Abby left the building, she went to a career at Conexus Credit Union, Mr. Speaker. Alex is also at Conexus Credit Union. She's the brand new vice-president of governance and is a transplant from British Columbia, so she's a new citizen to Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to please join me in welcoming Alex and Abby to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Hon. Ms. Carr:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you in the west gallery it's my pleasure to introduce two guests here today. We have first of all the mayor of the city of Estevan, Roy Ludwig, if he could give us a wave. Roy has been a dedicated civil servant in the city of Estevan for many, many years.

But more importantly, he is one of the reasons the lights are on in this building. He has worked at the coal mine in Estevan for 45 years, and he recently retired. So not only do I thank him for his service for the city of Estevan as a municipal leader but also for his dedication to the coal mining industry within the province of Saskatchewan. So thank you for that.

And with him also today is Jeff Ward, the city manager of the city of Estevan. And Jeff has talents of his own. He's a very good golfer. If you ever need someone on your team to carry you through, that's your man right there. So I would like to welcome you to your Legislative Assembly today, and I look forward to the meetings we'll have later today.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's a pleasure to join with the member from Estevan to welcome Roy Ludwig, the mayor of Estevan, to his Assembly. Certainly Roy has been a leader in that community and in our province for many, many years. And certainly he's played a vital role as well in power production in this province. He's a strong community leader, and I welcome him to his Assembly.

It's also my pleasure to welcome Jeff Ward, the city manager, to his Assembly here today. We thank him for his service and dedication as well to the people of Estevan.

And while I'm on my feet I just want to give a nice, warm, big shout-out to my good friend Erin Harlos that's leading that very fine group of grade 12's that's here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Ms. A. Young:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and present a petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for the funding of in vitro fertilization treatments in Saskatchewan.

[10:15]

Mr. Speaker, the undersigned residents of this province wish to bring to our attention the following issues: 1 in 6 couples in Canada will experience infertility, Mr. Speaker. That is so, so many in this beautiful province. And, Mr. Speaker, they'd like us to know in particular that these treatments are prohibitively expensive. As noted, the medication alone can cost anywhere up to \$7,000, which precedes the treatments which typically cost per cycle around \$10,000. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people's ability to conceive and grow their family should not depend on their socio-economic status.

I will 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 [in vitro fertilization] treatment for Saskatchewan people experiencing infertility.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition are from Rosetown, Kindersley, and also Rosetown, Mr. Speaker. 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. Investing in women's economic empowerment is crucial to women achieving gender equality, and legislating pay equity is a key component of this.

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 all of Canada which is the result of systemic gender discrimination in compensation for work; that while pay equity advocacy primarily seeks to address gender-based wage discrimination, it must also be mindful of ability, age, identity, and race-based wage discrimination.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatories for the petition today reside in Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Conway:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be on my feet to present a petition calling for changes to the new social assistance program, SIS [Saskatchewan income support]. This program represents further cuts to social assistance. Unlike its predecessors, it does not directly pay for housing and utilities, and it has led to the dramatic increase in rental arrears, evictions, and homelessness across this great province.

I'll read the prayer:

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

The signatories of this petition reside in Regina and Sedley. I do so present.

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

**Ms. Nippi-Albright:** — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be on my feet today to present this petition. Chief Piapot was an influential leader for First Nations on Treaty 4 land who brought his fight for treaty rights to a camp at Pile O' Bones located at what is now the legislative grounds. The west lawn has become a de facto site for Indigenous expression due to its proximity to the Legislative Assembly.

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 signatures of this petition reside in Norquay, Keeseekoose First Nation, and Fishing Lake First Nation. I do so present.

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

**National Addictions Awareness Week**

**Mr. Fiaz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize that November 21st to 27th is National Addictions Awareness Week. Mr. Speaker, we know that substance use and addictions are a problem faced by residents in Saskatchewan and across the country. Addictions do not discriminate; they affect people of all ages and walks of life.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget invests a record amount of money, \$458 towards addictions and mental health programs. As announced in the Throne Speech, our government is committed to adding 150 more beds, 150 more intensive addictions treatment and detox spaces across the province over the next three years. This year we are adding 12 more intensive addictions treatment beds in Estevan.

Mr. Speaker, we are also improving access to harm reduction supplies. Earlier this year we made drug-checking test strips available at Prairie Harm Reduction in Saskatoon and Nēwo-Yôtina Friendship Centre in Regina. The availability of these test strips will be further expanded in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all the members join me in recognizing Addictions Awareness Week and thank all the professionals in health care and CBO [community-based organization] sectors who work to support Saskatchewan people with addictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**International Day for the  
Elimination of Violence Against Women**

**Ms. Bowes:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize today as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Violence against women is sickeningly pervasive in our province. Last year 13 women and girls were killed in Saskatchewan, representing the second-highest rate of killings of women and girls, second only to Nova Scotia due to a mass shooting event there. Nearly 10 per cent of women and girls killed in Canada in 2020 were from Saskatchewan, despite the fact that Saskatchewan represents only about 3 per cent of women in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the highest rates of domestic violence in all of Canada are experienced right here in Saskatchewan, double the national average. Just yesterday we heard that YWCA Regina has had to turn away 181 women and 61 children this month alone. Front-line agencies simply do not have the necessary funding from this government to provide basic, safe refuge. During the pandemic, things have only gotten worse. Saskatoon police reported that domestic disturbance calls last year increased 24 per cent since 2019.

Mr. Speaker, not only do Saskatchewan women desperately need this government to step up and provide more resources to deal with the aftermath of violence against women, we need proactive leadership to shift attitudes and norms that allow the crisis of violence against women to fester in our province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Maple Creek Bull Rider Wins Canadian Title**

**Mr. Steele:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the accomplishments of Jared Parsonage from Maple Creek. Jared recently capped a successful 2021 rodeo year, winning the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association's bull riding title.

Jared was crowned an average winner in bull riding, outperforming Canada's best. He finished his season with an electric ride on Outlawed Buckers' bull, Homegrown, earning 87 points and securing his average title and his first Canadian title in bull riding.

Jared was also named the CPRA All-Around Cowboy for 2021. Not only is Jared the Canadian champion bull rider, he is an elite-level team roper. This skill no doubt was earned learning out on the ranch in Cypress Hills. It's a way of life that comes natural to many, but most likely very few in this House.

Mr. Speaker, Jared is a role model to countless young bull riders from Maple Creek and area. When he's riding he can be assured young future cowboys and cowgirls are watching. Mr. Speaker, you can be sure they are watching with pride. Congratulations on the Canadian title, and all the best in the future. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Pump Track Opens in Regina's Lakeview Neighbourhood**

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, on October the 15th on the corner of McCallum and Montague, the Lakeview Community Association opened Regina's very first pump track. For those who may not be aware, this all-ages facility is a rolling track designed for those who love to bike, skate, scooter, and wheel. The track has rolling hills and banked curves allowing riders to use their momentum and body weight to zip around the course rather than pedalling or pushing.

And while the pump track would have been a welcome neighbourhood addition at any time, Mr. Speaker, it is especially so in the middle of a pandemic when gathering indoors has been difficult and people have turned to the outdoors with a renewed passion. While only open for a few weeks, already hundreds if not thousands of hours have been logged on the track.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of the project was 160,000, no small chunk of change. This project was brought to fruition by the huge fundraising efforts of local businesses, community members, and grants. Mark Kress was the lead on special projects for the Lakeview Community Association. "It's been a crazy, great response and I'm sure there'll be more of these little pop-ups for the city in the future," he said.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to thank Mark and the community association, along with the donors, sponsors, and champions of this exciting addition to the neighbourhood. Thank you.

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



#### 4-H Program Prepares Youth for Public Speaking

**Mr. Bonk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. “Learn to do by doing.” This is a familiar saying to a lot of families in Saskatchewan, but to those who don’t know, this is the 4-H motto. 4-H is a 119-year-old program which has been a staple in many of the Saskatchewan communities.

In this program, youth learn how to conduct a meeting according to Robert’s Rules, keep accurate records, manage a project, as well as to write and deliver a speech in front of an audience. Last spring, nearly 3,000 youth from across the province participated in provincial 4-H public speaking. I’m proud to say that my daughter was among them. 4-H has taken upon itself to ensure that youth who go through the program learn how to convey their thoughts confidently and competently as well as speak to a crowd, which is such an important skill in today’s society.

4-H is a fantastic organization, and it is currently Canada’s largest out-of-school education program. 4-H teaches pride and workmanship and accomplishments, personal interaction with peers, respect for our environment, as well as respect for their elders and club leaders. Saskatchewan alone has more than 200 clubs with around 3,000 members. It is a place to form relationships and learn life skills that last a lifetime.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, the 4-H motto is “learn to do by doing.” And in that spirit, I’d like to acknowledge my daughter Emma, a proud 4-H member and now two-time provincial 4-H public speaking champion, for preparing this member statement today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Saskatoon Professor Awarded 2020 Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal

**Ms. Lambert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Richard Strayer, a constituent and role model who exemplifies our prairie spirit, is a recipient of the 2020 Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal.

Sharing his talents by donating countless volunteer hours to many community organizations, Dick Strayer was a member of the Saskatoon Nutana Rotary Club for 50 years. Mr. Speaker, with the rotary club, he was instrumental in organizing Meals on Wheels, a city-wide walk marathon to support the YMCA [Young Men’s Christian Association], and collaborating with the city of Saskatoon to develop the Beaver Creek Conservation area.

Dick Strayer has volunteered for 22 years with the Saskatoon Council on Aging and has served as a board member for the council for the past six years. He developed the first caregiver resource guide, a role that he is personally familiar with. Mr. Strayer was an engineering professor at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] who took early retirement to look after his wife who suffered from multiple sclerosis.

Dick is a former president of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan, as well as a long-time board member and former president of the Saskatoon Prairieland Exhibition. If that isn’t an impressive enough volunteer list, he also served as a board member and president of

the Saskatoon Board of Trade.

I now ask all members to join me congratulating Richard Strayer for being awarded the 2020 Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Cosmo Industries Celebrates 50th Anniversary

**Mr. Buckingham:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Cosmo Industries in Saskatoon, who are celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. Cosmo Industries has been a part of the Saskatoon community since 1971, and in that time they have improved the quality of life for so many people who are experiencing intellectual disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, Cosmo Industries creates employment and community opportunities which has many benefits, but most importantly these opportunities give Cosmo participants a chance to show the community their infinite strengths and skills. Mr. Speaker, I would encourage any business owner in the Saskatoon area who is interested in creating an inclusive work environment to reach out about the Cosmo-supported work program.

[10:30]

Mr. Speaker, we all know that diversity is a positive and a powerful thing. Cosmo has been practising that for 50 years. Their passion and commitment to the individuals that they serve makes the city of Saskatoon and our province a stronger and more diverse place to live and work. Mr. Speaker, I now ask all members to join me in recognition of Cosmo Industries’ 50th anniversary, and thank their staff and participants for all of the hard work that they do in our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Provision of Security at Legislative Building

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier refused to answer a single question about Bill 70, so I’ll ask him again. Have there been any threats to this building, to MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], to staff, to media that the Premier or his office have failed to share with the opposition or the Sergeant-at-Arms?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To answer to that particular question, there are a number of reported incidents that have happened over time to people that either work in the building or have visited the building, and MLAs, to be frank. So these concerns have been taken seriously. They were reported to the appropriate Sergeant-at-Arms’ office and left in their good stead, Mr. Speaker. It is the responsibility of government to ensure public safety, safety and security to all people in the

province, and that does not stop with the Legislative Building.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Here's another question the Premier refused to answer yesterday: can the Premier point to a single example, including the ones that the minister just mentioned, of when the Sergeant-at-Arms failed to keep this building safe?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon us to be proactive in this regard, to make strong efforts to keep people safe and not just wait for something to happen. That's what Bill 70 is about, and we intend to continue on with discussions. We've invited or . . . The opposition has been made aware of this particular bill a number of weeks ago. They didn't want to participate. We will continue to investigate, to ensure public safety in this building and beyond, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, when the minister mentions a proactive response, can she explain what she means?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Well the word "proactive" is, unto itself, obvious: that we take actions necessary to prevent something from happening, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we're planning on doing, and we will continue with discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister said something like this yesterday too to the media. She said, "We haven't been able to get them addressed effectively, and we'd rather be proactive in our security stance than reacting when something bad happens." She says much has changed since 1984, but it sounds to me like they're trying to make it more like Orwell's *1984*. What exactly would a proactive approach to shutting down protests look like for this minister?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Taking proactive action is what our policing community throughout the province, throughout Canada, actually does. That is part of their job. It's called — listen up — crime prevention, Mr. Speaker. We are taking the same approach as what our policing partners do, what we're responsible for in this legislature and beyond and throughout the entire community.

Mr. Speaker, we have just initiated a number of teams of police officers and support staff throughout the province to keep people safe. We're looking at the entire province, but also the safety and

security of all who come into the building, who work in the building, and we will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Can the minister please explain what sort of proactive work isn't being done by the Sergeant-at-Arms?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I think to, you know, elaborate on the historical context here, prior to 1984 — if we're going to use 1984 as the benchmark — that there was a security-type service within this building very similar to what this particular government is looking for, Mr. Speaker.

So proactive means taking appropriate action. When we look at the number of incidents that have been reported to us, we found that there were gaps. We're trying to address those gaps, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Can the minister please explain why those gaps cannot be addressed at the BOIE [Board of Internal Economy] table?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Mr. Speaker, we are aware of certain gaps within our security, within this building, and beyond its walls. Those are the areas which we're hoping to address with a new public safety, security . . . particular unit, Mr. Speaker. The work done by the Sergeant-at-Arms and his staff has been good. The world is changing. We need to address those changes to keep people safe.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, if there are gaps in our security, why is the government refusing to share that information with the opposition?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — We have worked over time with many interested parties here, including the opposition, with how we can improve security services in the Legislative Assembly. Ultimately many of these barriers to improving service are structural and jurisdictional in nature. These changes will provide access to additional resources that will allow new security positions to work with the Sergeant-at-Arms and others on eliminating these jurisdictional issues and improving security within the building and beyond its walls, Mr. Speaker.

As the opposition is very well aware, we attempted to work together to discuss the issue and seek bipartisan co-operation,

Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I see the Premier sitting in his chair, refusing to answer these important, straightforward questions. I will ask him again if he will find some courage, stand in his place, and point to a single time when the Sergeant-at-Arms has failed to keep this building safe.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech this government announced a number of initiatives to help keep people safe throughout the province. As we said, the safety and security of the people in this building is important, and it is incumbent upon government to ensure that people in this building are as safe as they possibly can be.

Let me point to the provincial protective services branch, Mr. Speaker. This is a conglomerate, a coming together of many enforcement arms of government, that we brought them together under one umbrella because we believe that it's necessary to break down those silos that currently exist, through no fault of anybody's, and ensure that those members — conservation officers, highway patrol officers — are able to respond to areas of public safety throughout the province. Mr. Speaker, this is, albeit different, it's really one and the same. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister for Corrections and Policing said that she thinks it's fine to plow ahead with this bill just because she can. She told the *Leader-Post*, "This is a government building, so what can I say? We're the government."

This building doesn't belong to the Sask Party; it belongs to all the people of Saskatchewan. Is this the real reason why this government is plowing ahead with this arrogant and entitled power grab — just because they think they can?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House is the people's House, and it is our job to ensure that the people that are in it, working in it, visiting it are as safe and secure as possible.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, the independent Sergeant-at-Arms has been protecting us all for decades. It is essential to our democracy that legislature must be independent from government. This work ensures all members are safe on both sides and ensures access for all Saskatchewan people, not just the ones who agree with the government of the day. Why is the minister throwing decades of precedent right out the window with Bill 70?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing right out the door with this. These issues and concerns that have been brought to our attention have gone on for a significant amount of time.

Mr. Speaker, we made changes to legislation just over a year ago to try and work with the jurisdictional issues. There still are gaps in our security to keep people safe, and we will continue those discussions, hopefully with the members of the opposition if they so oblige, Mr. Speaker. Our job is to ensure people are safe and secure while in this building and beyond its walls.

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

**Ms. Sarauer:** — Mr. Speaker, there's no shortage of reasons why Saskatchewan people should think twice about giving this government more control over who gets to protest at the legislature and use Wascana Park. Let's remember, this is the government that tried to order the Regina police to kick Indigenous protestors off the lawn twice. They rewrote the rules to push a building through for one of their biggest corporate donors as well.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 70 isn't about safety. It's about power and it's about control. Why won't this minister just do the right thing and scrap Bill 70?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

**Hon. Ms. Tell:** — Mr. Speaker, safety and security is the responsibility of government, for the people, for the entire population throughout this province, including within this building and beyond its walls.

To say that the government was telling the police what to do . . . Mr. Speaker, we have conservation officers. We have highway patrol officers. We have sheriffs that are responsible to government, Mr. Speaker. We do not involve ourselves in the operational procedures of any of those particular units, including the Regina Police Service.

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

### Support for Long-Term Care Facilities

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, what a shame. What a shame that this government is more focused on its own self-serving vanity projects than on serving the people of Saskatchewan.

Let me bring, let me bring this entitled government back to planet Earth. Over 900 people have died of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan, but earlier this week the Health minister said he doesn't want to look in the rear-view mirror. There've been over 900 COVID deaths, and those people, they're not looking in the rear-view mirror because they're living with that grief every single day.

Of those deaths, 154 were in the care of this province in long-term care, and nearly half of those deaths were seniors over the age of 80. Does the Minister for Seniors recognize that this government's failed COVID response has failed seniors?

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

[10:45]

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've taken this issue very seriously. And I've extended my condolences, as the minister responsible, on behalf of the government to all of the families who have lost loved ones as a result of COVID-19, whether in long-term care or throughout this province.

Mr. Speaker, the deaths that have occurred have been tragic. That's why, since the start of the pandemic, we have taken a number of steps and implemented a number of measures to make sure that we can try to protect those that are most vulnerable in this province including, dating back to 2020, staff and visitor health screening, continuous masking for staff, rapid testing for staff, prioritizing vaccines for our seniors and our elderly population as soon as we were able to do that, and a number of other issues and restrictions that were implemented, very difficult decisions, by the way, that we had to make as a government in order to protect the people of this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's an issue we take seriously. And we'll continue to make sure that we make these important decisions to support the seniors across Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, this government's failed action on COVID has failed seniors, and the Ombudsman report has all the evidence that we need. In the Ombudsman report released this summer, the findings are horrific: 20 per cent of residents tragically lost their lives.

Although the ministry was aware of crowded rooms and short-staffing issues for years, what the Ombudsman said is nearly a decade, this government neglected to take "meaningful, proactive, and effective steps to mitigate the threat of an outbreak." Why did the Seniors minister and all those former Health ministers on the other side not act on known dangerous and deadly conditions in that home?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to this specific home, as the minister responsible, last winter I wrote to the Ombudsman asking for her office to conduct a thorough investigation. It took place, Mr. Speaker, and in August she submitted a report detailing what occurred in the Parkside Extendicare situation and provided a number of recommendations, both to Extendicare and to the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority].

The SHA has implemented all of those recommendations, is my understanding, including the elimination of four residents per

room. That no longer is the case in Saskatchewan as of the end of March, Mr. Speaker. And since that point in time, we appointed the SHA as an interim administrator of the five Extendicare homes in Saskatchewan. The SHA determined upon that review that it would be responsible for a transition of responsibility to occur from Extendicare to the SHA. Mr. Speaker, that process is taking place right now.

We are concerned about making sure that we have the best possible care for seniors and elderly patients and residents across this province. This is about continuous improvement in long-term care, Mr. Speaker, and improving upon the record of those members opposite.

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

**Mr. Love:** — Mr. Speaker, this minister's colleague just said, and I quote, it is incumbent on this government to work proactively and to not just sit and wait for something to happen.

Well the Ombudsman notes, the Ombudsman notes that there was 254 days, fully eight months, from when the pandemic was declared to when the outbreak started at Parkside. For each one of those 254 days, that minister had all the warning signs he needed sitting on the shelf of his office. The Ombudsman report findings are not new. The government had been warned of serious issues at Extendicare for years.

In 2013 they knew that there was overcrowding, short-staffing, and infrastructure issues. From reports in every year from 2013 to 2019, they all tell the same story. And still this government has not implemented the auditor and Ombudsman recommendations for public reporting on conditions, and for these homes to be regularly inspected. Why not?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that there is one remaining recommendation that has yet to be implemented, and that is being acted upon as we speak. In addition to that, some of the other steps that are being taken that I've already discussed prior to this . . . But in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we will soon be piloting a new long-term care home inspection process across this province to make sure that we're always looking at finding better ways to improve the care for seniors and elderly residents across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to put on the record as well where we're starting from and the number of investments that this government has made, both into staffing and into capital, when it comes to long-term care in this province.

A number of new long-term care facilities, 15, Mr. Speaker; an additional four that have been announced; one that will soon open in Meadow Lake. More nurses. More doctors. A commitment to hire more continuing care aides, of which the first 95 FTEs [full-time equivalent] have been hired this budget year. And we'll fill the rest of those as quickly as we can, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to improving care for seniors across Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Love:** — Oh believe me, Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions on this government's spin which no one in the long-term care sector believes. Now, Mr. Speaker, this government has finally gotten out of business with Extendicare. Well this is too little and too late. Too many seniors lost, too many families are grieving as a result of this government's inaction. We know that it cost nearly half a million dollars for the SHA to come in to help save lives when it became so clear that Extendicare wasn't able to get the job done.

But what we don't know is, how much will it cost this government to end their dangerous and deadly relationship with Extendicare? And we also don't know, is this truly the end of for-profit care in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hindley:** — Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the member opposite's asking right now. He's asking about how much it's going to cost to exit the contract with Extendicare. So I don't know if he's saying that he thinks we should stay with . . . I just don't know what he's implying, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, here's what the facts are. We have a number of long-term care facilities in this province. A number are operated by the SHA. We also have some that are run by affiliate-based organizations that do very good work, providing care across this province, in our cities, in our rural communities across Saskatchewan, providing care for the long-term care residents of Saskatchewan.

We regularly conduct patient and family and resident surveys of the residents of long-term care, Mr. Speaker. Over 85 per cent of those respondents indicate that they are happy with the level of care, but as I've said earlier, this government is committed to continue its improvement. We're always looking at new and better ways to improve the care that we provide for the residents in long-term care across Saskatchewan, and we're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Irrigation Project at Lake Diefenbaker**

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Mr. Speaker, this government has announced its intention to move ahead with a \$4 billion irrigation project with Lake Diefenbaker. There is no question that this project has potential, but it's also clear that there are still many unanswered questions regarding the economics and feasibility, the environment, the duty-to-consult, and the impact on downstream users.

Yesterday we wrote to the government asking that an all-party committee be formed to get answers to these key questions about this project. Will the government work with us, strike an all-party committee, and get the answers Saskatchewan people are looking for on this massive project?

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

**Hon. Mr. Bradshaw:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's great to be able to get up and talk about the irrigation project when we have Agribition going on this week in the city, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Diefenbaker irrigation project is an investment in our provincial infrastructure for the people of Saskatchewan. Irrigation supports the growth and diverse high-value crops which increases on-farm profitability and creates more opportunities for value-added processing, business attraction, and employment.

Mr. Speaker, several information sessions were held this past summer in the communities of Whitecap Dakota First Nation, Delisle, Outlook, and they were very well attended. I'd like to thank the member from Saskatoon Nutana for attending one of the sessions in Delisle and saw the 160 people in attendance. And I'm sure she can affirm that those people had a very positive response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Mr. Speaker, that did not even come close to answering my question. And for the record, when I've been consulting with stakeholders, all that has been achieved is there's been more that has come to light in terms of the need for an all-party committee.

I will ask again: will the government put partisanship aside and strike an all-party committee to make sure that if this project goes ahead, Saskatchewan people will have all the facts?

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

**Hon. Mr. Bradshaw:** — Mr. Speaker, the Diefenbaker irrigation project is an investment in provincial infrastructure for the people of Saskatchewan. The origins of this project were started years ago. In fact Tommy Douglas signed the agreement that actually started the program. In it, he called it a multiple dam project powering irrigation and recreation. He also said it was the most single most important project ever undertaken in Saskatchewan. Then the NDP [New Democratic Party] government of the day put the kiss of death on it and shut it down. Mr. Speaker, even John Diefenbaker said, "I'm appalled at this damnable decision of the NDP government."

As far as the committee, Mr. Speaker, no.

#### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

##### **PRIVATE BILLS**

##### **SECOND READINGS**

##### **Bill No. 902 — *The Mennonite Union Waisenamt Amendment Act, 2021***

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill

No. 902, *The Mennonite Union Waisenamt Amendment Act, 2021* be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved that Bill No. 902, *The Mennonite Union Waisenamt Amendment Act, 2021* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this bill.

**The Speaker:** — Pursuant to rule 104, this bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

#### **Bill No. 903 — *The Collège Mathieu Act***

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

**Mr. Goudy:** — Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 903, *The Collège Mathieu Act* be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved that Bill No. 903, *The Collège Mathieu Act* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this bill.

**The Speaker:** — Pursuant to rule 104, this bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

#### **Bill No. 904 — *The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, 2021***

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

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill No. 904. And at the conclusion of my brief comments, I will be moving second reading of Bill No. 904, *The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, 2021*.

A constituent and former colleague of mine, Beth Williamson, approached me earlier this year regarding this bill to amend *The United Church of Canada Act*. As you may know, the United Church of Canada was founded in 1925 after the union of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Canada. In those days it was common for religious organizations to have their own

private Acts, which the United Church has in Saskatchewan, along with in many other provinces.

Recently the United Church of Canada undertook some governance changes which required changes to their private Act in Saskatchewan. I'm very pleased to have had the opportunity to work with a team from the United Church on this bill to implement those changes. And I am pleased to move that Bill No. 904, *The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, 2021* be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved that Bill No. 904, *The United Church of Canada Amendment Act, 2021* be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this bill.

**The Speaker:** — Pursuant to rule 104, this bill stands committed to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

[11:00]

#### **SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE**

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

#### **Protection for Seniors during COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Mr. Love:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand in the Assembly. And at the end of my comments I will be making a motion:

That the Assembly condemns the government for their failure to protect seniors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan.

But before I get there, it is my intention to lay out evidence that strongly supports this statement. And the evidence shows that this government not only could have done more, but didn't even come close to doing enough to protect seniors in the province of Saskatchewan during the pandemic. It is my intention to show this by looking at evidence in reports that come from both the Ombudsman and the auditor, reports commissioned by this government, information that they asked for but did not act on. And I anticipate hearing, from members opposite, evidence that has nothing to do with the realities that have been faced by seniors in this province over the last nearly two years and well before that during their term in government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to start by acknowledging that there have been over 900 COVID-related deaths in this province — 900 families who are left grieving, who are left questioning what could have been done differently. Of those 900 deaths, 154 were

residents of long-term care, individuals in the care of this government who were let down. That is a clear sign that this government has failed to protect seniors in Saskatchewan. Of those over 900 deaths, 373 were in the age group of 60 to 79; 401 were in the 80-plus age group. Mr. Speaker, that is an astronomical number of people lost to a preventable disease.

Now before the members opposite mount a straw-man defence of these numbers, let me assure them that we in opposition absolutely accept the fact that COVID-19 disproportionately affects the elderly. Everyone accepts that. That is a fact. This is something that was very clear early on in the pandemic, that when it comes to COVID, age is a significant risk factor. But it is my opinion that knowing the risks that age presents for seniors in this province, that this government failed Saskatchewan seniors. Knowing the risks that are present, they did not take the appropriate actions to keep seniors safe. And it's not just seniors in long-term care or personal care homes; this is seniors across the province.

This government failed to act, completely abandoned their responsibilities during the fourth wave, and allowed COVID to . . . They carved out a path that was the worst path in Canada. Seniors suffered because of those decisions. Seniors died because of those decisions. They made decisions to have a Saskatchewan summer that created a fall and winter of misery, and the folks who are experiencing the most misery are seniors and their loved ones.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to look back at what happened in the beginning of the pandemic. We had an opportunity in Saskatchewan. We saw what was happening in other parts of our nation and in other parts of the world. We saw what was happening in care homes in Ontario and Quebec, and the destruction that COVID was causing there.

In Saskatchewan we were fortunate, not because of actions taken by this government. We were fortunate to see what was happening in other parts of Canada, but we had a chance to get it right. We had a chance to do things differently than what was done in other provinces and other parts of the world. And we did nothing, nothing that we would consider proactive. What the minister today said, it is incumbent on this government to work proactively and not just sit back and wait for something to happen. This government is guilty of sitting back and waiting for the pandemic to arrive in our care homes.

What were the warning signs, Mr. Speaker? Well there were plenty and I'll list several. We'll go back all the way to 2010. In 2010 a report was written by the current minister for Parks, Culture and Sport. It was commissioned by who is now the current minister for Government Relations and the then minister of Health. And this report recommended an independent seniors' advocate be appointed in the province of Saskatchewan. Let's imagine for a moment if this government had accepted its own advice and appointed a seniors' advocate. What would that have done during the pandemic?

Well it's interesting that Canada's pre-eminent health journalist André Picard writes in his book *Neglected No More* that every province in Canada should have a seniors' advocate. This government should have taken their own advice. André Picard writes that during the pandemic "No one did more for seniors in

this country than the seniors' advocate in British Columbia."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been calling for a seniors' advocate in opposition for years. But this government didn't listen to its own recommendation in 2010 to appoint an independent seniors' advocate that could have saved lives — one example of how this government has failed seniors during the pandemic.

Let's look at 2015. A report from the Provincial Ombudsman recommended that this government publicly report on each care home's ability to meet guidelines for special-care homes. Today in question period we heard the Minister for Seniors claim that that recommendation is being worked on at this very minute. We heard the minister claim today that that recommendation is being worked on. That was six years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, six years ago. Had they followed through on that recommendation, more seniors would be alive today — another indication that this government has failed seniors.

In 2016 the Provincial Auditor raised concerns about the relationship between this government and the only provider of for-profit long-term care. The auditor recommended that the government, and I quote:

Clarify the accountability relationship between the Ministry of Health, the Authority, and the contracted special-care homes and update contracts with homes accordingly.

Furthermore:

The current relationship is complex and confusing. A clarified accountability relationship would clear up to homes to whom they are accountable and for what. In addition, it would streamline responsibilities for monitoring homes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was that confusion, that confusion between the ministry, the Health Authority, and Extendicare that led to Extendicare not following health measures that were supposed to be implemented there. It was that confusing relationship that the Ombudsman found at the very centre of the worst outbreak in the province that led to 39 individuals tragically passing away.

How much more evidence do we need than the auditor, the Ombudsman, and the reports issued by this government to prove that they have failed seniors in this province during the pandemic? It is their own words. It is the independent investigations that provide that evidence. It is not my words, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now if they choose to argue with these words, then shame on them. If they choose to argue with the Ombudsman, the auditor, and their own ministers, then shame on them.

Now the one tool that this government says that they rely on for accountability in long-term care is the CEO [chief executive officer] tour reports. But these reports also included alarming information, information that could have been acted on to keep seniors alive. Those reports detailed dangerous conditions that threatened infection control inside our care homes. These reports, going all the way back to 2013, every year from 2013 to 2019, flagged these warning signs, warning signs that sat on the minister's shelf for 254 days between when the pandemic was

declared and when the outbreak started at Parkside.

I'll read them again, but I hope members opposite are familiar with them by now. Four beds in a room was not acted on before the outbreak began. 1 to 30 staffing ratio overnight. Infrastructure and HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] concerns that hampered infection control. These damning CEO tour reports go back to 2013 but again, again I will read the words of the minister from question period today: it is incumbent on this government to work proactively and not just sit and wait for something to happen. Shame.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to take a few minutes to talk about broken promises, broken promises that this government made during the 2020 campaign. This government clearly recognizes that conditions in long-term care pose a threat to its residents due to short-staffing. During the campaign, the Sask Party offered a big promise of hiring 300 continuing care aides. Now had they done any of the preliminary work to make that big promise a possibility, like increasing capacity in training programs, working with post-secondary institutions, working with health care unions, working even with the opposition to make that a reality, it might have been believable. But none of those things were done. It was an election promise that had no reasonable path to being fulfilled.

Nevertheless the promise of hiring 300 continuing care aides in this budget year was repeated in committee by that minister and it was repeated at a SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention by our Premier days before the budget dropped. Just days, they continued to repeat that and claimed that it would be done in this year. Of course that has not happened.

It's interesting to note that the Minister for Seniors admitted in committee that the promise to hire more care aides had nothing to do with the pandemic, but it was about short-staffing issues that were there before the pandemic. No kidding. That's the kind of proactive work that could have been done to keep seniors safe, but they didn't do it and they have failed seniors in this province.

Now it struck me as strange to see a couple of weeks ago that the government released a press release and the Premier released a tweet that said that . . . They patted themselves on the back for hiring 95 new continuing care aides. Well that struck me as strange because that minister admitted in committee last spring that we had over 185 vacant positions in long-term care for continuing care aides. So this number of new care aides doesn't even come close to getting back to the level where we should be before we even start to consider that number of 300 new positions.

And I'm not going to get into the responses. I think other members of the opposition will talk about this. None of this passes the sniff test. Our health care unions are reporting that those positions have not been filled. People have just been moved around. It's a smokescreen, and it doesn't pass the test.

Now let's take a quick look in my closing couple of minutes here at that Ombudsman report. I want to read just a couple of things that jump out at me as being especially alarming, and if any members opposite have not taken time to review the report, I urge you to. I urge you to. I think it's your responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, 194 of the 198 residents tested positive for COVID-19 — 194 out of 198. Thirty-nine of those tragically died. Three other residents who had tested positive for COVID later died of other causes. One hundred thirty-two Parkside staff also tested positive. This is an unmitigated disaster, but all of the warning signs were there for this government to take action before the outbreak began. And I'll remind the Assembly 254 days passed, 254 days between when the pandemic was declared and the outbreak began.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read again from the Ombudsman's report. The Ombudsman found that:

Though Parkside could have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak at any time, as it happened, Extendicare, the Authority and the Ministry had 254 days, or a little over 8 months from when the pandemic was officially declared, to establish, update and implement their policies, orders, standards and practices to ensure . . . residents were being cared for . . .

How can this government claim that they protected seniors?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move a motion:

That the Assembly condemns the government for their failure to protect seniors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

[11:15]

[Interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Eastview:

That the Assembly condemns the government for their failure . . .

[Interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order.

That the Assembly condemns the government for their failure to protect seniors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The past year and a half has been a challenging time for everyone. Regardless of age, race, gender, or jurisdiction, COVID-19 has impacted us all. But how people around the world have responded in the face of those challenges has been anything but consistent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some people experienced fear and confusion. They panicked. I don't want to name names or even use initials, but suffice it to say that those people offer little more than negative dialogue and perceptions. They have no direction or positivity. Admittedly,



Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know many of these people, only about a dozen or so, but they're out there.

And unfortunately they tend to blame others for everything going on around them. Perhaps they simply can't accept that a global pandemic is a dangerous and often tragic reality. Maybe they fail to understand that we are all going through this situation together, and that the best way through it is to try and work together too. Or maybe it just makes them feel better to cast blame on others, so that they don't have to look critically at themselves to see if there's anything they could be doing to help the situation.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have also seen remarkable demonstrations of generosity and compassion during this time, especially in this province. Countless citizens in Saskatchewan have inspired those around them with acts of kindness. For example, we have seen healthy individuals offering free delivery of necessities like food and toiletries to those who may be isolated and unable to leave home due to illness.

Here in Saskatchewan we have seen demonstrations of ingenuity where people have found new and better ways to do things. I think about the Moose Jaw and District Chamber of Commerce and how their Big Give initiative found a way to feed families in need while at the same time supporting the struggling restaurant industry. A simple concept whereby community members who wanted to make donations could easily do so at any local co-op store. Those funds purchased meals from local restaurants which were then delivered to families in need through Moose Jaw Food Bank and Hunger in Moose Jaw. I will remind the members of this Assembly that initiative raised over \$27,000, fed over 2,600 people, and supported 23 of our local restaurants.

Those are the types of things the people of Saskatchewan do in difficult times, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and as a government, we are incredibly proud of them and we express our deepest appreciation for them. They stand in stark contrast to those with no defined purpose, who choose to instead point fingers of blame trying desperately to spread their fears and discord.

We see that same contrast in this Chamber daily, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The NDP members opposite spend their time and energy trying to cast blame on the government for all things pandemic-related. They have shamelessly slandered members on this side of the House to the point that several of them have been called upon to withdraw their comments and apologize. In fact the Leader of the Opposition has had to do so twice in the last week alone.

The members opposite are clearly ignoring the fact that every jurisdiction in the nation, if not around the world, is facing the same challenges. Those members choose to blame others for circumstances they don't like rather than trying to examine things they could do that might actually help the situation. For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they could appreciate that since 2008 this government has invested nearly \$2 billion building new hospitals and long-term care facilities, many of which were needed to replace the ones they closed. Or they could stop thumbing their nose at the hiring of hundreds of new nurses, continuing care aides, and the recruitment of countless doctors since 2007.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government has worked hard to address the COVID-19 pandemic in practical and meaningful ways. We

have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to combat this virus, setting record-high investments in health and education. Our government has supported the families and communities of Saskatchewan as they found innovative ways to continue to thrive despite the public health restrictions that were necessary to keep us all safe.

I will get into greater detail about that in a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But before I do, I want to highlight that even before the first case of COVID-19 was detected in our province, this government took steps to protect our citizens from infection and spread of that virus. And the first demographic this government sought to protect was our seniors, understanding that they were at the highest risk of negative outcomes.

Then as soon as the vaccine became available our government once again targeted our seniors and the most vulnerable members of our community in the first stages of our vaccination rollout plan. And when our province began offering vaccination booster shots, the government once again ensured that our seniors and most vulnerable citizens were protected first.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opposition to bring a motion calling for the condemnation of the government over the protection of seniors is simply ridiculous. But I suppose it's a fitting motion to come from the NDP, since the definition of "condemn" is merely to express disapproval. It's a motion of inaction. Nothing is required but to sit there with indignation, wagging your finger.

So we shouldn't be surprised to learn that that's what the members opposite desire. Not only does it reinforce the fact that the NDP want to blame the government for a global reality that no jurisdiction in the world has been immune from, but it also highlights the fact that they have not been listening to all of the innovative and supportive work the government has been doing to build, grow, and protect this province, not the least of which includes our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, here are just a few of the many things this government has done to support our seniors and continue to keep them safe. First, on top of the \$750 million our government already spends on long-term care services annually, we have invested \$6 million to hire up to 108 continuing care aides. As of November 4th, 2021, 95 of those 108 have already been hired. Let me repeat that. As of November 4th, 95 of the 108 have already been hired. That means in our first year we have already added nearly 100 CCAs [continuing care aide], Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The members opposite struggled to fire them at that rate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since taking over as governing party in 2007, our government has increased the number of staff working in long-term care facilities by over 725. That means we now have more than 5,100 CCAs, more than 2,100 LPNs [licensed practical nurse], RNs [registered nurse], and RPNs [registered practical nurse] working in our long-term care facilities.

Our government has also supported seniors by increasing the seniors' income plan by more than 33 per cent to a maximum of \$360 per month. As of December 2020 we kept our promise by providing full coverage of air and ground ambulance costs for inter-facility transfers within the province for seniors. We also lowered the cost of ground ambulance rides for seniors from

\$275 to \$135. Our government also introduced the seniors' drug plan, which allows eligible seniors over 65 to pay just \$25 per prescription.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government cares deeply for our seniors. We respect that they helped build this province into what it is today, and we sincerely thank them for that. Our government will continue to prioritize the health, safety, and needs of our seniors, and we will never turn our backs on them.

This motion is not well founded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it embodies a general attitude that our society needs far less of right now. As we make our way out of this pandemic, the last thing we should be doing is tearing each other down for the efforts we made to get through it. After hearing all of the positive things our government has done for our seniors over the past 22 months, the NDP still offers nothing but negativity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember my grandmother telling me God gave us two ears and one mouth, which means we should listen twice as much as we speak. I wish the members opposite had met my grandmother, because I think they could have used her advice. Although given what we've seen from them thus far, I seriously doubt they would have listened to what she or any other senior like her had to say. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Yeah well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. That was quite a speech from the member from Moose Jaw North, and it's given me a lot to go on. I don't quite know where to start. I mean, from deflecting responsibility to trying to give us a lecture on how to do our job holding government to account and calling us out for being negative and so forth, it really displays a disgraceful — disgraceful and immature — understanding of what this Assembly is about, what our jobs are on both sides of the House.

And let me remind you that as Her Majesty's Official Opposition here in Saskatchewan, our job is to prosecute and ask the questions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to get to the heart of the matter of how you have been failing seniors and all Saskatchewan people by your inability to ensure that seniors were protected, that we had adequate governance and oversight in our long-term care facilities.

And so when we talk about condemnation, that is what we are getting at, is that it's been an abject failure. Seniors, those in long-term care, they've lost their lives. Families have been affected. This isn't about looking in the rear-view mirror. This is an ongoing reality for over 900 families here in Saskatchewan. And I think it's shameful that you would try to absolve yourselves of responsibility and accountability when it comes to the role that your government played, that your Minister of Health played in terms of protecting lives, particularly those of seniors.

I will make reference to the report, the summary of investigation conducted by the Ombudsman of Saskatchewan here, that in its findings reported that the Ministry of Health communicated with the public on pandemic-related initiatives and issues, but it provided no direct oversight or support to Parkside during the

pandemic or outbreak. It goes on to say that it is responsible for establishing the governing framework for the long-term care system and for deciding how much and on what initiatives public money will be spent.

This government had a crucial and vital role in protecting all of those residents in long-term care. And it's absolutely shameful that they would stand up in this House and talk about how we're in the middle of a global pandemic and that these were forces . . . essentially you're telling me these were forces beyond your control. That's simply not true.

And I don't understand. I truly do not understand how you can even enter into political life here and not understand what your role is. You had a job . . . And I am speaking directly to the Chair, the Speaker, when I say that, but I certainly hope that everyone here is hearing my remarks.

Let's go back and review a few facts. This pandemic started over a year and a half ago. The Minister of Health, as has already been mentioned by the member for Saskatoon Southeast . . . Did I get that right? Eastview. Thank you. The Minister of Health and for rural and seniors care had 254 days to act proactively, to protect the safety of those residents.

[11:30]

And isn't it interesting that we have a direct contradiction here between one minister earlier today talking about being proactive to protect public safety, and yet they did anything but. And the Ombudsman report has provided us with damning evidence to that effect. They had the opportunity to ensure that they were offering governance and oversight. They failed to do that, and as a result we had 154 residents in long-term care lose their lives.

When that was occurring, when the outbreak at Parkside was occurring, you know, I was very distressed to watch those events unfold and know that the health care workers that were working in that facility felt powerless and unable to offer care, that they weren't receiving the support that they needed to do their job, that they felt that their own lives were being put at risk. And then in the aftermath of all of that, as has been recorded in the Ombudsman report, had feelings of guilt that they weren't able to do more to protect lives of the residents in that home, in that long-term care facility.

You know, this has had impacts far and wide on so many people, whether it's been the families of those who've died, the ones that were desperately trying to provide care, provide follow-up. And their government had let them down. You failed to provide adequate governance and oversight, step in, take the adequate measures. And as has already been alluded to and itemized by the member from Saskatoon Eastview, you know, the indications were there for over a decade about the problems that were happening and, you know, that the conditions were ripe for just such an event.

And that is why I find it so absolutely deplorable when members from the opposite side rise in debate here in the legislature and try to cast and point fingers at the official opposition for simply doing our job, asking the questions, speaking up for those who don't have a voice. We are representing the voices of Saskatchewan people. It's an honour and a privilege to be here to

do that. We all have a role to play, whether it is as an opposition member or on the government side or as the Speaker. And I encourage all of you to think about how you're conducting yourself in this House and whether or not you're truly serving the people of Saskatchewan when you try to deflect responsibility and aren't willing to be accountable for your actions.

The signs were there for more than a decade. We talked about in 2010 a report commissioned by then minister of Health recommending a seniors' advocate be appointed. Think what difference that might have made to have such an individual to highlight the concerns and press for the measures that would have prevented so many of these deaths.

In 2011 we had the scrapping of minimum care standards. And what a travesty that was because then you go and you have, you know, these CEO tours through the facilities and no accountability, no accountability whatsoever, to the point where the Ombudsman in 2015 recommended that government publicly report on each care home's ability to meet guidelines, and in 2016 the Provincial Auditor raising concerns about the relationship between government and for-profit long-term care.

The signs were there. You failed to heed those signs. That led to the worst outbreaks and deaths in our long-term care homes. It failed seniors. It failed their families . . . the health care workers who had to go into that war zone and, you know, pick up the pieces from the failure of this government to provide governance and oversight. With that I will conclude my remarks.

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

**Ms. Lambert:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My constituency of Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood is home to a high number of seniors, and it is my honour and privilege to represent them in this Legislative Assembly.

Ethel Costley, the eldest of seven children, was born in Vanguard, Saskatchewan. She passed away in 2014 at the age of 101. She told the story of her family living through the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic:

We were never sick except once in 1918 during the flu epidemic. At that time we were all sick. Most of us were in bed, even Mom and Dad. The doctor arrived when Grandma Hudson was taking care of us. Grandma Hudson fed us gruel, a thin porridge made of oatmeal and cooked till it was a broth. She took an old hen to make chicken soup and fed me with Mother's moustache cup. Grandpa came to do chores. Dad got out too soon and had a bad relapse. The neighbours pitched in to help with the seeding in the spring.

Fast forward more than a century, and we find ourselves immersed in another deadly pandemic. Holly Schick is the executive director of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism. She wrote in the spring edition of the *Gray Matters* publication:

Older adults have been some of the most affected by the pandemic because they are some of the most vulnerable to COVID-19. They have dealt with isolation, staying home to protect themselves and others. This meant a loss of contact with family and friends . . .

Older adults know a lot about the value of resilience. The life experience that comes with age builds resilience . . .

Resilience isn't just about toughing it out and surviving. It is about . . . ways to thrive in the midst of adversity. Older adults have embraced new ways of doing things. In some cases they forced themselves to learn things they never would have imagined trying. They realized how important new technology was if they were going to connect with others and keep contributing to their communities.

Anxiety, stress, loneliness have been experienced by many during this pandemic, and seniors are no exception. I would like to highlight that the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism received \$300,000 in the 2020-2021 budget from our government for a three-year project to address seniors' mental health.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have witnessed the creativity and embracing of new technology first-hand in my many retirement residences. I was so proud of my seniors and how resourceful they were to keep their spirits high and adapt to the public health restrictions.

I read about Gerda Osteneck, a Regina artist and photographer who made small things like masks, aprons, books, and postcards for gifting to folks needing a boost, and sending pieces of handmade mail art monthly to "add a little colour, a little cheer, and some hope." Bill Dearborn, a Regina bird carver, wrote:

As a bird carver, the pandemic helped reveal the value I placed on colleagues and instructors, all of whom provided encouragement, knowledge, and their experience as I strive to carve the most accurate birds in an artistic habitat. At the same time the pandemic meant that I was pushed to experiment with my tools, techniques, and paints beyond my usual.

There is story after story of the resilience and positive attitudes of seniors in this province as they have faced the ongoing pandemic. They have been through hard times. They know what it takes to survive and move forward. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will share but one example of resilience close to home and how this government has made it a priority to keep our seniors safe through vaccination.

Sophie Foster celebrated her 107th birthday in late October of this year. She has lived through two pandemics, both world wars, recessions, and more. On the day that I delivered my member's statement about Sophie, my constituency assistant reached out to let her know what channel she could watch. Mrs. Foster explained that she was heading out to lunch with friends and hoped to be back in time. Sophie received both of her vaccinations on site at Preston Park II and I believe she received her booster shot yesterday.

The Minister of Seniors, in the spring edition of *Gray Matters*, wrote:

As your Minister of Seniors, one of my top priorities is protecting the health and safety of Saskatchewan's older adult population. We know that one of the highest risk factors for serious outcomes is age, and this is why Saskatchewan is employing an age-based sequencing

rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. Every person who receives the vaccine gets us one step closer to protecting our communities and keeping our friends, neighbours, and loved ones safe.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government utilized a phased approach to deliver the COVID-19 vaccines and prioritize seniors. Phase 1 of the Saskatchewan COVID-19 immunization delivery plan for first doses began in December of 2020 and focused on high-risk populations, such as residents of long-term care and personal care homes and those of advanced age. Jubilee Residences, a long-term care home in my constituency, was included in this first phase, and I was grateful.

Phase 2 began in March 2021 and targeted the general population, again based on age, starting with ages 60 to 69 and moving in 10-year age increments. My seniors and the seniors across the province living in retirement residences received their first and second doses, mine on site through the mobile immunization clinic in the comfort of familiar surroundings.

We have now moved into vaccination booster doses. Phase 1 of the booster doses started on September 7th and included residents of long-term care and personal care homes. On October 4th, phase 2A of the booster program began with residents 80 years and older, six months following their second dose. On October 25th, phase 2B moved to administering booster doses to individuals 65 years and older, six months after their second dose. Evidence shows that those 65 years of age and over have waning immunity six months after their second dose, so providing booster doses to these populations provides increased protection to the most vulnerable.

We know that vaccines work. They dramatically reduce the chance of getting the virus. We know that recent cases in Saskatchewan show that unvaccinated people are six times more likely to get COVID-19, 13 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 28 more times more likely to require ICU [intensive care unit] care. This government made seniors a top priority to receive their first dose, their second dose, and now their booster dose. Our government will continue to focus on everyone getting fully vaccinated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to spend a moment on the tragic COVID-19 outbreak that occurred at the Extendicare Parkside in Regina in 2020. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families who lost loved ones. My constituency is home to Extendicare Preston in Saskatoon. On January 29th of this year, the Minister Responsible for Seniors requested the Provincial Ombudsman's office to investigate and report on the circumstances surrounding the Parkside outbreak.

On October 14th, the Ombudsman's report was released publicly. An announcement was made that Extendicare and the Saskatchewan Health Authority had agreed to collaboratively process the transitioning of responsibility for Extendicare's five long-term homes in the province to the SHA. This is a commitment by the SHA and our government to prioritize the health, safety, and needs of residents and their families. I would also like to note that as of March of this year, all three- and four-bed rooms in long-term care provincially were converted to private or two-bed rooms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government fulfilled a 2020 election promise to reduce ambulance fees for seniors in December of 2020. When it involves ground ambulances for seniors, we have lowered the cost from \$275 to \$135. I know that seniors in my constituency and across the province appreciate that our government has made ambulance costs more affordable, particularly those seniors on fixed incomes.

Another election promise that our government is working towards is hiring 300 new continuing care aides, including 180 care aides to support residents in long-term care facilities, 63 care aides to strengthen home care services across the province, and 57 care aides targeted to expanding home care services in rural and remote areas. As of this month, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 85 long-term CCAs and 10 rural CCAs have been hired.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are but a few areas where the health and safety of seniors in our province have been a priority during the pandemic. Protecting seniors continues to be a focus of this government. Therefore I will not be supporting the motion made by the member from Saskatoon Eastview. Thank you.

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

[11:45]

**Ms. Beck:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon and enter into the 75-minute debate on the following motion put forth by my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview:

That the Assembly condemns the government for their failure to protect seniors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've listened to all of the speeches to this point. There are a few things that I want to start by getting on the record and replying to and, perhaps even in a couple of cases, agreeing with.

The member from Moose Jaw North noted that the pandemic has been difficult for everyone, and that certainly is the case. There was a saying that I noticed online in early days that I still have on my phone and it's this — and I'm perhaps paraphrasing but — we are all in the same storm but we're not all in the same boat. That to say, Mr. Speaker, while this pandemic has by definition hit everywhere in the world, it isn't the case that everyone has experienced it the same way. It isn't the case that we were all equally vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic. And some of us in jurisdictions like Saskatchewan had the benefit of not realizing the impact of the pandemic until relatively late after those initial days in 2020.

Of course one of the populations that was especially vulnerable to the impacts of COVID we saw tragically around the globe and including here at home is with our seniors. And I've mentioned before talking to the Premier in early days of that pandemic and acknowledging that this was difficult. These are difficult times. These are difficult situations, so we acknowledge that. We don't expect people to have a road map for things that they have never experienced. However, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that the problems that we saw with long-term care in this province, the number of

people who have died, particularly seniors, was entirely preventable is simply false.

We have reports in this province going back a decade pointing to serious and consistent deficiencies within our long-term care system. The member opposite mentioned the Ombudsman report into Extendicare. In that report, the Ombudsman referenced her report from 2015 and again asked this government to implement those recommendations, particularly recommendation no. 19, Mr. Speaker. So when we say we need grace because we haven't done this before, that is true, Mr. Speaker. But people of this province do expect us, when we know better, to do better.

We have had 900 COVID-related deaths, as I've said, in Saskatchewan: 154 of those were residents of long-term care; 373 were age 60 and above; 401, 80 and above, Mr. Speaker, disproportionately impacting those in long-term care centres.

Mr. Speaker, we were found flat-footed in this province with regard to the safety of seniors because this government has ignored page after page, report after report, calling for us to invest in our long-term care system, to fix facilities, to fix four-bed wards, and to fix chronic shortages in staffing. That didn't happen, Mr. Speaker, and for that we do hold this government accountable.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go through some of the recommendations, some of the pieces that have gone unheeded by this government that we do hold them accountable for. In 2011 this government saw fit to remove minimum care standards from this province. The Premier, as recently as a month ago, claimed that that was not the case. Mr. Speaker, they did. In 2011 they removed minimum care standards from our long-term care centres, something that repeatedly the Ombudsman, the staff, the unions who represent those workers in those buildings have called for.

We know that the former member from Riversdale — I can say her name, Danielle — was tireless in her efforts to reinstate and improve on those guidelines, something that fell on deaf ears by this government time and time again. The call for a seniors' advocate, Mr. Speaker, something that was pointed out in BC [British Columbia] as being pivotal in helping curb unnecessary and tragic deaths in that province, Mr. Speaker, something this party, this side of the House has asked for for years, that fell on deaf ears. And for that we do hold this government accountable.

Mr. Speaker, speaking of disproportionate impact with regard to the pandemic, we would be remiss if we didn't talk about those who are actually delivering the care. Time and time again we see this government talk about spaces, about buildings and things like that. Important, Mr. Speaker, but someone actually has to deliver the care to those people in these facilities, and it's not those members, Mr. Speaker. It is people who are underpaid, disproportionately women, disproportionately women of colour, working in dangerous conditions for not enough pay, Mr. Speaker, and in this pandemic working tirelessly, working overtime, and putting themselves at risk.

I think of the member from Saskatoon University, who has repeatedly brought in pay equity, Mr. Speaker, and how this is related. It's those chronic staffing shortages, Mr. Speaker, are in part due to the fact that we do not pay long-term care employees

enough. People will suggest that, well one of the reasons that we pay people more is because work is dangerous. Do you know what? The number one WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] code claim in this province is for people who work in health care. It's dangerous work. It's hard work, Mr. Speaker, and it's underpaid work. And that is something that needs to be fixed.

Time and time again this government talks about spaces. They talk about beds. They don't talk about the people who actually need to perform the care, those people who stayed hours and hours ensuring that seniors, the best they could, had the care that they needed, watching people that they had cared for die in front of them, Mr. Speaker, because this government chose for a decade to ignore the recommendations that had been made to improve long-term care in this province.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things that they would like us to know that they have experienced: the absence or insufficient personal protective equipment, Mr. Speaker; inconsistent application of protocols; ever-changing rules in the workplace; lack of mental health supports; time away from their families; inequitable application of temporary wage supplements — some workers, those who worked in acute care, not even having that made available to them.

Mr. Speaker, we have empathy for those making decisions when they don't know better, but we will hold this government accountable for not doing what they reasonably ought to have known for a decade ahead of time. To suggest otherwise is false. And, Mr. Speaker, the reason we stand in this Assembly, the reason that they stand on that side, they have won the right, Mr. Speaker, granted to govern. They're expected to govern. They're expected to make the difficult decisions and not point fingers, not say, well Tommy Douglas did this in 1940, Mr. Speaker.

And we will be hopeful and grateful when we can be, Mr. Speaker, but I will not be thankful or grateful about the number of seniors who died in this province because of this government's inaction. And I will be voting in favour of the member put forth by my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Goudy:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Again I read the motion that was being put forward for the debate. And you know, when I read it again I just thought, wow, the Assembly is going to condemn the government "for their failure to protect seniors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in Saskatchewan." I thought that's a pretty broad, sweeping statement against our government. And then the member from Saskatoon Nutana kind of doubled down a bit and said that they've done anything but.

You know, I don't know if you noticed, but we have quite a few seniors on this side of the House, and they're getting closer to the age, you know. And to think that we've done nothing to protect our seniors through the pandemic is pretty difficult for me to accept.

You know, I personally know the member from Swift Current. His parents live in my community, my constituency. He grew up in my constituency, in my community, and he's a highly respected young man who has great care, compassion not only for his parents but for all seniors. So when I read that I thought,

wow. We appointed a Minister Responsible for Seniors.

So when I looked at how we rolled out our defence for the most vulnerable among us, our seniors, we prioritized them in care. And so when it came time, when the vaccines were available, we put it out first to those seniors and to people in the North where it was a little further to get to maybe some of the medical . . . So we tried to strategize to look after certain ones.

But I remember I used to go . . . oftentimes before the pandemic hit, I would be in Naicam for their seniors' get-together. And I remember at the beginning when there were discussions, others were starting to put measures in place and so I threw it out to all the seniors that day — and we were all masked up and in the room — and I said, what would you suggest that we do for you?

You know, we have to remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this country was built by the people who today are our seniors. They passed it on to us. A lot of those long-term care facilities that we're upgrading and replacing and that they're in are the ones that they had looked after building. And the policies that were in place were their policies that they put in place.

So when I was there I asked them — you know, what better person to ask than the seniors? — you know, how would you like us to care for you? And I think a lot of the things that we've done were to protect our seniors, and so prioritizing the vaccinations, masking, COVID testing for visitors going in. But you know what one thing that they said above all that came out in that day in the Naicam seniors' home and talking to friends of mine across the province, is that we want to not have anything come between us and the visits with our children and our grandchildren. You know, so you ask, what do seniors want to be protected from?

Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was in Alberta. I was 20 years old. My brother was 23. We had a 26-year-old buddy and the three of us hung out a lot. And I don't know how it came up; it was probably Callaghan who mentioned it but said, you know, we should go and visit the seniors' home. And you know, what are you talking . . . but okay. So we all three guys, you know, traipsed over to the seniors' home. Didn't know what to expect, but we went to the seniors' home.

And we thought what's best, we'll pick one senior each that we'll come and visit every week or as often as we can. So I picked one and my brother and Dale all picked one. So I remember sitting with that fellow — what a sweet guy — but it was getting more and more difficult. I was speaking into a microphone and he had the ear things.

And one day a young lady came while I was visiting. And I'm sitting on the chair; he's sitting on the bed. And she comes in and I say, "Oh hi there." And it turns out it was his daughter. And I thought, wow, and introductions and things. And she said something that I'll never forget. She says, "Isn't that nice this young man is coming to visit you, Dad?" And you know what he said? He said, "I am not enjoying this." And I thought, you're not enjoying this. So I'll tell you what, I'm sad to say that might have been my last time visiting the seniors' home.

[12:00]

But you know what? You know, he might have enjoyed it a little

bit, but he didn't enjoy someone who he didn't know, who he didn't love, who didn't really . . . You know, he wanted his family to be there to visit him. It was very clear from all those seniors in Naicam. They thought, you know what we want to do? We want to be protected, but we still want to have some freedoms. We want balance.

And you know, when I see this kind of thing, we've done nothing to protect our seniors? My goodness. In Watson, we got Norma Weber. I don't know if she's a . . . She's not a senior. She's still young, but maybe she's getting seniorish. And she's looking after . . . I'm in trouble now with Norma. So Norma, she has been lobbying, you know. The seniors' home in Watson needed some upgrades and maybe a replacement, and Norma has done a great job with the staff and with that Quill Plains Lodge board to lobby our government to say, hey, put us on the radar, put us on the radar. So this year our Minister of Remote and Rural Health said, hey, we are going to address the situation in Watson.

Like do we not care? Do we not think that we've done anything to protect our seniors or . . . like this continuing care aides. In the local community, we may not have gotten as many as we're shooting for, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we said, yes, we need 300. We're working towards that 300.

But you know one of the exciting things that I see? Our local community college made that an option. You can become a community care aide that'll be paid for by your government to go in and visit your mom or your mother-in-law or your neighbour or your friend each and every day to care for them. And that's what goes on in the small towns and the communities across this province. We're trying to commit to providing those workers in those places. You know, we're not a government who forces everything on people and who demands and can just . . .

You know, like I lived in Albania for three years, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to be raising the Albanian flag on Sunday if anyone would like to come and join us. But you know, in Albania the government ran everything. They were in charge of everything. Like they said, we'll do this, we'll do that, and we'll structure everyone's lives.

And you know, I had a little girl in my church that I was . . . if you could call me a pastor . . . [inaudible] . . . But anyways we had a group of people in Pogradec that got together regularly. And this one girl's name was Arveza. She sat in a school in a government-run country with big government, bigger, more intrusive government. And she had a face that she couldn't smile on the right side. She sat in a chair beside a window with no glass through the winter. You know, like that's . . . when you put everything into government's hands and don't think about the freedoms of the people, you know, come and talk to some of those people on Sunday afternoon when we raise the Albanian flag. Some of them lived under that kind of regime where we think that we can just manage everything.

We're trying to work with the people of this province to fill those positions. We're trying to serve and be the kinds of ones that are going to protect the most vulnerable among us. We're doing the best that we can. We have a person who's committed. He's honouring the seniors. He's caring for the seniors, and he is doing his level best.

You know, I heard someone say the other day in this House and it's like, you know, the Premier took the summer off to go golfing. That's like, what? This guy has no life. I just feel bad for him. I think, you know, the member from Saskatoon that didn't win the . . . I remember the day he said, I think, I think they saved me. I think maybe they did because this Premier has not had a life for the last year and a half.

They say that we're not taking the recommendations of Dr. Shahab. I would guess that our Health minister, our Remote and Rural Health minister, and the Premier have probably spent more time with Dr. Shahab over the last year and a half than they have with their families. And so taking the recommendations, my goodness. They are continually with this chief medical health officer, working to make sure that we can protect the most vulnerable among us.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to be supporting this motion that would just, in a blanket way, condemn the government that has worked very hard to protect the people that we love, the people that we care for, and the people that we're going to continue to build an infrastructure and the staff in this province that continue to look after them in a loving, respectful, caring way that we have and will continue to do. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The 65-minute period has expired. The 10-minute question-and-answer period will begin. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Mr. Lawrence:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of our most vulnerable and our seniors, I wonder where we would really be if the NDP hadn't closed over 1,200 beds and on top of that, fired hundreds of CCAs and nurses and how many doctors. And speaking of another vulnerable group, at the start of this session the members opposite, those people, brought forward a motion to remove unvaccinated children from the schools, their schools.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think we're all very glad that the pediatric vaccines are now available for the kids 5 to 11 — that's my grandkids — and I'm glad that so many Saskatchewan people have done the right thing and gotten vaccinated. But the NDP position is and has always been to remove unvaccinated children or ineligible children who live in a household with someone unvaccinated . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Next question. Order. Next question. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

**Mr. Love:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member for Moose Jaw North, a direct quote from the Ombudsman report. The Ombudsman writes:

The Minister of Seniors specifically asked the Ombudsman to investigate whether the conditions at Parkside impacted the transmission of COVID-19 within the facility. The answer is yes, but this should not come as a surprise.

The Ombudsman goes on to say that the ministry knew about these specific challenges for nearly a decade. And yet that minister did nothing to address these challenges, leading to 39 people dying. Does this represent a failure of government to protect seniors?

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

**Mr. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. I believe the Minister of Rural and Remote Health already addressed this question earlier today. When he became aware of the issues of concern at Parkside Extendicare, he requested that the Ombudsman prepare a report. When that report was completed, he immediately took action in light of the recommendations within the report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Fiaz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since the members opposite would like to play games with wording, I would like to quote a letter: "Proof of vaccination should be required for accessing in-person learning for children 12 years and older, and for households of those under 12 who cannot be immunized yet."

Mr. Speaker, the NDP House Leader made a motion to implement that measure — not debate it, not explore it, implement it — punishing kids for the choice of their parents. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question from the member from Saskatoon Nutana. How many kindergarten students are you willing to boot from school because mom and dad did not get vaccinated?

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

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to make reference to the fact that the NDP has been calling for seniors' care reform and for the implementation of recommendations from the Provincial Auditor and the Provincial Ombudsman for years.

Some examples include: March 2014 we tabled a seniors' bill of rights; May 2020 we called for minimum care standards to be implemented; July 2020 we called to appoint a seniors' advocate; October 2020 we called for stay-at-home care; November 2020 we called to protect seniors in long-term care from the second wave; and in February 2021 we made calls to end for-profit long-term care.

If even just one of those measures had been implemented, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would have . . .

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

**Ms. Beck:** — Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw North has chided the opposition for not working with them and being more positive in the face of 900 deaths in the province. Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the pandemic, we asked for an all-party committee to address COVID, something that this government repeatedly denied.

So I ask the member from Moose Jaw North, does he have any co-operative project that he'd like to propose? Or would he like to sign on to our request for an all-party committee?

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

**Mr. McLeod:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the member opposite who posed the question very well knows, the government has been working right alongside Dr. Shahab throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and we will continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

**Mr. Nerlien:** — Mr. Speaker, we're all aware of the strain the pandemic has put on the health care system. We're glad to see more health services returning to normal, but we all know that the pandemic has created a backlog of many surgeries and services. This government has seen this issue before, Mr. Speaker. We saw it under the NDP when Saskatchewan had the longest surgical wait times in the country. Through innovation and smart investments in people and equipment, Saskatchewan got out of that hole.

To the member from Saskatoon Nutana: we know the NDP putting politics before people and trying to limit services for Saskatchewan seniors when it's provided within the public system. Would the NDP also shut down all affiliates including faith-based delivery of long-term care?

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

**Ms. Ritchie:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A month ago, we made reference to the announcement by the Health Authority to take over all for-profit care at the Extendicare long-term facilities in Saskatchewan. And we welcomed that announcement and the Sask Party moving away from the deadly for-profit care.

But we questioned why it took so long for the government to act on known dangerous and deadly living conditions at Extendicare facilities that contributed to so many lives being lost here in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to ask the member from Moose Jaw, the Ombudsman report . . .

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

**Mr. Love:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Let's go back to the Ombudsman report. And this question is for the member from Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood. The Ombudsman report into the deadly outbreak at Parkside is crystal clear that the one person responsible, that the end of the line, the line stops for long-term care with the Minister of Health.

It might surprise the member from Churchill-Wildwood to know that since that report was released, our Health minister has not said a single word about the tragedy where 39 people died. Does the member believe that the Health minister, who is responsible for long-term care, should have offered an apology to all those people that he failed as the person responsible?

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

**Ms. Lambert:** — Every death is tragic, and we extend our heartfelt condolences to all the families who have lost loved ones. The loss of any life has a deep impact on families, on friends, and on communities as a whole.

The Minister for Seniors requested on August 5th, 2021, the Ombudsman released a report on the circumstances surrounding the Parkside outbreak. As I mentioned, the Saskatchewan Health Authority submitted a report on the Extendicare's five Saskatchewan homes. This report was publicly released on October 14th. We have now agreed, the SHA and the government and Extendicare, to enter into a collaborative process for transitioning the responsibility for long-term care services provided by Extendicare in Saskatchewan to the Saskatchewan Health Authority. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Mr. D. Harrison:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the COVID-19 pandemic first began, our government had to make a number of difficult decisions, including restrictions and lockdowns, in order to protect our health care system and keep people safe across the province.

[12:15]

That was at a time when vaccines were not available. Mr. Speaker, we know that vaccination is the way out of this pandemic, and today vaccines are available to more people than ever before. To the member from Saskatoon Nutana, why does the NDP favour locking down the economy and taking away personal freedoms when vaccines are readily available?

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

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

#### Motion No. 1 — Federal Government's Approach to Gun Crime

**Mr. Domotor:** — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the Legislative Assembly today to enter into debate on a motion that I will be moving forward at the conclusion of my remarks. Mr. Speaker, to set the stage for my remarks, I want to read into the record the motion that I will be making in a few moments' time, and it reads like this.

That this Assembly condemns the federal government's targeting of law-abiding firearm owners in recent regulatory changes and calls on the federal government to halt any proposed reduction of sentences for serious offences through the criminal code of Canada, as prescribed in Bill C-22 introduced into the House of Commons in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I will be so moving. Now to begin my remarks, Mr.



Speaker, I think all of us as a Member of the Legislative Assembly are aware of the inherent dangers of irresponsible gun use. In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the vast majority of Saskatchewan firearm owners are responsible and law-abiding, and I do not believe that the Liberal government's proposed changes to the Criminal Code are effective at managing irresponsible and illegal gun crime and will disproportionately affect responsible, licensed firearm owners, especially in rural areas.

The proposed changes to Bill C-21 and Bill C-22 will seek to take away firearms from licensed owners while removing minimum sentences and reducing penalties for violent gun crime and gun trafficking. Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of firearm-related crimes in Saskatchewan is committed with stolen and smuggled firearms. In fact Chief Bray of the Regina Police Service repeated the point and said, and I quote:

It is often legal firearms that are stolen from people who legally and lawfully own and possess them. The firearms are being stolen and being converted from legal use to illegal use, and used for criminal offences.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that the arbitrary banning of specific types of firearms will have no significant impact on crime in Canada. Mr. Speaker, in 2020 approximately 85 per cent of all handguns seized by the Toronto police were smuggled from the US [United States], the vast majority of gun crimes committed with illegally obtained weapons. The National Police Federation is on record in saying:

Costly and current legislation, such as the Order in Council prohibiting various firearms and the proposed "buy-back" program by the federal government targeted at legal firearm owners, does not address these current and emerging themes or urgent threats to public safety.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, the head of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has said, and I quote,

The firearms laws in Canada are actually very good right now. They're very strict [he added]. There are lots of law-abiding citizens out there who do possess guns for very legitimate purposes. When you look at the steps you have to go through to possess a firearm in Canada, it's actually quite rigorous. Once you do get a licence, the actual purchasing, the transportation, the storage, all of that has very strict laws in Canada.

Right now we have some of the most stringent gun laws and gun regulations in the civilized world, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The fact of the matter is that the federal government, ministers responsible, and bureaucrats responsible for, have never really been outside of the major cities in this country and as a result have a total lack of consideration and understanding of how the rest of Canada lives, especially in rural Canada and more specifically rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a proper Canadian, so whenever I can I like to use a hockey analogy. My two sons were both very active in hockey during the time they were growing up, from a young age of about five to the present day. There's always much talk about the violence in hockey, and I have always been a strong

supporter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we do not necessarily have to change the rules in hockey. We just need to ensure we enforce the ones that are presently in place and give the penalties that are appropriate.

It stands to reason that the proposed legislation will take guns away from responsible Saskatchewan firearm owners and will do nothing to reduce gun crimes in Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government's proposal to ban over 1,500 previously legal firearms is actually punishing the average responsible gun owner because they are the ones that are truly going to be affected by the law. It's not going to be the criminals, as they'll still find ways to obtain the firearms that they want to illegally, which includes being smuggled in from the United States. Mr. Speaker, instead of dealing with the problem of criminals obtaining and using stolen guns to continue to commit crimes of violence, we are making criminals out of law-abiding citizens either through bills, regulations, or orders in council.

Mr. Speaker, Bill C-22 removes the minimum penalties for criminals charged with gun-related crimes which includes: use of a firearm in the commission of an offence; possession of a restricted or prohibited weapon, knowing its possession is unauthorized; possession of a loaded handgun; possession of a weapon obtained through crime; weapons trafficking; robbery with a firearm; extortion with a firearm. Mr. Speaker, I don't think that the removal of more firearms from being legal is the way to address violent crimes we are seeing with the use of guns. But more enforcement and stronger penalties for the offenders, this to me would be more logical than the federal government's plan to lower sentences for repeat offenders using guns in a crime and doing away with minimum sentences. I would think that the thought of having stricter punishments for those that commit the crimes would be more of a deterrent to criminals that are caught than reducing prison times

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have spoken at length in the Throne Speech about our efforts to increase enforcement. The Saskatchewan trafficking response team is a specialized intelligent-led enforcement team dedicated to addressing illegal weapons, drugs, and human trafficking. The SRT will comprise 30 RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officers, six municipal police officers, two criminal analysts, and three support staff, for a total of 41 new permanent positions. It will have three offices strategically located in Lloydminster, Estevan, and Swift Current. These locations were chosen based on their proximity to provincial boundaries and established trafficking corridors. Municipal SRT resources will be located in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina. The team will be mobile and ready to deploy anywhere in the province to support other RCMP units and detachments, municipal police services, and intelligent and enforcement teams in Saskatchewan, as well as in Alberta and Manitoba.

For once, Mr. Deputy Speaker, instead of talking about the middle class and those working hard to join it, it would be better for the federal government to focus on actual criminals instead of law-abiding citizens.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I make this statement I'm not just talking about the hunters that use their firearms to provide food for their family, or just simply hunt for the recreation so they can get that big buck with all the points on the antler rack. I'm also

talking about farmers who use firearms to protect their property from either a raccoon — which I know can cause a lot of damage on a farm in various buildings, as I've personally had a friend who has had to deal with that back home — or for simply trying to protect their canola crop from those mangy gophers that can reduce yields substantially when they decide they want to move in and create a city and totally destroy the agriculture producer's crop in that specific area, which costs him, as a producer, thousands of dollars through lost crop yield.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also speaking about the many Saskatchewan residents that collect firearms worth hundreds of thousands of dollars as well. Each year there are gun shows hosted across this province which generate public interest and respect for firearms. Thousands of dollars are generated in these communities that host gun shows and provide economic benefits to the businesses located in them. Shooting competitions are another popular form of recreation which creates economic spinoffs as well.

Mr. Speaker, the ownership and use of firearms was once considered to be the domain exclusively for men. However nothing could be further from the truth in today's environment. I know of several women who own firearms that hunt game on a regular basis, as well as some that participate in shooting competitions. Mr. Speaker, these type of responsible gun owners are the first to promote safety and proper use and handling of firearms.

Unfortunately there are those that choose to ignore and break the laws of the land with use of firearms. And despite the strictest and more rigorously enforced laws, there will always be the criminal element in society which chooses to ignore the laws for their own personal gain. Whether it be poachers illegally killing wildlife, vandals destroying property, or robbers using a weapon against innocent people, they all are criminals who should be dealt with through our justice system by making sure they are provided with the appropriate punishments for their respective criminal activity.

Mr. Speaker, we have a problem with criminal gangs that try to settle scores in this country. This is what is driving an increase in gun violence, according to police departments and Statistics Canada. Mr. Deputy Speaker, by restricting or controlling the use of guns and making them harder to get, I do not believe that this in any way will change people's attitudes towards using guns for criminal activities, but will however punish those in our society that use them in a responsible manner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason the Liberals prefer going after and targeting licensed gun owners is because going after actual criminals is hard work. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe a more effective way to combat violent and illegal crimes committing using a firearm would be through things like stronger enforcement and penalties for illegally purchasing, targeting cross-border weapons trafficking, and targeting criminals and crimes committed using an illegal firearm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill C-22 eliminates a number of those firearm offences and the mandatory prison times such as robbery with a firearm, discharging a firearm with intent to harm, and weapons trafficking. Those are the problems, not the law-abiding firearm owners.

Mr. Speaker, this, rather than the Liberal government's proposed plan in Bill C-22, would make more sense. Bill C-22 could potentially put communities at risk with these proposed reduced sentences. The proposed elimination of mandatory prison time for violent firearms offences is concerning and requires a greater degree of scrutiny. The removing of tough, mandatory penalties for actual gun crimes undermines the very minority communities that are so often victimized by brazen gun violence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill C-22 is the federal government's plan to reduce consequences for criminals for their criminal activities. To give some examples, here are some of the reduced penalties for drug-related crimes, which would increase recidivism and overdoses: reducing minimums for trafficking, importing, exporting, and production of hard drugs. During the first six months of last year, there were 17,000 opioid deaths — 24 people per day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Drug use increases the likelihood of additional criminal activity, which in turn will probably result in the use of illegal firearms.

Minimum sentences would be reduced for the production of hard drugs, with increasing fentanyl levels. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there have been calls for bail reform to keep repeat gun offenders behind bars while awaiting trial. However the federal government is not interested in this and are instead making plans to do away with mandatory minimums for repeat offenders. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government claims that this is to stop people from going to jail for a couple of mistakes, but it's actually doing away with minimum sentences for people often convicted on second and third offences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is consistent with Trudeau's approach to gun violence, which is aimed primarily at gun control as opposed to tougher sanctions for criminals who use guns. In the 2021 election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Trudeau promised \$1 billion to support provincial governments that ban handguns and federally to toughen our laws on banned assault weapons, even though his own government has said banning guns will not work.

Mr. Speaker, this was explained by the Public Safety Canada. The vast majority of owners of handguns and of other firearms in Canada lawfully abide by requirements, and most gun crimes are not committed with legally owned firearms. Any ban of handguns or assault weapons would primarily affect legal firearm owners.

Gang violence is a real and growing concern for people across Canada, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and not just in the country's biggest cities. The federal government can't say that they want to crack down on the kind of criminal activity that has so many Canadians concerned while also doing away with policies that would take criminals off the streets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the gun crime problem in Canada is one of criminals using guns, illegal handguns mostly smuggled in from the United States, to ply their trade. Trudeau is focused on legal guns held by people who have completed a safety course, undergone a significant RCMP background check, and have had loved ones sign off on them being allowed by the government to own guns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Trudeau promises to put more resources into stopping gun smuggling. It is a pittance to what he will spend

to buy guns from people who have owned them legally for years without ever committing crimes. Currently the mandatory minimum for smuggling a gun is one year in jail, and the Liberals want to drop that, as it's too harsh, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

No family should ever feel unsafe in their home, but rural crime remains a criminal issue. Efforts made on rural crime are being stymied by nonsensical legislative changes by the Liberal government. No matter how draconian the Liberal government gets with domestic firearm regulations, no matter how much they trample on the freedoms of law-abiding Canadians, the reality is criminals do not obtain their firearms legally, and they will never follow firearms laws, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[12:30]

Instead of targeting law-abiding Canadians and firearms retailers, the government should be investing in anti-gang and -gun units and the CBSA [Canada Border Services Agency], to provide law enforcement with the resources they need to stop illegal smuggling operations and get dangerous criminals and gangs off of our streets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Liberals are going backwards by introducing Bill C-22. The Liberals are eliminating mandatory prison time for criminals who commit robberies with a firearm, weapons trafficking, and drive-by shootings. They're doing this because they feel these laws are unfair. They are actually standing up for criminals instead of defending our communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every legal gun owner in Canada is required to report changes of address, but those with firearms prohibition orders are not. Since no one tracks these dangerous individuals, is it any surprise that they account for a high percentage of those involved in repeat firearms offences? Tough penalties need to be imposed with certainty to dissuade criminals from using weapons.

The drug trade also fuels so much gang violence, and it must be made unprofitable through stricter border controls to reduce supply, for easier access to rehabilitation programs to reduce demand. The real tragedy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that continuing with the government's failed approaches wastes time and money that could be spent on making Canadians safer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know what the key drivers of crime in Saskatchewan are, and it's not hunting rifles. To try to ensure our communities are safe, the government has introduced the crime reduction teams. We expanded the Saskatchewan crime watch advisory network and created the protection and response team to help respond to crimes in rural Saskatchewan. We have created Saskatchewan trafficking response team whose target will be criminals that transport drugs, weapons, and to combat human trafficking.

We will also be creating the warrant enforcement and suppression team, whose primary goal will be to apprehend dangerous offenders with outstanding warrants and to remove them from being a risk to the general public. This, along with the government's plan to provide for an additional staffing of 60 new police positions, will enhance public safety and make those criminals accountable for their offences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is providing for these additional protection services because we believe that dealing with criminals and the crimes they commit are how government should deal with safeguarding our communities, not by punishing our legal, responsible gun owners and removing their ability to protect their lands in terms of wildlife, as well as enjoy the sport of hunting and recreational gun-shooting competitions. Our government will continue to support firearm owners, and the Government of Saskatchewan is opposed to moves that punish responsible and legal firearm owners, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to wrap things up by saying I'm really disappointed with the NDP that they're siding with Mr. Trudeau and the federal Liberals on these schemes. And I know they have one hunter over there who maybe doesn't agree with most of this, but I know they do agree with the removal of mandatory minimum sentences for these gun crimes. And it's because they don't know rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They don't understand what it's like to be on a farm, miles from anyone else, never mind the local police detachment. The Throne Speech that the NDP voted against was clear. We're bringing in more police, targeting trafficking, serious crimes, and introducing a warrant enforcement team so that people aren't literally re-victimized by the same criminals again and again and again.

All of those efforts by our police, by our prosecutors, by our justice system, are completely undermined when it turns into a revolving door. We want to see serious consequences for serious crimes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So on behalf of many, many constituents who have reached out to me and my colleagues on this side of the House — well maybe both sides of the House — about the safety of them and their families, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll be moving the following motion:

That this Assembly condemns the federal government's targeting of law-abiding firearm owners in recent regulatory changes and calls on the federal government to halt any proposed reduction of sentences for serious offences through the Criminal Code of Canada, as prescribed in Bill C-22 introduced to the House of Commons in 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford:

That this Assembly condemns the federal government's targeting of law-abiding firearm owners in recent regulatory changes and calls on the federal government to halt any proposed reduction of sentences for serious offences through the Criminal Code of Canada, as prescribed in Bill C-22 introduced to the House of Commons in 2021.

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

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved that the Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — We now stand adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:36.]



# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

## CABINET MINISTERS

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

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

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

**Hon. Dustin Duncan**  
Minister of Education

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

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

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

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

**Hon. Warren Kaeding**  
Minister of Environment

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

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

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

**Hon. Paul Merriman**  
Minister of Health

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

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

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

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

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