



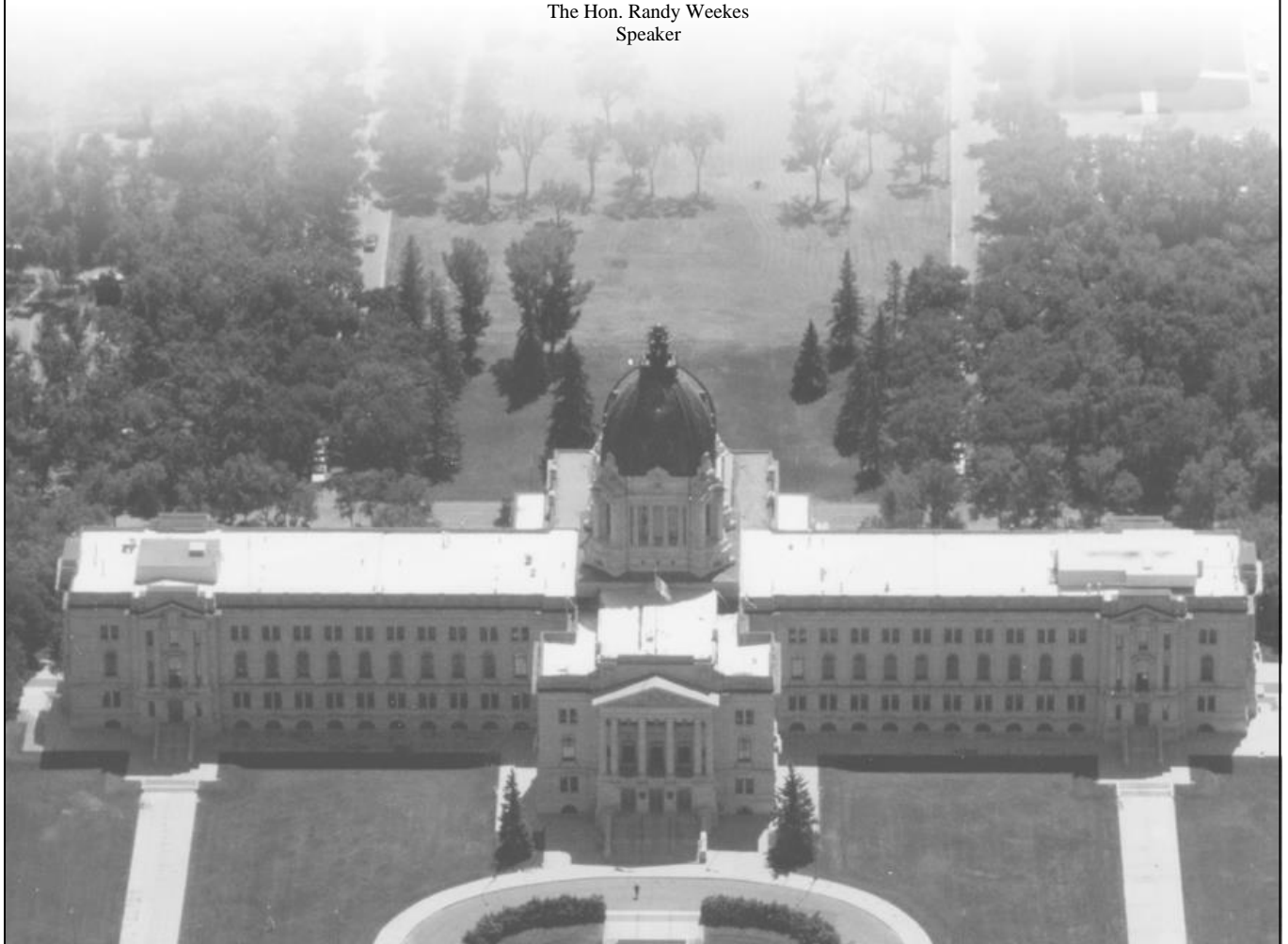
SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
2nd Session — 29th Legislature

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

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

Beck, Carla — Regina Lakeview (NDP)
Bonk, Steven — Moosomin (SP)
Bowes, Jennifer — Saskatoon University (NDP)
Bradshaw, Hon. Fred — Carrot River Valley (SP)
Buckingham, David — Saskatoon Westview (SP)
Carr, Hon. Lori — Estevan (SP)
Cheveldayoff, Ken — Saskatoon Willowgrove (SP)
Cockrill, Jeremy — The Battlefords (SP)
Conway, Meara — Regina Elphinstone-Centre (NDP)
Dennis, Terry — Canora-Pelly (SP)
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Ross, Alana — Prince Albert Northcote (SP)
Ross, Hon. Laura — Regina Rochdale (SP)
Sarauer, Nicole — Regina Douglas Park (NDP)
Skoropad, Dana — Arm River (SP)
Steele, Doug — Cypress Hills (SP)
Stewart, Hon. Lyle — Lumsden-Morse (SP)
Tell, Hon. Christine — Regina Wascana Plains (SP)
Vermette, Doyle — Cumberland (NDP)
Weekes, Hon. Randy — Biggar-Sask Valley (SP)
Wilson, Nadine — Saskatchewan Rivers (Ind.)
Wotherspoon, Trent — Regina Rosemont (NDP)
Wyant, Hon. Gordon — Saskatoon Northwest (SP)
Young, Aleana — Regina University (NDP)
Young, Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 12; Independent (Ind.) — 1

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Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Yesterday, March 9th, 2022 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order. He said that during question period, the Leader of the Opposition indicated that the Premier was spreading deliberate disinformation. I have reviewed the *Hansard* and am prepared to make my ruling.

The Leader of the Opposition's statement can be found on page 1693 of *Hansard*. In a question to the Premier he stated, "Will the Premier apologize for spreading deliberate disinformation about vaccines and their efficacy?"

On May 7th, 2008 Speaker Toth ruled out of order an allegation that the Minister of Education had attempted to deceive the public about funding for education. Likewise on March 7th, 2011 Speaker Toth ruled out of order an accusation that another member was trying to mislead the public. On October 20th, 2015 Speaker D'Autremont ruled out of order a claim that an opposition member was trying to mislead the public. More recently, 2018, Speaker Docherty ruled out of order a comment that the opposition was trying to mislead the public.

There are numerous other instances when allegations of this nature were ruled out of order. I wish to repeat what Speaker Toth ruled in 2008:

I do wish to caution members on their choice of language, particularly when participating in a lively proceeding such as question period.

Challenging the position of another member is acceptable; questioning their character is not.

As I have demonstrated, alleging that another member set out to deliberately deceive the public is improper. Speakers have consistently ruled that it is out of order to impugn the character of another member or members.

I find that the Leader of the Opposition's comments are out of order. I would ask that he apologize and withdraw the comment. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the ruling and I agree with the ruling. I agree with the ruling, Mr. Speaker. But the use of the term "deliberate disinformation" as . . .

The Speaker: — Just withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I intend to apologize . . .

The Speaker: — No. Just say the two words. Just say you withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not intending to debate you in any way.

The Speaker: — Leader of the Opposition, just withdraw and apologize.

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, it's incredibly important that we are able . . .

The Speaker: — I'm sorry. You're challenging the Chair. Just withdraw and apologize. Nothing else.

Mr. Meili: — I will not challenge the Chair, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Yes you are.

Mr. Meili: — . . . I withdraw the comment and I apologize.

The Speaker: — Thank you. Introduction of guests. I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

An Hon. Member: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Sorry. I recognize the Minister of Health. What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition just called me a liar. Everybody in this Chamber heard it. I ask him to withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apparently I was one of the people who didn't actually hear that. I would ask you to review the record.

The Speaker: — Order. Minister of Health, come to order, please. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everybody in the Chamber just heard the Leader of the Opposition call the Minister of Health a liar. Is he going to stand up and deny he said that? Will he stand up and deny he said that? If he will not stand up and deny it . . .

The Speaker: — Okay, that's fine. You make your point. I did not hear it. I was busy just getting prepared. We will check *Hansard*, and we will deal with it if it's on *Hansard*.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to introduce a group of 25 very bright young people from the Caronport homeschool group. Mr. Speaker, these students range from grade 3 to grade 11. They are seated in the west gallery, and I ask that all members extend them a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — Any other introductions? None.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today in this Assembly to present a petition calling on the government to scrap Bill 70. Those who have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: the independence of security at the legislature is of great importance to Saskatchewan people; and it is a long-standing parliamentary custom that security maintain independence by reporting to the Speaker; the Speaker has a constitutional duty to defend the privileges of the legislature and its members; and the Sergeant-at-Arms has successfully maintained the security of the legislature and its grounds since the '80s.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 70 would turn the Sergeant-at-Arms into a largely ceremonial role, which is highly offensive to the sergeant and his duties. As well, Mr. Speaker, Bill 70 breaches tradition in how issues of security at the legislature are handled. As most of us well know, these are typically issues that are dealt with through the non-partisan Board of Internal Economy.

I'd like to 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 stop the passage of Bill 70, *The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2021*.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today come from Unity. I do so present.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — I rise on my feet today to present a petition calling on the provincial government to take real action to fight climate change. Mr. Speaker, the United Nations has declared climate change the defining issue of our time. The latest IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] synthesis report, released on February 28th, states that "Human-induced climate change, including more frequent and intense extreme events, has caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people, beyond natural climate variability."

Without immediate action, adapting to impacts in the future will be more difficult and more costly. Saskatchewan has the highest greenhouse gas emission intensity of all Canadian provinces, and according to the Canadian Energy Efficiency Policy Scorecard, Saskatchewan ranks second last among provinces. The government's failure to produce a credible plan risks devastating impacts on the province's economic productivity and human and environmental health.

Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, call on the provincial government to enact a credible climate action plan and

allocate appropriate funding to ensure real reductions in Saskatchewan's emissions that are consistent with the scientific consensus to limit global warming to 1.5.

Signed by residents of Regina and in honour of the people seated in your gallery.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to rise today to present our petition calling on the government to fund in vitro fertilization treatments. The signatories would like to bring to our attention the following points: that one in six couples in Canada experience infertility; that IVF [in vitro fertilization] treatments are prohibitively expensive for many, with one cycle typically costing at least \$10,000 — a huge, huge cost for people who want to start their families, expand their families, and are unable to otherwise; that despite public health care being a right in Canada, there is no government financial support for Saskatchewan couples requiring IVF treatments; that Saskatchewan people's ability to conceive should not depend on their socio-economic status; that investing in people determined to grow their families here in Saskatchewan makes economic sense; and that other provinces have created programs that financially assist in providing IVF treatments to those struggling to conceive, and we should join that list.

I'll read the prayer:

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

The petition today has been signed by people from Humboldt. I do so present.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan calling for universal access to birth control. Mr. Speaker, we note that Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in the country, and adolescence starts at 12, which is very young, Mr. Speaker. After my colleague introduced this petition, we received a note saying, thank you for bringing this to light. And I quote, "This has broken my bank accounts and affected me personally day to day."

Mr. Speaker, the signatories wish to draw to our attention that having consistent and affordable access to contraceptive options is essential for promoting bodily autonomy, preventing unwanted pregnancy, and saving money on sexual and reproductive health care.

Mr. Speaker, 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 adopt a policy of making no-cost prescription contraceptives available to all

Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition reside in Qu'Appelle, Sedley, and Regina. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Retirement of Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Officer

Ms. A. Young: — Why thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to celebrate the retirement of my friend, constituent, and true servant of this province, Steve McLellan. For 14 years, Steve served this province as CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce and prior to that worked tirelessly in the tourism sector, promoting and boosting this province that we all love so much.

Prior to that, Steve had worked in fly-in fishing camps and the much-mourned Moosehead Inn in Kenossee. He's had a storied career here in the province, and it is one of true fair and balanced leadership in a critical organization.

Steve embraced and celebrated pragmatic thinkers, community solutions, and the hard work and energy that defines our business community. Relationships and staunch advocacy defined his career and led to some storied appearances in this very building, including under formal escort thanks to his advocacy for the film tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, in our dealings, Steve has been a straight shooter, a man who understood the important community role that businesses play in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, you know, he shared in retirement that he wishes to travel, and on behalf of a grateful province and an appreciative Chamber here, I hope that he won't travel too far. I ask all members to join me in sending thanks and congratulations to Steve and his family.

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

Saskatoon Tribal Council and Saskatchewan Government Sign Agreement to Support Rehabilitation of Offenders

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am excited to share with you that this government has taken another step towards reconciliation with First Nations groups. On March 4th, this past Friday, the Minister of Health, the member from Martensville-Warman, and I joined the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety, and witnessed the Saskatoon Tribal Council and their seven partner Nations signing a memorandum of understanding with Corrections, Policing and Public Safety.

[10:15]

The Offender Reintegration Partnership Agreement will support the long-term, successful rehabilitation and transition of Indigenous persons being released from correctional sentence into their communities. This program will provide greater access to spiritual, cultural, and skills-based training and supports for

persons in custody after they transition back to their communities. The promotion of healing practices, cultural supports, employment, education, and other skills-based training will help Indigenous persons successfully reintegrate into their communities and reduce their likelihood of reoffending.

Through this approach and in partnership with the Saskatoon Tribal Council, we hope to bring lasting change, reduce incarceration rates, and help address the underlying causes of overrepresentation of Indigenous persons in our correctional institutions in our province. This program is an exciting new step for the government's ongoing commitment to truth and reconciliation.

Thank you to Chief Mark Arcand and all STC [Saskatoon Tribal Council] chiefs. We look forward to working with other First Nations groups on this topic in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Loss of Local Grocery Store

Ms. Ritchie: — Local grocery stores were traditionally the heart of our communities, but things have changed in recent years. Saskatoon Nutana has been fortunate to have Extra Foods on Broadway as our local community grocery store for many decades. As smaller community grocery stores have closed, people in the neighbourhood crossed their fingers hoping our grocery store would be spared.

Loblaws announced they will be closing Extra Foods April 23rd. Local residents are left wondering what they will do for groceries going forward. The area is home to many people of all walks of life, including seniors who have lived in the neighbourhood, some for decades. Saskatoon Nutana has seen many changes over the last few decades, including increased density. More seniors are able to live independently longer because of nearby access to a grocery store, and others who want to be within walking distance to amenities have also moved into the area.

At a time when we are looking at ways to reduce our carbon footprint and trying to find ways to allow seniors to remain independent longer, losing access to local grocery stores seems to be counterproductive. As increased density is planned for major Saskatchewan cities to deal with urban sprawl, the return of community grocery stores makes good sense. Moving forward, let's make sure we promote walkable and active communities by supporting local grocery stores. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Camp Easter Seal Fundraiser

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to recognize a Yorkton-area event that went provincial and international this year. Mr. Speaker, just last month Camp Easter Seal celebrated its annual Snowarama fundraiser. Snowarama participants will typically make a monetary pledge and ride their snowmobiles for at least 100 kilometres. Funds raised support summer camp for individuals with special abilities.

This year, additionally, a group of dedicated snowbirds put their own spin on Snowarama, Mr. Speaker. And the desert chapter swapped their snowmobiles for motorcycles and their snowsuits for sunscreen as they put on a couple hundred miles south of the border. Some are deeming this adventure Sandarama. They raised \$8,500 for Camp Easter Seal, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Camp Easter Seal is the only completely wheelchair-accessible camp facility in Saskatchewan and provides a safe place to experience barrier-free camping experience. Thanks to a team of dedicated volunteer board members, snowmobile clubs like the Yorkton Sno-Riders and the Timmy Snowarama desert chapter and so many others, the event was a major success. In all, Mr. Speaker, it raised \$103,435. I ask all members to join me in thanking the 119 riders in both Arizona and Saskatchewan, who donated and rode in support of Camp Easter Seal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Remembering Clark Gillies

Mr. McLeod: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In late January, family, friends, and fans mourned the passing of Hockey Hall of Famer and four-time Stanley Cup champion, Clark Gillies. The accomplished power forward, who has been affectionately referred to as Moose Jaw's favourite son, was just 67 years old. Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to capture the career and character of Clark Gillies in the time allotted for this statement, but I will do my best.

Clark developed his skills at the outdoor rink and playground near Ross Wells Park in Moose Jaw, which is now known as the Clark Gillies recreation area. This would set him on the path to a Hockey Hall of Fame career, beginning with the Regina Pats and then the New York Islanders, leading both those teams to historic championship victories.

Mr. Speaker, the respect and admiration of Clark's teammates was reflected in the big heart and passion that he brought to that game. Off the ice, Clark's presence was just as big. Never forgetting where he came from, Clark regularly returned home throughout his career, using his celebrity to give back to the community and our province. Through the Clark Gillies Foundation, millions of dollars have been raised to help children who are physically, developmentally, and financially challenged.

Mr. Speaker, Clark Gillies's impact on and off the ice is far-reaching, and we will never forget him or his contributions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Moose Jaw Athletes Recognized for National and International Success

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been an incredible winter for Moose Jaw athletes, and it's great to see their hard work and dedication paying off. In January, Penny Barker, Danielle Sicinski, Jenna Enge, and Christie Gamble won the Viterra Saskatchewan Scotties in Assiniboia. Team Barker

then had the honour of representing Saskatchewan at the 2022 Scotties Tournament of Hearts in Thunder Bay, and they finished fourth.

Graeme Fish, a long-track speed skater, represented Canada at the Beijing Olympics in the 10 000-metre skating event. And with Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and Canada cheering on, he finished sixth. We are very proud to have such an outstanding athlete call Moose Jaw home.

Ben Coakwell attended his third Olympic Games in Beijing, representing Team Canada in the four-man bobsleigh event. Along with teammates Justin Kripps, Ryan Sommer, and Cam Stones, they captured the Olympic bronze. It was an incredible win for Ben and his team.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of the talent coming out of Moose Jaw. I'd like to thank these individuals for their strength, determination, and perseverance, and for giving us all the more reason to be proud of who we are and where we're from. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Support for Ukraine

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We condemn Russia's unprovoked assault that has displaced more than 2 million Ukrainians. Mr. Speaker, our government has partnered with the Ukrainian Canadian Congress of Saskatchewan with the intent to help displaced Ukrainian families resettle and rebuild their lives in Saskatchewan. This partnership is over and above the supports that we have already offered and will provide \$335,000 in funding.

Through UCC [Ukrainian Canadian Congress], nine community offices are available around the province to provide information and assistance to individuals and groups wanting to help. They are volunteering their time and efforts in collecting food, clothing, and monetary donations. The role of the community coordinators is to assist the individuals and families, who choose to come to our province, connect to resources such as settlement services, language training, and employment services to integrate into our province and our workforce. Our province will also be providing health care and education for Ukrainian newcomers coming to our province.

Mr. Speaker, as many Ukrainian women go into battle alongside their counterparts, we on this side of the House would like to honour the women who stand alongside us. We also honour those indigenous to this land, the ones that came before us, live with us, reside within our constituencies and throughout our province. We value you. We stand with you. And this government will always stand for you. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Health Care

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the government does its best to rewrite pandemic history, Saskatchewan people

won't forget the damage their failures have done to people's lives and to the health system that has been so damaged by the failure of this government to take COVID-19 seriously. From care aides and LPNs [licensed practical nurse] and nurses working on the front lines, to the health system CEO being pushed out by political interference in the middle of the pandemic, our health system is losing its most valuable asset — the people in it.

Does the Premier recognize that his pandemic choices are driving Saskatchewan health professionals away from the patients who need them right now?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Most certainly, Mr. Speaker, the last couple of years have been challenging for health systems, not just in Saskatchewan but across Canada and North America and around the world, Mr. Speaker. And we most certainly have been there to support our health care system and our front-line health care workers financially, Mr. Speaker, and have also made every effort to ensure that we are able to reallocate health care staff around the province so that we can optimize our full provincial capacity, Mr. Speaker, so that we can support one another on the front line.

As we find our way through the last number of weeks, you've seen in Saskatchewan we've removed all of the public health orders that are in place, Mr. Speaker. What we are going to see in our continued march back to a pre-COVID community environment, Mr. Speaker, is on Monday the emergency order in the province will expire and it will not be renewed.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier likes to pretend that health care workers in this province have received the support they need and deserve, but the story on the front line is very different. Last week, Dr. Tomi Mitchell, a family doctor here in Regina, penned a heartbreaking letter to her patients. She says that the pandemic has exposed cracks in the system that she fears are "beyond salvageable." She said, and I quote, "The majority of us do not get the support and respect that we need to do what we were called to do." She's closing her practice. She's heading somewhere else. Her patients don't have a doctor to go to anymore.

What is this government's plan to stop the exodus of health care workers from our province, that are caused by their actions, at a time when we need those workers more than ever?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, the investment of this government in health care since we were elected and had the honour to form and serve as government in Saskatchewan I think speaks for itself. Health care budget after health care budget has increased since 2007, up to just over \$6 billion this past year, Mr. Speaker. That's a four and a half per cent increase over the year previous. The Saskatchewan Health Authority was up just over 6 per cent. Just under 4 billion of those dollars flowed through to our Saskatchewan Health Authority, Mr. Speaker.

We have worked hard over the last number . . . just over a decade

now at increasing the training opportunities, increasing the opportunities for people to work, train and work in all designations across this province, Mr. Speaker. And we are showing results here in Saskatchewan. About 1,000 additional physicians from when the time the NDP [New Democratic Party] served as government are serving constituents, are serving Saskatchewan people in communities right across this province. I see that in the community where I live.

Over 4,000 nurses, additional nurses, are working in Saskatchewan today because we have increased training seats, Mr. Speaker, because we have worked at attracting people here from other areas of the world and to work in providing health care in our facilities, Mr. Speaker.

Over the course of the past year we added in our health care sector response, as part of our response to COVID, Mr. Speaker, just over \$165 million in addition to the budget that we had in place.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, the record of this Premier: since that member was elected Premier, we have 82 fewer family doctors practising in the province. That's a drop of 8 per cent, and it hurts families who need care. And it starts a vicious cycle that makes it even harder to recruit and retain new doctors, Mr. Speaker. How does this Premier expect to attract new docs to the province when, since he's in power, the ones that are working here are burning out and moving away?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — You know, the question that I and the discussions that I've had with Saskatchewan residents with respect to COVID-19 — which has been a challenge not only in Saskatchewan but across Canada and around the world — is what would have our COVID-19 response looked like, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP with 1,000 less physicians in the province?

[10:30]

What would have our COVID-19 response looked like in this province with 4,000 less nurses in the province, Mr. Speaker? What would our COVID-19 response look like had we not increased the training at the College of Medicine, Mr. Speaker, from 60 to 100 physicians, the residency positions from 60 to 120? What would our response to COVID-19 look like in this province had we not increased the nurse training seats in this province, Mr. Speaker, from 300 under the NDP to over 700 under the Saskatchewan Party?

And we'll be very interested in the next number of days, Mr. Speaker, as we're going to put a budget on the floor of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. You're going to see a budget that is going to continue on the Saskatchewan Party government's record of continuing to invest in health care, invest in training people to go out and offer those services in health care, Mr. Speaker, and continue to invest in the front-line people that are offering those services and servicing the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The worst COVID response in the entire country. The worst death rate. And this Premier wants to compare to a fiction instead of take responsibility for his own record. What a model of courage, Mr. Speaker. What a model of responsibility.

Finding a family doctor isn't just an issue in big cities, Mr. Speaker. In rural communities, the drop in family docs is even larger: 11 per cent drop since this man became the Premier, Mr. Speaker.

Patients across this province can't access care right now because there aren't enough doctors, there aren't enough nurses, there aren't enough CCAs [continuing care aide]. They're leaving the profession today, right now. Canora, Kamsack, Radville, Unity, Leader, Biggar, Indian Head, Preeceville, Wolseley, Pangman, Carlyle, Central Butte, Broadview, and Porcupine Plain — every one of those communities has health service disruptions right now because this government has completely abandoned any action to introduce rural health care.

This is a government that has created a problem that won't fix itself. When will this Premier stand up and give us a health human resource strategy to address the mess that they've created in rural health care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, in each of those communities, I would like to assure the people that under the Saskatchewan Party government, we are not going to do what the NDP did and close those facilities. We are going to reopen those facilities. Mr. Speaker, we are going to reopen them.

We already today are on the ground through our trade and investment offices, Mr. Speaker, attracting health care workers here from around the world. We are continuing to invest in training at our facilities, our post-secondary facilities across the province, Mr. Speaker. Increasing our nurse training spots by over 130 per cent since forming government, Mr. Speaker. Increasing our physician training spots from 60 to 100. And investing in the College of Medicine, the Academic Health Sciences Building, hundreds of millions of dollars to ensure that that college would never be under accreditation again, which it spent most of its time under, under the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we're investing in health care here in this province. We're investing in the people that are offering our health care services in our province, and we're not going to close facilities like they did under the NDP.

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

Affordability and Government's Fiscal Management

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to see the SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] rebate announced this morning by SGI, something that we've been calling for time and time again. But people need more relief in face of this extraordinary situation and the crushing, crushing cost of living that they're facing. On this front we've heard a lot of spin and deflection this week from the Minister of Finance, but no

adequate commitment to help Saskatchewan families who are struggling so desperately right now. To the minister: are you planning to introduce urgent new affordability measures in the budget or not?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, who has some experience in this House, knows that we do not pre-announce the budget before the budget. But we will continue with the large number of initiatives that we have and we've had over a number of years since we formed government to help with affordability.

One of the flagships that we have, Mr. Speaker, was to significantly decrease the number of people who have to pay provincial income tax in our province, Mr. Speaker. We took over 112,000 off the tax roll entirely. A family of four do not pay provincial tax in the province of Saskatchewan until they make over \$53,435. You know what it was under the NDP? It was a little over \$20,000 they were already paying taxes.

Of the provinces that have PST [provincial sales tax], and we know that Alberta does not, we have the lowest PST in the nation, Mr. Speaker. We have tax credits for a number of different situations, including low income; for seniors; for family activities; for people with disabilities; for caregivers, Mr. Speaker, and the list will go on and on for a number of questions.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What a tired response. Let's set the record straight. That government inherited a surplus. They blew through the rainy day fund in the middle of a boom. They promised a sovereign wealth fund but never delivered — in fact they didn't save a dime — and they tripled the debt. They introduced the single largest tax increase in the history of Saskatchewan that's costing the average family \$1,000 more each and every year.

It is this irresponsible, mismanaging government that is costing Saskatchewan people far more and doing nothing today. Again, what's the plan to help Saskatchewan people and families on this very important front?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I'd continue my list, but yet again the member opposite is on two sides of this right within his own question. He's saying if there is extra money, do we save it or do we spend it? And he's on both sides of that. He doesn't want the debt to go up, even though he knows that we had a number of support programs in place through COVID that did drive up the debt considerably.

He knows that we're building hospitals and schools in this province, something that those members opposite did not do. They closed hospitals and schools, Mr. Speaker. He knows that that drives up the debt but he doesn't agree with that. He wants us to spend the money but not save it. I don't even know exactly what he's asking for, Mr. Speaker, but he needs to stay tuned for the budget and he needs to answer the question that I have asked previously. Do their members support the carbon tax that's going on the price of fuel that is very much stressing people of

Saskatchewan or is he going to join us in calling for that to be paused?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, of course it makes sense to stay the federal increase to the carbon tax on fuel. But it's to this government I'll say, that is rebated. The fuel tax, which is much larger, of this provincial government — not a cent of that is rebated to Saskatchewan people. Same for the PST, same for the cost-of-living increases on front after front.

Back to the question I asked: will there be a measure, a package, to provide relief to Saskatchewan people who are facing crushing cost of living in this provincial budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — If I heard the member correctly, I think he's asking for a provincial CERB [Canada emergency response benefit] program quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, but he'll have to wait till the budget, as he knows. He has experience in this House, Mr. Speaker.

But what is ongoing is the number of supports that we already have in place, which is significantly more supports than was ever in place to help with affordability under the NDP. The best thing that this party ever did for affordability in the province, Mr. Speaker, was to defeat the NDP in 2007.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that government has lost touch with working people of this province. Hard-working folks that are showing up at the pumps today and they're stuck with a buck eighty a litre. Folks that are working and doing all they can just to pay the bills and put food on their table, all while their provincial revenues are soaring in face of this extraordinary situation. Next month, Alberta families will be getting a break. Why shouldn't Saskatchewan families be getting a break as well?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — So, Mr. Speaker, with the price of gas, which the member has touched on, the provincial tax is about 10 per cent of that. The federal tax is about 18.8 per cent of that. Does he think that the federal government has responsibility here? And any break that the province gives will be absorbed when the federal government increases their carbon tax on April 1st, Mr. Speaker. We need to look at all possibility of what we do as we move forward. Inflationary pressures is not just affecting this province, it's affecting the entire country, and it's affecting many countries around the world, Mr. Speaker.

So the member opposite knows he has to wait for the budget. But the affordability measures that have been taken to date by this government are significant.

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

Transportation of Saskatchewan Products to Market

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The disdain this government shows for working people is unbelievable. Just this week, Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister for Trade and Export Development, who is theoretically also the member for Meadow Lake, what he had done, what he had done to support Meadow Lake Mechanical Pulp through a rail crisis.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if it were me and these were my constituents, I would be on the phone doing everything I could to help 740 people stay employed. But not for that minister, Mr. Speaker. Radio silence.

But here's another chance. Will the Minister for Trade and Export Development find his feet and defend his constituents in Meadow Lake?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Bradshaw: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member for that question. Yes, I have to say that our transportation is totally, totally unacceptable. Paper Excellence has done an excellent job working within the province of Saskatchewan. And I'm well aware of the concerns surrounding Paper Excellence and the rail car shortage at the mill.

Mr. Speaker, I've been in contact with the federal minister and have also written the federal minister to express the negative consequences that's affecting the industry. As the member knows, CN is a federally regulated industry. The Meadow Lake mill is a significant economic driver in our province, and we will continue to advocate for CN to provide adequate transportation service to this mill. And not just this mill — we have other mills that are also affected by this. We will continue to press . . .

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

Ms. A. Young: — Mr. Speaker, I love when members on the side opposite agree with me. And thank you to the minister for that answer. That is truly great news for the people of Meadow Lake.

But, Mr. Speaker, did the minister have to wait until this was raised in question period to pay attention, pick up the phone, and stand up for 740 jobs that have been on the line since December?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Bradshaw: — I want to thank the member for that question. And the answer is no, we didn't have to wait. Mr. Speaker, we have been in contact with our federal counterparts to be able to try and fix the transportation industry we have in Saskatchewan.

I live in a constituency in northern Saskatchewan that has two mills — Dunkley Lumber and Weyerhaeuser — in the constituency. I'm well aware of the problems that we have with moving our product in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This, Mr. Speaker, is something that we need to be fixed in Saskatchewan. Not only is this affecting the forest industry, it's affecting the potash industry; it's affecting the agriculture industry. Mr. Speaker, as I said to the federal minister, this is unacceptable. We

have to get this fixed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the minister for acknowledging that there is a problem. This is something that all of us in this House agree on. But, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan we used to have an innovative Crown corporation that helped get exports to market by rail. It was called the Sask Grain Car Corporation and it was sold off for pennies by this government. You might remember it, Mr. Speaker.

So it's great. It's great that the minister acknowledges the problem, but what results is he getting for this province, Mr. Speaker? What results can he stand up and promise the mill in Meadow Lake here today?

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Highways minister.

Hon. Mr. Bradshaw: — Thank you. Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have been advocating all along for to be able to move the products that we need to move out to the ports out across this country. We've been working hard on highways to be able to fix our highways within Saskatchewan so we can get the truck industry moving. We also need to be working on the rail line industry.

The other thing is, Mr. Speaker, is I believe that we should have more representation on the Port of Vancouver. We have desperately been trying to get the federal government to give Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta more directors on the Port of Vancouver so we can move more product through the port. Thank you.

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

Minister's International Travel

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been one of the coldest, cruellest, and harshest winters in decades. Farmers and ranchers are losing their herds of cattle due to feed shortages. People are experiencing vaccine injuries. And families of loved ones cannot gather at their towns to bury . . . with their loved ones for funerals that they wanted. Truckers are worried over their livelihoods and fuel prices are soaring for the grain producers.

So what was so important in Dubai that a government cabinet minister had to jet over during a state of emergency and a global pandemic to another continent? While things were falling apart in Meadow Lake, this member from Meadow Lake is jet-setting across the world, proudly splashing pictures on social media to prove it. Why wouldn't this member stay to provide comfort for the pain and suffering of the Saskatchewan people, seniors isolated, closed businesses?

Did the member from Meadow Lake fly first class . . .

The Speaker: — Would the member go to the question, please.

Go to the question.

Ms. Wilson: — Did the member fly first class or economy during the state of emergency?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We always fly premium economy, Mr. Speaker, to the specific question. But, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to apologize for our international engagement efforts. We have put significant resources, Mr. Speaker, into opening nine international offices around the world.

Now I'll tell you the reason that we do this, Mr. Speaker. It's because of the fact that nearly 70 per cent of everything that we produce in this province, we export around the world. And, Mr. Speaker, we have seen very, very large increases in the amount of product that we have exported around the world over the course of the last number of years, even during the most difficult periods of a pandemic, Mr. Speaker. This province, our entrepreneurs, our producers, our manufacturers stepped up and supplied the world with those products that they need to continue going forward, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to continue that international engagement. We see that as being an incredibly important part of how this province is going to develop economically going forward, and we're not going to make any apologies for that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Constitutionality of COVID-19 Public Health Measures

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I was honoured to speak with the Hon. Brian Peckford, one of the original creators of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to discuss many issues affecting us today. He believed that every elected representative must take a principled stance for the people of their communities by supporting the referral of all COVID-19 measures and workplace policies to the Court of Appeal by way of the reference procedure to determine if they are contrary to the law, and in particular, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier: will the government take the advice of Mr. Peckford and test the legality of the COVID measures in court? Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, we've been very, very careful with respect to the drafting of the public health rules. Mr. Speaker, we're confident that those rules are constitutionally valid. Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that while Canadians have rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that those rights aren't absolute. That's recognized in section 1 of the Charter, Mr. Speaker.

So with our rights, Mr. Speaker, come our responsibilities, and that's what's recognized in section 1 of the Charter. We're

confident that the legislation and the rules and the public health orders that have been brought forward are fully constitutional, Mr. Speaker, and we will defend that position in court.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 43, *The Royal Saskatchewan Museum Amendment Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report . . . Oh, that's why I'm mixed up. Sorry. Yes.

When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of this bill and that the bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 43 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 43 — *The Royal Saskatchewan Museum Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 43 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 38, *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 38 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 38 — *The Seizure of Criminal Property Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — I'll try this again, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 38 be now read the third time, passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Does someone agree with this?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee on
Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 39, *The Queen's Printer's Amendment Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 39 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister of Justice.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 39 — *The Queen's Printer's Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 39 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND
SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee on
Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 40, *The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 40 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 40 — *The Trespass to Property Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill now be read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 39 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Would the member from Saskatoon Eastview please come to order. We're having troubles hearing and carrying out our responsibilities here. Order, please.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND
SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee on
Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 41, *The Legislation Amendment Act, 2021*, a bilingual bill, without amendment.

The Speaker: — Would the Minister of Government Relations come to order please. That's no more chit-chat. We're going to get through this, eh? When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 41 and that the bill shall be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister of Justice.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 41 — *The Legislation Amendment Act, 2021/Loi modificative de 2021 sur la législation*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 41 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

[11:00]

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: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 42, *The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2021 (No. 2)* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 42 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 42 — *The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2021 (No. 2)*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 42 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 46, *The Legal Aid Amendment Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 46 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 46 — *The Legal Aid Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No.

46 be read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 51, *The Privacy (Intimate Images — Additional Remedies) Amendment Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 51 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 51 — *The Privacy (Intimate Images — Additional Remedies) Amendment Act, 2021*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 51 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 53, *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act, 2021* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in the Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 53 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 53 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal Act, 2021*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 53 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing

Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee on
Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 54, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Remote Witnessing) Amendment Act, 2021*, a bilingual bill, without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole on Bills? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 54 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move to third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 54 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Remote Witnessing) Amendment Act, 2021/Loi modificative diverse (attestation instrumentaire à distance) de 2021*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this bill now be read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 54 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND
SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice.

**Standing Committee on
Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice**

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this is the last one. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on

Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report consideration of Bill No. 55, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Remote Witnessing) Amendment Act, 2021 (No. 2)* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this bill and that the bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 55 and that the bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 55 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Remote Witnessing) Amendment Act, 2021 (No. 2)*

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that Bill 55 be now read the third time and passed under its title. 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: — Third reading of this bill.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Government Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In some ways it's probably good that we had a few moments to cool down after question period here, but we are going to be going into some of the same topics in our debate. And the reason for that is that these are issues that greatly impact the people of the province. They're issues that we have continued to hear about, both within my own constituency office and through our caucus office. And these are pressing matters for the people of the province.

I think we can all agree that we would like COVID to be over, but we can't pretend our way out of that. And we need to make

sure that we are keeping people safe, and the government has a responsibility to ensure that people are kept safe in the meantime. We know that we're going to receive the rest of the numbers today for February in terms of how many deaths we have had. But there has been an incredible lack of transparency around how many people have died from COVID-19 this past month, a huge delay in the reporting of that information and also in the reporting of hospitalization numbers. And this is a marked change from what we saw throughout the pandemic. People have grown accustomed to having access to this information and access to their public officials to ask questions throughout this pandemic. And that has simply not been the case since February 7th, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

These recent issues have come to light in quite a public way. And we know that, you know, we have been calling on the government to conduct a public, independent inquiry into COVID-19. We saw the impact of the Ombudsman being able to do an investigation into Extendicare and long-term care after the second wave unfortunately impacted our seniors in a very significant way, and more of them died as a result of those COVID infections. We were able to then shed a bit of light on what happened in those situations.

We know that the impacts of COVID-19 across our province are not yet known, and so a public inquiry is an important way for us to get at that. And I have been hearing concerns from so many members of the public, especially over this past year and starting in the summertime when the government declared that COVID was over and removed all of the public health measures that were in place. And we started to see the experts speaking out, calling attention to these actions and cautioning the government. And you know, why do we have these public health experts, if not to listen to them in a time of a pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

So these questions started to arise at that time and the government's handling of the pandemic really was called into question during the fourth wave, where so many people across the province were in touch with us to say, you know, this doesn't make any sense; I don't feel like my kids are protected. You know, people who told me, I've always been a Sask Party voter, but they have lost their way and I have no understanding of how they're ever going to earn my support again. Those are the types of phone conversations we started having in September, and we have continued to have.

And throughout the fourth wave, where we had the highest COVID death rate in Canada, this government continued to claim everything was fine — nothing to see here, we've got it all under control — when we know that our health system did not have the capacity to handle the influx of patients that we had, our record hospitalizations, and our record deaths. And these are just the deaths we know about. There are also studies of excess deaths that have been done. And the government doesn't like to hear about this, and they don't like to talk about it, but when you look at the unexpected number of people who have died in our province, it's anticipated that our COVID deaths are much greater than they are reported at this time.

And then during the fifth wave, we have continued to see a lack of judgment from this government in pretending that there's nothing to see here, shutting down PCR [polymerase chain reaction] testing, leaving it up to rapid tests. And we've seen how

this has created a whole host of problems in terms of people being able to access Workers' Compensation, having to pay for a PCR test to prove upfront that you have COVID-19.

Not everyone has the luxury of being able to shell out \$200 to pay for those PCR tests, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And these rapid tests that the government sat on for so long as we urged them to deploy them to schools, thankfully have been distributed at this time, and we have those tools with us. But that's about the only tool we have at this point in time for individuals to be able to keep themselves safe. And that's not a protective tool, that's a reactive tool to say, "Now that I've been infected, I'll work to make sure that other people don't get infected."

But removing self-isolation from the public health order makes absolutely no sense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Spreading misinformation that our vaccines are not effective — completely irresponsible, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People have lost their faith in this government and the handling of the pandemic. And that has had several impacts across the province and these impacts will continue to ripple. And that's what we're here to talk about today.

Some of these impacts include the damaged health care workforce, making life harder for people who are waiting to access surgeries and other treatments and making the rural health care crisis worse. So I'll spend some time talking about these individually. And then at the end of these remarks, I will be moving a motion to this effect as well.

Let's talk about the health care workforce. Today in question period, the Leader of the Opposition brought forward the fact that we have 82 fewer doctors than we did when this Premier took over — 82. We know that health care workers are burning out at an alarming rate.

[11:15]

If we think that the fifth wave has been hard on all of us, everyday people, think about the folks that are working within the health care system. When COVID hit, well this government actually laughed at us when we first asked our first question about COVID, because this is no big deal. They had the gall to laugh about it. But once we had got our first case in Saskatchewan, I think there was this hope that after a couple of weeks if we all sort of hunkered down in our homes, we would be able to limit transmission and it would be a short-term measure.

Now it's two years later, Mr. Speaker. We're coming up on our two-year anniversary of our first COVID case in Saskatchewan. And at that time we couldn't even get tested to know whether we had COVID if we hadn't travelled internationally. So a whole host of people who got COVID during that period of time who are now dealing with the long-term impacts of long COVID, which we are starting to understand and I will say is quite alarming, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of how we are going to deal with the long-term impacts of this pandemic.

We all thought this was going to be short term, and the health care workers had no reason to feel otherwise as well. And some of the public health epidemiologists, you know, I've seen forecasts that this type of thing could happen and that there could be some sort of superbug or you know, something. And we know that our globalized world means that we have increased contact

with people from across the globe, and it makes us more vulnerable to these types of communicable diseases.

We all hoped it would be over, but it became rapidly apparent that that wasn't going to be the case. And we have seen irresponsible decisions from this government in wave after wave. And you know, unfortunately we have had to call for some unpopular measures. I don't like wearing masks. I don't want to wear a mask on my face every day, you know. I'm not so vain that I'm like, oh I'm great looking and I need to show everyone my face at all times, but like yeah, it's a bit of a pain. But if this is what will protect fellow citizens, you know, I'm willing to take that step.

And you have to make these unpopular decisions sometimes. And that's what leadership is. And instead we have seen a government that has pandered to extreme views instead of stepping up and taking leadership in hard times. And you know what? People don't like that. People are not accepting of that.

And you have let down the health care workers that are on those front lines, that were being applauded at the beginning of this pandemic. And now where are those applauds? The government needs to have their backs at this important time, at this important time.

And we've heard from nurses about burnout rates. We've heard from doctors. We have seen an exodus of doctors, you know, people very publicly posting on Twitter about their burnouts. We know that we don't have the care aides we need to be able to appropriately staff. It's about the whole health care team folks.

This government promised to hire a bunch of long-term care aides, and then they couldn't. They haven't fulfilled that promise. And there were so many vacancies that already existed at that point in time, but they refused to acknowledge that these are not one-off problems. This is about the fact that there isn't an overall workforce strategy. This is a systemic issue and it needs to be dealt with in a systemic fashion. You can't just have community by community telling the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority] what their needs are and trying to get acknowledged. They're all having the same conversations with the SHA.

These gaps exist throughout the system. And what have these gaps led to? When someone actually gets into a rural area and they're the top dog, they're the one who's supposed to be leading their ship, they become burnt-out. They're doing things outside their scope. They're tired. Scheduling is a complete mess. They're not feeling supported. We have to make sure that these folks have mentorship, are supported in these positions, and get these jobs and then stay there. We have to create an environment that people want to be a part of, and right now, that's not what health care workers have.

There's been a significant impact on patients. Everyone in this province should have access to health care when they need it. This is the birthplace of medicare. And instead, we've been talking about all of these service disruptions, which basically means people don't have access to that health care. And this extends to lab and X-ray, which has been a problem for years. It extends to ambulances. We're still waiting for ambulance reform from this government. All they'll do is point the finger back at us, when we know they've been in charge for so long. They've

been government since 2007, and what have they done, Mr. Speaker?

Our hospitals are at capacity. They won't even disclose what the capacity of the hospitals is. They won't even tell us how many people have COVID in hospital every day. What are they hiding?

Our surgical rates are rising. People are suffering as a result of their decisions. People are paying out of pocket for surgeries, Mr. Deputy Speaker, travelling out of country to pay for surgeries that they desperately need, people who don't want to become addicted to opioids to manage their pain levels. And the surgical waits have just skyrocketed along with MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging], along with specialist waits. This is all part of the bigger picture, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The impact on patients is huge, and they are driving our public health care system into the ground. It's not just surgeries. It's organ donations. It's cancer treatments. I spoke to someone who doesn't know if her cancer is in remission because she can't get the appointments that she needs. That's not peace of mind, Mr. Speaker. It's a breakdown of our health care capacity on the hands of this government, and it will have lasting impacts. It is already. It was a problem before the pandemic, but our staffing shortages are creating a crisis.

This goes across the system. It extends into rural health care. We need an overall strategy to address this, and this government needs to acknowledge their very significant role in this problem.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move the following motion:

That the Sask Party government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has damaged Saskatchewan's health workforce, making life harder for Saskatchewan people waiting for surgeries and other treatments, as well as making the rural health care crisis worse.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Saskatoon Fairview:

That the Sask Party government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has damaged Saskatchewan's health workforce, made life harder for Saskatchewan people waiting for surgeries and other treatments, as well as making the rural health care crisis worse.

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

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm honoured to enter into today's debate, and I would like to begin by indicating that I will not be supporting the motion put forth by the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

I would like to start off by sincerely thanking the people of Saskatchewan for what they have done to help the province navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic. Further I want to especially acknowledge and thank the many health care workers and support staff across this province for their courageous efforts to care for the people of Saskatchewan. The COVID-19 pandemic, a global pandemic, has impacted virtually all nooks

and crannies of this planet. It would not be overstated to say that it has dominated much of our collective lives over this past two years. Our conversations, our actions, the work we do here is largely impacted by COVID. And, Mr. Speaker, the motion for today's debate also speaks to COVID-19.

But before I delve too deeply into the more formal remarks I'm going to make here today, I'd like to share a little of myself, a moment of my life from 2016 that I'll never forget and has some relevance for today's debate.

Spring seeding on the farm is an all-hands-on-deck event. If you've ever experienced it, you'll know what I'm referring to. And if you haven't had the opportunity, I hope that one day you can see it for yourself. It's a well-choreographed dance of water trucks, super-Bs, drills, sprayers, and land rollers. There's people and machines moving in a game where every minute counts. Everyone has a role. Everyone has a responsibility. And everyone relies on each other for the engine of seeding to operate efficiently.

Now, Mr. Speaker, people from Saskatchewan are not unfamiliar with wind, but the wind that smashed into our piece of the province that late afternoon in April 2016 was a chapter unto itself. And when we first saw the signs of smoke emerging from the coulee about a quarter mile away from our home, panic instantly set in. It was a prairie fire — a prairie fire with nothing standing between it and the village of Findlater about 5 miles away.

Amidst this instant chaos, seeding immediately halted and everyone began to pick up the fight. Neighbours joined in, as did local fire departments from Holdfast and Bethune, and we tried our best to beat back the rapid spreading flames. Our truck with the water tank and pump for filling the sprayer suddenly became a fire truck. The breaking disc was set on to work on building a fireguard. My mother, my wife, my nephews, everyone else took hold of a spade and battled the blaze.

Mr. Speaker, if there's one word that could be used to characterize the prairie fire we fought that evening, it would be "unpredictable." It moved and snaked and dodged and darted and leapt. As soon as we sensed we might be making some inroads, the fire reignited and redoubled its efforts in another area of the rocky pasture. It was something I had never seen before and it is something I pray never to see again.

A landscape dotted with glowing tufts of dry grass exploded like land mines, further spreading the chaos. The 90-kilometre wind was relentless. To be quite honest, Mr. Speaker, there were moments where it was uncertain if we were actually going to win that battle and stop the flames from reaching Findlater, placing in jeopardy many homes and many lives.

Ironically, we were not alone in our challenge that evening. Farms near Bethune and Dilke also struggled similarly. It was quite a sight that evening to look up with smoke-filled eyes and see the distinct line, that reddish-orange glow in the distance to the east and to the north, all around us. Mr. Speaker, memories of that night will stick with me always. In the end, what I can say is that we were able to contain the fire. Slowly the wind subsided. Slowly we took the upper hand. Slowly we were able to let some of the people go back to their lives.

The fire departments returned to their communities. Our neighbours went home. My wife went back home to be with our boys, and a few of us took turns on the watch. Mom of course insisted on doing the longest of the watches. Actually we didn't stop attending that smouldering landscape till just before dawn, when of all things a brief shower, a gentle rain finally put an end to what was a 12-hour saga.

When the fire of COVID-19 began to spread quickly across the globe in 2020, the landscape of the world was quickly altered. Like the flames of our pasture, COVID proved to be an unpredictable and relentless foe. Initially on that dreaded April day, it was shovels and wet gunny sacks, but eventually water trucks and breaking discs allowed us to strengthen both defence and offence. Similarly, from the beginning of the pandemic we have sought to use the most effective tools available to us to combat the spread of COVID-19.

And as more tools became available to fight against COVID, so too was the people of Saskatchewan's ability to combat the virus more effectively. Tools like vaccinations and rapid antigen test kits are widely available. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has led the nation in both access and distribution of rapid test kits throughout the pandemic. More than 18 million rapid test kits have been distributed in the province and can be accessed in one of 630 locations.

And similar to our fight with the wall of fire in 2016, many came together, assumed in some cases uncomfortable and unfamiliar roles but roles nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, critical and necessary to the challenges of the situation. And just as we as a team, as a family, did not turn our backs on the smouldering ash as circumstances improved, neither has nor will our government remove its vigilant eye from COVID as we alter our strategy to combat the virus.

Mr. Speaker, our government has begun to shift some focus back to seeding — that is, continuing to strengthen and enhance our health care in our province. To that end, critical ICU [intensive care unit] capacity is expanding in this province. By June of this year, ICU beds will increase from 79 to 90 as we move towards a target of 110 beds.

[11:30]

Our most important resource in the health sector is our human resources, the people who bring skill, dedication, and caring to health care in this province. Mr. Speaker, recruiting, training, and retaining health care professionals in Saskatchewan is important work that the government began in 2007 and is committed to continue. Since 2007 our government has added approximately 4,300 nurses to the heart of our health system. In addition to this, we have welcomed nearly 1,000 more licensed physicians to our communities. Mr. Speaker, this represents a 56 per cent increase since 2007.

Initiatives to attract talent within and from outside the province into our health sector are ongoing. Whether it be virtual recruitment initiatives from the Philippines or expanded residency training programs in southern Saskatchewan, we are committed to strengthening health care across this province.

Mr. Speaker, our growth plan for 2030 clearly sets out a goal for

our surgical wait times. That is to reduce surgical wait times to a three-month target. Important initiatives and aggressive targets to address the present backlog of surgeries built up through the COVID-19 pandemic have been announced. Targets have been set for an additional 7,000 surgeries in '22-23 over pre-pandemic levels, 13,000 more the following year, and 18,000 more in the year to follow that. This is welcome news to a number of my constituents and people across the province who will benefit from these initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, last night as I prepared to lay down the last of the comments for this debate here today, I spent some time reflecting on the past two years — what is going on, what we have lived through. For one thing, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what. I have definitely grown a lot greyer. It's kind of the elephant in the room here. Just throwing that right out there.

So much has changed, but then again so much hasn't changed also. One thing that will never be the same is my appreciation of life. You see, almost two years ago I had a close friend who was diagnosed with cancer. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, cancer amidst a COVID pandemic. I guess what I'm saying is that the pandemic, the measures, the surgical interruptions, and our health care workers, these are not abstract terms or concepts. These are friends, our family members, our neighbours on both sides.

Coming together as a community, we were able to fend off a raging prairie fire. Likewise coming together as a province, we will endure the pandemic. It's for these reasons that I am not in support of the motion put forth by the opposition member.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees. Thank you, mister deputy deputy speaker. It is always a pleasure to enter into debate in this Assembly. And I really enjoy the opportunities presented by the 75-minute debates, not only to discuss substantive matters that are of great import to our caucus and certainly on the other side as well when it's their opportunity.

And I want to start by recognizing the comments shared by the member opposite. And sincerely, I really am sorry to hear about your friend, and I hope they're doing well. This is a hot and spicy Chamber sometimes, but when it comes . . . I hope we can agree that when it comes to real, personal matters like health and the struggles that unfortunately touch too many of our lives as they relate to illness and suffering, that we can be united in our shared humanity and in our well wishes. And I do mean that very sincerely, and I hope your friend is doing okay and their family is as well.

And I thank you for your friendship to them and I'm sure all of the . . . I don't know you well, but you strike me as a pretty decent fellow. I'm sure you were a great support as I imagine your entire community was. So my sincere appreciation and solidarity with you on that. It's been truly a tough time, and this is a really emotional subject I believe for many of us in this House.

And this is an important motion. The motion of course is that the government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has damaged our health care workforce and made life harder for Saskatchewan people waiting for surgeries and other treatments as well,

specifically making the rural health care crisis worse.

And you know, there are numbers involved in this, but all of these numbers represent people. Thirty-six thousand folks waiting for surgeries in this province — 36,000 people, with a wait-list of 4,000 for orthopedic surgeries.

An Hon. Member: — Bigger than Moose Jaw.

Ms. A. Young: — Yeah, it's bigger than Moose Jaw. That is a huge number of people. And that is a huge number of people who are potentially living with suffering, with chronic pain. And we did see some of them come forward to this legislature last session. And I'd like to provide an update for some members on a few of those folks, and I believe my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview will be doing so as well.

One of the individuals who came forward was a constituent of mine, Dallas Oberik. She'd been waiting for two years for a hip replacement. And now, Mr. Chair, I know there are some who think that every person who comes forward as a validator in this House is, you know, a card-carrying New Democrat planted as a media strategy, and I'm here to say that's simply not true. This is a woman I door knocked in the summer, a woman with, you know, a family in the public service that had largely been apolitical. But the ongoing struggle — and as she spoke about the deterioration of her health over those years — moved her to act.

And she had the courage and the privilege and the ability to speak up and share her story on behalf of the thousands and thousands that can't. And I am happy to recognize and report to members and thank the minister. Dallas did have her first of two hip replacements and is doing quite well; of course still waiting for the second, like so many behind her.

The other constituent of mine who came forward last session was Eden Janzen. And again, I know for all members the delay of organ transplants in particular was incredibly, incredibly challenging. And you know, Eden's leg has healed. She's no longer forced to live at Wascana Rehab. She was discharged just recently; however life has not gotten better for Eden.

In order for her to be qualified for a transplant, there are a number of steps in the health care process that you must jump through. And you have to be healthy enough to make it on that list, and unfortunately Eden is not. And even more unfortunately, since being discharged from Wascana Rehab, her SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] payments have been late. She's had challenges with housing. And we've recently learned that her special diet which allows, you know, as someone on dialysis, allows her to eat food that prevents her kidney disease from deteriorating further, that special food supplement that comes as a part of SAID has been cut by the ministry.

And that is something I want to raise for all members. I think that should be of concern. And it's something we will continue to advocate for through casework and, if necessary, on the floor of this Assembly.

And I raise those stories, Mr. Speaker, because I do hope that there are members on the other side, you know, who've wondered how some of these folks are doing. I know we all have people in our own constituencies who are part of those 36,000

people waiting, waiting for surgeries. And it's important to remember the human impact of that. And you know, while I recognize we all hope that COVID-19 is winding down, although it's impossible to know with the delays in reporting, this will continue to impact people in the province for years.

Even by the government's own numbers, we are looking at a wait of nine years to make our way through that surgery backlog. And in addition to that, delays continue. There are a number of communities that have service interruptions right now, today, on the government's own website: Canora, Kamsack, Radville, Unity, Leader, Biggar, Porcupine Plain, Preeceville, Wolseley, Pangman, Carlyle, Central Butte, and Broadview and Indian Head. And these are real and these are significant, and many of these are precipitated by health care staffing concerns, certainly in our smaller communities.

We saw in the news last week that women in the Yorkton area who may be in need of either planned or, even worse, emergent C-section [Caesarean section] — as I myself was, delivering my daughter — can no longer get that in the area. And as somebody who has gone through that, and I'm sure as every parent and certainly every biological mother knows, the concern and the fear that you have in late stages of pregnancy when something goes wrong are among the worst feelings that you can have in your entire life.

And for women and families in that area to know that, should something go wrong or even something just go a little bit sideways, that they're looking at an expensive ambulance ride or a transport through STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service] to Saskatoon is . . . You know, to the member from Indian Head, I'd really appreciate it if you wouldn't heckle me specifically, it feels like exclusively, when I'm talking about women's health issues.

So, Mr. Chair, when these issues occur, and there are women who are currently without access to health services, who are looking at an expensive transport to Saskatoon or to Regina, these should be of concern for all members. This is not the standard that we think people in Saskatchewan should have to live with. These patient transfers, the 36,000 people on the list, the 4,000 people awaiting orthopedic surgeries, these are going to be with us for years to come.

And, Mr. Speaker, of biggest concern here is the lack of transparency and the lack of admitting that there is a challenge. These are real problems and, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think what every citizen in this province, what every resident is hoping for is at least the information to know what is happening and whether or not they can rely on those services. Certainly COVID has exacerbated these issues, but the staffing challenges, the lack of services specific to anesthesiology have existed for years. And now these staffing issues have become critical, critical shortages. These are problems that existed before March 2020, and they have been made worse.

And for people in the province, they want transparency, they want equitable access to health care, and they want to know that should there be an emergency, they're not necessarily going to have to rely on an expensive ambulance ride or air transport to get what services they should be able to get in their home communities prior to these service interruptions. With that, Mr.

Speaker, I will be supporting the motion and look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. I really appreciate that. Once again, as always, an honour to stand up here in the House and speak, and speak to this motion. I'll keep you all in suspense on if I'm going to support it or not.

Before I get into my response though, I do want to say a few things. I want to take a few seconds to thank the people of Saskatchewan for what they've done over the course of the last two years. I know I quote it quite often when I'm in this House, but "from many peoples, strength," you know, our provincial motto. And maybe no more than in the last two years have we seen that personified by the people of this province.

Everybody's made sacrifices, whether it be our young kids going to school, whether it be the teachers, whether it be our health care workers, whether it be the people in this Assembly. Clear across this province, everybody has had to make sacrifices, so I do want to say thank you to the people of Saskatchewan for what you've done and how you've taken this challenge of global pandemic and met it head on like we meet everything else head on, with courage, with determination.

I have a lot of friends who work in the health care sector, and you know, at the start of this pandemic — and I do believe it was the member from Saskatoon Fairview — you know, we saw parades and we saw the signs in the windows. You know, our heartfelt gratitude, my personal heartfelt gratitude goes out to what those people have done and continue to do to help keep our province healthy. They've been there every day. It's been an extreme physical and mental toll. So thank you to them for everything that they have done.

[11:45]

This is version 3 of this speech. I went over it. I thought about it. And I went in one direction, and I went in another direction. And you know, I was going to talk about all the things that our government has done to support the people of this province, whether it be vaccine rollouts, whether it be access to rapid tests, whether it be millions of dollars in support into the education system, into the health care system, or our business responses which there were numerous. And I had conversations with business people in this community and other communities who said it made a difference, whether it be the Saskatchewan small business emergency plan, all those things. And I was going to go in deep on that. And I thought, you know what? No, those are numbers. You know, those are numbers.

And I kept coming back to one of my friends, Warren Woods. Warren passed away just over a year ago with COVID. You know, I was thinking about, was texting him. And he told me, yeah, I got COVID, he would say. And I said, well watch yourself. Make sure you get to the hospital. And he did; he went to the hospital. And unfortunately he lost his battle.

But it made me think about our time here. We don't know when our time here is up. We don't have that luxury. We barely have

that luxury as politicians. We know we're here for a little while, and then it's the will of the people. But you know, as humans, we don't know when our time is up. And we need to embrace the times we have.

And I know the mandates, you know, they were difficult for people, but they were necessary. It did create some division in our province. There's no question about that. There's families out there . . . My own family, you know, there was a lot of division. Now is the time to work past that. And unfortunately, you know, it's tough sometimes when the name-calling comes out or all that. You know, it creates more division.

You know, I looked through some of the comments that are out there. And I'll go to the favourite medium of the opposition — Twitter. "Scott Moe continues to put politics before the health of Saskatchewan people." Let's talk about health. Is COVID the only thing that falls under health? What about mental health? What about the mental health of our kids having to sit at home, not being able to associate with their friends? What about their mental health? What about the physical health of people who need exercise but facilities were closed? It's much, much more than just shutting down everything like the members opposite wanted to do. There's much more . . . picture. But you don't see that. They don't want to talk about that.

A member of the opposition, the Leader of the Opposition, wanted to steal Christmas again from everybody this year — shut it all down. Well there's much, much more to it than that.

I'll tell a little story. We've talked about division and how we need to heal. I got COVID in early January and so my son, who's considered a close contact . . . He only had his first shot at that point in time, five years old. So he had to wait until my five days were up, then do another 10 days afterwards. My partner, Laurie, had just gone back to work. She was extremely excited to get back to work after mat leave and now she has to stay at home because I'm isolating. She had some very unkind words for myself, for our Health minister, and for our Premier. The mental toll that that was taking on her was enormous. It's not something you hear from over there very often.

Grandma Nettie, 92 years old, got her shots. Vibrant lady in Melville got so COVID-worried that she wouldn't even let anybody come to visit her. And we wanted to keep Grandma Nettie safe, but after time has gone on, it has taken her a long time to readjust and get herself back. She's moved to Kamsack now; she's in a home there. She is so happy. She is so vibrant again. The life has been breathed back into her.

So we're talking about health issues. There's much more than just this virus. The mental toll it's taken on our business community, having to shut down, or having people constantly tell them, it's not safe to go out. It's been extreme.

So I noticed our friends across the way, and I wanted to take a quick look at the motion here. And I'll freelance a bit, but the government damaging the health care workforce. Well I think back to . . . and I know they love this because we do hearken on this, I think back a few years. And I really wish the kids from Caronport were still here. Give a little education, a history lesson as it were.

Damaging our health care workforce. Yeah, shutting 52 hospitals and putting 400 nurses out of work, I would say that's damaging our health care system. Making life harder for people waiting for surgeries. Oh yeah, you know. We did have a surgery wait-list problem back in 2006. I don't know if you remember that or not.

We now have a plan to do 38,000 extra surgeries in the next three years. You want to talk about it? There's the plan. It's right out there if you want to know what it is. And I was excited to stand up here today because I knew that member was going to have a field day with me.

Making the rural health care crisis worse. You know what? I do remember being born in the . . . well I don't remember being born in the Weyburn hospital but I remember being in there not so long ago. That place was long past due. There's a new hospital going in in Weyburn. What about Midale? Oh yeah, right. We lost our hospital back in those days. I distinctly remember losing that hospital.

And here's more to the list. You want to talk about the COVID? Okay, here we go. Let's bring it right up to date for you. This budget includes a long-term care facility in La Ronge, future Grenfell long-term care centre, urgent care centres here in Regina and in Saskatoon, new hospital in Weyburn, P.A. [Prince Albert] Victoria Hospital; planning for Watson; Estevan; long-term care in Regina. You want to talk about lists? You want to talk about current, up-to-date investing in the people in Saskatchewan, investing in more nurses, more doctors, more everything that would have never happened under our partners across the way there?

So anyways, I do want to thank the members opposite for bringing this motion forward and giving us a chance to remind what was and what can be. This is a government that is investing in the people of Saskatchewan, over \$6 billion in the health budget. And we're looking to continue to the future, not to the past. We have a growth plan and we are putting it in action.

You want to talk about care? I heard them mention, oh, ambulance. Well guess what? We have STARS air ambulance in this province. Why? Because our government invested in it. We're investing \$10 million into the emergency hub stabilization for rural hospitals. We continue to invest. Why? Because we believe in the people of Saskatchewan. We thank the people of Saskatchewan for everything that they have done and continue to do.

And I for one won't keep you in suspense any longer. I will not be supporting the motion put forward on the floor today. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to just show some appreciation for the member who spoke directly before me for his revisionist history that had us chuckling over here over and over again. I wasn't expecting to laugh so much when I came to work today.

You know, I want to start by just having a look at the motion that's before us, and I'll start from the premise that the members

opposite are absolutely entitled to their own opinions, but they're not entitled to their own facts. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the motion says that the Sask Party government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic has damaged Saskatchewan's health workforce. That is a fact. And my source for that, which I have not heard yet from any members opposite, is the health care workforce. What do they have to say about this government's handling? I'll get to that. I'll get to that.

Moving on, the government has made life harder for Saskatchewan people waiting for surgeries and other treatment. That's a fact. It is an undeniable fact. And my source for that that I'll get to today are the people of Saskatoon Eastview, and I'll be reading their direct words. So if the members opposite want to argue with health care workers, they're welcome to reject this motion. If the members opposite want to argue with the people of Saskatchewan who have absolutely had their lives made harder by their choices, then today you will argue with the words of the people of Saskatchewan. I welcome you to do that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to start with reading an email that was sent to the Premier and to myself by a resident of Saskatoon Eastview. I have her permission to share. It's from a constituent named Rachel, and I quote:

I am writing to you as one of hundreds of thousands of responsible and concerned Saskatchewan residents who are seeking a safe path to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Let's be clear. We are all tired of adjusting our behaviours in order to keep ourselves and others safe. We wish to resume our lives in a more normal manner.

On January 31st you proposed that the pre-emptive removal of our public health orders, mandatory masking, and proof of vaccination would occur outside of the medical advice that you've received. Instead you culled the convenient sliver of data that supported your political agenda. Instead you relied on anecdotal account of constituents demanding that we get back to normal. Instead you repeated the anti-vax disinformation talking point that our vaccines do nothing to prevent infection and transmission. If you are not prepared to do your job in an intelligent, science-based, thoughtful, and inclusive manner, please step aside.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the result of that has been damaging. The results of those decisions has been damaging to my constituents. And it is my job, as it is the job of every member opposite, to speak up when their constituents are being hurt by the actions of the government.

I want to get to another email, this one from a constituent who did wish to remain nameless. But as the motion says that the government handling of the pandemic has damaged the workforce and made life harder for people, this constituent writes:

I have grave concerns regarding the proposed lifting of public health measures by our Premier. Personally I am a cancer survivor, now in high-risk screening program. I'm supposed to be scheduled for medical imaging every six months. My last appointment, which should have taken place in November, is now scheduled for the end of this month. Prior to this wave of the pandemic, my other

appointments were pushed back as well. Hopefully this does not result in any serious outcomes for my health.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does it say when constituents write out of fear for their health? Not from getting COVID, but because they cannot get the cancer treatments that they need as survivors because of political decisions that this government has made to protect the most extreme factions of their base?

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Saskatoon Fairview talked about service disruptions. Due to this government's choices, we have thousands, thousands of Saskatchewan residents who have not gotten the care that they need. We highlighted that throughout the fall session when it came to the Delta variant and that wave in Saskatchewan. That continues today absolutely. Folks in Saskatchewan are not getting the care that they need during the Omicron wave, which continues despite this government's negligence, perhaps due to their negligence. And, Mr. Speaker, folks are not getting the care that they need.

All of the members opposite should remember when my constituent Jessica Bailey was here in the Assembly. She joined us during the fall session to share about her heartbreaking journey. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that Jessica embodies the courage and the resilience of Saskatchewan people, but she should never ever have been put in the position that she was. She's become a voice for all those who've been ignored, forgotten, and left to die by the immoral actions of this government.

Jessica's 36 years old, Mr. Health Minister, 36 years old. She was scheduled for a kidney transplant, a kidney transplant that she was unable to receive because that program ended for one reason only: this government's decisions and that Health minister's decisions, Mr. Speaker. Jessica was ignored, left to suffer, left for her health to deteriorate because she couldn't get the kidney transplant that was scheduled for her in September.

I'm here to report that Jessica's health has not improved. Jessica was unable to get back on the transplant list because the coordinator of that program was redeployed, working on COVID. She could not get back on the transplant list because of the decision of this Health minister.

[12:00]

When that coordinator returned to her position, her health had deteriorated so badly that she was ineligible for a transplant. That is on this government. And each one of the members opposite that support these immoral policies should be able to answer for why Jessica has been left to have her health deteriorate so badly that she's ineligible for a transplant. It's shameful.

I have another constituent in a similar situation. Her husband is at stage 5 kidney failure. He can't get on the transplant list yet, but that might be in his future, and hopefully that care will be there for him when he needs it. She went to the doctor with her husband, and her family doctor told them that their best option is to leave Saskatchewan to get the care that he needs. They're unable to leave Saskatchewan because they have a child that has other specific needs, and they need to be here for that child to be part of the community.

Can you imagine? Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite: could you imagine being told by your health provider that you need to leave the province to get the care for your husband and having to choose between providing for the needs of your child or your husband? Shame, shame on this government for forcing her into this position. This is immoral that the government has actively chosen this path. Politics over people at every turn. Power over morality at every turn. Serving themselves instead of serving others at every chance that they get. Shame.

Mr. Speaker, I am nearly at the end of my time, but I want to read just a couple of quotes from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. From Tracy Zambory, and this is available publicly if you want to know about it. She said, “It’s confusing and it begs the question as to the reasoning behind all this,” when she was asked to report on why the government was lifting all health restrictions. She said:

Nurses are burnt-out. They are tired. If there’s an emergency order in place, then we should have the other protections in place, yet leadership of this province doesn’t want to have anything in place to try and lessen the crisis that we’re in.

That is what health care workers have to say. They say the actions of this government do not align with the realities of our health care workforce.

I will be supporting this motion, Mr. Speaker. I have delivered the evidence and the stories to support this motion. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair of Committees: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. A. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. It is my pleasure to be entering into this debate today on the motion put forth by the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

I would first like to thank all of the health care workers for their hard work and dedication that they have given us during this pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is a phenomena few have ever witnessed in their lifetime. Never in recent times have we seen an illness, or in this case a virus, wreak such havoc across so many countries the way COVID-19 has. Health care systems around the world were scrambling to cope with outbreaks that were simultaneously occurring. Globally, health care systems were stretched to the limit. Health officers and experts strategized to develop plans that would meet the immediate need for care while preserving their health care systems.

People were afraid at the start of the pandemic before vaccines were available. Based on what we were seeing and what we were hearing from around the world, we knew this was going to be very serious. But we also knew vaccines were going to be the best defence for negative outcomes, to prevent negative outcomes from COVID-19.

Mr. Deputy Chair, our province has worked closely with Public Health Agency of Canada, who is responsible for procuring vaccine for the provinces. In the words of the Hon. Minister of Health, “We are putting in place human and financial resources to successfully distribute vaccine and get Saskatchewan residents immunized against COVID-19.” Under the guidance of Dr.

Shahab and his experts, they worked many hours to develop and implement protocols to help and keep our citizens safe until vaccines became available. “Once mass immunization has occurred we will get back to our normal routines,” Dr. Shahab said in December of 2020.

I remember those early mornings driving to work to help with screening at our local facility, donning full PPE [personal protective equipment] so I could assist screening the staff who had finished their night shifts or were starting their days. I remember those nights staying late, working on policies to ready our system for COVID-19.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all remember the restrictions that were imposed in the beginning until we could purchase vaccine. Christmas 2020 was very lonely for a lot of Saskatchewan people. At that time, restrictions were in place that limited household bubbles if you lived alone, or you were allowed to have one other person there in your regular bubble. Seniors in long-term care relied on health workers and staff for company, and they were fortunate if they FaceTimed with their loved ones.

Staff parties, pictures on Santa’s knees, craft sales — everything was cancelled. Snowmobiles, curling bonspiels, hockey games, all sporting events that do so much to help pass that time during our long, cold winters were postponed. Mr. Deputy Chair, restaurants were closed except for takeout, and it was a challenge to get groceries.

But most importantly, we missed our friends and families. Those who could work from home did, and those who couldn’t worked under difficult restrictions. We offer a sincere thank you to everyone for their dedication that they steadfastly held and provided during this challenging time.

Mr. Deputy Chair, negotiations with unions were ongoing so staffs could be redeployed to where they were most needed. Vaccine clinics were organized across the province. The response was unbelievable. People couldn’t wait to roll up their sleeves. My office in Prince Albert answered many calls from people anxious to get their vaccine and looking for clinics. We couldn’t get the vaccine out fast enough, people were that anxious. Saskatchewan had the highest uptake per capita in Canada during the early rollout stage, even with vaccine supply being limited at the time. For a lot of people, we just couldn’t get it in their arms fast enough.

When Moderna became available, supplies were sent to the northern Indigenous communities because it didn’t require the extreme degree of temperature for storage and transportation that the Pfizer vaccine did. The SHA and tribal councils worked together to distribute the vaccine. Across Saskatchewan, appointments for walk-in clinics filled rapidly and drive-through clinics were held where lineups were long, but people were prepared to wait.

Our government, under the guidance of Dr. Shahab and public health doctors, worked with the education divisions to develop strategies and plans that met the needs for our children’s education, and plans were implemented to support small businesses struggling to make ends meet due to reduced capacity and shutdowns. Mr. Deputy Chair, closures during the pandemic were very hard for a small business, and a plan was needed to

help them keep their doors open. Dr. Shahab implemented proof of vaccine and QR [quick response] codes. This allowed for schools and businesses to safely open their doors.

Our health care workers have worked tirelessly throughout this pandemic. We know they are all dedicated to their families, friends, communities, and their patients. This is what has kept them going throughout this extraordinarily difficult time. We know they are frustrated. We know they are tired. And from every single person in Saskatchewan, we say thank you.

When our health care workers were being harassed by protestors who were opposed to the vaccine, Mr. Deputy Chair, our province passed legislation that implemented the bubble zone to protect those who were working hard as front-line workers. Steps have been taken to educate the public through all forms of media, and this education has also been translated into multiple languages. Our province leads the nation in distribution of rapid test kits. To make rapid test kits more easily accessible, we have distributed more than 18 million kits to 630 locations throughout the province.

Being vaccinated still remains the most effective tool we have to manage this pandemic. In Saskatchewan we have a high rate of vaccination for all eligible residents ages five and up. Over 85 per cent have had one dose, 80 per cent two, and 50 per cent of our population have had their booster.

Mr. Deputy Chair, the pandemic has been difficult, not only for the people of our province but for our decision makers. Under the guidance of Dr. Shahab, those restricted gathering sizes were necessary, but they had consequences for our Saskatchewan citizens. The drug task force findings showed an increase in drug use and self-harm as a result of isolation and loneliness over the pandemic.

Depression, especially for our seniors, became more prevalent. I have spoken with families who have seen how much their parents or grandparents have changed without the contact, warmth, and stimulation from their families. Families have struggled with guilt when their loved ones have died alone or when they were only allowed to see them when they were no longer responsive. I know this from personal experience. We lost our dad last fall, my dad. He was a great-grandpa and his very favourite thing in the world was to see his little great-grandsons. From the time he entered the hospital, he never got to see them again. So it's been very difficult, this pandemic, for very many people.

Mr. Speaker, I know it's been a tough journey for everyone. We all have learned lessons through this COVID-19 pandemic. But here in Saskatchewan we are strong, we are resilient, and we are responsible citizens. We will continue to find our way through this, we will continue to work together, and we will stand Saskatchewan strong.

I again thank all the front-line workers for their hard work and dedication to get us through this pandemic. I will not be supporting the motion put forward by the member opposite. Thank you.

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

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Eastview: do you support the removal of public health restrictions and . . . people from being capable of making their own decisions on how best to deal with COVID-19?

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

Mr. Love: — There we go. Okay. You know, I want to thank the member opposite for the question, which is a really good one, and I have heard lots from constituents on this. And I'll tell you what they say every time: it's really hard to make informed personal risk assessment when this government keeps that information from the public in terms of daily reporting of cases, deaths, hospitalizations, and ICU numbers.

How can people in Saskatchewan be expected to make informed risk assessment without the information that they need? And I'll tell you what's a real embarrassment for this province: when we see those nationwide numbers reported, when those nationwide numbers are reported and under Saskatchewan, it says N/A. And what this government has decided to do is be not accountable, not accountable for the decisions that they've made to put Saskatchewan people and lives at risk. Thank you.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, COVID has been hard on people, certainly in regards to health care but cost of living is skyrocketing and folks are having a harder and harder time getting by. So to the member from Walsh Acres: why is he standing in the way of making sure that people in this province, drivers, are getting gouged for a buck eighty at the pumps?

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

[12:15]

Mr. Meyers: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Unfortunately I didn't hear the end of the question. I did hear that it was something to do with . . . It is very difficult to hear from back here. So I really can't answer because I really didn't hear the end of the question, but I am very proud of what our government is doing, investing in the people of Saskatchewan. And we'll see in the budget in a couple of weeks just how strong this province is. Thank you.

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

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite don't want to own their own record in government but they trumpet leadership endorsements from NDP cabinet ministers who helped close hospital beds and created the longest surgical wait times in the country. To the member from Regina University: how many more health care spaces would have been available for COVID patients if your party hadn't closed 52 hospitals?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

University.

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member from Cannington. I'm happy to stand here and debate Grant Devine any day. But, Mr. Speaker, to that member — and he should well know, representing a community from outside of the cities — those communities in rural Saskatchewan fought hard for their health facilities, fought hard for their constituencies, fought hard for their hospitals. And he is the only member in government right now who has closed hospitals today.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been no ownership over the over a thousand — 1,504 — current health care vacancies that exist under this government's watch right now. To the member from P.A. Northcote: what's the plan to solve that?

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

Ms. A. Ross: — I thank the member opposite for the question. Right now we are currently . . . The Minister of Trade and Export is working at recruitment with other countries and a virtual recruitment from the Philippines. But may I remind the member opposite that since we've come to power, we've recruited nearly 1,000 more doctors, approximately 4,300 more nurses. We've added 40 new seats to the College of Medicine and doubled the number of residencies. Thank you.

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

Mr. Domotor: — Mr. Speaker, last summer members opposite wanted to keep Saskatchewan masked up and locked down. But at the same time, those same members were proudly crushing Bohs in the Pil zone at Mosaic Stadium with no masks in sight. To the member for Regina University: will you stand up and apologize for your party's hypocrisy?

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

Ms. A. Young: — Regina University. Oh, thank you. You know, Mr. Speaker, if that member wants to stand up and say Aleana Young was double-fisting beers again and again into a microphone, I am happy to hear it. But, Mr. Speaker, I was very, very clear. I said it into microphones held by members of the press that I was going to go to that game and I was going to have a great time.

But you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? You know who couldn't go to that game? Children, people who are immune compromised, seniors who were worried about their health — those are the people who had to stay home because this government, this government dragged their feet on vaccine passports only to implement them two months later.

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

Ms. Bowes: — To the member from P.A. Northcote: as a former health care worker yourself, as someone who has worked on the front lines of our health care system, do you agree with the need for a health human resources strategy? And do you agree that our health care system is chronically understaffed?

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

Ms. A. Ross: — I thank the member opposite for the question. And as a health care worker, I am very proud . . . or a former health care worker, I am very, very proud of my colleagues for the tremendous work and dedication that they have given the province and the people of our province. I encourage you to stay tuned to our budget. There will be many interesting initiatives coming forth, and it is a goal of our province to continue to support health care and our health care workers.

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

Ms. Lambert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Members opposite are quick to gloss over their record in health care, which includes 52 hospital closures, the worst doctor and nurse retention rates, and the longest surgical waits in the entire country. To the member from Saskatoon Fairview: do you acknowledge our successes in reversing your party's record of closures, staffing vacancies, and surgical wait-lists?

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

Ms. Mowat: — I'll ask this question: do you acknowledge what Grant Devine did to bankrupt this province? Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government refuses to acknowledge the fact that they're the ones who are in power right now. People are suffering today. The smug looks on their faces when we talk about health care are completely unacceptable, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Love: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from Arm River: can the member tell the Assembly why this government has failed to deliver people the information that they need to make their own personal risk assessment, including daily reporting?

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

Mr. Skoropad: — I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. You know, and I'd also like to thank Dr. Shahab for his sage advice throughout this pandemic. And to that point, we have followed his advice. We have followed his guidance throughout this pandemic, and quite simply we followed his recommendations to report every seven days, like other provinces in this country. Simple question; simple answer. Thank you.

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

Mr. Friesen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Members opposite express concern for our health care workforce, and we do too, but the member from Lakeview is accepting leadership endorsements from old NDP cabinet ministers who helped drive hundreds of doctors and nurses out of the province.

To the member from Saskatoon Eastview, do you endorse these NDP cabinet ministers' policies that sent 450 nurses and 173 doctors packing?

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 2 — Support for Pipelines and Energy Security

Mr. Francis: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The last week marked the fourth anniversary since being elected. And oddly enough, four years ago I found myself presenting on this same topic, in the very first session — pipelines. A very important topic. I love pipelines. Many on this side love pipelines. Over there, there might be a few fakers, but I don't think there's much support for pipelines over there.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have clothing that says "I love Canadian oil and gas" and "I love pipelines." I have them in my office in Kindersley. The Minister of Energy and Resources has them on her binder. We're proud of our energy industry here in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why? There's many reasons. They're efficient. They're safe. They provide jobs. And on a smaller scale, they provide heating fuel for our furnaces that we need to keep us warm in the winter. Our fireplaces, our gas appliances — we need pipelines to serve all of those things. Every winter I'm very thankful for those things. We have energy security in our province, largely to do with programs this government has provided over the years.

But, Mr. Speaker, on a national scale, the debate and advancement on pipelines has shown little to no progress. Not a single new pipeline built under the Trudeau Liberal anti-energy government in seven years. Not even an approved project. A near-perfect record by the Liberals, except for Enbridge somehow getting Line 3 replacement through.

In the past, market access has been the biggest hurdle for our oil and gas producers. As important as that was and continues to be, today it's turning into something far worse: the threat of world energy security.

The virtue-signallers here at home and around the globe have been touting leave it in the ground, transition away, build a cleaner economy, build back better. Obviously Trudeau has not accomplished any of this on his own. Jagmeet Singh, Elizabeth May, they're all in that same glee club, singing from the same song sheet. And these guys want a sheet. The carbon tax lovers should be rejoicing at this current price signal that we're getting. Yet, fuel is bad. Don't use it. Get off of it. These same people are now yelling at the top of their lungs, help the consumers with the price. Give them a rebate. The same folks that hate the oil sands,

hate pipelines, and hate Canadian oil and gas at all levels.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, careful what you wish for. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the folks that support this position and share that warped mentality have gotten exactly what they wish for, proudly sporting what one columnist referred to as their green blinders. They've helped it get so expensive that hardly anyone can afford it. Mission accomplished. Good job. Nicely done. They ran companies off that were willing and able to improve our supply and supply world demand. Instead, put fear in investors that forced the money to go elsewhere in the world, as the federal government announced the phase-out of oil and gas development.

In the meantime, they continue to adopt egregious regulation, making it virtually impossible economically to further develop our natural gas and oil resources, let alone have people invest in it. And of course, where does the financial burden be placed? On the people and the provinces. A clean, ethical, and sustainable industry here in Canada that is the envy of the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, something that a normal leadership group would tout and be proud of. But oh no, the virtuous, liberal crowd knows better, Mr. Speaker. Kill oil and gas. Kill coal. Dash madly to clean and green.

How did that work out in Europe? They rushed to renewables. Spain for instance, Germany for instance — green transition success stories. Hardly. We know how it went. It went horribly bad. Many are going back to coal after a decade of rushing to green, renewable sources. A balance is what is required. And of course, now they look back and acknowledge, well maybe it was wrong to maybe put Russia in that driver's seat — a real trusty European renewable backstop.

COP26 [Conference of Parties 26] in Scotland is another prime example of what's wrong with the all-or-nothing green system. The who's who of the jet-set left spewed the "do as I say, not as I do" vapour trails across the globe in their private jets to feed each other's green egos — Greta, Leonardo, William and Kate, Jeff Bezos. You know, regular everyday folks like us, working stiff to try and feed their families, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Last night I went through the list of attendees: 20 to 30,000 delegates, 16,016 pages, 19 of which were 250 eager Canadian delegates. Not one from Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I might add. Some of us might feel it might be a bit hypocritical to burn fuel that you're principally opposed to the use of and wish to eliminate. Well commercial airlines now are providing us with a plus-minus in our flights that we book. These jet setters go around in their private jets with two or three people in them, around the planet, telling the rest of us how we're supposed to be more efficient in our daily lives and change our energy-use practices.

Well during COP26, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a significant weather event. It's referred to as the big calm. The wind didn't blow. Crazy. That is catastrophic when the wind doesn't blow, isn't it? And when it resulted in only a 5 per cent operating capacity in the renewable system, what happened? They didn't have any power. Crazy. And the solution? They come up with a solution: gas generators, and fire up the last two remaining coal plants in the UK [United Kingdom]. Wow, brilliant to replace that expected wind generation that unfortunately didn't happen.

[12:30]

Then to add insult to that injury, the Griffin Wind Farm was hired to restore the clean power narrative because it was getting egg on the face of all the green people that are all at this conference. But you know what, then the wind decided to blow too hard and it overproduced capacity and they had nowhere to put it. They couldn't use it fast enough.

A half a billion British pounds were paid for power that was never used. Efficient. Reports are that the wholesale power price topped at a hundred times the normal wholesale price. Well the good news is at least it wasn't that dirty carbon capture oil from Estevan. Or it wasn't any dirty oil sands Canadian oil and gas. So that's the good news. We didn't use any of that garbage.

You know, the world needs to be rid of all that stuff, and our federal government continues to double, triple, quadruple down on that position. Instead of singing the praises of clean, sustainable, ethical Canadian products, our net-zero PM [Prime Minister] announces more regulation and emissions reduction targets.

And if that isn't enough, we're treated to a new federal administration in the US [United States] First task of the Biden administration: kill Keystone XL. The one approved project. A project nearly completely built. Would have immediately eliminated the Russian import volume. But Joe said, no, keep that dirty Canadian oil out of the world market. We prefer Putin over the oil sands. Great move. Add the pandemic to the equation and all of a sudden the world supply is dangerously low.

Who benefits? Russia. Who's pinched? Every country Russia sells to, including the US. So naturally President Biden calls on OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries], the Saudis, Venezuela to boost production. What do they tell him? You want more oil? Pump it yourself.

Maybe take a look north, Mr. Biden. We've kind of got some up here. The pipeline you bonked on the head maybe should be reconsidered. Like I said, that pipeline is largely built, not to mention it is highly supported by every state that it goes through. It creates jobs in every state and province that that thing is built in.

Our own federal government isn't saying a single word as far as I've heard on having the US administration taking another look at KXL [Keystone XL]. They said little to nothing when Biden killed it after being inaugurated, and they're saying even less now. They killed Energy East. They killed Northern Gateway. They bought and parked TMX [Trans Mountain Expansion].

Now we find Putin holding enough energy cards in his hands — cards that were dealt to him, by the way — giving him the power and the war chest to pull off this current invasion of the Ukraine. They gave him the access. He amassed the wealth and power, and now the world is looking back and wondering what went wrong.

Well the answer, or at least a solid alternative, lies beneath our feet in this province and across Western Canada. It's called the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It covers half of BC [British Columbia], all of Alberta, two-thirds of Saskatchewan, half of Manitoba, and the southwest portion of

the Northwest Territories. 1.4 million square kilometres which hold huge deposits of light, heavy oil, oilsands, coal — things the world needs.

The problem is we're still landlocked. We need pipelines and we need Keystone XL approved in the US and completed. We need Trans Mountain built. We need Northern Gateway and Energy East. We need access to every global market that wants us, especially Eastern markets caught in Russia's web. We need the carbon tax paused and eventually eliminated. We need to scrap the Clean Fuel Standard. These tax grabs erode Saskatchewan's competitiveness and do nothing for the environment.

We need fair regulation. Repeal Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, as ships coming in with foreign oil have just as much negative impact on the environment as ships going out, and in many cases more. We need time for our industry to continue with innovative ways to reduce emissions, keep our energy jobs, continue to generate wealth, and pay for services and infrastructure for all Canadians.

We need our federal government to recognize and give the provinces credit for things that they are doing to lower emissions: support CCUS [carbon capture, utilization, and storage] on coal, on enhanced oil recovery, on natural gas-fired electrical generation; acknowledge our agriculture practices; support SMR [small modular reactor] development. They need to stop working against us and start making a concerted effort to work with us.

High gas prices are just the latest item on a long list of inflationary pressures we've seen as a result of COVID, yes, for sure, but also because of the extremely reckless borrowing, spending, and money-printing occurring in Ottawa. It's all catching up. It was all predicted, and it's happening.

The federal NDP continue to enable and are just as responsible for all of this. There is no way a minority government should be able to operate in this manner. To the members opposite: find your voice. If you truly support this province's energy sector and the ag sector, appeal to your federal counterparts. Convince them to stop propping up the Liberal government.

The Athabasca by-election is proof that the people of this province are not excited about ever having a left-wing liberal candidate again, or a member. In fairness we had a great candidate. And sincere congratulations to the newest elected member, by the way. He's very deserving of that election win, and I don't mean to downplay that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the members opposite, people are sick of the NDP's tired, divisive, and unpopular policies. They're not in the best interests of the people of this province and the voters. Every time they go to the polls they send another signal. And another signal is sitting right there.

In my very first speech I made a reference to the sinking of the *Titanic*. Ironically last month Tammy Robert tweeted out, and I quote, "As for @Sask_NDP, it's dead to me. We need a new plan. We'll make one."

And she goes on to say in a subsequent tweet:

This will likely do nothing to stop the pathetic, petty infighting, because the @Sask_NDP doesn't even have maturity anymore to target forming govt, become Cabinet

Ministers. Instead the 10y squabbling will now continue over who's going to be the next captain of the *Titanic*.

I do wish them luck as they rearrange their deck chairs over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is some speculation that the members opposite may in fact support this motion. While there could very well be one or two members that would consider it, I believe a large majority of them absolutely hate the industry. They've made it very clear and transparent how they feel about the type of energy that isn't deemed to be green, and it will be very interesting to see if they support this motion. The majority of them will once again tuck-in tight with Jagmeet Singh and his pal, Justin Trudeau. Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this particular point in time it's really all about energy security.

The one final little story on that point. The member from Cannington and I were at Legislative Horizon Institute last fall, and one thing that stuck in our minds that we heard, a quote from one of the presenters is, "When the power goes out, no one cares one bit about climate change."

And that speaks to energy security, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are certain countries in the world that are in no position to choose anything but the cheapest and most available source of energy. Coal, oil, and gas are here for decades to come. Energy and security and availability is all they care about.

Apparently the tone-deaf former secretary of state, John Kerry, can't relate as he openly expressed hope that Vladimir Putin would "stay on track" in the fight against climate change. Talk about green blinders, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the fact remains, oil and natural gas and, yes, coal will be a large part of the energy mix for decades to come, and Western Canadian resources should be at the front of the supply line.

I will put forward the motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

That this Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan and the role of Saskatchewan energy production in providing global energy security. And to that end, we call on the Government of Canada to repeal Bills C-48 and C-69, support pipeline projects including Energy East, Northern Gateway, Keystone XL, TransMountain, and repeal the carbon tax.

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

That this Assembly supports the Government of Saskatchewan and the role of Saskatchewan energy production in providing global energy security. And to that end, we call on the Government of Canada to repeal Bills C-48 and C-69, support pipeline projects including Energy East, Northern Gateway, Keystone XL, TransMountain, and repeal the federal carbon tax.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Being aware that this will concurrently adjourn debate

in the House, I move that the House be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved that the House be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly now stands adjourned till Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:41.]

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