



SECOND SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

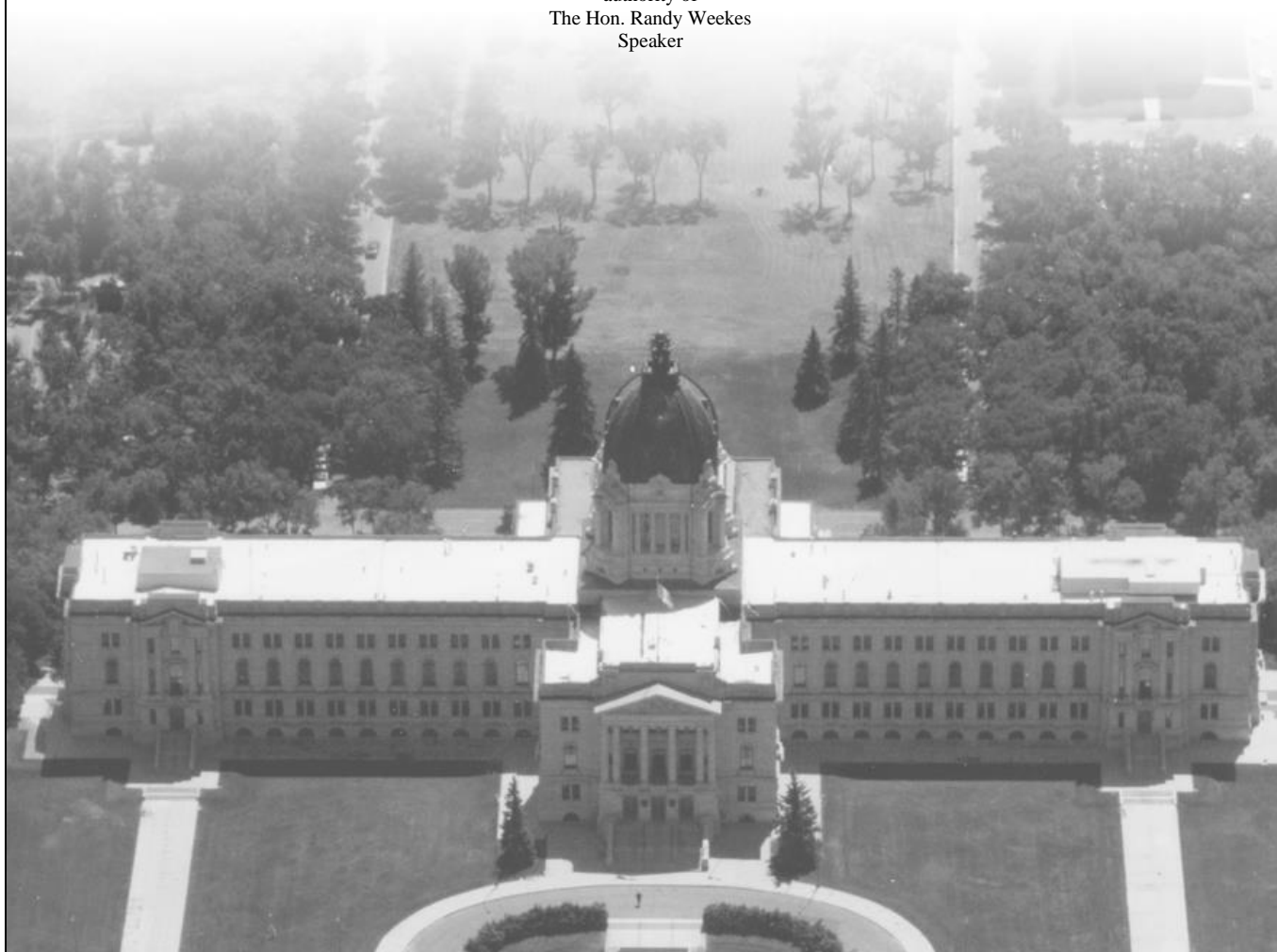
of the

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)
Docherty, Mark — Regina Coronation Park (SP)
Domotor, Ryan — Cut Knife-Turtleford (SP)
Duncan, Hon. Dustin — Weyburn-Big Muddy (SP)
Eyre, Hon. Bronwyn — Saskatoon Stonebridge-Dakota (SP)
Fiaz, Muhammad — Regina Pasqua (SP)
Francis, Ken — Kindersley (SP)
Friesen, Marv — Saskatoon Riversdale (SP)
Goudy, Todd — Melfort (SP)
Grewal, Gary — Regina Northeast (SP)
Hargrave, Joe — Prince Albert Carlton (SP)
Harpauer, Hon. Donna — Humboldt-Watrous (SP)
Harrison, Daryl — Cannington (SP)
Harrison, Hon. Jeremy — Meadow Lake (SP)
Hindley, Hon. Everett — Swift Current (SP)
Jenson, Terry — Martensville-Warman (SP)
Kaeding, Hon. Warren — Melville-Saltcoats (SP)
Keisig, Travis — Last Mountain-Touchwood (SP)
Kirsch, Delbert — Batoche (SP)
Lambert, Lisa — Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood (SP)
Lawrence, Greg — Moose Jaw Wakamow (SP)
Lemaigre, Jim — Athabasca (SP)

Love, Matt — Saskatoon Eastview (NDP)
Makowsky, Hon. Gene — Regina Gardiner Park (SP)
Marit, Hon. David — Wood River (SP)
McLeod, Tim — Moose Jaw North (SP)
McMorris, Hon. Don — Indian Head-Milestone (SP)
Meili, Ryan — Saskatoon Meewasin (NDP)
Merriman, Hon. Paul — Saskatoon Silverspring-Sutherland (SP)
Meyers, Derek — Regina Walsh Acres (SP)
Moe, Hon. Scott — Rosthern-Shellbrook (SP)
Morgan, Hon. Don — Saskatoon Southeast (SP)
Mowat, Vicki — Saskatoon Fairview (NDP)
Nerlien, Hugh — Kelvington-Wadena (SP)
Nippi-Albright, Betty — Saskatoon Centre (NDP)
Ottenbreit, Greg — Yorkton (SP)
Reiter, Hon. Jim — Rosetown-Elrose (SP)
Ritchie, Erika — Saskatoon Nutana (NDP)
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

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Gregory A. Putz

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

Deputy Clerk — Iris Lang

Clerk Assistant — Kathy Burianyk

Sergeant-at-Arms — Sean Darling

Hansard on the internet

Hansard and other documents of the
Legislative Assembly are available
within hours after each sitting.

<https://www.legassembly.sk.ca/Calendar>

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Duncan	2313
Young, A.	2313
Goudy	2313
Mowat	2313
Skoropad	2313
Grewal	2314
Beck	2314
Docherty	2314
Wotherspoon	2314
Morgan	2315
Bowes	2315
Ross, L.	2315

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Conway	2316
Mowat	2316
Bowes	2316
Nippi-Albright	2316

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Walker School Raises Funds for Outdoor Learning Space	
Wotherspoon	2317
Missing Persons Week	
Dennis	2317
Recognizing Saskatoon Community Associations	
Nippi-Albright	2317
Sports Celebrity Gala Held in Assiniboia	
Marit	2317
Grade 12 Student's Poems Published in Online Literary Magazine	
Domotor	2318
Regina Volunteer Dedicated to a Life of Service	
Grewal	2318
Opposition Statements on Health Care Numbers	
Cockrill	2318

QUESTION PERIOD

Management of Provincial Economy	
Meili	2319
Moe	2319
SaskPower Rates	
Young, A.	2320
Morgan	2320
Health Care System Capacity	
Mowat	2321
Merriman	2321
Access to Reproductive Health Services and Members' Views on Abortion	
Sarauer	2322
Ross, L.	2322
Suicide Prevention Strategy	
Vermette	2322
Hindley	2323

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Ottenbreit	2323
------------------	------

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund — Executive Council — Vote 10	
Moe	2323
Meili	2327
Wilson	2337
Mowat	2337

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a school group from the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Joining us from Gladmar Regional School are 11 grade 7 students. They're seated in the west gallery, if they give a wave. And, Mr. Speaker, they're here with parent chaperones, Hayley Labatte and Brittany Fonstad. As well, Mr. Speaker, they are accompanied by their teacher, Chris Abtosway.

This is not the first school group that Chris has brought to the legislature, Mr. Speaker. He has brought a number of groups to the legislature, Mr. Speaker. And I think I've noted in the past, I first had the opportunity to meet Chris when we lived on the same floor in residence way back in university. So I'm kind of dating both of us here, Mr. Speaker, and we'll leave those stories for another time.

But I do look forward to meeting with the students after question period and having an opportunity to answer some of their questions. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming the grade 7 class from Gladmar Regional School.

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome for the first time five individuals seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. We have Toni, we have Flora, we have Yvette, we have Rex, and we have Tetet, or Maria. And they're representing the Saskatoon Association of Filipino Entrepreneurs, who myself along with many of my other colleagues had the opportunity to meet with today and welcome to the legislature for their first formal visit.

And I would like to ask all members to join with me in welcoming these wonderful entrepreneurs balancing additional careers, multiple locations, the demands of family, as well as their strong advocacy for their community to this, their legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to join with the member opposite and invite some friends to their legislature: Rex Cabellon, Flor Padua, Yvette Jamarolin, Maria Buenaventura, and then Toni Carlo Chin. Missing today is Chris Rod. He organized the meeting that we had with the Minister of Trade and Export.

And you know, just a little telling story about what the Filipino culture brings to this place. It was interesting. The member from The Battlefords popped his head in, and he's a bit of a foodie. And the five of them here today happen to all have restaurants and in the food services with the organization SAFE [Saskatoon Association of Filipino Entrepreneurs]. And so he asked, which is the best restaurant to eat at? And immediately they had responded together, they're all the best.

And you know, that is what we really appreciate about the Filipino culture. And I'm sure that every one of us here have many, many stories of friends and what are becoming family of the Filipino community. So welcome to your legislature, and may we all receive them and give them a warm welcome.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join in with the other members in welcoming this group of Filipino entrepreneurs to their legislature here today, along with noting that we did a member's statement previously in the session to acknowledge some of their work and the foundation, the founding of SAFE.

We're sad that Chris Rod couldn't be with us here today, but we had a very good conversation with these folks. And they're great representatives for their communities, talking to us about labour shortages, the ability to recruit to their restaurants and food service agencies, and also immigration issues, wanting to be able to bring family here.

I think that it's great that this group has formed and can be advocates on behalf of other folks who are in the same situation that they are in. And I want to thank them for an engaging conversation; I know it won't be the last. We look forward to the multiple events throughout the summer and thank them for their time here today. So I'd ask all members to join in welcoming them to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Skoropad: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it is an absolute pleasure to welcome here three fantastic constituents of mine from Central Butte, seated in your gallery: Rachel Peterson — you can just give a little wave — Kayla Hamm, and Deandra Peterson. And Deandra, actually we have a bit of a connection here. I career counselled Deandra here. I know I look very youthful, but I'm actually old enough to have career counselled her. She panned out okay, I'm thinking, so there you go. So I just want to welcome you here.

But apart from being three energetic and community-minded young ladies, they're also three members of the Central Butte Child Care Incorporated board. And recently, Mr. Speaker, I'm thrilled to announce that recently there was an announcement where they received funding for 33 spaces for their child care facility. So that's going to be just a great thing for Central Butte. Thank you for all your work you've done on that. And I just want to ask all members to help me welcome them to their legislature.

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

Mr. Grewal: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Mr. Grewal: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, it is my pleasure to welcome all community members from the province of Gujarat from India — welcome; we welcome you all — and to introduce my mentor and friend, Mr. Krishan Kapila, sitting in your gallery with his wife, Hembala, and the current MCOS [Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan] executive director, Rhonda Rosenberg.

Before retirement, Mr. Kapila was a science teacher, a lecturer, and a special assistant to the minister of Health for the Government of Saskatchewan. He was the recipient of the Award of Merit by Saskatchewan science teachers' association in 1999. He has held a multitude of volunteer roles for many associations, including India Canada Association, Saskatchewan heritage celebrations, Regina Multicultural Council, Regina Multi-Faith Forum, the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, and Multi-Faith Saskatchewan.

For his vast volunteering efforts, he has been recognized several times, including being the recipient of the provincial cultural volunteer award presented by Saskatchewan Council of Cultural Organizations in 1996, the recipient of the Award of Merit by Saskatchewan science teachers' association, and the recipient of the Mayor's Community Volunteer Award in 1999. In 2000 he was awarded Toastmaster of the Year, Regina, and in 2005 was the recipient of both the commemorative Saskatchewan Centennial Medal and from the Betty Szuchewycz multicultural award for outstanding contribution to multiculturalism in Saskatchewan. He was awarded the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] Commanding Officer's Certificate of Appreciation for work done on the diversity management advisory committee, Depot Division, in 2008. He was deeply honoured in 2010 when he was the recipient of the Saskatchewan volunteer award presented by Premier Brad Wall.

In 2015 he received recognition for multicultural contributions at the 40th anniversary of MCOS and was the recipient of the Service Above Self Award from Regina Eastview Rotary Club. In 2016 he was the recipient of the exemplary service award for Saskatchewan Youth Visual Art Project by Multi-Faith Saskatchewan and in 2019 was the recipient of the honorary Doctorate of Divinity, St. Andrew's College, University of Saskatchewan. Finally, in 2020 he was the recipient of the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers from the Governor General of Canada.

I will have more to say on Krishan in a member's statement in a few moments, Mr. Speaker. I would now ask all members to join me in welcoming him into his Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to rise and welcome 19 grade 12 students here today from Sheldon Williams Collegiate in Regina Lakeview. They are joined today by their teacher Mr. Holcomb, and as well as they're joined by Donarae Deringer, who is here in capacity as a chaperone, who I know as a teacher, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to have these 19 young folks here with us today. I know this is a very big semester for all of you, your last semester of high school. I could not be happier to have you join us here today and look forward to being able to meet with you and answer your questions after question period. Until then, I invite all members to join me in welcoming these students to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to ask leave for an extended introduction.

The Speaker: — Leave has been requested for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in the west gallery we've got at least, I don't know, 60 people, but they're all representing the Gujarati community of India. And Gujarat is one of the richest and biggest provinces of India. And they're all seniors living in Regina, again from the Gujarati community. I'm not going to do an extended introduction to introduce every single one and do a bio, Mr. Speaker, although I'm tempted, but I'm not.

But I've got a few names that I want to read into the record. Some of the leaders are Matat Patel, Jagdish Patel, Jag Patel, Baldev Patel, Rasik Patel, Jigar Patel, Nalin Prajapati, and Govind Patel. Apparently that's the only name that they can go by, is Patel, Mr. Speaker.

But again, there is at least 4,000 Gujaratis that are living in Regina, and 10,000 in this province as a whole. Their contributions are significant. And as Saskatchewan, as Regina, I just want to thank them all for their contributions, for choosing Regina, number one, but recognizing the fact that you've done so much for this province. And we want to thank you for that. Again, thank you for choosing this. You've all settled here since 1975. We're all better because of you. If nothing else, you embody our motto, "from many peoples, strength."

So I ask that all members join me in welcoming the 60-plus group of the Gujarati community, and again, welcome to your legislature. Thank you again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour to join with my friend on the other side to welcome the Gujarati Samaj of Saskatchewan to their Assembly. Leaders

within this community, these are amazing folks. I've met many of these folks through time, gotten to know some of them quite well, met many new members of the community here today as well. And welcome to the Saskatchewan legislature, your Legislative Assembly.

I want to give special recognition to my good friend Jigar Patel and Sam Patel that are here as well, real community leaders — president Patel and the leadership of the Gujarati Samaj of Saskatchewan. As has been described, this community enriches our province, builds a brighter future for many. And the society itself, the Samaj supports the settlement of so many that are choosing to build their lives in Saskatchewan. These community members contribute to all facets of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — economically, socially, and culturally.

And trust me, Mr. Speaker, they know how to have fun. You won't find a more engaging and fun Diwali celebration than that with the Gujarati Samaj of Saskatchewan. You will find them dancing into the wee hours of the night for Navratri, Mr. Speaker. Nine days into the night, three days, four days of celebration here in Regina where folks from across southern Saskatchewan come together to party and celebrate, and it's a beautiful thing.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of us in this Assembly to extend our care and our love to this wonderful community in our province.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, while on my feet I want to join with the member previous to recognize Rhonda Rosenberg and the multicultural organization of Saskatchewan for her enormous contributions. Rhonda, I think you and I have dinner together about three times a week because we both are involved in so many different cultural organizations, and through this time of Ramadan we've been iftaring together an awful lot. But Rhonda, just know that your efforts to strengthen Saskatchewan, to build understanding, and act against racial hatred in our community makes a difference and is noticed.

Sitting beside her I want to recognize Dr. Krishan Kapila and his wife. Dr. Kapila as has been identified, is a remarkable person that's offered so much to this province on all fronts, from a cultural perspective, through science and education. I ask all members to welcome Dr. Kapila, his wife, and Rhonda Rosenberg to their Assembly.

And while on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have three very special guests that have joined us here today from the Walker School Community Council, Mr. Speaker. We're joined by Chair Emma Trobiak, by Secretary Chrystal Kish, and by Reid Hill, sort of jack of all trades, and he has a specific political interest in this place from time to time as well. But these are the epitome of volunteers and community, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be identifying what they've accomplished for the community in a member's statement here today. They've been fundraising hard to leave a legacy and to enrich learning and to support community, Mr. Speaker, and they've been steadfast in that work, Mr. Speaker. I've been proud to be a part of it.

But they also give back, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to identify that they believe that they can't just be fundraising and asking for

dollars; they also need to give back. And they do so in so many ways. But one fine example, Mr. Speaker, was on a February evening this last winter at the Outdoor Hockey League site over at the Rosemont rink, this school community council, along with the Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association, decided to offer chili and a bun to anyone in the community, and of course all the hockey players and the parents as well. They served up 275 bowls of chili, Mr. Speaker, on a cold evening and brought us together with kinship and a whole bunch of fun, Mr. Speaker. And it just is a clear demonstration of how much these folks care about our community. It's my pleasure to welcome them here today, and I ask all to join me in doing so.

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After the lengthy introduction across the way, I feel that anything I have to say will be totally inadequate. But, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce, in the east gallery, Lori Johb, president of Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. Lori and I have got to know each other reasonably well with our respective roles and enjoy having discussions periodically on a variety of different issues. She's been a tireless advocate for workers and workers' rights in our province. And while we may not agree on everything, most of the things that we do have discussions on, we certainly do agree on.

Her husband and I have a common ancestor, so the family tie has not really produced a lot of good benefits, but the warm relationship we've got and the need to help workers in our province certainly has. And I would like to take this opportunity to welcome her and all of her members to the legislature and wish them very well in the future and ask the members to join me in welcoming them and thanking them.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister opposite in welcoming Saskatchewan Federation of Labour president Lori Johb, as well as strategic advisor Eric Bell to their legislature. The SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour], under Lori's leadership, has been doing incredible work fighting for decent wages, living wages, and working conditions on behalf of all Saskatchewan people.

They are raising the bar for what the expectations are for workers in our province who unfortunately still have the lowest minimum wages in Canada and are still left waiting for paid sick leave after two years of a pandemic. I want to thank president Johb as well as Mr. Bell for their tireless advocacy. And welcome once again to your legislature.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I will be brief. As the Minister Responsible for Culture, it does give me great pleasure to see so many people attend today, as the member from Coronation Park has so kindly gathered over 60 members from the Gujarati community. Thank you very much for coming this afternoon. I had an opportunity to visit with them

briefly. So thank you so much for all your commitment to our community.

I also want to thank Rhonda Rosenberg for her work within the cultural community. Your commitment and your dedication makes Saskatchewan a better place.

And I also want to thank Krishan Kapila. Krishan is . . . well we've known each other for a lot of years. And as the member read off all his accolades, I think we all need to get up earlier and start trying harder if we want to kind of match what Krishan has the opportunity to do for the province.

And I also want to welcome the Filipino community to the Legislative Assembly. I've had the opportunity in the past to meet with these young entrepreneurs, and thank you for everything you do for our province.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, please, I'd like you to welcome each and every one of these fine members to our Legislative Assembly. Thank you very much.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Conway: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to be on my feet, but I take no pleasure at all in again presenting a petition calling on that government to overhaul SIS [Saskatchewan income support]. We continue to see the cruel impacts of this heartless program, Mr. Speaker. We see this program aggravating homelessness and precarity just when people are trying to recover from the economic impacts of a pandemic, just when they are struggling with record inflation, Mr. Speaker. Really this is just another example of the Ministry of Social Services' wasteful and ineffective policies that work against their mandate to help people get back on their feet.

Disappointingly, we have not seen substantive changes to SIS, Mr. Speaker. A buck a day isn't going to cut it. And indeed this program has contributed to that government's reputation that they just don't care.

So with that, 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 restore direct payment of rent and utilities for income support clients.

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

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to fix the rural health care staffing crisis. These citizens wish to bring to our attention that recruitment and retention of health care professionals is a particular issue in Saskatchewan's rural health care facilities, leading to many emergency room, acute, lab, and X-ray service disruptions; that the ongoing effects of the

pandemic have created burnout and led to early retirements and resignations which has rippling effects for small cities and towns; that health care workers and their families are valuable assets in Saskatchewan communities and local economies; and that at the 2021 SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, over 94 per cent of rural leaders voted to support a resolution acknowledging the nursing and health care worker shortage across Saskatchewan.

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 fix the rural health care staffing crisis.

This petition today is signed by individuals from Wilkie, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

Ms. Bowes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to rise today to present our petition calling for paid sick leave legislation. The undersigned residents of Saskatchewan would like to bring to our attention the following: a healthy workforce is good for the economy; lives could be saved if workers could afford to stay home when they're sick; no one should have to make the choice between going to work sick or risking the roof over their head by staying home; workers, doctors, and public health officials have all called for paid sick leave in Saskatchewan, along with our guests from the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour; the official opposition has twice now introduced paid sick leave legislation since the onset of the pandemic, calling for a minimum of 10 paid sick days each year and 14 days during a public health crisis such as COVID.

I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to introduce and pass paid sick leave legislation. We ask them to do that immediately and without further delay.

Today the petition, Mr. Speaker, has been signed by residents of Delisle as well as Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to present the following petition. The folks who signed this petition wish to bring to your attention: survivors of both Ile-a-la-Crosse and Timber Bay boarding schools have been denied the Indian residential school settlements that other sites received on the basis that the schools were run by the province of Saskatchewan rather than operated by the federal government.

The conditions at Timber Bay residential school were so horrific that it is the only residential school in Canada with an open RCMP investigation surrounding historical crimes. In 2019 the federal government and president of the Métis Nation of

Saskatchewan signed a memorandum of understanding committing parties to exploratory discussions to address the legacy of Ile-a-la-Crosse boarding school; the province was not involved in the signing although they've been invited.

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 recognize the Ile-a-la-Crosse and Timber Bay schools as provincially run schools, release the records of these schools, offer the students a formal apology, and compensate the survivors.

The folks that signed this petition reside in Debden, Waterhen, and Loon Lake. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Walker School Raises Funds for Outdoor Learning Space

Mr. Wotherspoon: — It's my pleasure to rise and recognize the incredible local efforts of the Walker School Community Council. A few years ago the council identified that there was a need for an outdoor covered learning space for students and community in the schoolyard that faces beautiful A.E. Wilson Park and Wascana Creek. They made a plan to fundraise and have been dedicated as a force of fundraising ever since.

The structure will be 20 by 30 feet. It will connect with the bike path. It will be accessible for those in wheelchairs. And an Indigenous rock circle will also be located near the structure.

The amount they needed to raise was \$77,000. They've received a \$20,000 grant from the city of Regina and \$10,000 from the amazing Rosemont Mount Royal Community Association. Through many different fundraisers, bottle drives to barbecues, a jail-and-bail that I had the pleasure of participating in, and much more, they've raised over \$41,000. With all their hard work, they are just \$7,000 away from meeting their goal.

The council Chair, Emma Trobiak, Jen Bates, Chrystal Kish, Reid Henry, Roger Payot, and Reid Hill, as well as Anya Costain-Cyr, have all been incredible in their dedication towards this project. These volunteers and this council are the epitome of volunteerism and community. They will leave a legacy for students and community. I ask all members to join with me in extending our gratitude.

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

Missing Persons Week

Mr. Dennis: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 1st to the 7th is Missing Persons Week in Saskatchewan. This is to raise awareness, discuss prevention strategies, and promote services and supports available to families of missing persons.

Mr. Speaker, missing persons cases are heartbreaking. Families and friends are left with many unanswered questions and live

with the uncertainty of not knowing whether their loved ones are safe. Caring for Families One Day at a Time is a theme to highlight available supports for those impacted by the tragedy of missing loved ones.

Missing Persons Week is organized by the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership and includes representatives from Indigenous groups, police services, the provincial government, and community agencies. Mr. Speaker, anyone can report a missing individual — an employer, a friend, and a family member.

This week is an opportunity to honour those who we have lost, support families, and remind them that loved ones are not forgotten. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. We ask of this and more from God, the Creator. Thank you.

[14:00]

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

Recognizing Saskatoon Community Associations

Ms. Nippi-Albright: — miigwech, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be on my feet again to recognize the community associations in my constituency — Riversdale, Caswell Hill, Westmount, Mount Royal, Pleasant Hill community associations. Community associations offer affordable sport, culture, and recreational opportunities. They also provide community newsletters, community cleanup days, and advocacy work.

Since the start of the pandemic, they have had to alter, reorganize, and even cancel programming they would normally deliver. However, rather than shut down, they've continued to meet and advocate for the residents in their neighbourhoods. This is all done through volunteers. Like many community associations across the province, they've had a dramatic decrease in volunteers due to COVID.

I know the community associations in Saskatoon Centre are seeking out volunteers to help keep things running smooth and so that they can continue to offer opportunities for their residents.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the community associations in Saskatoon Centre for all they do. I ask all members to join me in thanking the community associations for doing a great job during this pandemic. miigwech.

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

Sports Celebrity Gala Held in Assiniboia

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Mr. Speaker, I recently joined a few hundred friends at the Prince of Wales Centre for the Assiniboia Sports Celebrity Gala. Former voice of the Riders Rod Pedersen emceed, featuring legend NHLer [National Hockey League] and Stanley Cup champion Lanny McDonald and CFL [Canadian Football League] Hall of Famer Chris Walby. This was an unforgettable evening enjoyed by all, especially since last year's Sports Celebrity Gala was postponed due to COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, this biannual event was spearheaded by the Civic Improvement Association in 2013 and has held very successful fundraisers ever since. Over the years a variety of celebrities including Bobby Bourne, Clark Gillies, Amber Holland, Brock Lesnar, Marty McSorley, Dennis Hull, Tiger Williams, and Siera Bearchell have all helped to raise over half a million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to report this year's event raised over \$75,000 to assist in the completion of the Southland Co-op multipurpose arena. The town of Assiniboia will be the first with this type of facility in rural Saskatchewan, and we are all looking forward to the opening later this year.

Mr. Speaker, a project like this wouldn't be possible without the hard work, determination, and generosity of a lot of folks. I now ask all members join me in thanking them for helping to build and strengthen our community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Grade 12 Student's Poems Published in Online Literary Magazine

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mercedes Tate is a Plains Cree woman and a member of the Poundmaker Cree Nation on Treaty 6 territory. She attended Cut Knife School until grade 9 and is currently a grade 12 student at Unity Composite High School.

Mercedes has been writing stories and poetry since her early adolescent years, and her English teacher, Vicki Orobko, recognized her talents early on. Vicki directed Mercedes to Rick Revelle, author of the *Algonquin Quest* novels, who brought her poems to the attention of the editor at miramichireader.ca. Two of Mercedes's poems, entitled "Where the Wild Kids Are" and "Have You Seen My Sister?" have been published on the website.

Mr. Speaker, both poems are her reflection into intergenerational trauma, life on the reserve, as well as missing, murdered Indigenous women and girls. Mercedes is hoping her poetry will start some conversations and shed more light on the issues and challenges faced by Indigenous women and people.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating Mercedes Tate on her published poetry. I wish her all the best in her endeavours, which includes applying to university with the goal of becoming a teacher. Thank you.

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

Regina Volunteer Dedicated to a Life of Service

Mr. Grewal: — Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago, Mr. Krishan Kapila left New Delhi, India with a one-way ticket to Canada. He arrived alone, seeking employment which would allow him to bring the rest of the family to Canada.

For his first 13 years here, he lived in the small rural communities of Wolseley and Balgonie. His thinking was traditional, and living was simple and private; however, a bit isolated. With time, he gained a broader outlook on life and enjoyed a variety of

opportunities to progress.

When he moved from Balgonie to Regina, he began volunteering on local and provincial cultural projects that have earned him too many accolades to name. Following his retirement 22 years ago, he started volunteering more time in Regina Multi-Faith Forum and Multi-Faith Saskatchewan.

He has stated how he is so grateful to God for bringing him in touch with inspiring people and for creating opportunities which impacted him and led him to his new goal in life — love and service. He also began focusing on his responsibility to the wider community as he believes we all are family.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kapila's accomplishments and recognitions are too numerous to name, even though I tried as part of his introduction earlier. I am so thankful that I have had the opportunity to learn from Mr. Krishan Kapila. Thank you, sir. I ask all members to join me in thanking Krishan Kapila for his service to Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Opposition Statements on Health Care Numbers

Mr. Cockrill: — Mr. Speaker, I recall that Leader of the Opposition saying he would do politics differently, but he's not. He claims we have lost 82 doctors since 2018, but in reality we have 118 more doctors in the province. He said that Regina ERs [emergency room] have zero new physicians since 2019, but in reality there are three new physicians in Regina ERs.

On multiple occasions in this House he has said that the children's hospital is in code black. He reinforced that point by saying, "The children's hospital doesn't actually have any more pediatric in-patient beds than the previous pediatric ward." Mr. Speaker, code black is a bomb threat and completely inappropriate in this situation. As well, the children's hospital has 22 additional beds, 8 of which are pediatric in-patient beds.

Last week the member for Saskatoon Fairview said that people in Saskatoon need to wait 38 hours in the ER for an in-patient bed. The actual average wait time is less than a third of that, Mr. Speaker. She then went on to say that a wait time to see a doctor at an ER in Regina is 5.1 hours, but the average wait time is 1.7 hours.

Mr. Speaker, we've got a handle on the math on this side of the House. Under an NDP [New Democratic Party] government, 52 hospitals closed, 1,200 long-term care beds closed across the province, 450 nurses lost, and 173 doctors lost under their watch. This isn't doing politics differently, Mr. Speaker. It's the same old NDP.

The Speaker: — I would ask the member from The Battlefords to withdraw and apologize for using the word "bomb threat." It can be easily taken out of context. Please do so.

Mr. Cockrill: — I withdraw and apologize.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Management of Provincial Economy

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is sad when you see new members get sucked into the spin instead of standing up for their constituents as they were elected to do.

In 2021 StatsCan tells us that Saskatchewan was the only province with a shrinking GDP [gross domestic product], a recession to the tune of nearly a quarter of a billion dollars, the only province to see negative growth, a single red arrow in a sea of green. And that's the third year in a row that Saskatchewan's economy has shrunk, an economy now smaller than it was a decade ago.

Would the Premier care to explain how, despite all his assertions to the contrary, he's managed to lead the worst economic performance in the entire country?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to this past year, we had an unprecedented drought in the province of Saskatchewan. The agricultural GDP was down just over 40 per cent. If that agricultural production would have been the same as it was the year previous, we would have experienced in this province about a three and a half per cent growth, Mr. Speaker.

And the fact of the matter is, is those numbers are inflationary adjusted back to 2012. Our actual exports in the province last year were valued at just over \$37 billion. That's up 24.7 per cent from the year previous, Mr. Speaker. In fact since 2007 exports have grown in this province by some 88 per cent.

As we look ahead, Mr. Speaker, to the projections in this province, look ahead to this current year, the projection is for a four and a half per cent growth in the province. That's second in the nation of Canada. The year after, 2023, the projection is . . . the average of all the projections is a 3 per cent growth, again second in the nation of Canada.

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

Mr. Meili: — Well that's surprising, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Premier blaming farmers for our economic troubles, just as the minister blamed farmers for the deficit just a few months ago. This Premier has never learned the lesson that when you sacrifice human health for economic growth, you wind up losing both.

For two years we've been sold this false dichotomy that we had to trade human well-being for economic well-being. And now the facts are right before our eyes: our economy and our health suffer badly. The worst COVID response in Canada, the worst population growth in Canada, the worst economic performance in Canada by far, the only province to shrink. And the minister of the economy is chirping from his seat. The real leader who calls the shots over there, he unveiled this ambitious growth plan but all we see is shrinkage.

Does the Premier recognize he's failed us? Is he ready to remove the minister who is pulling the strings and put in someone with a clue on how to stop shrinking the Saskatchewan economy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I think what I had said in the original answer was that there was a significant drought last year across much of the prairies. We're thankful we had a crop insurance program that was in place, largely been improved since our time in government, that was made available for our producers, Mr. Speaker.

But with respect to shrinking, Mr. Speaker, as I said in the previous answer, since 2007 our exports are up some 88 per cent in this province. Some of the highest value, most competitively priced, most sustainable exports that you can find anywhere in the world, they're produced right here in Saskatchewan and exported to over 150 countries around the world. Those exports were up almost 25 per cent last year to \$37 billion, Mr. Speaker.

We're the second-largest food exporting province in this nation. Mr. Speaker, 30 per cent of the world's potash comes from this province; 100 per cent of Canadian potash comes from this province. We're a world leader in uranium. These are all industries that are expanding as we speak, providing jobs for Saskatchewan people and providing jobs for others to move here, to find a career, to move their family here, to raise their family in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Incredible to hear a premier try to spin the worst economic performance in the country, the only economy to shrink in all of Canada, as somehow good news. Incredible. But there is a bright spot in the Saskatchewan economy, and we all know it is the rising resource prices in potash and oil and gas that should benefit all Saskatchewan people.

Yesterday my colleague pitched a simple, straightforward plan that would help relieve the incredible cost-of-living pressures that Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan families are facing today. Immediately scrapping the PST [provincial sales tax] expansion; getting Saskatchewan people a direct rebate now; and investing in the future, in health, in a sustainable economic growth — these are measures that would help today and help stimulate this Premier's failing economy. And it simply requires booming resource industries to contribute a little bit more of these windfall profits to the owners of the resources rather than shareholders at a time when profits are three, four, five times what they were last year.

Surely the Premier can agree, when the resources we all own are being sold at record profit, it only makes sense to share that wealth with Saskatchewan people. The Premier has a chance to make a difference. Will he do that today, or does he just not care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I watched with interest yesterday as the Leader of the Opposition and his Finance critic walked out and asked . . . and put forward another tax hike on industries in Saskatchewan, industries that are creating jobs for people in this province and industries that we are working very hard to ensure that we can continue to attract their investment into this province to create more jobs into the future.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question, maybe, maybe . . . And we had one of the representatives here yesterday from Whitecap. I don't know if the members opposite had the opportunity to run their plan by that member to consult with the industry before coming forward with their plan, but maybe the Leader of the Opposition, maybe, Mr. Speaker, maybe, Mr. Speaker, the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Maybe the Leader of the Opposition or the other members that have so much to say, Mr. Speaker, would like to ask the Finance critic, in his meeting last week with the Saskatchewan Mining Association, did he bring up the fact that in a debate during the last election he said they weren't interested in royalty reviews? They weren't interested in increasing royalty rates here in the province, Mr. Speaker. Did he mention that to the Saskatchewan Mining Association when he met with them last week, or the members from Whitecap that were here?

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that production is up, values are up. We're not going to make changes before the budget's even voted off in this House to what we are going to do with Saskatchewan-owned resources. Mr. Speaker. And the only thing that is shrinking in this province is the Saskatchewan NDP's caucus.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Premier is absolutely happy to charge every person in Saskatchewan more money, to hike taxes on every ordinary family in this province, but when it comes to standing up for them, he's nowhere to be seen.

Our plan asks these industries for a modest increase, a very reasonable 1 per cent triggered only, only when resource prices are through the roof like they are today. And we heard the over-the-top rhetoric from the minister yesterday, but that hyperbole is pure hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. It's the same minister, the same minister that blindsided the potash industry with an added \$117 million take at a time when prices were only a fraction of what they are today, Mr. Speaker.

To the Premier: instead of rejecting this very sensible measure, instead of missing every opportunity to reduce costs for Saskatchewan people, will he work for them? Will he ask those industries, those with the most, those who are profiting wildly right now from high resource prices, to help out just a little bit with those who are paying a fortune at the pumps?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago there was a federal election campaign and there was one leader that stood up, one leader that stood up and said, we aren't going to raise taxes; we're just going to raise them a little bit, just a teeny-weeny, teeny-weeny little bit. And look what's happened in this nation, Mr. Speaker. We have carbon taxes supported by the NDP. We have . . .

Mr. Speaker, time and time again we see, we see leaders stand up

and say they're going to make just a teeny-weeny little increase in taxes. Give an inch, the NDP for sure will take a mile. Don't give them the opportunity at all. They'll join with the federal Liberals; raise taxes; raise the cost of living; print money; loan money; do whatever they can to essentially destroy the Canadian economy. We aren't going to have any of it on this side, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to continue to work with the industries that are creating jobs, creating opportunity for Saskatchewan people. And we will always, always stand up for the people that we represent in this province.

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

SaskPower Rates

Ms. A. Young: — Wow. Yeah, man, wow, Mr. Speaker, teeny-weeny. What overwhelming confidence, and dare I say, arrogance from a government that presided over the only economy that shrunk last year, a government that doesn't care about affordability, and one that won't step up and provide a cost-of-living rebate to Saskatchewan people and is actively, actively making life more expensive and kneecapping small businesses with their 32 tax and fee hikes to Saskatchewan's hardest hit industries. It's death by a thousand cuts, Mr. Speaker. And right now, no one can afford an 8 per cent power hike. So to the minister: will you scrap this hike today?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, SaskPower submitted a multi-year application to the Saskatchewan rate review panel, requesting an average rate increase of 4 per cent for this year, 4 per cent next year. It's been four years since SaskPower last raised rates, which was in 2018. The rate increase at that time was 3.5 per cent. Without the rate increase, SaskPower would be projected to lose \$28 million.

Mr. Speaker, the goal is to have regular, affordable increases done carefully and with the direction of the rate review panel. The member for Regina University talks about lower power rates, but she called our 10 per cent power rebate last year "a handout for businesses that does not seem like good public policy." Mr. Speaker, we don't really have a lot of interest in taking advice from the members opposite on how to run power utilities or anything else. We want to make sure that our government operations stay stable, the Crown utilities are able to continue to be funded adequately, and grow as they are needed to, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. A. Young: — It's great to hear that the minister's concerned about stability in government operations. And I'm sure that an 8 per cent hike in one calendar year isn't going to be considered regular and affordable by businesses here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, he doesn't want to take advice from me. That's fine. But let's talk about some stakeholders. Let's talk about the

Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Mr. Speaker. In the CFIB's [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] letter to the rate review panel about SaskPower's 8 per cent proposed hike, it reads, and I quote:

According to survey data from April 2022, keeping up with government costs is among the top two issues making it difficult for small businesses to get back on track, with 84 per cent of business owners identifying this as a major concern. If costs keep increasing without significant relief measures, Saskatchewan's small-business climate will continue to suffer.

So, Mr. Speaker, what's the explanation? Can the minister explain to the people and small businesses of Saskatchewan how 8 per cent is the right amount right now?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the member opposite. She should get out a calendar. There's 12 months. They start in January, end in December. So the rate request is September '22 with the second one April 2023, which is another calendar year. So just for the basis of her understanding of what a calendar year is, I think I want to point that out.

Mr. Speaker, that same member, the member for Regina University, talks about lower power rates, but she called our 10 per cent power rebate a handout for businesses. But then she raises the issue about CFIB, and this is what she really thinks about CFIB. Mr. Speaker, I have a quote from her: "Imagine being the CFIB and just getting to go to work every day and lie."

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we stand with the businesses in our province. We stand with having things regular, planned so that we're able to do things and move forward and protect the strength of the businesses so they can continue to employ people in our provinces, so they are able to meet payroll. And, Mr. Speaker, we don't need advice from that member, and I don't think the CFIB does either.

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

Health Care System Capacity

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, they should spend less time on Twitter and more time talking to their stakeholders on these issues.

Whether the minister likes it or not, he is completely out of touch with the severity of our health care crisis. Last week he said, "They act like having our hospitals at or near capacity is a bad thing."

Well tell that to our health care staff, who are at their breaking point worried about patient care. Tell them that over capacity in our hospitals is a good thing. Tell that to the countless patients waiting in our emergency departments. Trust me, being at or near capacity, and far over capacity in Saskatoon and Regina, is far from a good thing for those who are working or needing care within our health care system. Will the minister apologize for the

comments that he made last week?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll put that quote into context. Yes, I did say that. Is the opposition claiming that we should only be running our hospital capacity right now at 50 per cent? We have a backlog of surgeries that we need to get in, surgeries that they've called for, the people of Saskatchewan have called for, and that we're listening to. We're making sure that our hospitals are running, Mr. Speaker, at full capacity so we can get those surgical backlogs.

Like I said, Mr. Speaker, we have a huge surgical backlog that we need to be able to address, but we have a plan. We have a four-point plan to be able to recruit, retain, incentivize, and train individuals to be able to fill our human resources challenges, Mr. Speaker.

But we do need our hospitals running. We understand that there are some challenges within our HR [human resources] systems within our health care, Mr. Speaker, but certainly we have the plan to be able to do that. And we do want all of those surgeries done. Are they suggesting that maybe we should cancel those surgeries and throttle back in the health care system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — That's utter nonsense, Mr. Speaker. Utter nonsense. Capacity in our hospitals isn't a new issue. It has been ongoing for years. It's why the last premier actually had ER wait time targets and why he introduced the emergency department wait time initiative. Thirty-eight hours, that's the time that a patient had to wait in a Saskatoon emergency department for a bed in 2020. In 2021 patients were waiting 29 hours for a bed.

This is not something that we should accept, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people deserve better. In committee the minister committed to getting us the current wait times. He's had ample time to get these numbers. Will he update the House on how long people are waiting in ERs today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I am pleased to update the House on the actual numbers that we did discuss in committee. The member opposite said that it was 38 hours in Saskatoon to wait for an emergency in-patient bed. It is actually 11 hours, as was identified by the member's statement earlier. That is still too long, and we're working to reduce that, Mr. Speaker.

The member also said that in Regina the average wait time is 5.1 hours, Mr. Speaker. In committee we corrected that to, again, 1.7 hours. We have to continually fact-check everything that they get off of Twitter, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make sure that the information is accurate. Just because it's tweeted and retweeted a few times doesn't actually mean it's accurate. The information that we gave them in committee is accurate. Again they're cherry-picking stats out of this to try to embarrass the government and try to disparage our health care workers.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan to be able to support our health care workers, and we have the facts here to be able to provide to the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Access to Reproductive Health Services and Members' Views on Abortion

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, in light of recent news coming out of the Supreme Court in the US [United States], I think it's important to take a little history lesson from this government. In 2017 this Sask Party government began the exploration of changes to legislation effectively restricting access to abortion care to girls under 18, something which would obviously fly in the face of Canada's Constitution. To the Premier: how many members of the Sask Party caucus support a woman's right to abortion services today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First off I'd like to say this is a very important issue, should not be made to be a divisive partisan politics. There's no place for that here. Our government follows the law. The law is that women have the right to access reproductive health services in Saskatchewan and in Canada.

Reproductive rights are an important . . . And I will continue to be a strong voice for Saskatchewan women. A US Supreme Court ruling has no impact on women's rights in Canada.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, glad to hear the minister will continue to push that very important issue within her cabinet and her caucus because the real divisions are with the Sask Party. We know there are many members on that side who would love to see what happened in America happen here, like the former minister for Rural and Remote Health, the member for Yorkton; the former leadership candidate, the member from Saskatoon Willowgrove; the Energy minister; and that Premier, who was congratulated as a pro-life Saskatchewan leader by a prominent anti-choice group right here in Saskatchewan. Does this government recognize and affirm that access to health care includes access to abortion services?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Status of Women.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as I stated, the law is that women have the right to access reproductive health services in Saskatchewan and in Canada. Abortion continues to be covered as a medical procedure under the Canadian health Act. And Saskatchewan will continue to follow the Canadian health Act by providing this service. So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, glad to hear that minister echo that again and hope she continues that fight at her cabinet table again. For example, there's been a history of this government being pretty clear about how they feel about this issue.

[14:30]

And I mentioned the Energy minister before. Back when she was writing for pro-life news for over a decade, she referred to advocating for abortion rights as "some sort of psychological cover" and put Canada's laws on abortion "in the eminent company of North Korea." Does the Premier denounce these statements?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Status of Women.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker . . . Please listen to the answers. I think this is really important because women in Saskatchewan, women in Canada, want to hear what we have to say. So heckling me will get you nowhere.

In Canada, neither government nor a minister of government is in a position to interfere with a decision made by a patient in consultation with a physician as to the medical necessity of this procedure.

Mr. Speaker, I have never hid where I stand in this regard. So to be heckled and to be jeered at by the members opposite, I find just . . . It's bullying. And I didn't think that we were going to allow that kind of behaviour in this House.

[Interjections]

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, again happy to hear the minister put these statements on the record. The question was to the Premier. Does the Premier denounce these comments of his current cabinet member, the Minister for Energy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Status of Women.

[Interjections]

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Please be respectful.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Minister.

Hon. Ms. L. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know this becomes a very emotional, very emotional topic. Because you know what, each and every one of us have our own mind, and we are allowed to think that way. Now, Mr. Speaker, in Canada we respect the law, and women have the right to choose. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Suicide Prevention Strategy

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, this is the 14th day this spring I

rise on behalf of Saskatchewan families, today the Clarke family, who have lost a loved one to suicide. When will we see a real plan to save Saskatchewan lives?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I extend my deepest condolences to the Clarke family. As we have discussed several times in this House, Pillars for Life, the Saskatchewan suicide prevention plan, continues to be built upon by the government through the work that we do with our stakeholder engagements and engagement with communities and families across this province to continue to work and improve upon the suicide prevention programs that we have in Saskatchewan right now. And we'll continue to do that work to enhance those programs across Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 32 and 33.

The Speaker: — The Whip has tabled the answers. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the preparation of the Chamber for Executive Council estimates this afternoon, I move that this Assembly do now recess until 3 p.m. to prepare for the Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — It has been moved that the Assembly do now recess till 3 p.m. to prepare for the Committee of Finance. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This Assembly stands recessed till 3 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 14:34 until 15:00.]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Clerk Assistant: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for the Committee of Finance.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Chair: — The business before the committee are the estimates for Executive Council. The first item of business are the main estimates for Executive Council, vote 10, found on page 47 of the Government of Saskatchewan Estimates book.

Before we begin, I would like to advise the Committee of Finance of the process. First I will invite the Premier to introduce his

officials, followed by calling the estimate. Then the Premier can make his opening remarks. And will the Premier now introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd just take a moment to introduce the officials that have joined us here today. To my left is my chief of staff, Shannon Andrews. To my right is the Premier's special advisor, Reg Downs. Mr. Speaker, to Shannon's left is James Saunders; he's the associate deputy minister with the cabinet planning department. Immediately behind James is Kristen Fry, the executive director of corporate services. Mr. Speaker, behind and to my left is Jared Dunlop; he is the director of policy and research. And behind Jared is Cole Zawislak; he is the manager of House business for the government, Mr. Speaker.

General Revenue Fund Executive Council Vote 10

Subvote (EX01)

The Chair: — Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX01), central management and services. The Premier may proceed with his opening remarks. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well thank you again, Mr. Chair. I would just afford a few minutes here for some opening remarks with respect to the budget that was introduced here, I believe just over a month ago, Mr. Speaker, and how that budget really does get this province's finances back on track. It does get this province's economy back on track, Mr. Speaker, and most certainly is a budget that we've all been looking forward to for some period of time finding our way through two very challenging years.

The fact is this budget is still a deficit budget. The projection is for a \$463 million deficit. That's reduced from \$2.1 billion last year when we had substantial dollars in that budget not only for the drought that we had in this province but to support Saskatchewan people through the COVID pandemic, Mr. Speaker. And this budget is on track to balance by '26-27 as it's laid out.

It's also a point of note that was maybe not overlooked, Mr. Speaker, but wasn't talked about — or, Mr. Chair, pardon me — talked about too much, was in this actual budget there's also a \$450 million debt repayment with the cash that the government had on hand.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget there's education funding, just under \$3 billion, \$2.88 billion in education funding in this budget, about \$1.99 billion going directly to the school divisions. Small pockets of funding relative to those numbers but I think very crucial and important pockets of funding, Mr. Speaker, that are available ultimately for children, students across this province. And one I might make note of is a \$7 million provincial fund that will allow school divisions then to apply and hire a number of EAs [educational assistant], up to 200 EAs across the province, Mr. Speaker.

And I also make note of a substantial investment in child care in the province, Mr. Speaker, opening up. Funding is being provided to create 61 additional child care spaces in our

communities across this province. And we had some guests with us today that were from the community of Pilot Butte, I believe where they had a . . . Central Butte, pardon me. Pilot Butte's in Alberta. Wrong province. No. Pilot Butte, Indian Head. Picture Butte's in Alberta. I'm getting there.

Mr. Speaker, back to the budget. Mr. Speaker, we have CBOs [community-based organization] that do such great community-based work in community after community across this province. And we felt it important in this budget — again, not discussed a lot — to ensure that we're providing those CBOs, the people that are delivering those services, a 2 per cent lift within their CBO, Mr. Speaker.

And so that's been provided to all of the CBOs across the spectrum of government, many of them being in the Ministry of Social Services, but also in Justice as well as Health and other ministries, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's an important point of note that maybe we hadn't discussed as much on the floor of this Assembly as maybe it deserved, Mr. Speaker.

We are focusing not only on supports — and I'll get to those in a minute, Mr. Speaker — but focusing also on ensuring that we are enforcing the laws and keeping people and their property safe in this province, Mr. Speaker. That's why we had brought together all of our provincial law enforcement arms under one provincial protective services unit, Mr. Speaker. And this is important. As you look at any law enforcement arm across the nation, whether it be the RCMP or whether it be municipal police forces, they have that single branch that unites the enforcement unit into a single organizational structure.

In addition to that, we've partnered . . . And much of this next number of funding announcements that were in this budget are going directly into the RCMP. But they're very focused, they're very focused on keeping people safe and keeping our property safe, Mr. Speaker.

The first was funding to form the warrant enforcement and suppression team, to ensure that we have a team working in this province for those folks that, you know, may have a warrant for their arrest. They're going to find them, and they're going to have to deal with the consequences of such warrant.

Mr. Speaker, we created and established the Saskatchewan trafficking response team, and that sounds like, you know, a fairly vague term, but it's very focused on the trafficking of drugs, the trafficking of firearms, and yes, the trafficking of people. And so this team, Mr. Speaker, is going to focus in on those three areas in keeping our families safe in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, in this budget we expanded the funding that was going to the crime reduction teams, forming new crime reduction teams in this province because of the effectiveness that we have seen and what we have heard from Saskatchewan communities with respect to what the performance and what the crime reduction teams are providing their communities.

Mr. Speaker, no budget — in particular, ever, but after the last two years — can go without having some discussion on health care. And that is something that has had much discussion on the floor of this legislature, Mr. Speaker. Our health care budget was up a little over \$300 million from last year, which again was a

substantial increase last year, supporting our health care system, our health care workers, and supporting the families that they serve across the province.

As we find our way through this, Mr. Speaker, we are again ramping up all of the other areas of health care that are providing services. Surgeries has been discussed, Mr. Speaker. And we are ramping our surgical capacity back up with the full intent now of going beyond what we have ever delivered in surgeries here in this province. \$21.6 million was provided in this budget. That builds on \$20 million that was already in that budget from last year, Mr. Speaker, which wasn't utilized, which was diverted to COVID funding across the system last year.

This will be the first year, this coming year, of a three-year surgical initiative. And, Mr. Speaker, over the course of these three years we're going to plan to deliver more surgeries than we ever have in this province before.

One other item, and I talked about again about on the floor of this legislature, was our ICU [intensive care unit] or our intensive care capacity in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, you'd know this well, coming from the city of Prince Albert. We have 79 ICU beds in the province, Mr. Speaker. We have found that we simply need more than that, whether we have COVID pressures or whether we have even more pressures from increased surgeries in our hospitals as well.

And so we have had a commitment to increase that from 79 to 110, Mr. Speaker. We're at 85 today, up 6 just announced, I believe, yesterday; 4 more coming before the winter or some time this summer, late into the fall, Mr. Speaker. That'll bring us to 90 beds. We're already at 85, have more ICU beds than we've ever had at any point in the history of the province.

Long talked about, Mr. Speaker, finally coming forward is some additional funding to our emergency medical services, our land ambulances that are servicing many, so many of our rural communities across the province, Mr. Speaker. And much more to come in that conversation, I think, in the years ahead. And an appreciation, a show of faith and appreciation to the service that they provide my community and each of our respective communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to human resources — and this is a place of great interest to me personally, was even prior to my time in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, and in particular when it comes to health professionals — we have a record of recruiting health professionals in this province. We've talked about 1,000 more doctors, 4,300 more nurses. But we need more, Mr. Speaker. We need more to provide the services and the level of service that people expect today, which is different than it was 10 and 15 and 20 years ago.

And we need more because we are a growing province. We have more people here in the province as well, Mr. Speaker. And so we had put forward a plan to, you know, how we were going to recruit, how we're going to retain, how we're going to train, and ultimately how we're going to incentivize, when necessary, medical professionals into certain communities and around all communities across the province.

On training, an increase to our nurse training seats. The Minister

of Advanced Education is working feverishly on ensuring that can come together with our partners. This'll be nurse training seats of various designations, whether it be LPN [licensed practical nurse], RN [registered nurse], whether it be nurse practitioner training seats. This brings us up now in the province to 1,000 training seats. I believe — and I'm looking to the member from Indian Head that represents Pilot Butte — I believe there were 300 training seats in 2007 when we formed government, was the number of nurse training seats we had. We're at 1,000 today, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to come back to that in just a moment.

Mr. Speaker, we're well versed with respect to the changes that have been made at the College of Medicine; the investment that is made, the physical investment in the infrastructure; the annual investment in the training at the college itself; and the expansion of the seats, 60 to 100 seats, Mr. Speaker; and ultimately our residents' positions, expanding those to 120 seats, Mr. Speaker.

We have to do a better job at retaining our home-grown graduates, Mr. Speaker, those folks that are attending our Saskatchewan education facilities, our post-secondary facilities. We need to do a better job at keeping them here. We have done, at points in the past, a good job of that, Mr. Speaker. And I think back to the early days of the Physician Recruitment Agency of Saskatchewan, and the focus that it had on engaging with the College of Medicine here in Saskatoon and Regina, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that we are doing everything we can to attract those physicians in the communities.

That's why we're expanding the successful work of what was PRAS, or the Physician Recruitment Agency of Saskatchewan, moved on to be Saskdocs, Mr. Speaker, to expand the work and the focus of that agency to all health care professions, so that we can utilize that agency and what they have learned to support communities in recruiting not just physicians but nurses and lab techs and whatever we might be short of in that particular community at some point in time, Mr. Speaker.

And we do have a few rural communities that have a deficiency in the services that are being offered, Mr. Speaker, and it's a commitment of this government that we're going to return those services to those communities, Mr. Speaker. In our major urban centres, we have some hospitals that have a large number of patients that are flowing through those hospitals. And we thank our health care staff across this province for what they have done for the last number of years and what they continue to do today.

And know that we are focusing our efforts on bringing more health care professionals into our health care centres, whether they be rural or urban, Mr. Speaker, so they can retain their services and so they can handle the volumes in a safe way as to those volumes that are coming through their door.

That's why we have a two-year commitment of recruiting 150 nurses from the Philippines — 150 this year, 150 next year, Mr. Speaker — to bring some folks, some qualified folks into those facilities sooner rather than later. And the training in the Philippines is very closely aligned in particular with the training that is happening at our Sask Polytechnic, for example, here in Saskatchewan.

Mental health and addictions, a conversation that I always say

we're going to continue to have more of in the future than we have in the past. And that most certainly, I think, is true coming out of the past two years. Mr. Speaker, mental health and addictions funding by this government over the last number of years has been significant increases, again this year as we build on our commitment to achieve 150 addictions beds build, and we'll accomplish our 77 additional mental health beds here in the province.

Adding a number of health buses, Mr. Speaker, to see folks where they are, whether that be in their neighbourhood or in their home when they are having challenges. Our urgent care centres which are talked about from an emergent perspective, but the intakes that they will have to ensure that when someone might be having a mental health crisis, Mr. Speaker, or an addictions challenge, that they have somewhere where they can go and be taken into the system virtually immediately, Mr. Speaker, and to ensure that they can find themselves in front of the practitioner that they ultimately need to see.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, public capital, I'm not going to spend much time on. It's \$30 billion is our commitment by 2030, a significant investment in public capital, whether it be the 15 new schools that we're building, the five major renovation projects, whether it be a Prince Albert hospital, whether it be a Weyburn hospital, whether it be some of the preliminary work that we're doing on a facility in Yorkton, whether it be the long-term care facilities finishing in Meadow Lake, La Ronge, Mr. Speaker, working on Grenfell, and looking at other communities such as Estevan and a number of others in the long-term care space.

And a significant build, in the very early stages, right here in Regina, Mr. Speaker, which hasn't had a long-term care facility constructed for decades, Mr. Speaker. And so we're looking at a significant build of long-term care capacity here in Regina, as we see, and just saw a census where people continue to get a year older each and every year, Mr. Speaker, and that's true in Saskatchewan as well.

Mr. Speaker, with the Crown capital that is being invested this year, it's just under \$2 billion, \$1.8 billion. And I think that's an important investment as well as we look at just the last number of weeks with what's happened down in our Southwest and our Southeast and again in our Southeast, Mr. Speaker, with the spring storms that we've had. I think we're thankful for the moisture, not so much thankful for the damage and the resulting power outages. But that investment in capital is most evident and most necessary, Mr. Speaker, so that we can continue to provide the cell phone service, the power service to Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget there is a little over 200 million, \$233 million that is targeted investment to meet and to be inclusive of everybody in the growing economy that we are seeing here in Saskatchewan. This is targeted investment, in particular to our Indigenous communities and Indigenous people, so that they can participate in the growth that we are experiencing, and most notable among that was the Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is yet another step towards what I call economic reconciliation, Mr. Speaker. It builds on successes in the forestry industry, the

gaming industry, the uranium industry, the potash industry, the mining industry as a whole, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to more successes with a fund available such as this.

A bill on the floor of this legislature, the labour mobility and fair registration practices office, is ensuring that we can get the qualified people that we can, that we need here, and additional funding in here to allow our province and the industries that are creating jobs in our province to continue to engage with countries around the world through our eight trade and economic development offices, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, all of this is paying off. We're seeing close to \$14 billion of committed investment in the province, the largest single investment ever in our province's history with the BHP investment — largest investment in BHP's history, the largest mining company in the world. We're seeing Cargill. We're seeing Viterro. We're seeing Richardson. We're seeing AGT Foods. We're seeing Ceres Global — all investing in the canola crush industry. We're climbing the value chain there, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing AGT join with FCL [Federated Co-operatives Ltd.] in that canola crush plant and go beyond to a renewable diesel plant, Mr. Speaker.

We're seeing Red Leaf Pulp looking at investing in our province, in this capital city, and up in what I call God's country, Mr. Speaker, in the Prince Albert area, and I trust you'd agree with me. We're seeing a significant investment in the forestry industry there, in not only the pulp mill, but also in an OSB [oriented strand board] plant, Mr. Speaker. So most certainly things are looking strong, Mr. Speaker, from an economic perspective. And this is a budget, I think, that puts this province most certainly back on track.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to my next comments here. And this is the last time that I'm going to have the opportunity to have this Leader of the Opposition here at Executive Council estimates. And I thank this leader — I truly do — for, you know, his service as the Leader of the Opposition.

I was thinking back to a number of years ago when I was first elected and then shortly after, Mr. Speaker, he was elected. I was thinking, you know, the NDP at that point in time, they had 12 members. They had just lost a couple of by-elections — I think three at that point in time — just before the session started that particular year. They'd just elected a brand new leader who was promising change over on the opposition benches, and he was promising that he was going to do politics very, very differently, Mr. Speaker. That was a commitment that was made and that we could all expect that there would be very different results from doing politics differently, Mr. Speaker, across the way.

Now we look forward about four years, Mr. Speaker, and it's now this leader's, as I said, the final time that he will be in Premier's estimates here, Mr. Speaker. And I look across and I see that the NDP still has 12 members. They still don't have any rural seats, and they just lost another by-election just prior to going into this session. And so, Mr. Speaker, not a lot has changed. Not a lot has changed, Mr. Speaker.

They're now in the process of yet another leadership race. This is the fourth one that they've had in 13 years, and I think that's the problem that we see here, Mr. Speaker, is they keep changing

leaders but nothing else changes. Nothing else changes across the way. The leader changes; nothing else changes. Mr. Speaker, this particular leader promised to do politics differently, just like the last one, and then he did everything exactly the same as they've always done it. And they've gotten the same result time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, what we see, we see the same old tired politics. We see the same old smear tactics that we've seen for years. We see personal attacks after personal attacks. We see the same old divisive rhetoric that we see leader after leader. And we see the same old tired, pessimistic, gloom-and-doom approach that we can only see out of the NDP. And then they wonder, and they stand there and wonder, Mr. Speaker, why are we getting the same result?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's because of this: Saskatchewan has changed but the NDP has not changed. This is a stronger province that we live in today. It is a growing province, it is a confident province, and it is a very, very optimistic province. And the NDP are none of those things — none. They never have been and they never will be even one of those things.

Mr. Speaker, it's not often in the history of this province, of this nation, where you have a four-term government that still represents change and the opposition party that represents more of the same. But that's exactly the situation that we're finding ourselves in in our province here today.

This party and this government is always looking for new ideas and new approaches, Mr. Speaker. One announced today, Mr. Speaker, and one announced virtually every day throughout this session. We're looking for new growth. We're looking for new ways to access markets. We're looking for new ways to attract investment here, Mr. Speaker. And we're looking for new ways to create jobs, for the private sector to invest and create jobs in our province. And we're looking really, at the end of the day, for new ways to make life better for Saskatchewan people.

Meanwhile we have the NDP which never, ever changes. In fact, if you can't believe that, believe this. One of their leadership candidates has actually made that her central theme in her campaign, and the NDP doesn't need to change anything, she says. They don't need to change any of their policies. Everything is just fine the way it is. And here's what she said the other day, and I want to quote an article in the *Leader-Post*, and I quote:

When asked if . . . [her] ideas are similar to the 2020 campaign, Beck said [yes, but] the "emphasis is different."

"The problem with the Saskatchewan NDP has not been a lack of policies," she said.

That's the end of the quote. So she plans to keep the exact same policies that have been around for decades now, Mr. Speaker, the exact same policies that were not successful in the 2020 election. And, Mr. Speaker, may I just say here today, I strongly, strongly endorse this approach. I think this is a great approach for the NDP. Mr. Speaker, I hope they never change.

They certainly didn't change when we saw Dwain Lingenfelter across the way. They didn't change when we saw Cam Broten across the way, and they most certainly haven't changed under

this leader who promised that when he got here he would change things, Mr. Speaker. And now the next leader that we see is actually running her campaign on the fact that she's also not going to change, Mr. Speaker. So I look forward to the NDP changing leaders. I also, Mr. Speaker, look forward yet again to seeing exactly the same thing across the way, more of the same, more of the same old NDP.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There was a moment there when you thought you were going to see the Premier be a class act. You thought you were going to see him extend that olive branch and, you know, thank someone for their service. That didn't last very long, that moment. But he's right. I am moving on. I won't be the leader of this party anymore after the month of June. Applaud if you like.

The only difference is that I've admitted that it's time for me to go. But this Premier, the choices he's made, the way he's hurt Saskatchewan people, his time is done. He just doesn't know it yet.

And in fact, no, there's one other difference. There's one other difference. I've said some things that were hard to say. I've spoken up for choices that would have kept people safe but that were unpopular. I'd sacrifice my political career to try to save people's lives. Scott Moe has sacrificed people's lives to save his political career. That's who we're dealing with, with this Premier.

The Chair: — You can't use . . . I'll let the member know that you cannot use the proper name. You have to use his title. Thank you.

Mr. Meili: — Yesterday I had an intense experience, Mr. Chair. I got it in my head that I wanted to have Korean food for supper. So I looked up where can you get good Korean in Regina, and I went to Korea House on 11th. Bibimbap was great. And as I was preparing for tonight, I was thinking about what to ask.

And after I'd had my meal, I went out the front door. And I saw across the street that somebody was collapsing in the bus shelter, and there were two people trying to revive this young man. So I ran across the street and I spoke to the bystanders. They'd called 911. And I started to assess this young man. He'd clearly had an overdose. He wasn't breathing at all and his pulse was getting weaker. 911 had been called. Emergency services were on their way. But I had to start chest compressions and keep those going for a few minutes until emergency services was able to attend. And fortunately they got there in time. This young man got a naloxone shot, got oxygen. His life was saved.

But I walked home just thinking about that moment. Like if those good Samaritans who had shown up and had called 911 hadn't been there, it was a matter of minutes. And that was potentially another person to add to the 327 who lost their lives in 2020 due to overdose in this province. 446 lost their lives in '21. 121 have already been accounted for as having died from overdose only a quarter into this year. We're on track to set an unbelievably tragic record when it comes to overdose deaths.

And you think about what that means. Every single person who

dies, how many more had a near miss? How many more are just in desperate circumstances and destroying their lives with drugs? How many more are dealing with poverty? And you know, the Premier's been mad at me for pointing out that his comment, when he said he didn't care about climate change, that that applied to so many things. But when I walked home yesterday I just kept thinking about all the ways, whether it's the SIS program that's left more people homeless, the decision to have almost no investment in mental health and addictions that's serious, no access to in-patient care, and the decision to not fund safe consumption sites. Well every one of those decisions might have ended up with that young man not being in the situation that he was in. And thank God he's still with us today, but it's only a matter of luck.

So a very simple question to the Premier, a very simple question to the Premier. Safe consumption sites have been proven to save money and save lives. Your own government's documents have said so. Your minister has refused to give us one single reason why he's not funding safe consumption sites. Can you tell us what's in your belief system, what is it that is blocking you from saving lives?

[15:30]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to the question, I'll get to that just in a moment. I'm just going to correct just a little bit of the preamble with respect to a comment that there hasn't been an increase or virtually no funding within the area of mental health and addictions. This is a priority for this government. The very first minister, Mental Health and Addictions minister, Mr. Speaker, has come under this administration. And most certainly it is a priority for this government.

I'd say maybe even beyond us sitting as professionals, it's a priority for all of us in this Assembly as individuals. And if you yourself aren't . . . I think, in fairness, at times all of us do struggle with our mental health. But if you yourself are not having an ongoing struggle with mental health, I think it's fair to say that you're likely supporting someone that is, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I think we should just respect that regardless of where we sit in this House.

With respect to safe injection sites, the Leader of the Opposition is correct. We're not funding directly safe injection sites, Mr. Speaker. One that has come up on the floor of this legislature, one organization that does offer those services alongside a number of other services, does receive a substantial amount of funding from the Government of Saskatchewan, and that's Prairie Harm Reduction in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

They receive, through Health, about \$310,000 this coming year is what they will receive. That's up a little over 300 per cent since we formed government, Mr. Speaker. That's for a number of various things, but yes, not for a safe injection site. Social Services also provides about \$662,000, or just a little more than that, Mr. Speaker, to provide services for our Ministry of Social Services.

Mr. Speaker, sorry, with respect to correcting the comment

earlier, the funding into the mental health and addictions envelope — and I mentioned in my opening comments significant increases over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker — it sits at 7.2 per cent of the health budget today. That's about \$470 million. It's just under half a billion dollars that is being provided to mental health and various addictions programs, Mr. Speaker. Funding like the 10 beds that I said we'd be completing this year, bringing an additional 77 mental health treatment beds into operation. There's a number in Saskatoon, Regina. I think the last 10 are coming into Prince Albert this particular year, Mr. Speaker.

And the strategy that we're taking with respect to addictions is, one, is to provide those pathways, Mr. Speaker, for folks to find a pathway out of addictions. That's why we're increasing not only our mental health beds by 77, Mr. Speaker, but our intensive addictions beds that are available by 150. We ran and have in operation a number of these beds in the community of Estevan, working very closely now with a number of other interested parties, Mr. Speaker, to look at, you know, can we bring our total complement of rehabilitation beds in the province up to 150?

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned the urgent care centres in my opening comments as well. And a portion of those . . . Part of the purpose of those urgent care centres is to provide that pathway when an individual — brother, sister, friend, mother, daughter — presents themselves, Mr. Speaker, that we're able to get that individual in front of the supports that they need. Whether those be some mental health supports, whether those be some addiction supports, whether those be some, you know, ultimately detox or ultimate rehabilitation services, Mr. Speaker, we want to have the resources in place, Mr. Speaker, and then start to bring people that need those services into the system and into the opportunity to improve their situation.

We're also making efforts when it comes to addictions more specifically, and the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions has spoken to this many times with respect to going to where people are, whether that be in the community, whether that be in their home. Mr. Speaker, we're making naloxone kits widely available across the province. They're available in pharmacies. They're available . . . Obviously the EMT [emergency medical technician] that attended in the previous story would have had one, Mr. Speaker, the previous events that the Leader of the Opposition had described. Mr. Speaker, we're providing drug-checking strips to a number of organizations across the province so that those are readily available.

We're adding to the health bus capacity that we have. And my understanding is we have a few vans, four vans I believe that are operating now in our major centres. And we're going to add three buses, seeing some of the successes that the Saskatoon Tribal Council, a project that we partnered in in some funding, Mr. Speaker, with . . . I believe Synergy 8 was the local fundraising group that was working with Saskatoon Tribal Council on a bus that is actually attending to First Nations communities within the Saskatoon Tribal Council's area.

Mr. Speaker, we're adding three buses to that initiative — one in Regina, one in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, and one I believe is going to split some time between Prince Albert and North Battleford — so that we are seeing people where ultimately they are, with the supports that they ultimately need. And sometimes that support

is explaining the intake system, Mr. Speaker, so that they can access the services that they need. The supports may be something like naloxone or a drug-checking strip, Mr. Speaker. Or the support may be some information, may be some information on some questions ultimately that they may have.

Mr. Speaker, there's much more that we have done with that \$470 million, Mr. Speaker. But that's a rundown of where much of that investment is going. Where it's going in the months and the years ahead, Mr. Speaker, is in creating pathways for people to find their way away from addictions and to improve their mental health situation.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you. The question was a direct question about why the decision not to fund safe consumption sites. And the fact that the Premier and the minister repeatedly have refused to answer that question leaves us only to conclude, really with no other option but to conclude that — given the evidence that that would save money at a time when we've lost nearly 1,000 people to overdoses, that it would save lives — that it can only be some ideological barrier, that this is judgment, this is discrimination. Otherwise there's no reason to explain that unbelievable, incomprehensible policy decision that continues to put people at risk.

Now these estimates are a rare opportunity to ask the Premier questions about his choices and priorities, and we'll return to health and mental health in a little while.

But I think it's worth spending a little bit of time talking about the rhetoric that this government has used. The branding, the ads that say this is a province back on track despite what we saw today — the worst economic performance in the country, the only province in the country to see a loss in GDP in the last year. Despite all of that rhetoric, this Premier continues to show Saskatchewan people that he's lost track of what really matters in their lives.

We're in an unprecedented situation with the war in Ukraine, coming out of the pandemic — hopefully seeing the end of that. But this is a challenging time. The impact of the war in Ukraine on prices of resources now have oil at over \$100 a barrel, strong potash prices that have also driven prices at the pump and prices in grocery stores through the roof. Windfall revenues for certain sectors, but families struggling to pay for food, to pay for fuel, to keep the lights on.

This government has chosen to ignore that affordability crisis, chosen to do not one single thing to address the current affordability crisis. In fact, they went the opposite direction. This Premier looked across the province and said, people are having a hard time making ends meet. What will I do? I'll add 32 new taxes, 32 new fees.

We heard here today, the Premier was going off about our very sensible measure to talk about taking a little bit more from resource companies at a time when prices are through the roof. The Premier said we were trying to raise taxes moments after he chose, after he chose to raise taxes on every single person in the province. That's what he's defending today. That's what he's advocating.

So why does the Premier think, at a time of windfall revenues, why does the Premier think — at a time when even without that change, government revenues are far understated in this budget — that it is better for those dollars to pad his bottom line than they are to improve the lives of Saskatchewan people who are struggling right now?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for that question. With respect to the tax increase that was proposed by the Leader of the Opposition and the Finance minister yesterday to the resource industry in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we're one month into a 12-month fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, you know, as we look ahead to maybe month six, eight, nine, whenever that might be, Mr. Speaker, we will take a look at that point in time to ensure that if there is a surplus — and I think we're just about a half-a-billion-dollar deficit yet as it sits today — but if there is a surplus at that point in time, we would have a discussion as to how we would, you know, invest or return our dollars to Saskatchewan people so that all Saskatchewan people are the beneficiaries of those dollars.

Those dollars . . . Saskatchewan people own the resources in this province, Mr. Speaker. And if there's to be any discussion about how surpluses, in particular surpluses that arrive because of high natural resource prices, Mr. Speaker, we will have that discussion with an eye to ensuring that it is equitable to all. Not going to, you know, certain specific areas, but is equitable to all. And I think that is the respect that Saskatchewan people would expect from their government, given that they're all shareholders in this resource.

With respect to the . . . and this came up in question period today, Mr. Speaker, the GDP forecasts in Saskatchewan. We had a significant drought. No, that isn't the fault of farmers that it didn't rain, Mr. Speaker, just to correct another conclusion that was drawn at question period. It didn't rain in many areas of this province. And due to the very best efforts and innovation and some of world-class farming methods and techniques that our agricultural producers, who are world class, leading the world in many cases, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to sustainability and moisture conservation, we still had a challenging year this year because it just did not rain.

Mr. Speaker, thankfully we have a robust crop insurance program. Thankfully we have built on a number of strong years in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, and I think in many cases we're going to weather that tough year here in this province. But, Mr. Speaker, it is that drought that has reduced the agricultural GDP numbers in this table by just over 40 per cent, just over 40 per cent in an industry that is likely the most important export-based industry that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And as I said, things are adjusted back to 2012, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't take into account the agricultural commodity prices that are present today, Mr. Speaker. And if you had taken the year previous and replicated the production that we had, if we didn't have the drought per se, agriculture would actually be up three and a half per cent and we'd have a substantial increase this year. And that is shown in the out years in the forecasts of all of the major financial institutions. This year, 2022, the forecast is four and a half per cent growth, Mr. Speaker. That's second in the

nation. The 2023 year, the forecast is 3 per cent growth again, Mr. Speaker. That is second in the nation.

With respect to the efforts that this government has made, and the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance has went through them a number of times in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, but I think it bears in this committee to mention them again. About \$2 billion each and every year that's annualized, Mr. Speaker, that is available for families in Saskatchewan, whether that be the personal income tax savings that we see, Mr. Speaker — that's about 300 million, 306 million a year, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to come back to that one in a moment because I have a few examples, real-life examples that I think matter to Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, we have the low-income tax credit, \$140 million each and every year, not just this year, not just last year, and not even just next year, but going on. Mr. Speaker, the seniors' income plan, which was not increased over the time that the NDP government had the opportunity, it's been increased seven times under a Saskatchewan Party government.

[15:45]

Active families benefit, the disability tax credit, the caregiver tax credit, the first-time homebuyers tax credit, the home renovation tax credit, the graduate retention program which the outgoing Leader of the Opposition says he'd get rid of, Mr. Speaker. We're going to keep it as an attraction tool to keep not only our medical professionals in this province but our other trained professionals in the province.

The Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship, Mr. Speaker, the \$100 SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] rebate, the other \$285 SGI rebate. I think the Finance critic yesterday was suggesting \$105 taxation rebate and slush fund. Mr. Speaker, \$385 has been returned to auto users in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Decreases in ambulance coverage fees across the province. Home care services, Mr. Speaker, have been augmented. Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living or SAIL, Mr. Speaker, has been enhanced, as well as support for a number of medical expenses, seniors' drug plan, the children's drug plan, Mr. Speaker, supports in the area of autism.

But I want to come back to the personal income tax area and the PST in particular, Mr. Speaker, with respect to what difference this has made and the announcement that was made today by the Minister of Labour with respect to the minimum wage and going up a buck this year, a buck next year, and a dollar the year after, Mr. Speaker.

When we came to government in 2007, minimum wage here was \$7.95. Mr. Speaker, substantially higher today and going to be substantially higher in the years ahead. The difference being if you were a minimum wage earner in 2007, Mr. Speaker, and you're a minimum wage earner today, in 2007 you paid income tax on that income, and today you do not.

Mr. Speaker, this is a significant difference, and this is what it means to a single person that might make \$40,000 in a year. They now pay \$373 more, more in PST, Mr. Speaker. They pay more

in PST than they did in 2007 under the NDP. But they pay \$1,017 less in provincial income tax, and they receive \$171 in the low-income tax credit, which didn't exist under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. This is a net tax savings for one individual making \$40,000 of \$815 per year under this government.

Mr. Speaker, just as importantly, and maybe even more importantly, if you go to a family of four, a family of four that might have a \$50,000 annual household income. They pay \$476 more in PST today than they did under the NDP. They pay \$2,302 less in provincial income tax, and they receive \$634 in the low-income tax credit, which again didn't exist under the NDP. This is a net savings for a family of four with an income of \$50,000 of \$2,460 this year, next year, and every year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that same family of four might advance their career due to some investment, let's say in the potash industry or the oil industry that the members opposite would like to tax, Mr. Speaker. They might advance their career, both the husband and wife, or the partners, Mr. Speaker, and increase it to \$100,000 a year. Well now they would pay \$834 more per year in PST than they did in 2007, admittedly, but they pay \$3,077 less in their provincial income tax and they pay . . . Mr. Speaker, that would be a net savings of \$2,243.

That same family of four continues to improve their situation: \$125,000 in total income; 959 paid extra in PST, admittedly, Mr. Speaker; \$3,455 less in provincial income tax; \$2,496 savings last year, this year, next year, and into the future, Mr. Speaker.

These are not one-time savings, Mr. Speaker. These happen each and every year, Mr. Speaker. This is why I think it's important for us in this province to actually not do politics too much differently. Mr. Speaker, it's important for us to not consider policies like a nickel on the dollar for the potash industry, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a time for us to ensure that we are doing exactly what we are doing, attracting that investment, creating those jobs, creating that opportunity for Saskatchewan people.

And paying attention, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we are doing what we can to improve the affordability matrix that they have in this province to the tune of about \$2 billion each and every year. That's real money in the pockets of families across this province every year — last year, this year, next year, and into the future.

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

Mr. Meili: — Last year, the year before, the year before that, the economy shrunk under this government. I remember 2019 estimates. The Premier wasn't aware that we were in a recession, just didn't know, wasn't paying attention. This last year 5 per cent, that's what Alberta's economy grew. Six per cent in BC [British Columbia]. In Saskatchewan we're down by 0.3 per cent.

And it's not just one drought. It's not just one bad year. It's every year. This Premier has seen this government, seen this province make a drastic shift away from growth to shrinking. And the question, Mr. Speaker, is because this isn't a single year, because this isn't a simple problem, why is this truly happening? What's really driving the economic downturn under this Premier, and what's going to change? Because right now we see an ambitious growth plan, but all we see is a shrinking economy.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to where we've been and where we're going in this province, first two very challenging years behind us and behind, you know, many people around the world, Mr. Speaker. I explained how the drought had an impact on this most recent year, 2021, with respect to our GDP outlook. I also explained, Mr. Speaker, that our exports are up to about \$37 billion this year. That's a record number. They're actually up about 24.8 per cent I believe, going off memory, Mr. Speaker, over the year previous. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a tremendous indicator on what is happening in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll come back to exactly where we're going, which is driving some of the growth outlooks that we have, Mr. Speaker. So most recently, Mr. Speaker, the drought is what has been a drag on some of the numbers here, Mr. Speaker, outside of the rhetoric coming from the members opposite of how they continually, you know, talk down the Saskatchewan economy and the opportunities that we have in this province, Mr. Speaker, which I think Saskatchewan people have become quite accustomed to over the course of the last decade and a half. And they most certainly are looking forward to more opportunities in the future, which I'm going to get to here in a moment as well, Mr. Speaker.

But on March the 18th of this year, 2022, just this year — this isn't that long ago, Mr. Speaker — TD Economics revised their provincial economic forecast for the province of Saskatchewan. And I will quote what they said:

We've upgraded our real 2022 GDP growth forecast the most in Saskatchewan. Given its impressive diversity of commodity exports, no other province is as well positioned to benefit from the recent surge in prices.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read that in one more time. Mr. Speaker:

We've upgraded our real 2022 GDP growth forecast the most in Saskatchewan. Given its impressive diversity of commodity exports, no other province is as well positioned to benefit from the recent surge in prices.

Mr. Speaker, Scotiabank Economics publications goes on, on March the 23rd of this year. "Saskatchewan's 2022 budget is an ambitious plan of finding its way back to balance," Mr. Speaker, as per the previous discussions about the choices that this government makes and where the investment goes. Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say, ". . . featuring a positive revenue outlook and incremental new policy measures . . . as commodity prices continue to soar, Saskatchewan finds itself on a much stronger fiscal footing."

Mr. Speaker, when you add to those outlooks, Mr. Speaker, the commitments that we have seen, in many cases Saskatchewan companies, but also international and multinational companies that . . . or national and multinational companies that are making investments into Saskatchewan's resource-based industries, Mr. Speaker, allowing us to climb the value chain and all the time creating jobs directly and many more jobs indirectly in these industries, Mr. Speaker.

Just in the last year we've had Viterro, Mr. Speaker, a Saskatchewan company, head office not too far from this building, announce their construction of their canola processing facility here. Cargill, Mr. Speaker, a company we know well in this province, also a new state-of-the-art processing facility at the Global Transportation Hub, Mr. Speaker.

Under construction as we speak, Mr. Speaker, we see AGT Foods, not only increased and invested heavily into their logistics and processing hub in Delisle — which I was at that announcement, Mr. Speaker — we see AGT Foods joining with FCL on another canola crush facility, Mr. Speaker. FCL going on for an ag hub there, Mr. Speaker, as well as a renewable fuels plant. \$2 billion in total, Mr. Speaker.

We see Clean Seed Capital corporation, Mr. Speaker, moving their head office to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. We see Ceres Global Ag, Mr. Speaker, a significant investment down just east of the community of Estevan, again in the canola crush industry. Red Leaf Pulp, Mr. Speaker, an investment in Regina, a significant investment here in Regina and an investment in jobs, again direct and indirect, Mr. Speaker.

We see Northern Nutrients investing in this province. We see the P.A. [Prince Albert] pulp mill, Mr. Speaker, reopening that mill in the community where you reside, Mr. Speaker. We see the construction of a new OSB plant in that community as well. We see Pivot Furniture moving into that facility as well, Mr. Speaker. We saw over \$100 million invested in the Carrot River facility, the saw mill facility at Carrot River, Mr. Speaker. We saw over \$30 million investment in the saw mill, the Carrier saw mill at Big River.

Mr. Speaker, I had mentioned a number earlier, the BHP mine, largest investment this province has ever seen, largest single investment by the largest company, mining company in the world, Mr. Speaker. We most certainly, most certainly, Mr. Speaker, have been through a couple of challenging years with a pandemic, been through a challenging year when it didn't rain on much of this province, Mr. Speaker, and the impact that that has on our agricultural industry, the spinal cord of the Saskatchewan economy and the spinal cord of Saskatchewan industry, Mr. Speaker.

But as we look through this year and look at the forecasts of all of the major financial institutes in Canada, Mr. Speaker, we look at the investments that have landed in this province and we look at the support that the government is providing through the Minister of Trade and Export's office, the Minister of Energy and natural resources, our Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

I agree, I agree with TD Economics when they say, Mr. Speaker, that they have upgraded their real 2020 GDP growth forecast the most in the province of Saskatchewan. It's because of our impressive diversity and it's because of the opportunity that is here.

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

Mr. Meili: — The lowest GDP . . . well actually not growth. The only negative growth in the entire country, worst performance. The worst in the country when it comes to mortgage delinquency, Saskatchewan people having to walk away from their homes

because they can't afford to pay the bills. Job losses, 4,500 jobs lost year over year, the worst job performance in the entire country. This is the record of this Premier: the worst economic performance in the country, the worst performance in response to the pandemic in the country.

And we also see the worst when it comes to population growth. The Premier ran on a platform in the 2020 election to grow Saskatchewan's population by 1.4 million by 2030. But every year since 2013 we've been losing tens of thousands of people — tens of thousands of people — to interprovincial migration.

[16:00]

In February we learned that Saskatchewan had the lowest population growth in the entire country, only 3 per cent over five years, 3 per cent over five years. That's the census, Mr. Chair. And the members across the way know it, the lowest in the entire country. In March we learned that Saskatchewan's population growth had stalled even further, the lowest annual growth rate of all provinces and territories in 2021 at 0.36 per cent. Next door in Manitoba and Alberta, they're growing two and three times faster than we are here in Saskatchewan. We're on target to hit that Premier's growth plan of 1.4 million people by 2068.

How can we grow our population by 18 per cent in eight years — that's what he's promising to do — with the worst economy and the worst health care in the country? Does the Premier understand that his decisions that have led to economic recession, his decisions to run the worst COVID response in the entire country, have the highest COVID death rate in the entire country, is driving people out of Saskatchewan and discouraging people from coming and making their homes here?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Well, Mr. Speaker, my wish is coming true as we see nothing changing. The Leader of the Opposition continues to run down the Saskatchewan economy, run down the opportunities that we have here in Saskatchewan time and time again. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that — and the census just came out — that over the last 10 years Saskatchewan is up 100,000 people, Mr. Speaker. That's 4,300 people up just in the past year. This is in contrast, Mr. Speaker, to a party that continually runs down the opportunities in Saskatchewan.

In the fall of 2006 just prior to an election, about a year before an election, there was a government poll that was put out, Mr. Speaker. And the number one concern on Saskatchewan people's mind, number one concern by a substantial amount, was youth leaving and population decline. This was in 2006, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP. They haven't changed since then, Mr. Speaker.

On March 26th, 2003, a few years earlier, Mr. Speaker, there was a news release that was put out. And the news release was titled, the out-migration is at its lowest level in four years. Certainly something to celebrate, Mr. Speaker, under an NDP government is that we're still losing people, but we're losing less than we were, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter, as I said, is we're up 100,000 people in this province over the course of the last 10 years. That's

a far cry from any year when the NDP had the opportunity to govern. Up over 4,000 people just this past year, Mr. Speaker. We are at a point here today where we're at 1,183,000 people. That's the highest population level that have ever lived or resided in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And this is a number that we do intend to grow over the course of not only the next eight years out to the year 2030, Mr. Speaker.

And yes, we have set a target of 1.4 million, Mr. Speaker. We do believe that's an achievable target. We don't believe it's a farcical target, like the members opposite. We believe it's an achievable target, Mr. Speaker. And all of the investments that I read off in our previous answers are all going to need Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, and people to consider moving here and staying here to build those facilities, whether it be the forestry facilities up in the area of the province where you live, Mr. Speaker, whether it be the canola crush facilities in the Yorkton area, the Regina area, the Estevan area, Mr. Speaker, whether it be the potash expansions at our existing mines, Mr. Speaker, or the new mine, the largest single investment ever made into the province of Saskatchewan, the new mine at Jansen.

Mr. Speaker, we have had two challenging years in this province. And I said, economically this past year, also a challenge with the fact that it didn't rain in many areas, Mr. Speaker, and our reliance on the agriculture industry and our reliance on the farmers that are producing crops and cattle and other livestock in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe this is an opportune time for me to say thank you to our ag producers in the province and to all of those involved in the ag industry. Mr. Speaker, we've had a number of strong years in agriculture, notwithstanding some challenges in the livestock area, notwithstanding increasing input costs, Mr. Speaker. But we got a lesson last year, Mr. Speaker. It didn't rain. And again I would just once again thank our producers for producing what they did, using the world-class innovation that in many cases they have innovated here in Saskatchewan, world-class seed technology, agricultural practices, Mr. Speaker. And I would just say thank you to each and every one of them for what they have done.

And I would just say a quick thank you as well to the Minister of Agriculture for ensuring that he's doing everything he can to ensure that we have a robust crop insurance program in place. And that was no more evident as to the importance of that than it was in this past year.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The worst economic record in the country. The worst economic performance in the country. The only province to see a recession. The worst COVID response in the entire country. And you can see, you can see when this government knows that they have something to be embarrassed about.

The worst population record in the country, they start talking about 2007. The minister who sits behind the Premier, he starts chirping. That's when you know that you've touched a nerve because they are embarrassed. The lowest population growth in the entire country. It's what they've hung their hat on. But there's nothing to hang your hat on at all when you're failing.

But this all comes down to the reality that we're dealing with economic illiteracy on the part of this government — economic illiteracy. Who otherwise . . . How else would you explain? And I'll look to my colleague here, who proposed that very sensible measure yesterday.

How else would you explain a government that looks at \$250 million in excess profits to shareholders, sees that money there at a time of soaring prices and says, that money will be better spent . . . that money will be better in the pockets of shareholders than it will be in the pockets of Saskatchewan people, that it's better for our economy if that money isn't being spent in local businesses, isn't being invested into health care, isn't being invested in those measures to increase sustainability. That money's much better if it's going off to their shareholders.

That is the economic illiteracy of this Premier and the reason why we're seeing this decline in interest, sadly, in people living in this province. We want to see this province grow. It's not going to happen with this Premier in place.

And we look at one other example of economic illiteracy. This is loud and clear. There's a member across the way who wishes he was the premier, wishes he was the premier, wishes he was the one answering these questions but was very unsuccessful when he tried to be. But he said something that I want to quote here. He said, and I quote:

The most severely affected industries [talking about the worst period of the pandemic] were the performing arts and sports events sector [this is a quote from the minister], along with accommodations. Job numbers dropped by roughly 60 per cent in these areas. Our outfitting industry has been one of the hardest hit industries. The Canada-US border has been closed . . . and we have no clear end in sight . . . hunting and fishing outfitters rely heavily . . . on American customers.

Thirty per cent fewer tourism jobs, 30 per cent fewer jobs in tourism, 60 per cent fewer jobs in arts and sports events sector. What does this Premier decide to do? What does this Premier decide to do? He decides to add the PST on those sectors. Economic illiteracy.

This is a premier who decided, looking at industries that were struggling, that were having a hard time getting going again, that we need to be thriving, he decided to put a tax on rodeos, on rock shows, and Rider games. To the Premier: how does that make any sense? We have yet to hear a single explanation of why this government wants to slow down key Saskatchewan industries.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to read off a number of the supports that I think really speak to the fact I'd said we'd had a couple of significant deficits over the course of the last two years, the last year due to the fact that it didn't rain; we had a significant drought in the province. But also the supports that we've provided, much through the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker, but many other supports across the sectors in our communities to Saskatchewan residents and to Saskatchewan organizations and businesses, Mr. Speaker. But

then I will come back, and I want to address the economic literacy piece as well, as I find that an interesting comment that may have some legs here, Mr. Speaker.

You know, first of all, Mr. Speaker, when we found our way, like every other province and area in the world, we were looking at, already looking at we didn't know how long COVID was going to be here, but how were we going to ensure that we would have a vibrant economic recovery whenever it was that we found our way through COVID. So we'd invested an additional almost \$900 million in capital at schools, in hospitals, in highways, some power lines, Mr. Speaker, as well to upgrade some of our power infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

We'd talked during the affordability question about the auto recovery rebate, Mr. Speaker, that was provided. Two of those rebates were provided to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. We had the SaskPower customer rebate program, which came up in question period today, Mr. Speaker, with some of the comments that the same old NDP have made about that program, Mr. Speaker. The home renovation tax credit was implemented. That was a campaign promise, Mr. Speaker, and when we make a commitment, we stick to that commitment, Mr. Speaker.

Our gaming partner grants that we had provided, and our gaming agreements that we have in this province, this gets back to the economic reconciliation conversation and modelling what is working on inclusion, including our Indigenous people and Indigenous communities in a strong and vibrant economy in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And the word "economic reconciliation" really came from Chief Bobby Cameron when we enhanced what was already the strongest agreement in Canada, enhanced that agreement with some online gaming opportunities, Mr. Speaker. And this is a model really for the rest of Canada to look at, Mr. Speaker, and it's happening right here in this province.

The small-business tax rate reduction as well came in, Mr. Speaker. The tourism sector support program addresses some of the member opposite's questions. There's \$40 million that were provided in supports for tourism-related industries here in the province, Mr. Speaker. Small-business emergency payment also provided \$70 million there, again addresses a number in the question, Mr. Speaker. Agricultural sector supports, post-secondary supports, Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on with respect to the dollars that were provided.

Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting when I hear the term of "economic literacy" being used in this House, in particular when it's coming from that outgoing Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, the outgoing Leader of the Opposition that doesn't like us going back to 2007 with our comments.

So let's just go back to 2020, to the election campaign that we just had in 2020. Mr. Speaker, he missed \$4 billion in his platform, Mr. Speaker. He had a \$6.8 billion platform, but he had missed \$4 billion of that 6.8, Mr. Speaker. Thankfully, like we do every day in question period, we need to fact-check what comes in and out of the member opposite's mouth, Mr. Speaker.

And when it comes to economic literacy, Mr. Speaker, I read a couple of quotes in here earlier, one from TD Economics about Saskatchewan being well positioned, likely better positioned

than any other province to benefit from some of the natural resource opportunities that we see ahead of us. We don't want to just benefit from the prices. We want to expand those industries and expand our jobs and expand our opportunities.

And you contrast that, Mr. Speaker, us working to expand those investment opportunities with a party now that has officially joined the federal Liberal Party, Jagmeet and Justin — the J and J crew, I call them, Mr. Speaker — in ensuring that Bill C-69 is going to go, ensuring that . . . It's not a price on carbon, Mr. Speaker. Canadians view it as a carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. That's what it is — the most ineffective that has ever been introduced in the nation of Canada or anywhere on earth, Mr. Speaker.

We see another tax increase by the Finance critic yesterday, Mr. Speaker. He comes out rehashing the old nickel-on-a-dollar that didn't work for Dwain Lingenfelter, and it isn't going to work for whoever is leader over across the way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take the comments from TD Economics and Scotiabank on what the opportunities are in this province. I'm going to take the comments that I hear from MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] that are talking to their constituents day in and day out. And I'm going to take the comments from what I'm hearing from our industries that are actively investing billions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, \$14 billion this past year right here in the province. We're going to build on that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to create more jobs, Mr. Speaker, more opportunity for Saskatchewan people and more to join us as Saskatchewan people in the future.

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

Mr. Meili: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we may have to add dementia to economic illiteracy because the Premier seems to have forgotten what the question was. The question was, what was the economic argument for slapping a 6 per cent tax on industries that were already struggling?

Let's just add a couple of quotes from folks that have been watching what's going on. A group that we all enjoy, the Saskatchewan Roughriders said, "Sports, arts, and culture were some of the hardest-hit industries by the pandemic over the past two years." They added that the ". . . decision will impact many in our community who are looking forward to coming together Rider game day and for the 2022 Grey Cup."

I'll add another one from REAL [Regina Exhibition Association Ltd.] CEO [chief executive officer]: "The sport and entertainment industry was among one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. The last two years have been the darkest time the industry has ever faced."

These are industries that are struggling. We've heard from gym owners, from sports teams, from the arts and culture industry. Everyone is saying that this is a bad idea. So to the Premier, are they wrong? Or is he wrong in introducing a 6 per cent tax on entertainment and sports at a time when we need those industries to thrive?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

[Interjections]

The Chair: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question, the Minister of Finance and myself have answered this in the media and elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

We have made moves in the last couple of years to ensure that the province's finances are stabilized and are not reliant on high resource prices alone to balance the budget. Mr. Speaker, we never want to be in a position in this province where we're hiring and firing health care professionals, where we're hiring and firing education staff, our teachers, Mr. Speaker, those that are providing services in our community, on the price of a barrel of oil. Mr. Speaker, we don't want to be in that position, and that's why we've taken steps to stabilize Saskatchewan's finances.

To the earlier question, before the budget has even been voted off, Mr. Speaker, if there is an influx in natural resource royalties, we will have a discussion as the Government of Saskatchewan as to how we can return that, with an eye to ensuring that all people in the province can benefit from whatever investment, debt repayment might be made at that point in time.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier of the affordability situation of a single individual saving this year, relative to under the NDP, just under \$1,000. A family of four with a 50,000 income, just under \$2,500 each and every year, last year, this year, and next year. Mr. Speaker, that number continues to be strong throughout the other incomes, Mr. Speaker.

I heard the opposition leader read a number of quotes. I have a few quotes myself here that I would also like to read into the record, Mr. Speaker. Again, not going back to '07 as the Leader of the Opposition wishes, but going back to 2020, after the election. This would be April of 2020. This is the post-mortem report that was put out by the NDP after nothing changed in that election. We're seeing today nothing changing again, the outgoing leader talking down Saskatchewan's economy and opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

And it goes like this, and I quote, "The NDP has too often missed voters' deep concern about jobs." I agree. Mr. Speaker, it goes on: "Too many working people no longer see the NDP as their party." Mr. Speaker, I agree, and I'm quite comfortable with that. Mr. Speaker, it goes on:

... many views were offered on this concern: perceptions that we no longer support resource industries, economic development, and new jobs; the perceived federal NDP role in the Liberals' minority Parliament ...

Mr. Speaker, there's a whole lot in there. They don't support the resource industries, tried to tax them as recently as yesterday, Mr. Speaker, a nickel on a dollar; tried to rehash that policy, Mr. Speaker; have joined officially now the federal Liberal Party in really every effort to do what they can to destroy the natural resource industry that creates so many jobs in this province. And I would add, a natural resource industry, whether it's oil, potash, uranium — you pick the product — is the most sustainable product that you can access anywhere in the world, and the world should buy more of it.

But, Mr. Speaker, back to the post-mortem report. It goes on, and

I quote:

... the federal NDP's positions on resource development and energy infrastructure (including proposed pipelines in the prairie provinces) [that's here, Mr. Speaker] have damaged the provincial party's brand and political prospects in Saskatchewan.

And so they've gone on from blaming Saskatchewan people to blaming the federal NDP party, Mr. Speaker, when actually they're one and the same, the J and J crew.

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

For too long, we [which is not we, but we the NDP, Mr. Speaker] have allowed this decline of our rural base ... The party has failed to fully deal with the changes in agriculture, the growing proportion of workers in ... smaller cities and rural communities, and the changing needs of those communities.

Well again I agree, Mr. Speaker. The thankful thing that I would say about this post-mortem report or any post-mortem report after any election is, Mr. Speaker, we again, time and time again — four times in the last 13 years — are seeing leadership races. We see leader after leader after leader that promises change, Mr. Speaker. We see no change. At least this time we have one leader coming in that is promising no change, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to those days.

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

Mr. Meili: — Now the question of course was what the economic argument was for putting a tax on industries that were already struggling. And you can tell when the Premier doesn't have an answer, he goes into rhetoric. He tries to light it up the way Brad Wall used to light it up. I think folks who were in the House then could remember. He had a lot of talent in this House. He was a charismatic guy, a good speaker. This Premier, well he's no Brad Wall, doesn't have those abilities, doesn't have the economic record, doesn't have the population record.

But, you know, I do think there's many things that he could learn from Brad Wall. One of them brings me back to the 2017 budget. But before I get there, I just want to read a quote to you:

If I said to a Saskatchewan resident ... would you be willing to pay this for the ... concerts and the Rider ticket in order for us to address the very critical surgical wait-list ...

This was the Finance minister trying to explain that right now people in Saskatchewan, they've got extra money lying around. It's no big deal to ask them for an extra 32 taxes and fee hikes, and we need it. We need it to address the surgical wait-list.

Now moments later — well, days later — \$60 million came in to cover the cost of those surgeries, triple what this government is collecting on the PST. And yet they dug their heels and said, no we still need to tax those industries. We still need to make life less affordable for Saskatchewan people.

Now back in 2017, Brad Wall made some really bad choices. He didn't undo many of them, but there were a couple — cuts to

libraries, cuts to funeral services — that were backtracked.

This is clearly a dumb choice. This tax makes no sense. It hurts the economy, and it hurts Saskatchewan people. Will the Premier . . . He's got the opportunity; we're not done here. We have time this session. Will he kill this tax? He's got the money. He's got the time. Will he make the right choice for Saskatchewan people?

[16:30]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, the decisions that were made in the budget are there for sure, at least until we vote the budget off in this House, Mr. Speaker. And the decisions that we had made, albeit challenging decisions . . . And we've had to make a number of challenging decisions over the course of the last few years as we make every effort to stabilize the budget here in Saskatchewan and to remove ourselves from being reliant on natural resources, Mr. Speaker.

With the \$60 million that was provided for surgeries, I believe it was part of a \$2 billion fund that the federal government had put together. This builds on, you know, many discussions that we've had at the Council of the Federation table for a number of years now, Mr. Speaker, meeting weekly in the early days of COVID, go to biweekly and now meeting likely a little more closely to monthly or a couple of times a month at times, Mr. Speaker, and then having our first ministers' meetings as well on a much more regular basis.

I think back to the Safe Restart funding that we had negotiated, Mr. Speaker, as the 13 premiers of the provinces and the territories. That was during my time as Chair, Mr. Speaker. A little over \$20 billion that was transferred through to the provinces. Much of that went into our education sector and the municipalities. We flowed through those dollars. Some, yes, went into our health care sector, Mr. Speaker.

And then the more recent \$60 million, I was on the phone that week working with the federal government on this fund. Yes, it's \$2 billion across Canada, 60 million here. It's appreciated for sure. It goes into our surgical initiative, which I'd said earlier was up 20 million last year which we'll utilize this year and every year. Added to that 20 million, 21.6 million, so now up over 40 million from two years ago, Mr. Speaker. But the total of that surgical initiative is not \$40 million. It's \$625 million is the total, Mr. Speaker.

And so we will put the \$60 million into that, Mr. Speaker. We're in the process of . . . And the Minister of Health is working closely to deliver on his three-year plan. That quite likely will extend beyond that, Mr. Speaker, and increasing our surgical capacity here in the province. It's going to include enhancing our public surgeries that are being offered, but it's also going to include an increase in our private surgeries, Mr. Speaker.

And we know, because the members opposite simply don't change, Mr. Speaker, regardless of who the leader is, that they don't like the private surgeries that are being offered within the public system here in this province. Well the fact is is we have to use all the tools that are available to us, and so we're going to quite likely use more private surgeries in the future, Mr. Speaker.

We're over 10,000 a year today; about 120,000 performed in Saskatchewan since the inception of that initiative, Mr. Speaker. And I would say there's going to be more private surgeries that will be offered within that public system here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this really leads me to, you know, the question about choices, Mr. Speaker. And you know, the right choice that we feel as the government representing the majority of Saskatchewan people, but representing all Saskatchewan people as well, is to make every effort that we can to grow the economy and grow that opportunity for people that live here today and people that may not be born here, Mr. Speaker, the next generation, the next, next one, as well as people that are coming here to live here from other areas of the world, most notably right now some looking to live here from Ukraine. We believe that's the right choice to grow that economy and to grow that opportunity to create those jobs and create that opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

We believe when it comes to all of the initiatives of government, that the right choice is to have a plan, Mr. Speaker, to have a plan to balance the budget of which we put before this legislature and will very likely vote off . . . Well we did vote it off, I guess. I've been saying that a bit. We did vote that off, Mr. Speaker. But as we find our way through the next number of months, you will see that we do have a plan to balance in the Saskatchewan finances, Mr. Speaker.

And should, you know, resource revenues and other revenues continue to increase, Mr. Speaker, and stay at a high level for a long period of time, it stands to reason that we'll likely balance earlier, Mr. Speaker. Should we continue on the strong pace that we are seeing of investment coming into this province, Mr. Speaker, I think that bodes well for the future of not only the province in general, but most importantly for Saskatchewan people and those opportunities.

And so we believe it is the right choice to grow that economy, create those jobs, have a plan, a plan to balance the budget, a plan to ensure that in that balanced budget there's stability, that we're not relying on fluctuations in or high energy prices or high potash prices or high natural resources prices, Mr. Speaker.

We also believe that there's another right choice that Saskatchewan people are becoming quite accustomed to, and that's regardless of who the leader is across the way, Mr. Speaker. But we believe the right choice for this province is to never again elect an NDP government.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, well we agree on one thing: we agree that it is important to grow the Saskatchewan economy. It's just such a shame that this Premier has failed so spectacularly in that all-important role. The economy has shrunk since he was elected Premier, the only province in the country to see a decrease in GDP this last year. And yes, he has failed spectacularly to balance a budget. Never balanced one in his entire career as the Premier.

Now I do want to talk about something pretty serious. We did have a drought last year, and we saw a lot of producers really struggling. And the Sask Party chose not to increase the payment

rates to 80 per cent with AgriStability, despite calls from producers across the board and the feds committing to cost-share that. So that's a real concern.

We also see the real concern for livestock producers. Livestock producers don't have the luxury of crop insurance. They don't have what crop producers have. They don't have that support from both levels of government. At a time when we don't know what we're going to face in terms of weather, but we do know we're facing extremely high input costs. Input costs for fertilizer, for fuel, for equipment are through the roof. So the level of risk that those producers are undertaking right now is higher than we've ever seen.

So again to the Premier: will this government be looking at ways to fix AgriStability, fix support for livestock producers, help make sure that our agricultural producers are able to manage the incredible risk they're taking on this year?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a number of agricultural support programs, business risk management programs that are in place. These programs are in place. They're shared programs between all of the provinces and the federal government, Mr. Speaker. When there's changes that are made to these programs, ultimately you need a consensus agreement on those programs, Mr. Speaker.

So with respect to AgriStability . . . it's AgriStability, which I had here somewhere and I will get. Mr. Speaker, well the business risk programming all told, we had \$338 million in the budget this year. We obviously had paid out a little over \$2 billion last year, Mr. Speaker. This year has a record coverage of \$405 an acre. And I just set aside my . . . the one I was looking for.

[16:45]

The reference margin limit is the one I was looking for, Mr. Speaker. The reference margin limit was . . . Okay, geez, I had the sheet out and I just misplaced it. Mr. Speaker, there was actually an agreement for the removal of the reference margin limit which was what the producers really did want in those negotiations. It was supported by producers, in particular those that have experienced declines in farm income factors such as production loss, which we did experience this past year. So the reference margin limit — which was the priority for this government because it was the priority for producers, going into those federal-provincial negotiations — was reduced, was removed actually, Mr. Speaker. And that was the primary objective.

Mr. Speaker, we also joined with the federal government and in a number of other funding programs, really one-off funding programs given the fact that we had a livestock industry or an animal agriculture industry in the province that was having a real challenge as we found our way through the summer. And so we had provided actually \$119 million, Mr. Speaker. We joined with the federal government, who also provided some dollars for a total of \$277 million. What this consisted of was two payments, totalled up to \$200 per head for breeding cattle, Mr. Speaker, \$277 million that came in.

We also had provided some funding in the way of doubling the low-yield appraisal, the threshold values for Saskatchewan Crop Insurance customers. And we expanded some access to building some water infrastructure in the province as well for our livestock, Mr. Speaker. What we did was — and this was due to the dry conditions we had this year — the maximum rebate for livestock producers will increase to \$150,000 on the farm and ranch water infrastructure program. Mr. Speaker, the first \$50,000 is on a 50/50 cost-share, the remaining 100,000 on a 70/30 government-producer cost-share.

And there's been about \$23 million that has been provided through that program since 2018. A very important program, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the fact that some producers simply were running out of water for their animals, and they were faced with the decision to sell them at depressed prices. Mr. Speaker, I think this speaks to the broader support of the agriculture industry as well, not just through the business risk management programs but through supporting the access to markets.

A number of years ago, we had a government, an Ag minister from this province that really spent a lot of time in other areas of the world. Our Ag minister of the day, the member from Lumsden-Morse, previously Thunder Creek, worked very closely with the federal Ag minister in opening up and accessing those markets, some of the free trade agreements that were in place, that were coming into place at that point in time.

We haven't seen that type of vigour out of this current federal administration, and I doubt whether the adding another J to the leadership profile is going to help that in any sort of a substantial way, Mr. Speaker. And that's why we are taking it upon ourselves to support all of our industries in this province, Mr. Speaker, industries that export to over 150 countries each and every year. Paramount among those industries is our agriculture industry, Mr. Speaker.

And just for some reference on what is happening here with our export markets, Mr. Speaker, Japan in 2021 since 2007 is up 121 per cent with the value of our exports going into Japan. Brazil up 454 per cent, big potash market in Brazil. Mexico up 177 per cent. Dubai is an interesting, interesting market. Dubai is a market that's up 52 per cent year over year, 2020 compared to 2019. We're up 52 per cent with our Saskatchewan exports into Dubai. They are predominantly, virtually 100 per cent, agricultural exports, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be leaving later this week to go to Dubai to advocate alongside our ag industry, alongside those that have dealings in Dubai, to ensure that we are not only securing that market and providing that opportunity to expand that market into the years ahead, but to ensure that the folks that are buying Saskatchewan products understand that in particular when it comes to agricultural products, this is the highest quality product you can buy.

When you look at how producers are producing that product, it is competitively priced, Mr. Speaker, and it's the most sustainable agri-food product that you can buy in the world. You compare Saskatchewan peas, lentils, canola, canola oil, wheat, barley, canary seed, whatever the comparison is, Mr. Speaker, our products are better. They're higher quality. They're competitively priced. And they're much more sustainable than

anything you can find in the world. That's the message I'm going to be bringing to the United Emirates. That's the message we bring on behalf of our ag producers each and every time we're abroad.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you. According to the DIACC [Digital Identification and Authentication Council of Canada] framework Saskatchewan has joined . . . Saskatchewan individual digital identity roadmap. And according to the DIACC framework, basic access to services such as health records, student loans, qualifying for disability, managing land use, shift in social attitudes towards health and lifestyle will be digitalization. So the digital domain could be linked to the food system as well, we're learning.

Now what is the affordability, and how much money was spent on this already? What was budgeted? How much was spent? What is expected to be spent on DIACC in the future? We understand it's been postponed, but it's coming back. Will there be less staff, more staff? And exactly what is the framework, the time period for DIACC in the future? We've heard it's coming back in December, and we would like some accountability and transparency, please. Thank you.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I have a note here from the Minister of SaskBuilds that says the cost estimates to date, largely internal within the ministries, I would think they're minimal, but there would be some costs within the ministry. But any costs that would be outside of that would be from proponents. And I'm informed that they're commercially sensitive, so we can't actually release those costs, Mr. Speaker. What I would say is that we are not moving forward with the digital ID [identification] program at this point in time. That's the decision of the government.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We've spent a lot of time in this Assembly talking about health care, but we still haven't heard a recognition from the Premier that the government has a problem, that the health care system is a mess. The ongoing chaos in our health system remains unchecked: ER waiting rooms with stretchers for care; 36,000 people on the surgical wait-list; no room for sick kids in our brand new children's hospital; a mental health and addictions crisis claiming lives each and every day; doctors packing up and walking away, with 82 fewer family doctors since the Premier took office, and every indication that that number will continue to dwindle based on the Saskatchewan Medical Association's reports that 76 per cent of Saskatchewan doctors are concerned about the lack of physician voice in the government's pandemic response, that 55 per cent are planning to reduce their hours of work, 67 per cent amongst doctors in smaller centres and rural areas, and that one in five say that they plan to retire in the next two years.

It's a recipe for disaster and the Premier does not care. He pats himself on the back and looks the other way as people from every corner of the province struggle to access the health care that they

need and deserve. The first step to dealing with a problem is acknowledging that you have one. Will the Premier recognize that under his government our health system is a mess?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just going through a number of items in that question. With respect to the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital, thankful we have that infrastructure here in the province, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan had waited quite some time for a children's hospital, Mr. Speaker, associated with our expanded and certified College of Medicine, which is attracting not only physicians but attracting some of the world's best surgeons to work in our College of Medicine but also to be surgeons in our children's hospital, which is co-located with our College of Medicine.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the challenges that we're seeing in this province — and admittedly there are challenges — we're seeing much the same across Canada. That is due to in many cases . . . not just though. Two years of coming through a pandemic, Mr. Speaker, has really highlighted where some of the shortages or some of the challenges we have in our health care system, not just in Saskatchewan but in all other provinces across the nation.

And I'm going to get to how we're addressing some of those in this province in a moment, Mr. Speaker. But what I might add, and we talked earlier about the \$60 million, 2 billion across Canada, in surgical dollars that are available. There's some in long-term care. I believe there's a proposal in the mental health area as well, all of that totalling a few billion dollars over five years.

What the premiers have asked for, Mr. Speaker, is for the federal government to become a full and fair funding partner of health care, provincially delivered health care, Mr. Speaker, and to increase their share of funding to 35 per cent which is where it should be, Mr. Speaker. It started at 50/50. There was tax points given to the tune of about 15 per cent. Thirty-five per cent is the number that the federal government should come in at. They're at about \$42 billion a year today. They need to increase that by about \$28 billion to become a full funding partner in provincially delivered health care in this nation. It's a unanimous ask among all 13 premiers, Mr. Speaker, and it's most certainly one that's supported by this government.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the physician situation across the province — and I mentioned this in my opening comments — we are up about 1,000 physicians in Saskatchewan, up about 4,200 nurses in Saskatchewan. I can't imagine going through the last two years without those folks offering the services that they do in our health care system, but that is what it would have been like under the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. In saying that, we need more. And I'd said that earlier, and I had talked about the four-point plan that we have to recruit folks, Mr. Speaker.

Well maybe I'll start there, the plan to recruit, retain, to train, and ultimately incentivize all health care professionals that we need, Mr. Speaker. Up to 1,000 training seats for nurses, Mr. Speaker, ensuring that we are training folks right here in Saskatchewan to work in the Saskatchewan health care system. Yes, we're going to be recruiting abroad in particular over the next two years, a

target of 300 people coming in, 150 a year for two years, Mr. Speaker.

[17:00]

Revamping our health care recruitment agency, like I had mentioned a number of questions ago, with respect to not just focusing on physicians. Getting back to the basics of supporting communities with their health care recruitment initiatives and efforts, Mr. Speaker, and really recruiting the broad spectrum of health care professionals that we need to ensure that we have the services in all Saskatchewan communities. And we will use, Mr. Speaker, incentives where they are necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier of the surgical initiative that we have and the fact that that was increased by \$21.6 million in this year's budget, adding on a \$20 million increase last year, Mr. Speaker. And you know, some of this is going to go into, yes, private surgeries that are offered in that public system. We know the members opposite don't like that. They likely won't change with whoever the next leader is, Mr. Speaker. But what that means for Saskatchewan people is we ultimately would have 120,000 less surgeries that would have been performed in this province. Mr. Speaker, that's 10, 11, to 13,000 surgeries a year that the NDP just simply wouldn't do here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to do more in the months and years ahead to achieve what we have achieved before. We were left with a surgical backlog in 2007 under the members opposite. Due to COVID we again have a surgical backlog. We've done this before, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to do it again. And I'd say that Saskatchewan people are most certainly going to be part of that.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier of what we are doing in this province to enhance the health care system that the critic references as a mess. It's a health care system that we believe in. We believe in the people that are working in it, Mr. Speaker, offering those services. And we're coming with real financial supports in this budget that each of those members voted against, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. But coming with people into our ICU space, expanding our bed space there, six announced two days ago, Mr. Speaker, up to 85, the highest number of ICU beds we've ever had permanently in this province, expanding to 90 later this year and on our track to get to 110.

Mr. Speaker, the investments in mental health I went through earlier, substantial investments, completing our expansion of 77 mental health beds across the province, the last 10 being built here in Prince Albert as we speak, Mr. Speaker. The 150 additions beds that are being provided and all of the community services, the health buses, the naloxone kits, the efforts that we are making to see people where they are, Mr. Speaker, the efforts that we are making in our schools.

And I think in fairness, there is a conversation for us about how we can provide additional supports, Mr. Speaker, for our youth, for that next generation, in particular in the area of supporting them in any mental health challenges that they may have, that we know is more prevalent today than it most certainly has been yesterday or the day before. And it isn't going away. We need to continue to invest. That's why 7.2 per cent of our health budget is invested directly into mental health and addictions today, Mr.

Speaker. That's a substantial increase from when I sat down there with the member from Lumsden-Morse, Mr. Speaker, and we were talking about five, five and a half per cent just a few years ago.

The commitment to health care by this government is one that has been on full display, whether it be in building hospitals, whether it be in recruiting, training, and retaining our doctors — 1,000 of them additional, Mr. Speaker, 4,200 additional nurses. The investment into new ways to provide more surgeries to Saskatchewan people and our commitment to mental health and addictions investment in this province has been paramount, Mr. Speaker. Our record on health care is strong, and that investment is going to continue to increase to provide these services into the future.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Chair, the Premier famously said, after the deadly second wave, particularly devastating in our long-term care homes, that he wouldn't change a thing. He doubled down on that a year ago when we had these Premier's estimates. He said the same thing. And since that time a year ago, another 800 people have died. Another 800 people have died. Thousands more have been sick. Thousands more have had their lives disrupted by this government's decision to have the worst pandemic response in the entire country. The worst economic performance, which is what they said, they had to react badly to the pandemic. They had to not take the pandemic seriously to save the economy. But no, we had the worst economic performance, the worst population growth, and the worst COVID response in the entire country.

At that time of these last estimates, we were here in Regina. We all spent the whole session here in the city because the province had to be locked down. Because this Premier had seen the modelling and had said, I'm going to reduce restrictions and make things worse for the Alpha variant. And then this past summer he saw the modelling, had it shown to him, saw what the Delta variant was going to do, and declared that the pandemic was over, declared it was time for a good-time summer. And what happened? We had the worst fourth wave in the entire country. Hundreds of people died. We had to fly people to ICUs in Ontario because we'd overwhelmed our hospitals here.

To the Premier: would he still not change a thing? Or does he recognize how foolish it was to have ignored the advice of experts, to ignore the modelling and put people's lives at risk, and to make the choices he's made that cost Saskatchewan people their lives?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple points of clarity with respect to the facts in the preamble and the question there, Mr. Speaker, from the outgoing Leader of the Opposition. He said that someone in this Assembly has declared that COVID is over. That would be news to me. No one has declared that COVID is over, Mr. Speaker.

And he also said that the government didn't listen to the advice of experts. The government did, on virtually a daily basis throughout the COVID pandemic, work with our chief medical

health officer here in this province, Mr. Speaker. And most recently, on April the 7th, he had this to say publicly about COVID-19, and I quote:

I think it is a balance of doing the things we enjoy, but also being aware of what are the risk factors, what the transmission rate is in the province and taking the proper precautions. But at the same time, I think as individuals and communities, COVID can't be the overriding thing. It can't influence everything that we do.

Mr. Speaker, another chief medical health officer, not from this province, but I took interest in a quote the chief medical health officer in British Columbia had made, Dr. Bonnie Henry, who's guiding Premier Horgan, who is leading the NDP government in British Columbia. Dr. Henry had this to say, Mr. Speaker:

This virus is still here and it's going to be here for years and we're going to have to manage it without having to take legal or draconian measures that also have negative impacts.

Mr. Speaker, let me just repeat that point: "... that also have negative impacts," she said. "It's really being able to manage ourselves now." That's the end of that quote. Mr. Speaker, we have taken the advice of our chief medical health officer. We have never declared that COVID is over. COVID very much is present in our communities today, Mr. Speaker.

And in taking that advice from the chief medical health officer that I just read, that he had stated publicly on April the 7th, Mr. Speaker, I think in fairness the question can come back to the outgoing Leader of the Opposition or any of the others there that aspire to be a leader at some point or the NDP in general.

Just since Christmastime, Mr. Speaker, the opposition party has demanded that we install gathering limits, or put in gathering limits here in the province, contrary to the advice of the chief medical health officer. They have asked for capacity restrictions at stores that again would have crippled businesses and essentially been a lockdown, Mr. Speaker, contrary to the advice of the chief medical health officer. They asked to change the definition of "fully vaccinated" to three shots in this province. The independent member might be interested in that, Mr. Speaker. That's contrary to any of the advice of the chief medical health officer or the independent member.

Then the NDP did demand that the government expand the list of locations where vaccine passports were required, ensuring the majority of Saskatchewan people would remain locked up in their homes for a longer period of time. And they demanded that schools be closed down yet again, Mr. Speaker. I go back to the other negative impacts that Dr. Henry had listed. Those are specific and quite impactful, I think, when we think about the negative impacts of locking down our schools and sending our children home.

Mr. Speaker, I think in fairness, the question for the members opposite is quite simply, why wouldn't you take the advice of the chief medical health officer in this province or other provinces in some of the recommendations and some of the obscurity that you were putting out in the public domain?

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

Mr. Meili: — Well, Mr. Chair, the Premier likes to say that he followed Dr. Shahab's advice but that's simply not a fact. Even Dr. Shahab himself has said on a number of occasions, especially during that deadliest fourth wave when hundreds died, when we had the worst fourth wave in the entire country, he said that it's up to government to release his recommendations. But he wouldn't say it. He did however say that his recommendations would have aligned closely with the letter from the medical health officers of the province, this letter that the Premier had with plenty of time before the fourth wave hit, that he chose to ignore.

[17:15]

So the question is, because the Premier likes to say, likes to pretend, I would say, that he listened to Dr. Shahab's response, to Dr. Shahab's recommendations: will the Premier release those recommendations if he is so convinced that he did what the experts suggested? We know many experts, many physicians, many leaders throughout this province gave different advice, gave advice that this Premier clearly didn't follow. He says that he followed Dr. Shahab's advice. Will he release those recommendations? Will he make them public?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to tabling some recommendations, most certainly there's nothing to table, Mr. Speaker. There was a discussion that happened after receiving a letter from Mr. Cory Neudorf, signed by a number of physicians, maybe 20 or 25 physicians, Mr. Speaker. When upon reading that letter, Mr. Speaker, there was ... Essentially what the letter is is a call for additional lockdowns, for a 28-day lockdown here in the province, gathering restrictions ...

Mr. Meili: — This is such a dishonest table. This is so ridiculous. Like I seldom believe ... [inaudible] ... This is so disappointing.

[Interjections]

The Chair: — Excuse me. Order. Dishonest is not an acceptable term. Please apologize for it.

Mr. Meili: — I apologize.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, it actually says here, gathering restrictions, Mr. Speaker, are recommended.

But here's where I think the discussion led between the Minister of Health and Dr. Shahab. It was on point 2 on page 2 of the letter, and it's where ... And I'll quote the letter, Mr. Speaker: "The proof of vaccination should be required in more venues and more locations and should consider not accepting proof-of-negative-test as an option for entry."

Mr. Speaker, as you know, in this province we'd always provided the option for negative tests. We didn't want people to lose their jobs or not be able to attend a venue because they weren't able or were not vaccinated, Mr. Speaker. We had that negative-test option in there for all of the provincial employees when we enacted the proof of vaccination, which was still in place at this point in time, Mr. Speaker. We removed it, I believe, in the middle of February, Mr. Speaker.

The federal government took a different route. Some other provincial governments took a different route where they didn't accept that negative test. We did here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So it goes on to say:

A negative test should not substitute for vaccination while we try to reduce community transmission, as they can miss people with lower levels of viral shedding. In order to keep schools open, we need to make them safer. A proof of vaccination should be required for accessing in-person learning for children 12 years and older and for households of those under 12 who cannot be immunized yet. It should also be required for teachers and staff in all schools and daycare facilities.

And so what that is is for students 12 years and older and teachers: if you're not vaccinated, you're not coming, Mr. Speaker. And for those kids under 12, the rest of their family would have to be vaccinated or those kids aren't coming, Mr. Speaker. As it went on to recommend that facilities that were hosting youth sports, extracurricular activities for school-aged children should also require proof of vaccination for eligible participants, spectators, so those parents that might come watch, coaches, as well as any volunteers that may be involved.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I would go back to Bonnie Henry's, Dr. Bonnie Henry's comments about the negative consequences or, Mr. Speaker, that can come with public health measures being enacted, Mr. Speaker. We were always attuned to that throughout the pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

But with respect to the question, I believe this letter and all of these recommendations . . . There was a motion put forward by one of the members opposite — emergency motion actually — to adopt all of these recommendations, Mr. Speaker. And the government simply wasn't going to force vaccinations on kids to enter our schools, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite seemed willing to do so.

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

Mr. Meili: — Mr. Speaker, now we've corrected the record on that multiple times. The Premier knows that. He chooses to repeat this information. It's not accurate.

What he also has chosen not to do, he has chosen not to release the recommendations of Dr. Shahab, recommendations that Dr. Shahab himself has said were different than what the government chose to do. He has said that it's up to the government to release those recommendations and they've refused to do so, which only leaves us with one conclusion, which is this government knows, this Premier knows, he had the information in front of him that could have saved people's lives. He had the information in front of him that could have avoided that terrible fourth wave. I don't know what he wanted more, if it was some political bump, it was a fun summer, but something was of greater priority to him than keeping Saskatchewan people alive. And that, Mr. Chair, is shameful, shameful, shameful.

Now something else that is shameful is sharing information that is false when it comes to something as important as vaccines.

And there was a quote in the *StarPhoenix* that said, and I quote, "Premier repeats falsehoods about vaccines." This is when the Premier went around saying that a three-dose, a three-dose regime of Pfizer did not do anything to prevent transmission — clearly not a factual statement.

We know that people who have the booster are less likely to catch Omicron. Even with Omicron, it reduces that by about 50 per cent. And when you look at what it does to ICU admission, hospitalization, and death, even if we just look in Saskatchewan, those folks who are fully vaccinated were five, nine, or seven times less likely to wind up in hospital, ICU, or death, respectively, in the province.

And yet this Premier went around sharing, and I quote, "repeated falsehoods" about vaccines. Now that to me is striking for a number of reasons: one, that a premier would choose to share that sort of information that wasn't true; but secondly, that the vaccine rates in our province, we're now still the second lowest. We're at 41 per cent that have gotten that third shot. We're at only 41 per cent of kids 5 to 11.

So does the Premier regret, does he understand how damaging it was for him to share information about vaccines that was not correct? Does he understand how damaging it was for him to put his full-throated support behind a convoy that went on to block borders and shut down capital city because they were against vaccines? Does he recognize how, when he gives space to groups like United Grassroots that causes further fuel for the anti-vaccine movement? Is that something that he's proud of? Is he proud of having led to, of having influenced the worst vaccination — second-worst — second-worst vaccination rate in the entire country?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, just to correct the record, the comments I read in earlier were directly from the letter from Mr. Neudorf. And the motion that I had referenced in this House was on October the 28th of 2021. It was just about a week after the letter was sent, Mr. Speaker. And the motion goes, and I'm reading out of *Hansard* here:

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

Mr. Speaker, the motion that was being moved was:

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

Mr. Speaker, that's the letter that I was reading out of, Mr. Speaker, just to correct the record on some of that.

With respect to my comments on vaccines, I've never said that vaccines — and quite the contrary — that vaccines have not prevented severe outcomes, in particular of the Omicron, of all COVID but in particular of the Omicron variant. However, as we found our way into the Omicron variant, it is true that vaccines have not been as effective at reducing the transmission of

Omicron. And those comments were specific to Omicron, regardless of what the outgoing leader, how he, you know, utilizes or changes or interprets those comments.

Mr. Speaker, I have a quote here from . . . This one is from Dr. Fauci, I believe, Dr. Fauci from the US from the NI . . . It goes here, and I quote:

SARS-CoV-2 appears not to substantially engage the systemic immune system, as do viruses such as smallpox, measles, and rubella that consistently have a pronounced viremic phase. Moreover, neither infection nor vaccination appears to induce prolonged protection against SARS-CoV-2 in many or most people.

Mr. Speaker, that's Dr. Fauci.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention went on to say, and I quote, Mr. Speaker: CDC expects that anyone with Omicron infection can spread the virus to others even if they are vaccinated or do not display symptoms.

Mr. Speaker, our chief medical officer in Saskatchewan, Dr. Shahab — and let me thank him for his service the last couple of years — but he went on to say, Mr. Speaker, “But certainly the vaccines were designed to prevent severe outcomes, not to, on their own, prevent transmission.” That's about what I said, Mr. Speaker. Getting boosted is critical, but it doesn't protect as well against transmission. Mr. Speaker, those are Dr. Shahab's words.

The Canadian chief medical health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, had this to say, Mr. Speaker:

It's now clear that the primary series of a COVID-19 vaccine — the first two shots of an mRNA vaccine or a viral vector product like the AstraZeneca vaccine — do not protect against the Omicron infection.

Mr. Speaker, that's Dr. Tam.

Dr. Kieran Moore from Ontario, the chief medical health officer there, went on to say this vaccine isn't providing a significant benefit at two doses against the risk of transmission as compared to someone who may be unvaccinated, Mr. Speaker. And Dr. Cory Neudorf, where this letter came from, Mr. Speaker, said, “We both agree this vaccine is far less effective against transmission than previous variants.” All similar to the statements that I had made with respect to Omicron.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the protests, the United We Roll, some of the protests that were occurring, Mr. Speaker, I was very clear. Again I need to clarify the interpretation that the outgoing Leader of the Opposition put forward. Mr. Speaker, we have said that people have the right to legally protest, Mr. Speaker. They do not have the right to break the law in those protests.

Blocking border crossings is breaking the law, Mr. Speaker. And that didn't happen here in Saskatchewan, and for that I'm grateful to Saskatchewan people that had their voice heard but did not outwardly block a border crossing here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So we do support and have always been clear that we do support the right of individuals to legally protest, whatever their cause is. We do not support the blocking of borders, Mr.

Speaker.

We also do not support the *Emergencies Act* that was brought in. Three of those border crossings — Coutts, Emerson, and the one in Ontario at the Windsor bridge — were all removed prior to the introduction of the *Emergencies Act*, Mr. Speaker. What we saw the *Emergencies Act* brought in by Justin Trudeau, supported by Jagmeet Singh and the NDP, Mr. Speaker, was brought in to clear the downtown Ottawa situation that they had.

[17:30]

We had said, and we believe upon consultation, which was read into the record at committee the other night, and 7 out of 10 premiers did not feel the *Emergencies Act* should be enacted. The Prime Minister and his partner, Jagmeet with the NDP, enacted it anyway, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in the history of this province.

And so we don't agree, Mr. Speaker, with the imposition of the *Emergencies Act* and what it actually resulted in, in freezing bank accounts and what ultimately those results were. We feel the tools were already available. They were proven to work in the three border crossings that were cleared. In the case of the Coutts border crossing, fairly substantial work and effort went into that for obvious reasons, Mr. Speaker.

What we also don't agree, as I said earlier, we agree these folks have the right to legally protest. When they do legally protest, Mr. Speaker, we don't agree with people that call them names. We saw that, Mr. Speaker, with the Leader of the Opposition when we had a protest outside of this legislature, Mr. Speaker. He called . . . These were yellow vest, accused yellow vest protesters at the time, Mr. Speaker. And the outgoing leader called them anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic sentiments that they had. And he said this is what this movement has become. Mr. Speaker, we don't agree with the *Emergencies Act*, we don't agree with breaking the law blocking borders. We don't agree with those comments, Mr. Speaker, but what we do agree is people do have the right to legally protest their cause.

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

Mr. Meili: — Just a quote from the Premier's letter to the convoy. He said, and I quote, “. . . because vaccination is not reducing transmission . . .” That's very much the same as what he had said publicly. And it's not remotely the same as any of those quotes, any of those quotes. There's a difference between not as effective and not reducing transmission at all. That latter statement, the statement that the Premier has made, is false and he should correct it because he . . . And he should correct it, because we have seen a massive drop-off in the number of people seeking vaccination. He said it was not reducing transmission, and it's just one of many statements that has . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Leader of the Opposition, the “false” is indicating that the Premier was lying, and you know that's not allowed. So I'll ask you to apologize again and withdraw.

Mr. Meili: — To say that the statements are false? I'm just clarifying, thank you very much. Could you clarify the statement, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: — The word false, the word false when identifying the Premier and what he had said, you used the word false and that is non-parliamentary. And I ask you to apologize and withdraw.

Mr. Meili: — I don't recall the usage, Mr. Speaker, but I'll apologize nonetheless. What I would say is the notion . . .

The Chair: — And withdraw. And withdraw.

Mr. Meili: — Oh, and withdraw. Thank you very much. The notion . . . Let me make this clear. The notion that that statement, that reducing transmission is the same as what those letters said from those experts, is clearly not the case. They were talking about two doses. They were talking about not as effective. They were certainly not saying what the Premier said, which was that it no longer had any effect on transmission, which is absolutely incorrect.

Now not only did the Premier's choices to ignore the modelling, to ignore the experts, lead to tens of thousands of added cases of COVID-19 in our province, not . . . lead to hundreds more deaths, avoidable deaths because of those choices, we also saw the overwhelming of our health care system. We saw so many people who should have been able to access cancer care, therapy for kids, surgeries, unable to get the care that they need.

So to the Premier, we need some clarity on this, because the minister has been unable to answer these questions clearly. He's had time to look at it. Hopefully he can help you today.

How many people are waiting for surgery right now? How many surgeries were delayed during the fourth wave? How many were permanently cancelled and never went on to be performed, people that were removed from the list? How many people died while waiting for surgeries? How many people's surgeries will not be . . . How many of those surgeries will not be performed because those people are deceased? They never received those surgeries. They died on the waiting list.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is an important topic. This is a topic that we have discussions at not only the Council of Federation table but the first ministers' table, Mr. Speaker. And likely part of the result of this topic is the \$2 billion fund that the federal government had opened up, Mr. Speaker. As I said, Saskatchewan's share of that is about \$60 million. We're going to put that into a \$625 million surgical initiative, our annual investment in surgeries in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And the challenge that we have in Saskatchewan — I'll get to the numbers in a moment — is substantial. And it's substantial across Canada. Every province is dealing with a very similar challenge, which is why the federal government has dipped a toe in this water to increase some of that funding. And we would say with unanimity across the provinces and territories that they need to get in at least waist-deep, Mr. Speaker, and provide a substantial increase to be a full funding partner of not only our surgical initiative, but all of provincially delivered health care across this nation of Canada. That is a real staple of the foundation of what it often means to be Canadian, Mr. Speaker,

is to have access to that health care, and we're being underfunded today by the federal government.

We sit today at a high level, like all other provinces, Mr. Speaker. Just over 34,000 surgeries are waiting, Mr. Speaker. How we're going to find our way through this backlog . . . and as I said, we've done this before. We were doing in 2019 about 85,000 surgeries. Today we're actually up above that. We're about 90,000 surgeries today. That's about 97 per cent capacity here in the province, Mr. Speaker. And I think in fairness when we hear reports and they're true reports, Mr. Speaker, of some of the stresses and challenges we have with people in our health care system, I know that they are not all there due to COVID. Many folks are in our health care system due to the fact that they're getting their surgery performed, because we're already above 2019 levels.

Where we're going throughout this year, Mr. Speaker, is we're going to increase on that 90,000 annual surgeries. We're going to increase on that number this year to about 97,000, so an increase of about 7,000. Next year we're going to push that a further 6,000 up to 103,000 total surgeries, Mr. Speaker. And the year after that, in 2024, we push that right through to 108,000 surgeries. So that would be an additional 5,000 in that year, Mr. Speaker, up 18,000 surgeries over where we are today, which is already up 5,000 over where we were just a few years ago in 2019.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome. The question was how many surgeries were delayed during that fourth wave? How many were permanently cancelled, so were never performed because they were removed from the list? How many people died while they were on that waiting list, either from that condition or were removed because they were deceased? Now since the Premier . . . Hopefully the folks with him have had a chance to think about that.

I'll add another piece to this, because one of the most tragic parts of the health care system that was shut down and shut down for months was the organ donation system. And we've had people come and share their stories. I'm thinking of one person in particular who we know still has not received her transplant, who we know her health has deteriorated significantly since she was in this House.

So to the Premier: how many people weren't able to get an organ transplant, how many missed opportunities for organ collection, and how many people died waiting for that organ transplant because that organ transplant system was shut down for that period?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, I'll do the answers in the reverse order of which the questions were asked. First, with respect to the organ donation program, the organ donation program that we do within the province is kidney transplants, Mr. Speaker. Any of the other organ transplants that may occur for Saskatchewan residents would happen outside of the province.

Mr. Speaker, there was some questions asked in committee I

understand, and I'm going to read some of the . . . around this, and some of the answers that were provided in committee. Where are we here? The organ donation transplant program was shut down during the months of September and October. There was no registered donors during the month of October. And in between July 11th and October 29th, so inclusive of those dates, no organ transplants were cancelled due to the pandemic-related surge capacity, Mr. Speaker, and the physician always had the ability to prioritize that surgery if there was a donor available. And so the answer is that there was no organ donations that were cancelled due to the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to general surgeries, which was the first preamble question in that last question, Mr. Speaker, all cancer surgeries, if they were prioritized by the physician, occurred during the pandemic, as well as any emergent surgeries that were prioritized, identified and prioritized, by the attending physician. Those also went ahead throughout the pandemic. Mr. Speaker, we did have capacity for cancer surgeries that were prioritized by a physician, as well as emergent surgeries that were prioritized by the physician as well.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The head, the CEO of the Saskatchewan Health Authority quit during that fourth wave, left his position. How much are we paying him in a non-disclosure agreement as a result of his departure?

[17:45]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I'd like to ask . . . you know, thank any and all outgoing members of the SHA [Saskatchewan Health Authority], whether they be in leadership positions or otherwise. This is a position that obviously the HR is handled by the appointed health board that we have.

As we know, in this province we amalgamated a number of health boards across the province into one. I think in fairness, thankfully so, as we found through the COVID pandemic where we could unify the response, use folks in testing and vaccination clinics in testing vaccination clinics in various areas, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the outgoing, the CEO that resigned, Mr. Speaker, he'd be dealt with like any public servant would be in, you know, faced with that type of a situation, and any of the details would ultimately be dealt with by the Saskatchewan Health Authority board that is responsible for that position. In saying that and thanking Mr. Livingstone, I also take the opportunity to thank Mr. Will, who has stepped in I think impressively and has helped navigate us through the last number of months at the Saskatchewan Health Authority as well.

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

Mr. Meili: — While it's true that those health human resource matters would take place through the SHA, those are public dollars. Those are Saskatchewan taxpayer dollars that have gone to that NDA [non-disclosure agreement]. I'd like the Premier to tell us how much we, as Saskatchewan taxpayers, have paid in

the NDA to Mr. Livingstone, as well as in the non-disclosure agreement to Mr. Quinn, the outgoing Sergeant-at-Arms.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the question of the SHA, Mr. Speaker, it's a, you know . . . That's precisely what the Saskatchewan Health Authority board and the board Chair are working on, as this is their employee. They will, I am sure, handle the situation like they would handle any other public servant of equivalent level across government or within the SHA, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to the Sergeant-at-Arms, I think that's a question that likely is best posed for the Board of Internal Economy.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it's clear enough to say: whether it was the political interference from the minister at the board level at the SHA or Bill 70 and the choices that were made in this House, are resulting in people leaving or are resulting in people leaving that are important leaders. And leaving, leaving in such a situation, leaving in such a situation that this government is willing to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to make sure they don't tell the story about what happened under this government's leadership. That to me is extremely telling about how willing this government is to interfere in destructive ways with people who should be leading us still.

Now the Premier wants to talk about the letter of the law when it comes to where and how we can ask these questions. Let's talk about the letter of the law. Let's talk about the letter of the law in this House. And every member who's sitting here voted unanimously for a suicide prevention strategy.

We heard the minister admit yesterday that he had no intention of doing anything different after passing that vote than he was doing prior to passing that vote. He told people he'd heard on the doorstep that it was time for a different approach, that we needed to address the suicide crisis in this province. But he committed, and this Premier committed. They committed to a law. A law that said that we would have annual reports. A law that said that there would be serious consultation. A law that committed to a new suicide prevention strategy.

Why did the Premier go through with this charade? Why did he choose to present that information to the member from Cumberland, who shared his story, who poured out his heart about what's going on with his community? Why did he lead the people of this House and of this province — especially those who have lost loved ones to suicide — why did he lead them to believe that he was going to do something different? Did he know at that time that he had no intention of following through on a law that his government and this House passed unanimously?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe I will begin . . . I want to go through the bill, actually clause by clause. This is an important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and it's a piece of legislation that I think really has a place in the initiatives and the

investment that we talked about earlier, in particular when it comes to mental health and addictions investment, Mr. Speaker. And ultimately investment in preventing suicides in our province and in our communities, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to start by maybe just saying how the bill and the initiatives of the government work hand in hand. First I'm going to speak about the Pillars for Life which is the strategy that informs the investment that the government makes in the area of suicides, Mr. Speaker. And that's important.

What the bill does is really ensures that that strategy and that action that comes from the strategy transcends any government that might sit on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It formalizes the effort of whoever may be sitting in the government rows, Mr. Speaker, that they will continue with the work that has really been begun under this administration, Mr. Speaker. And it's going to continue, and continue to increase our investment and our effort and our work on this topic in the months and years ahead.

So the first thing I want to read is a quote from *Hansard* on April the 30th of 2021. This was prior to the bill being voted off, Mr. Speaker, in the debates of the bill. And it was the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions that said, and I quote:

We are focusing on continuing the implementation of the Pillars for Life plan with oversight from experts involved in overseeing Saskatchewan's mental health and addictions plan. Pillars for Life addresses much of what is in the bill, but the bill also formalizes the effort so that it transcends governments into the future. And to succeed, all partners involved need to work together.

So I think the minister was very clear, Mr. Speaker, prior to the bill being voted, on what the intentions of the government were. And nothing that comes out of the outgoing leader's mouth, Mr. Speaker, are going to change what was spoken in *Hansard* prior to that bill being voted on that very day.

Mr. Speaker, so let's go through the bill. And I have been waiting for this opportunity where we have some time because this is important. This is an important bill. And I again thank the member from Cumberland for his effort in ensuring that this bill does find its way to the floor and does find its way to have unanimous support.

The strategies and the efforts and the initiatives that are led by our Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, of which I'll go through in a minute, are also important, Mr. Speaker. And they are really informing the action that is the result of that strategic document that we have, the Pillars for Life strategy, Mr. Speaker.

So the first point of the bill is to establish a provincial strategy. We have Pillars for Life strategy, Mr. Speaker. It was indicated in the comments of the Minister of Mental Health that this was going to be the strategy. Mr. Speaker, under 2(a), it says the improved public awareness and knowledge about suicide, Mr. Speaker. We had the running U Good? campaign. We also have added to that There Is Help, There Is Hope, Mr. Speaker. And this is involving families that have lived experience in suicide, Mr. Speaker, losing a family member or a friend, Mr. Speaker. And so we are and we're continuing to add to this as we look

ahead, but that's what we're doing today.

Mr. Speaker, when you go on to 2(c), make publicly available existing statistics, the coroner's office does so. Promoting collaboration is letter (d), Mr. Speaker. We have our Pillars for Life working group that is in place. It involves ministry, CBOs, representatives from community-based organizations as well as again those individuals and families that have lived experience in the area of suicides, that have lost a loved one, Mr. Speaker.

It talks about in (f), promoting the use of research and evidence-based practices, Mr. Speaker. I'd point to the Muskwa Lake project, Mr. Speaker, I believe in the community of Pinehouse, if I'm not mistaken. Not only is that a . . . has a treatment arm, Mr. Speaker, for folks in that area . . . And the minister and myself and I believe the Minister of Education was with us, we had the opportunity to attend a ROC [Reclaiming Our Community] meeting in Pinehouse, a recovering our community meeting, Mr. Speaker, that has been going on for decades. They meet every Monday morning, all of the partners in delivering services, to discuss what they can do to better deliver those services in that particular week, and who might need a hand that week.

But the Muskwa Lake project, not only is a treatment facility, Mr. Speaker, a nature-based treatment facility, it also has a research arm to it as well, Mr. Speaker, which is part of promoting the use of research and evidence-based practices and to receive funding from this government.

Roots of Hope. The Roots of Hope is based in the research that the Mental Health Commission of Canada had done, Mr. Speaker. And so this is informed programming that we have.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to consultations with relevant non-government organizations, relevant entities within the governments of provinces, territories, and federal departments, I would point to the letter of commitment that was signed by this government, the FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations], and the federal government, Mr. Speaker, to work on suicide prevention strategies in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there's a commitment to report two years after the coming into force of this Act. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're now in 2022. In this year's annual report, Mr. Speaker, it will be made public in 2023, and there will be a report in that annual report that the government has. In the meantime, what we're doing is we're reporting annually on the Pillars for Life strategy, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are the comments that were made by the minister prior to . . . in the discussion in the lead-up to the vote of this very important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. There are what the government is doing on really a clause-by-clause basis with respect to the bill. And I've also explained that this bill is an important piece of legislation. It's supported by all members in this House. It's supported by the Mental Health Commission of Canada that has a letter, and I quote this in as well, Mr. Speaker:

On behalf of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), I wish to congratulate you and your government on recently releasing the suicide prevention plan titled *Pillars for Life: The Saskatchewan Suicide Prevention Plan*. At the outset MHCC is pleased to see that the Ministry of

Health has taken a concerted effort to increase suicide prevention capacity at the local level across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that is a strategy that has the accolades of the Mental Health Commission of Canada. That is the strategy that this important piece of legislation will ensure transcends governments, and transcends the individuals that are here supporting this strategy, this approach, and supporting the investment by this government in suicide treatment, suicide support in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Meili: — Experts, when Pillars for Life was released, described it as so vague as to be meaningless. They said that they were not confident that it would save lives. This is what the experts at the University of Saskatchewan, authors of successful suicide strategies in other provinces had to say. This is what Tristen Durocher knew when he walked from La Ronge, when he fasted for 44 days, and the Premier had nothing to say to him but, get off my lawn. We already had Pillars for Life in place. That protest was necessary because that strategy was nowhere near adequate.

And when the Premier stands up and thanks the member for Cumberland as though he might actually be in some way satisfied by what this government has chosen to do by ignoring their own law, that is a slap in the face to the member from Cumberland, is a slap in the face for the families whose names he's been reading every day into the record here in this House.

[18:00]

It is 100 per cent clear that the people who matter most, the people who are most affected by this legislation, expected more and what they got was less. They expected a true suicide strategy and instead they got a raw deal. They got a red herring. They got a government who was willing to put words on paper but not to put any action in place.

And this is why on so many occasions the people of Saskatchewan are looking at this government and saying, why don't they care? Why, when it comes to the prices we're paying at the pump, do they not care? Why, when it comes to how long we're waiting in emergency rooms or for surgeries, why don't they care? Why, when it comes to the folks that we lost to COVID-19, does this Premier not care?

And that message that this government is sending to Saskatchewan people, that this government doesn't truly care about their issues, about their concerns, about the real challenges they're facing in their lives, well it's not just a political problem, Mr. Chair, it's a problem for us as a province. We should have a government that cares. We should have people in this province able to trust that this government cares about what they're really going through.

And I want to point out one last thing and one final question here. If we're ever going to do better, if we're ever going to change from that sense that this government doesn't care, we need to have an honest look at what's going on. We need a government that's willing to own its mistakes, to be clear about what's really going on in health care and education, in our economy. And that

also means looking back and answering questions.

And I want to quote Russell Wangersky. He's the editor of the *Leader-Post*, and he wrote an article about whether or not we need a COVID-19 inquiry in this province. And his answer was a resounding yes. And he said, and I quote:

In other words, one of the ways to make sure that learning sticks — one of the ways to take advantage of all of that tragic COVID-19 education, with all of its heartbreak . . . [all of its] loss — is to have a clear-eyed examination of what went right, and what went wrong.

Now I know the members opposite — I think the minister said it today — they don't like to take any lessons from the opposition. Well, fair enough. But they don't like to take lessons from anyone. They don't like to take lessons from the public, from experts, from their own failures. And what I would commend this Premier to do is to have a hard and honest look at what really went on in COVID-19, because there is so much we can learn in our health care system and in so much more about this province, about what needs to be done differently.

So to the Premier: will he finally understand that it is not enough to just say, I wouldn't change a thing? It's not enough to say that it's fine and we can move on. But we have to look seriously about what this province has gone through these last two years. We need to learn these lessons. Will he commit to that independent, objective COVID-19 inquiry today?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I think many of the questions, these later questions in particular, were just addressed in a very personal way. I'll speak to the members from this side. But in the debate that occurred in this Assembly last Thursday, Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member from Riversdale. I listened with great interest to the member from Regina Walsh Acres and the newest member in this Assembly, the Saskatchewan Party member from Athabasca, Mr. Speaker, with their very personal and compelling stories.

You add to that, I think, really you can see the conviction at which this government is approaching mental health, addictions, and of course suicide, Mr. Speaker. And we see across the way, unfortunately, you know, leader after leader that just simply is not going to change their approach. Their approach of, quite frankly, you know, personal attacks, Mr. Speaker, is talking down the Saskatchewan economy, Saskatchewan people essentially, Mr. Speaker, and most certainly not going to change into the future.

And I think that's why you've seen the NDP now have lost four elections by fairly substantial, substantial margins, Mr. Speaker. After every election, and even in the most recent by-election in Athabasca, the NDP will very quickly talk about change. I quoted from the post-mortem report after the most recent election in 2020. Then they'll quickly change leaders as they're doing right now, but they never really actually change too much, Mr. Speaker, over there.

And I used to listen to the previous member from Athabasca as he would quite often blame the voters, Mr. Speaker. And now

we're off to blaming the federal Liberals and joining the provincial Liberals with the recent ask here, Mr. Speaker.

But the result is the same. When you're not willing to change, the result is the same. It's the same election result, Mr. Speaker. It's the same result in a general election. It's the same result — or actually a different result, but the same ultimate result — in the seat in the by-election that was held in Athabasca.

But nothing most certainly is changing over on that side. It's the same old tired policies. It's the same old attacks, name-calling, Mr. Speaker. And it's that same pessimistic, gloom-and-doom approach that we have seen for far too long in this Assembly. They keep doing the same things over and over and over, Mr. Speaker. They talk about doing things differently, but they do the same things over and over, and they keep getting the same results.

But there is hope. Mr. Speaker, there is always hope. As we see the leadership election starting to transpire across the way, Mr. Speaker, we see a candidate that is committed to not changing, as I read earlier, not changing the NDP approach, in fact said that the problem with the Saskatchewan NDP has not been the lack of policies but now the emphasis is going to be different. Mr. Speaker, well that's not a lot of change. So we would see more of the same under one leader.

The other leader, however, has substantial change that she is putting forward. And I quote from a website here, Mr. Speaker, Change Starts Here: "Kaitlyn knows that the NDP's current approach to politics and community organizing isn't working." Mr. Speaker, this is an individual that is running on change. She wants change, the entire party for better or worse, I suppose. Let it be on the record, Mr. Speaker, that I'm rooting for no change here, Mr. Speaker, and I think in many cases many Saskatchewan folks are as well.

They are having another leadership — yes, again — the fourth one in 13 years, Mr. Speaker. And it's a contest really between a change for better or worse and no change, Mr. Speaker.

What you are going to see all the time that is occurring is a government here that is continuing to talk to our constituents, continuing to talk to constituents that are outside of our constituencies, likely in some of the members' opposite, Mr. Speaker, including the independent member — in particular, maybe the independent member, Mr. Speaker — and representing the folks that we have been elected to represent, Mr. Speaker.

It is rare after four elections that the party of change in this province is actually the governing party, Mr. Speaker, but we are always willing to change. We are willing to do the right thing and do the right thing by Saskatchewan people, and we're never, ever going to stop standing up for the people of this province.

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

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll say it never ceases to amaze me that you can get Sask Party MLAs to stand and applaud someone for committing to not follow their own suicide prevention strategy, to committing to not learning from choices that led to the worst pandemic response in the entire country, the

worst economic performance in the entire country, the worst population record in the entire country. But for some reason, this is what the Sask Party wants to celebrate. This is what the Sask Party loves about this Premier.

Mr. Chair, I thank you for your time today. We've come to the end of our Premier's estimates. This is always an opportunity for us to dig into a number of issues. Never enough time. There are so many things to question, so many things to critique. Never enough time to get to everything.

But I do want to just end my remarks with a few thank yous. I want to thank the folks at the table, Clerk's table, who do so much to make sure we follow the rules and do things at the right time, and you know, dot our i's and cross our t's; and the Sergeant-at-Arms and his team, who keep us safe and who do so much, not just in this Chamber but all around this precinct as leaders and as protectors of democracy.

I want to thank the Pages. From the first Page to the last Page, you're a great bunch. It's really been fun to get to have you back. You know, we missed having the Pages in the House, and it really, really, it adds a lot. And I hope that you're having a good experience. I hope that you're not fully discouraged about democracy after your time with the circus that goes on here at times. And just thank you for your service.

And I want to thank the officials for joining us today, for their support bringing forth the information that's needed and being present here.

And I want to thank our staff. Our staff: Kat Norton; Brock Bowman; Kerri Martin, who's here as a sessional this session, working hard on issues. All of the team: Cheryl Stecyk, Jannet Shanks, Nathaniel Cole, Kelsey Morrison, Andi Bauer, and Landen Kleisinger. That's a long list to keep track of. I want to thank that group. They're doing an incredible amount of work. I just see the energy that they bring forward. We are a small group, but we work so hard. And they absolutely perform beyond expectations and punch above their weight.

As do these folks who are sitting around me right now. I want to thank the MLAs on our team. This caucus works hard. The number of hours . . . You folks on the other side, you have no idea what it's like to be an MLA in opposition. Very few of you. Some of you have been there. You have no idea. The backbencher screaming about it, he has no idea of the number of hours that go into preparing for committee, doing the work as a small team with our entire staff being what it is for one minister. No idea.

And that's fine. We don't expect any sympathy. We don't expect any efforts, any recognition of that. But I recognize it. I recognize the work that these members put in, how hard they go here late at night, back again early in the morning, and then out in the community every night, out in the community all weekend. And they do it because they truly care, and it shows every day. So I want to thank the NDP MLAs. Thank you again for the opportunity to do these Premier's estimates today.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to take this opportunity to

also just extend a number of thank yous and notes of appreciation to people that, you know, are involved in our life down here, in our professional life, in what we do each and every day. I'll apologize at the outset if I forget someone. Most certainly know that your work and your effort is appreciated.

But I begin with you, Mr. Chair. Sit here for three hours, minus potentially just a couple minutes for a quick break, so we'd thank the Deputy Chair as well, Mr. Speaker. I thank both of you for conducting these estimates here today.

[18:15]

I'd like to take this opportunity as well to thank all of the officials that allow us to do our work in this Assembly each and every day, Mr. Speaker. That's the Clerks, the Sergeant-at-Arms here, Mr. Speaker, those in Hansard, our Pages. Thank you for what you do each and every day, as well as our broadcasting staff that are here, Mr. Speaker, and the building staff that work across this broader building each day, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to take a moment to thank my officials that have joined us here during these estimates: James Saunders, Mr. Speaker, Kristen Fry sitting behind James. We have Jared Coles, who I affectionately refer to as Porridge, Mr. Speaker, and Cole, Cole Zawislak. Sorry, Jared Dunlop, who I affectionately . . . The new Jared, Mr. Speaker. Jared Dunlop, Mr. Speaker. Stole him from the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. He's still a little sore over that, Mr. Speaker. And Cole Zawislak, who does a couple of jobs within the government, within the minister's office here right now.

Mr. Speaker, last but not least, not here, but Julie Leggott is our press secretary or press . . . I don't even know what her title is, Mr. Speaker, but working hard with the media each and every day, Mr. Speaker.

And I would be remiss if I didn't actually thank the media. Like the opposition, I don't agree with them, seldom do actually, Mr. Speaker, but they play an important role in communicating what we do down here to the people of the province.

And last but not least, along with Julie, Reg Downs, and Shannon Andrews that work very closely with what we do each and every day in the Premier's office. And they do a yeoman's amount of work, Mr. Speaker, and it most certainly is appreciated.

I want to take an opportunity as well to thank all of the ministry staff. Some have joined us here today, staff in my office: Rhonda, Launa, or Rho-Launa as I call them, Mr. Speaker. So Launa comes up and helps Rho-Launa at times, Mr. Speaker. To thank them for the smile that they greet me with every morning, but thank all of the ministry staff for what you do in your office, Mr. Chair. And I would just keep encouraging each of you to keep it light. Keep it fun. Work hard. Don't take yourself too seriously in this place. You're doing some very important work and we're very, very grateful for it. And that goes for . . .

And I would extend that same appreciation to the caucus staff in both caucus offices, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition is right. There's a lot of work that goes into what happens in this Assembly on both sides of the House, and a lot of that work originates with the caucus staff who put in some very long hours,

Mr. Speaker, and that also is appreciated by all of us on both sides as we're all caucus members first and foremost.

One quick thanks, Mr. Speaker, not a quick thanks, thanks that I've said many times before, the one that I think bears repeating, and that's to . . . Given what's occurred in the last couple of years, I'd like to say a very special thank you to all of those people across Saskatchewan up to and including but even beyond, our health care sector, Mr. Speaker, that have provided us services during a time when we really didn't know what we were dealing with, if you think back to the early days of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's one of those times when you know where you were when in Canada, Sophie got COVID, Mr. Speaker, was when we really started moving ambitiously in this province. We were coming back from a first ministers' meeting that was cancelled because there was a COVID case in the Prime Minister's family, Mr. Speaker.

But also go beyond that to our teachers, our educators, to all of those that are working and have worked with people, our front-line workers in grocery stores, service stations — the list goes on and on and on — mine workers, coming together in large groups throughout this, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan people have done a remarkable job throughout the last two years, Mr. Speaker, and they continue to do a remarkable job as we look toward some much better times in the days ahead.

Last and not least, Mr. Speaker, I'd say thank you to all of the MLAs that serve in this Assembly on both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his service as the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. He, I think, served for the reasons that he felt were correct. We didn't agree on everything but he did serve, and he served his caucus and he served his constituents well. And so I thank him for what he has done.

And I thank all of the members opposite for the effort that they make. Not to compare efforts, Mr. Speaker, but being in opposition . . . and there's members on this side that, yes, have served in opposition. There's members that formed this party that did serve in an opposition of eight, Mr. Speaker, and that might be part of the desire that we have to never go back to opposition, Mr. Speaker, as one, we believe that the policies are what is best for this province, Mr. Speaker.

But most certainly I want to take this opportunity to thank the entire governing caucus as well for the effort that you make each and every day. I think the quality and integrity of caucus members that represent the governing caucus in this province was on full display last Thursday in what I thought was one of the most important debates that I've seen in this House. And to the three of you that participated, but to all of you, I think it's a testament of the character, of the desire to serve that you have. And for that I thank each and every one of you here today.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take also the opportunity to thank my family. Tough year in our house, Mr. Speaker, and we're finding our way, Mr. Speaker. But I want to thank them. As everyone knows, and I thank everyone's family, that of an elected member here. We don't serve alone in this

Assembly. We're gone from home, many of us, for extended periods of time. And you only serve here with the support of your family. And I am most grateful for mine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Yeah, I would ask all officials to please leave the chambers. We will now vote off the estimates.

Is subvote (EX01), central management and services in the amount of \$6,031,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is subvote (EX03), communications office in the amount of \$1,094,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is subvote (EX04), cabinet planning in the amount of \$1,118,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is subvote (EX05), cabinet secretariat in the amount of \$512,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX06), members of the Executive Council in the amount of \$143,000. This amount is a statutory amount. No vote is required.

Is subvote (EX07), Premier's office in the amount of \$492,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is subvote (EX08), House business and research in the amount of \$248,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is subvote (EX10), intergovernmental affairs in the amount of \$2,783,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is subvote (EX12), Lieutenant Governor's office in the amount of \$725,000 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

Resolved that there be granted Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2023, the following sums for Executive Council: \$13,003,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — This motion is carried. There being no further

business before the committee, I would invite a member to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Committees.

Mr. Hargrave: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — Next sitting. It now being . . . Oh sorry. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

The Speaker: — The House Leader has moved to adjourn the House. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House now stands adjourned till tomorrow at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:28.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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

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

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Social Services

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Education

Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
Minister of Energy and Resources

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

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

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

Hon. Warren Kaeding
Minister of Environment

Hon. Gene Makowsky
Minister of Advanced Education

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

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

Hon. Paul Merriman
Minister of Health

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

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

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

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

Hon. Gordon Wyant
Minister of Justice and Attorney General