



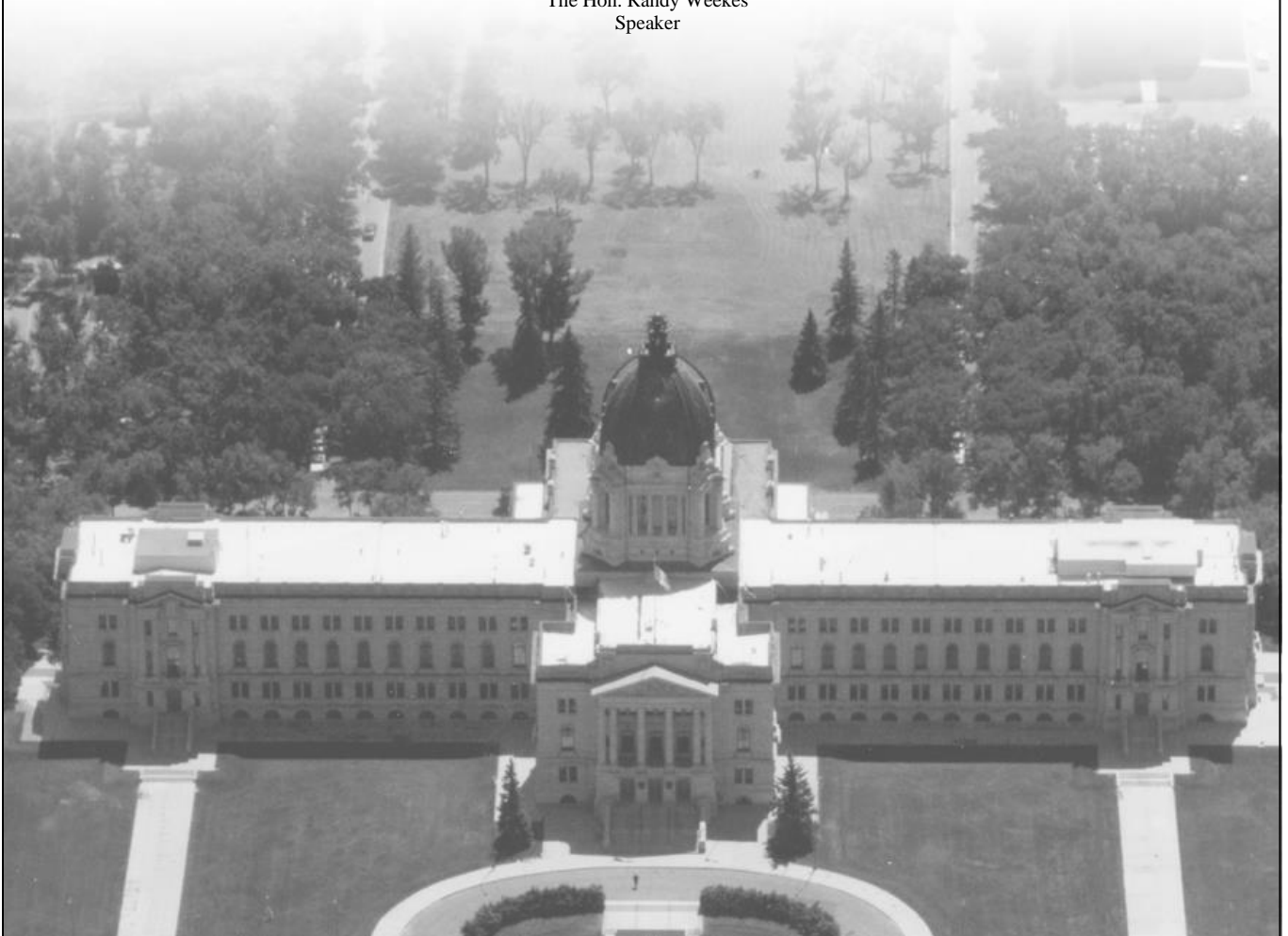
FOURTH SESSION — TWENTY-NINTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

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



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
4th 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 — Carla Beck

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

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 46; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 14;
Independent: Saskatchewan United Party (Ind.) — 1

Clerks-at-the-Table

Clerk — Iris Lang
Law Clerk & Parliamentary Counsel — Kenneth S. Ring, K.C.
Deputy Clerk — Kathy Burianyak
Principal Clerk — Robert Park

Sergeant-at-Arms — Lyall Frederiksen

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[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour Relations and public safety.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with leave for extended introduction.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we gather here on this very special day — it really is — in the province of Saskatchewan. It holds deep significance to our province. It is a privilege to stand before you and extend a heartfelt gratitude and recognition to the courageous men and women who embody the very essence of heroism in our community.

We are here today to honour the remarkable efforts of not one but three groups who have gone above and beyond the call of duty. That would be the Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters and Paramedics Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Saskatchewan Volunteer Fire Fighters Association, who have tirelessly and effortlessly responded to countless emergencies. Ensuring our province remains a place where it is safe and secure is paramount.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to introduce a number of members that are seated in your gallery, of course. And I'll start with Tyler Packham, he's Regina L181 president; Evan Chambers from Regina; Mark Moroz from Regina; Layne Jackson, Regina fire chief; Gord Hewitt, Regina deputy chief; Aaron Dreger, Regina's assistant chief; Brett Kowalyk from Moose Jaw; Jay Protz from Saskatoon Local 80, president; Trevor Warren from Saskatoon; Chris Grasby from Saskatoon; Jayden Poirier from Saskatoon; Greg Garbe from Saskatoon; Chief Morgan Hackl, who is Saskatoon's chief, but not only, was recognized as a National Chief of the Year; Louis Cherpin, who is the president of the Saskatchewan Volunteer Fire Fighters Association; Gillian Morrison, executive director of the Saskatchewan fire fighters association; Shayne LaMontagne, who's the vice-president of labour relations, fire chiefs labour relations committee; Rod Montgomery, labour relations, fire chiefs labour relations committee; and Lindsay Holm, who is labour relations, fire chiefs labour relations committee.

And a special thank you to Lindsay, who is, I believe, in North Battleford and is retiring and made a very special presentation, which I am still kind of shaking over how special that was.

Mr. Speaker, later this day I am going to be introducing

legislation that these gentlemen have lobbied for, for the betterment of their people that they represent. I'll be introducing legislation that goes a long ways to dealing with some of the lobbying that they have put forward in this legislature, and to both opposition and government. And I want to say how professional your lobby has been over the years. I've been through it many, many times, how effective it is. And I think because of it, you'll see that Saskatchewan will be a leader across the nation because of your efforts.

I also want to thank the member seated beside me. He has been the Minister of Labour Relations for 13 years. I have been for two months. I am not worthy to stand in front of you and do all this introduction and recognize the bill when it was the work of my seatmate from Saskatoon Southeast. It was . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Somebody else had trouble with that earlier.

Anyway I want to ask all members to thank these heroes in our midst for all the work that they do, whether it's on the volunteer as a fire chief or as a professional firefighter within our province. Thank you very much. And before I sit down — we're going to recognize them — I have two other introductions to make. So let's recognize our firefighters in Saskatchewan.

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I also would like to introduce Phil Germain, who is the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Workers' Compensation Board, and Gord Dobrowsky — we go back many, many years, Mr. Speaker — who is the chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board. These two have been crucial individuals in making this legislation become a reality for the betterment of Saskatchewan. Thank you two for being here today and celebrating this very, very special day. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to join with the minister in welcoming all of these individuals to their gallery. First the representatives from the Workers' Compensation Board, thank you for your work on behalf of the province, and in particular to all of the members who are here today who serve our province so well, not only for the service that they do but all of the members that they're here representing.

First I'd like to echo what the minister had said, and thank you all for your advocacy on behalf of your membership. I think you will see the fruits of your labour today. As has been already mentioned, very professional advocacy work, something that you have been fighting for on behalf of your membership for a long time. We have helped in amplifying that voice in the opposition.

Very excited to see the government taking that next step and, as had been mentioned in the Throne Speech, becoming leaders in Canada. Very much something that unfortunately is needed. Let's not get that wrong. But we're very happy to see that coverage happen, as had been mentioned in the Throne Speech.

Thank you for the work that you do every single day in keeping us safe. Not just on your behalf, that thanks doesn't go just to you, but we ask that you extend that to everyone, every member that you serve with, every single one of your colleagues. We cannot thank you enough for running to the danger when we are

running away from it.

In particular I also want to give a congratulations to Fire Chief Hackl for his national recognition. Very, very well deserved. We are very well represented in this province by the members in this gallery, and I ask all members in this Chamber to join me once again in welcoming these individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to join in with the members in welcoming this esteemed group to their Assembly today and, as the critic for Health, just also identify how much . . . I know how much work it has been.

And you know, adding presumptive cancers is absolutely not something anyone wants to have to do, but we know that these roles put you at increased risk. And it is good to see this action taking place and doing the right thing here. So I want to join with the members in welcoming this group to their Assembly.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I also want to welcome Michael Sorowski, who is in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, here on his hunger strike. He will be no stranger to this Assembly. I would urge members of the government to take a moment to speak with him while he's here today, and I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these guests to their Assembly today.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Request 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. Wotherspoon: — Thank you. Before I introduce two very special guests here today, I want to just take a moment to say a big thank you to the professional firefighters, the fire chiefs, the paramedics, the volunteer firefighters that have joined us here today. You serve and protect us all in extraordinary ways and take on significant risk and sacrifice personally. And I want to say thank you very much for what you do each and every day.

And I want to say thank you for what you've done for your members and for those that are serving and protecting across Saskatchewan in your advocacy, your voice, your lobby. As the official opposition, we've been proud to join with you in making those calls. We're pleased. We'll see what the legislation looks like here today. But I want to say thank you so very much for all of your leadership and what it means to this province.

There's two folks seated behind them that are constituents of mine: Ella and Morris Eagles. These two folks are the epitome of community leaders. They share with me that the pride of their life

are their two children and eight grandchildren, but they should be recognized as well for all the other ways that they have given back.

Morris was the leader for the welfare rights office in Regina for many, many years, fighting for the most marginalized in the community, Mr. Speaker. Was very active as well with the North Central Community Association throughout their lives, Mr. Speaker, as well as still an active board member on Pine Lodge, working towards the supports for those that are in the grips of addictions and for treatment.

I just want to say thank you to these very fine leaders, to my constituents, and to ask everyone to provide Ella and Morris Eagles a very warm welcome.

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

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too would also like to welcome Ella and Morris Eagles to their Assembly today. Not sure if they recognize me — Lori Wicks.

Morris grew up down the street from me, just a couple doors down, and so I'm very good family friends with his mom and dad. And his sister Sharon still lives in that same house. And I'm very pleased to see you here today, and welcome to your Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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 for the recruitment and retention of pediatric specialists. These citizens wish to bring to our attention that we've lost our only practising pediatric gastroenterologist in Saskatchewan this past spring. And we know that this has left pediatric GI [gastroenterology] patients, very sick kids, to have to leave the province for medical care.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a temporary coverage solution that has been produced by this government. It is not at all adequate for the needs that exist for pediatric GI patients. We need to keep working to recruit a robust pediatric GI team and make sure that we have adequate specialists for our sick kids in Saskatchewan.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully respect that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately recruit an appropriate complement of pediatric GI specialists and adjunct services, and develop a plan to address the service gaps in pediatric specialty fields.

This is signed by individuals from Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. I do so present.

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

Mr. Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present our petition calling on the government to ban conversion therapy. Mr. Speaker, the queer and trans community in Saskatchewan is under attack. The government has openly quoted and used conversion therapy resources in an attempt to justify their pronouns and gendered names legislation that will cause irreparable harm. They have courted known anti-trans experts from the United States who espouse this ideology for use on children.

Mr. Speaker, sadly it would seem in Saskatchewan conversion therapy is alive and well. I have canvassed this thoroughly. Conversion therapy is harmful, has lasting impacts, and is opposed by experts in the field of psychology, and is in fact in direct contravention of *The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code*. The undersigned demand action on this file.

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 ban the practice of conversion therapy and prohibit transportation of youth and adults outside of Saskatchewan for such purposes.

The undersigned live in Bellevue and in Saskatoon. I do so present.

[13:45]

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

Ms. A. Young: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present this petition calling on the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan for the funding of in vitro fertilization treatments, Mr. Speaker.

There's nothing that anyone can do to address the frustration, the consuming love and hope and desperation that so many people in this province feel when they're struggling to conceive to start a family. And with this impacting at least one in six people, I know this has impacted likely people in this room and if not, certainly friends and people that we love who have struggled with this, Mr. Speaker.

And while there's nothing that anyone can do to lessen that emotional toll, we can alleviate that financial burden, Mr. Speaker. There are other provinces that have undertaken to create programs that alleviate that financial burden, Mr. Speaker, and we should invest in people determined to grow their families right here in Saskatchewan.

I'll read the prayer:

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatories of this petition today are from Weyburn, Saskatchewan. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling on the government to improve labour laws in Saskatchewan. Those who have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: that even after the October 1st increase, Saskatchewan's minimum wage will remain the lowest in Canada at \$14 an hour; that the opposition has been calling for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage since 2018 and has also twice 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, paid sick leave has been proven to save employers money, while making workplaces healthier and safer for all workers. Mr. Speaker, also 71 per cent of workers in Canada have experienced workplace violence or harassment, and much more needs to be done to ensure that workplaces in Saskatchewan are harassment free.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Government of Saskatchewan to improve conditions for Saskatchewan workers by passing legislation to increase the minimum wage, guarantee paid sick leave, limit nondisclosure agreements which could silence survivors of workplace harassment, and require employers to track and report incidents of violence and harassment in the workplace.

Those individuals signing this petition today come from Martensville and Saskatoon. I do so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Occupational Therapy Month

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has proclaimed this October Occupational Therapy Month. These qualified individuals provide care for some of Saskatchewan's most vulnerable residents during difficult times, often while in recovery or suffering declining mobility.

Our government realizes the significance that occupational therapists play in our resident's medical journey promoting independence and mobility functions. Since 2007 our supply of occupational therapist positions in Saskatchewan has increased by 75 per cent. Our hope is to attract more qualified professionals to full-time permanent positions often in a hospital, long-term care homes, and community-based settings.

That is why our government has invested nearly \$100 million in our four-point health human resources action plan that aims to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain more valuable health care professionals like occupational therapists to Saskatchewan.

Last year we purchased 10 additional training seats for occupational therapists, expanding the total amount available to

Saskatchewan residents to 50. During an occupational therapist's schooling our government provides support through the clinical placement bursaries program to assist our residents with their final years of education. I hope that everyone can take a moment this month to say thank you to an occupational therapist. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hudson Bay Teacher Receives Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour one of our province's finest young teachers, Kara Fidelack. Originally from Watrous, Kara is a teacher at Hudson Bay Community School. And, Mr. Speaker, she's a very good one, so good in fact, Mr. Speaker, that this year she was a recipient of the Certificate of Achievement at the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence. And listening to Kara describe her teaching style, it's so clear that she loves her work and her students.

She works hard to engage her learners and to foster creativity and curiosity in young learners, and she adapts her lessons to the learning style of each of her students, often using play-based centres. She celebrates every child's interests and their personal growth. And what she's doing, Mr. Speaker, is instilling a lifelong love of learning. She's teaching her students to love learning which will serve them well throughout their schooling and their life.

Mr. Speaker, at a difficult time for teachers across this province, when they're strained past their limits, we continue to hear stories like this of teachers going above and beyond for their students every day.

And I ask all members to join me in offering heartfelt congratulations and a sincere thank you to Kara Fidelack, one of Canada's finest teachers.

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

Unity Lions Club Contributions to Community

Mr. Domotor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Unity Lions Club, which is currently sitting at 22 members, has been instrumental in the development of paved pathways around the town of Unity. The town of Unity, the Unity Wildlife Federation, the former Unity Kinsmen Club, the Unity Credit Union, and private donors have all contributed to this success story. In 2023 a total of more than \$100,000 has been put into path upgrades. The paths will continue to be a huge part of the club's legacy into the future.

The Lions Club continues to make other notable contributions to their community, including an annual scholarship and bursary at the Unity Composite High School grad. Club members are gatekeepers at community events and hosts of children's activities at Canada Day festivities held at the museum. The Lions Club was also instrumental in helping to fund the Unity Credit Union Aquatic Centre.

The service club celebrated their 70th anniversary in 2017. The Lions Club motto simply states the following: "we serve." And they certainly do stand by their motto over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the Unity Lions Club members, the town of Unity, any and all businesses and personal donations that have contributed to the paved pathways that help to make Unity a great place to work, play, and raise a family. Thank you.

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

Current and Previous Government's Handling of Health Facilities

Ms. Conway: — Ladies and gentlemen, gather around for a spine-tingling tale of political trick — not treat — perfect for Halloween. The Sask Party government has resurrected its old and tired talking point about NDP [New Democratic Party] hospital closures again and again and again in last week's Throne Speech. And then yesterday the member from Kindersley's shot fired.

So let's shine our lantern on the truth and dispel this ghastly ghost story once and for all. Picture this: a Sask Party government, in its quest to distract from its failures and hold on to power at all costs, spins a chilling yarn about the NDP closing 52 rural hospitals. But beware, because the reality couldn't be further from their terrifying tale they like to tell.

Still reeling after being plunged into near-bankruptcy by Grant Devine, the NDP modernized health care services in 1993 by transitioning acute services to health centres in smaller communities across Saskatchewan.

Today all but one of these communities has a dedicated health centre — that is, when it's not experiencing closures or disruptions under the Sask Party government. And one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years later, not one acute care hospital reopened under their watch.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve a government that will move beyond the distraction politics that haunt Saskatchewan under this government. Our province deserves leaders who value truth over spin, honesty over distraction, treats over tricks. Happy Halloween.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Melfort 222's Fastball Story

Mr. Goudy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in the '60s, a Melfort fastball coach named his team after a pain medication of the day in honour of the headaches received turning that young players into a winning team, and thus the 222's were born. Some of his players followed suit in the '80s, taking local kids from playing tenny ball in the south side tennis courts and turned a ragtag crew into a multi-year national fastball championship team with a spot in Saskatchewan's Sports Hall of Fame.

Today the 222 name is still alive, having grown outside of

Melfort and spread across North America. Our coach's son and world-class pitcher, Dean Holoien, and second baseman, Keith Mackintosh, have taken the name and inspired a third generation of 2's.

Chances are if your daughter plays competitive fastball in Saskatchewan and wants to play college fastball in the United States, they will know the name of the '60s headache medication. To date hundreds of girls in this province have worn the 222's jersey, benefiting from the life lessons learned of teamwork while representing Saskatchewan across North America. Many of those parents and players have gone on to receive scholarships to play in the US [United States] and received character-building challenges of competitive sport.

So in honour of our 222's coaches, Doug and the Holoien crew, third-generation Dean and Keith, and the countless other coaches like our member from Gardiner Park, men and women who invest themselves into the next generation, thank you for the many kids and parents who benefit from your sacrifice and investment in the lives of the next generation. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Covenant Energy Investing in New Biodiesel Refinery

Ms. C. Young: — Logistics, proximity to feedstock, labour, a business-friendly city, Saskatchewan's investment opportunities and business environment led Covenant Energy to choose the border city to build a \$900 million renewable diesel refinery. Covenant Energy will produce biodiesel and jet fuel by converting processed canola oil and other sustainable feedstock with a capacity of 9,000 barrels per day.

CEO Josh Gustafson recognized benefits of the area, such as access to both CP [Canadian Pacific Railway] and CN rail and the proximity to feedstock crushers. They have purchased 134 acres in the northeast quadrant of the city on the Saskatchewan side. Construction will begin mid-2024 and be completed in 2026. The project will create hundreds of local jobs during construction and 60 full-time jobs through the two-year build-out. This is a flagship project for Saskatchewan.

The renewable fuel can be blended in with any fossil fuel product. It will produce hydrogen-derived renewable diesel using state-of-the-art technology that burns more completely than fossil diesel while reducing up to 80 per cent emissions. It will also produce Arctic-grade renewable diesel, usable down to minus 40 Celsius along with sustainable aviation fuel. Saskatchewan is always open for business.

I ask all members to help me welcome and thank Covenant Energy for their foresight and choosing Lloydminster for such a major and significant investment.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Jansen Potash Mine Expansion

Mr. D. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan continues to be the premier destination for investment in Canada. BHP has just approved a plan to invest \$6.4 billion in stage 2 of its Jansen potash mine, which will double capacity by the end of the decade.

Once complete the mine will produce 8.5 million tonnes per year. This follows BHP's approved \$12.4 billion investments for the Jansen project, making it the largest mining investment in Saskatchewan's history.

The impact of this expansion on our province's economy cannot be overstated. The \$6.4 billion investment will have a ripple effect throughout our economy. The second stage of the project is expected to create more than 2,000 construction jobs and more than 300 full-time Saskatchewan-based jobs once production begins. Our potash industry accounts for approximately 30 per cent of the world's production, and directly employs nearly 6,000 people.

Mr. Speaker, I quote Mr. Ragnar Udd, BHP Americas president, "The approval of Jansen stage 2 is an exciting next step in our growth plans for Canada that reinforces our confidence in potash and our optimism in Canada as an investment destination." Our government is very proud to continue to partner with BHP on these projects. BHP has a track record of responsible and sustainable mining practices.

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I would like to thank BHP for their billions dollars invested in and continued confidence in our province. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Access to Cancer Diagnostic Services

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government is failing to deliver on things of critical importance to Saskatchewan people. And today we're joined by Ella and Morris Eagles. Ella needed a specialized CT [computerized tomography] scan called a PET [positron emission tomography] scan to screen for possible cancer, but because of short-staffing and a lack of supplies, her appointment was delayed in September. And right now she's waiting three to four weeks for a biopsy.

[14:00]

What does the Premier have to say to people like Ella and Morris, who can't get the cancer screening when they need it, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — I'd say this is a government that is committed to making significant investments, not only in attracting, training, incentivizing people to come here to work in our health care system — and that includes in the cancer care and in the diagnostics that we have here — but also investing in the very capital investment that is needed to increase the number of diagnostic opportunities that we have here, Mr. Speaker.

An investment in Melfort in years gone by; an investment alongside it would be a private diagnostic centre that will be available in our urgent care centre that is being built in partnership with Ahtakakoop Cree Nation in Saskatoon are just but a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker.

But in saying that, there's more to do here, across Canada and more to do in the province of Saskatchewan, when it comes to continuing to invest in our cancer care, and continuing to invest most certainly, Mr. Speaker, in all of the infrastructure and ultimately the people that are involved in detecting that cancer at ever earlier opportunities today than maybe we were 5, 10, and 15 years ago.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, Morris and Ella heard the words that no one ever wants to hear from their doctor: we need to order some additional tests because we're concerned it might be cancer. Thousands of people like the Eagles get put onto waiting lists for critical diagnostic scans every year in this province and, Mr. Speaker, those wait-lists are growing under that government's watch.

Does the Premier think that it's acceptable that Ella had to wait longer and longer to hear back about such a critical diagnosis in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — No. No, Mr. Speaker. Our family has been among those many thousands of families that have received a very similar diagnosis. And you cannot get to your points of care soon enough upon having that diagnosis, Mr. Speaker, and finding your way through the treatment programs that we have.

And that's why this government is committed, committed to investing not only in the people. And we've talked many times on the floor of this legislature about the health human resource plan that we have in attracting health professionals to work in our communities, wherever that may be, and that includes in our cancer care, Mr. Speaker. It includes in the diagnostic services that are available in our communities.

That's why you've seen this government expand on previous programs that were available for a small number of groups in the province, Mr. Speaker, in the way of procuring publicly paid private diagnostics here in the province. And I think as we look ahead, there's more opportunity for that type of investment to ensure that we are expanding the diagnostics that are available to all Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, for whatever the reason might be.

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

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, we know that health care workers in this province are doing their very best. And they know that when there's a shortage of staffing or when equipment breaks that it has impacts on Saskatchewan patients in terrible ways.

In an email that was sent to Morris, a senior leader in medical imaging at the RUH [Royal University Hospital] said, and I quote, "It weighs heavily on all of us here when we are unable to provide this service." Mr. Speaker, the writer also goes on to quote:

I've already authorized overtime in September and throughout November and October to attempt to catch up, but with only one scanner and only a limited number of

specialized techs to run it, we also must be concerned about overworking and burning out the staff.

Mr. Speaker, there are many impacts. The staff are doing their best and they're compassionate and they want to provide care. When will the minister make sure that they have the staff, Mr. Speaker, and the equipment that they need to be able to deliver their jobs?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, having the staff and having the equipment — whether that be the equipment in our publicly . . . all publicly funded, but publicly operated diagnostic services that we have, or in the publicly funded private diagnostic services — most certainly is a focus and a commitment that this government has made, to the tune of increasing by over 100 per cent, since we've had the honour to form government, the investment in our diagnostics.

Multiple more locations available, Mr. Speaker, as well as expanding the number of people that are offering services in those locations. In '07-08, that budget was \$4 million. Last year it was \$160 million. The most recently delivered budget had another \$7 million increase to ensure that the funding is there to go alongside with the health human resource plan that we have to attract and retain medical professionals across the medical system, including in our diagnostics facilities, Mr. Speaker, and to ensure that we have more diagnostic opportunities for patients today than we did yesterday, than we did last year, than we have throughout time in this province.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, if it was working we wouldn't have people coming to this legislature to tell this government otherwise. Ella and Morris aren't the only ones who need access to this important scanner. People across our province need quick access to it so they can diagnose and track certain cancers and get quick access to treatment.

The PET machine at the RUH is the only one in the province and when it stops working, everyone in Saskatchewan has to go without. This machine requires a special radioactive serum to function and the SHA's [Saskatchewan Health Authority] machine for creating that serum broke down.

When this happened the government should have acted quickly to get more of the essential serum. Calgary and Edmonton both have facilities that produce it, but the government didn't reach out to purchase any. Why not? And how is the minister going to make sure that this doesn't happen again?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to begin by apologizing and saying to Ella and Morris that this is not acceptable. I'm sorry to hear that there's been a delay in your treatment and care as a result of this.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has indicated and as the member opposite also indicated as well, there was in September a

multiple-day disruption at the Saskatchewan centre for cyclotron services — where they produce the isotopes for the PET scans — due to an unexpected and unanticipated equipment failure, Mr. Speaker.

To mitigate impact to patient care with the resources we have and the staff that we do have, the cyclotron has been adding additional production cycles and is operating outside its regular hours in order to be able to keep up, Mr. Speaker. And we remain committed as a government to ensuring that we're doing everything we can to make sure that this is happening so that we could catch up on any backlogs and make sure we get ahead of this and be better prepared. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, there's an eerie trend with this government. They are not fixing the problems with medical diagnostics. When the machine in Saskatoon was down, Ella and Morris asked if they could go to Calgary, but the Sask Party wouldn't cover the cost.

That delay in getting a PET scan has caused a delay in getting a biopsy and continued uncertainty for their family, who's in the dark right now. It all adds to a backlog that grows worse and worse, and there are no solutions coming from this government on big picture challenges. This isn't unique to PET scans or the Eagles family. It's a system-wide problem.

What's the plan to fix the backlog of diagnostic tests that people need when there's a chance they might have cancer and are facing down the most stressful moment in their life?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and absolutely this government takes this issue very seriously. And I have had the opportunity recently, as recently as yesterday and a couple of weeks ago, and will have additional meetings coming up here, as an example, with patients and women across Saskatchewan who are dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis or a potential breast cancer diagnosis.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that we currently have some unacceptable wait times when it comes to breast biopsies due specifically, here in Regina, to a shortage of specially trained radiologists that specialize in this particular field.

I met yesterday morning with the CEO of the SHA, the CEO of the health recruitment agency, and the CEO of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to indicate and ask them that everything be on the table when it comes to not only filling those vacancies but what else can we do here in the immediate short term to build capacity and add capacity with the resources we currently have in the system to be able to catch up on these backlogs and get the women of Saskatchewan the biopsies that they need, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, there are serious problems of

understaffing in our health care system, and diagnostic specialties have been hit hard under this government. We're paying top dollar to bring in contract radiologists to try to fill in the gaps, but this is costly and no long-term solution. Meanwhile Saskatchewan people are languishing on wait-lists, living with uncertainty and fear.

This government is failing when it comes to timely cancer diagnosis, and the people of this province deserve so much better. When will they admit that their health human resources plan isn't working?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to increase and add funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the work that they do in providing cancer services right across this province. In this year's budget, \$222 million to strengthen and support cancer services. In '22-23 the Cancer Agency delivered services to over 8,100 new patients and provided over 70,000 appointments.

In the area of breast biopsies, Mr. Speaker, I can report that they have been, despite some of the struggles here in Regina . . . And again this is a priority for government to get these vacancies filled whether . . . And again right now we are using temporarily locums to be able to provide that service as much as we can while we recruit as quickly as possible permanent, full-time radiologists into these positions, Mr. Speaker.

We are doing and conducting more breast biopsies. In the calendar year of 2019, roughly 1,200 biopsies done in the province; in the first six months of this year, just over 1,000. So, Mr. Speaker, working to catch up and to get, again as I said earlier, the women of Saskatchewan the biopsies they need as quickly as possible.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, Morris is a constituent of mine and a remarkable community leader. And he's been a tireless advocate pushing this government to act and get this service restored and to get the care his loved one Ella deserves and the care that so many others deserve.

Let me be clear. They drove from Regina to Saskatoon for this service to arrive and find out that it was shut down and to have no answer. I called that minister, reached out right away. There was no support and no plan for Ella and Morris and so many others waiting for this diagnostic.

What's the minister's plan to make sure this never happens again and to make sure people like my constituents, Morris and Ella, won't have to wait to get the diagnostic care they need when their lives are at stake?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Hindley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in a previous answer, it's unacceptable what happened in this particular case, and I will ask our officials to follow up to ensure that steps are taken to mitigate if this should happen again. With

respect to this, Mr. Speaker, we would not want this to happen again.

Mr. Speaker, again as I said previously, we do take this issue very seriously. So in follow-up to some other conversations that I have had — with senior leadership in the SHA, with the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, with the Ministry of Health, and with other areas of health care where we may be experiencing some staffing challenges right now, Mr. Speaker, which are not unique to just Saskatchewan — we have conversations within government.

I have had with the Minister of Advanced Education about additional training opportunities here in the short and medium term as well, to look at what we can do to help complement those services, Mr. Speaker. But again, nothing is off the table when it comes to doing what we can and looking at all options to be able to address these challenges as we currently face them, Mr. Speaker.

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

Sales Tax and the Provincial Economy

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this tired and out-of-touch government is failing folks like Ella and Morris on health care. And they're totally failing to deliver when it comes to the cost of living.

This government is making families pay \$1,608 more in PST [provincial sales tax] and utilities from each and every household year after year. And this year this government is bringing in \$2.7 billion in PST from Saskatchewan people, more than double the take in 2016 — \$1.5 billion more. They're flush with cash from the largest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history, but there's no relief for Saskatchewan people.

How does this government justify doubling the take on PST but doing nothing for families?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — There is a lot in the preamble of that have-no-plan NDP member quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, but there is also some creativity in their numbers. And so let's just say that almost half of the NDP math on this increase — when he says that costs are up 1,600 for Saskatchewan families — almost half of that math comes from the cost of a phone bill.

But the NDP are comparing the cost of a landline telephone in 2016 to a 50-gigabyte cell wireless plan in 2023. They are not comparing a landline in 2016 to 2023. But if they did, they would see that the cost was up zero, Mr. Speaker.

You'd think that they would be able to find an advisor that knew something about the history of, I don't know, SaskTel — how about SaskTel? — that could have clarified that for them before they got creative with their math.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Bit of a dodge there. Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion in PST was what was collected before the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history. Now it's \$2.7 billion, Mr. Speaker. All spin from that tired and out-of-touch government.

There's so much they could be doing and should be doing to provide relief for families. They could be rolling back the PST that they added to things like kids' clothes, used cars, food, and restaurant meals. They could be offering relief on power bills that they've increased three times in just the last year. The list of options is long.

But the list of relief from that Sask Party government, well it's pretty short, Mr. Speaker. Why is this tired and out-of-touch government denying Saskatchewan people the cost-of-living relief they so desperately deserve?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the have-no-plan NDP quite frankly just get more and more creative. You know, they just assume if PST revenue is higher, it's because PST is higher. Not necessarily, Mr. Speaker. How about there's more people living in the province spending money, paying PST, the highest population this province has ever had.

How about there's more economic activity happening in the province which pays PST, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. The economic activity in this province means that we are collecting more PST. But let's just think, back in the day of the NDP, a family of four would have paid about \$5,000 in provincial tax. Today they pay less than 2,000. That's \$3,000 per year, each and every year, for that family of four from when the NDP were in government. That is savings each and every year, and it's indexed to cushion it from inflation, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — All spin from that minister, but the facts, you know, the second-worst economic record in Canada under that Premier, Mr. Speaker, and the biggest tax hike in Saskatchewan's history. The measures the current government has brought forward in this Throne Speech, well they're narrow and they don't help the vast majority of families. The minister, the Premier, they know that. And the Sask Party knows it's long past time for some provincial relief on cost of living and the many, many hikes imposed by that government.

You know, we stood yesterday united in this Assembly calling for home heating fairness, but it's time for that Sask Party government to look in the mirror. When will they offer some cost-of-living relief on some of the measures and hikes that they have driven up the cost of living in such an awful way for Saskatchewan families?

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

Hon. Mr. J. Harrison: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about economic growth in Saskatchewan. Let's talk about population growth in Saskatchewan — 30,000 increase just last year alone. During their entire 16 years in government, what did the

population do? It declined, Mr. Speaker. We have more people working in this province than we have ever had before. Over the last year, nearly 14,000 more people working in Saskatchewan.

And let's talk about something that never would have happened under the NDP that we found out about today: a \$6.4 billion announcement from BHP Billiton going to phase 2 of 4 of their Jansen Lake mine, Mr. Speaker. Nearly \$20 billion has been committed thus far by BHP to this project, something that never would have happened under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to work with companies like BHP, companies like Nutrien, companies like Mosaic in our mining sector, energy companies that are making record investments as we go forward.

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

Contract Negotiations with Teachers

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, when it comes to teacher bargaining, this new Minister of Education doesn't bargain on the floor. He doesn't bargain at the table. But he does bargain on billboards, Mr. Speaker. This summer his ministry put up billboards across the province, trying to convince people that our teachers only want a bigger pay bump. The STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] itself said the ads were "misleading and ridiculous."

And now we find out that billboard campaign has cost taxpayers \$145,000 and counting. To the minister: why did he think it was appropriate to spend \$145,000 of public money on a misleading public campaign attacking teachers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, in regards to that question, I'd like to just bring some facts to the conversation here. Number one, our teachers in this province who do incredible work all across our province in community after community after community, Mr. Speaker, they're compensated about on par with the Western Canadian average. Number two, we have put forward a fair offer for teachers and we're ready to bargain, but we're only going to bargain at the table, not on the floor of this Assembly.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the third fact of the day is that it was the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation that walked away from the bargaining table. Mr. Speaker, we want a fair deal for teachers to provide predictability for students, for families, and for teachers, but it's hard to bargain when you're alone at the table.

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

Mr. Love: — Mr. Speaker, there's a test coming up for that minister. If he believes in the facts he just presented, then he's welcome to show up outside his office this Saturday when teachers assemble to educate him on the facts. We'll see if he passes that test. I'll sum up their concerns for that minister. Teachers are dealing with a record increase in enrolment, increase in classroom complexity, and funding that comes nowhere near keeping up with inflation.

They've asked the minister for help because that's his job. That minister has refused their demands. He put up billboards attacking them, and he's allowed the education crisis to worsen. How can the member opposite call himself the Minister of Education, when all he is capable of doing is disrespecting teachers and aggravating that crisis?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, as much as I love 100th Street in North Battleford, that's not where we bargain deals. We're at the bargaining table. We're ready to discuss what we believe is a fair deal for teachers, Mr. Speaker, and we would invite the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and their members back to the table to continue bargaining, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about investment in education, you know, it's important to add more facts to this conversation. Mr. Speaker, those members opposite, they had a chance in government. They were government for 16 years. What did they do when it came to schools? They closed them. They closed them in Lang. They closed them in Saskatoon. They closed them in Regina. 176 schools in this province closed by the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what's important to remember is we've got 17 school projects across the province under way right now; since 2007 \$2.4 billion of capital invested into education. This is a government that has invested in education and will continue to do so.

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

Mental Health Services for Youth

Mr. Teed: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've heard the Education minister say that he thinks there are ample supports for LGBTQ+ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, plus] youth impacted by this government's legislation but we know that that's simply not the case.

This is legislation that uses the notwithstanding clause to take away the rights of vulnerable kids. We've asked the government, what's their plan to increase those mental health supports and make sure that LGBTQ+ youth who are already at increased risk of suicide will get the supports that they need? But there's zero action from this government.

We all remember the story of Sarah Mackenzie who lost her child Bee to suicide. When will we see a real plan to give LGBTQ+ kids the mental health supports that they need to stay alive?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to reject part of the premise of that question. What we put forward in the policy and the legislation that we passed just last week in this House, Mr. Speaker, that's an inclusionary policy. It's a policy to ensure that parents are involved in their child's education. And as I pointed out numerous times on the floor of this House, it's a policy that was already largely in place, in

practice or in policy, across school divisions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to supports, with the \$20 million that we added in June for classroom complexity, over 260 positions were added in school divisions all across the province. We talk about the mental health capacity-building initiative that we have through the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker. We have that in a number of school divisions right now. And I know the ministers of Health are working on expanding that to more school divisions all across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've also spoken at length in this House about rapid access counselling. It's available in 30 communities all across the province for adults, Mr. Speaker, and we've added it for children, youth now in 13 communities. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 138 — *The Workers' Compensation (Extending Firefighter Coverage) Amendment Act, 2023*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour Relations and public safety.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 138, *The Workers' Compensation (Extending Firefighter Coverage) Amendment Act, 2023* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety that Bill No. 138 be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Principal Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

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

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by the Hon. Mr. Morgan, seconded by Mr. B. McLeod, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Ms. Conway.]

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

Mr. Fiaz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I resume my

response from yesterday. Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the NDP legacy. Closing schools and hospitals, Mr. Speaker. Enormous harm to our economy, education, and health system, Mr. Speaker, compared to what we're building and we are protecting. We are building schools. We are building hospitals, Mr. Speaker. And one of the schools I would like to mention and highlight that's in my constituency, Regina Pasqua, Harbour Landing west joint-use school we are building, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan continues to build a strong economy, Mr. Speaker, despite our economic growth facing threats like global instability, inflation, and high interest rates. One of the biggest threats is our own federal government, Mr. Speaker. And that is not only the threat to our economy, the Saskatchewan NDP is also a threat to our economy, Mr. Speaker, since they strongly support the carbon tax. And the carbon tax increases the cost of everything we produce, manufacture, and transport, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, the piece of bread rises in price, and it is then . . . They do not have the right to blame that's affordability and all that.

Mr. Speaker, these new federal regulations, they'll kill thousands of jobs and devastate our resource sector. Mr. Speaker, federal government overreach will have an adverse effect on our health system, education system and, of course, our businesses and economy, which ultimately affect people's quality of life.

This is what we are protecting, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the reasons we passed *The Saskatchewan First Act* to defend Saskatchewan's economic potential and provincial autonomy from federal government overreach. Despite all these obstacles, our economic growth is on track.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, the other day the member from Saskatoon Eastview said, and I quote, "We all celebrate this growth." Mr. Speaker, yes, we are growing our economy and the population is increasing day by day by day.

Yesterday we had the Sask Polytechnic reception here in this building. I had the chance to meet a few of the officials from Sask Polytechnic. And one of the deans, Has Malik, was speaking, too. And he mentioned this: that he moved from Ontario in 2018 to Saskatchewan, and at that time only 200 international students used to be in Sask Polytechnic. And now we have 3,199 international students, and we added 60 more countries to have students from. And only that, Mr. Speaker, their graduation rate is 95 per cent plus, and employment is also 90 per cent plus, Mr. Speaker. And the most important is that retention and people being employed and living in Saskatchewan is more than 95 per cent. That's why it is called building relationships while investing here in Saskatchewan and protecting it.

1.4 million people living in Saskatchewan by 2030 — that's a promise, Mr. Speaker. Private capital investment of 16 billion annually in 2030. Now in 2030, capital investment reached \$13.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. Agri-food exports of 20 billion annually. In 2022, Saskatchewan agriculture exports hit \$18.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. So we have already achieved many goals in the 2030 growth plan well ahead of time.

Saskatchewan feeds the world, Mr. Speaker, blessed with one of

the best agricultural land. Irrigation can protect future crop production. Since 2020, over 34,000 acres have been irrigated in Saskatchewan. The 2030 growth plan has a target of irrigation, an additional 8,500 acres per day. Saskatchewan has been almost double their target this year: 15,000 new irrigable acres and on track to meet its 2030 target, Mr. Speaker.

Our province is blessed with an abundance of natural resources, and our government will ensure Saskatchewan remains at the forefront of opportunities. The critical minerals strategy is putting Saskatchewan on the path to lead the country in mining exploration and development.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is about building and protecting, and we are building and protecting our economy, our investments, our health system, and our education system. We are building interprovincial and international relationships, Mr. Speaker, and we are protecting our values and our rights. Our values, Mr. Speaker, that this nation spent hundreds of years to set these rich values, our rich economic values and social values and our family values. We are protecting our rights of mining and use of our lands. We are protecting the rights of all Saskatchewanian minorities and majorities, LGBTQ+, students, teachers, and parents' rights, Mr. Speaker. We value all these rights, Mr. Speaker.

I support the Speech from the Throne and stand on guard for these values, Mr. Speaker. And I do not support the amendment. God bless Saskatchewan. God bless Canada.

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

Mr. Skoropad: — Good guy. Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute privilege to share some thoughts, make some remarks regarding the Speech from the Throne that we heard read by the Lieutenant Governor last week.

Since that time we've heard some vastly different speeches given in this House to that same Throne Speech, and we've also seen vastly different perceptions of Saskatchewan. One, Mr. Speaker, that supports the Throne Speech. One that reflects a place that, quite frankly, people want to live, people want to move to, and people want to call home.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen another perception. One that vehemently disagrees with the Throne Speech, and one with a perception of Saskatchewan that is a place from which people would and should flee. The good news is, Mr. Speaker, while that may have been the prevailing attitude so many years ago, it clearly not is the attitude of the Saskatchewan we know here today. As noted in the Throne Speech, over the course of the past 16 years since we've had the honour to form government, we have unwaveringly worked to build a province, to build a home that we are proud to call home.

And I am so proud to call Saskatchewan and Arm River home. I am so proud and humbled to represent the people of Arm River, Mr. Speaker, honoured to come to know and be welcomed by its many communities.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency is amazing. Actually in particular, the people of my constituency are amazing. The people of Arm River have certainly opened their doors in welcoming me to meet

with them in town halls and legion halls, RM [rural municipality] offices, kitchen tables, Mr. Speaker. They've invited me to play hockey — to the chagrin of my wife — and they have invited me to play golf and baseball and horseshoes and pickleball and curl and all those wonderful things. And they have found a place for me in trade fairs, community festivals, and parades, and even the odd dunk tank.

Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely so blessed to represent the people of Arm River. These are good people. These are salt-of-the-earth people. Whether you refer to Nokomis or Eyebrow or Bethune or Kenaston or Jansen or Tugaske, you're referring to amazing people, Mr. Speaker. These are people that I think of when I reflect on the message of this year's Throne Speech. Preserving, improving, building, and supporting — these are words that mean something to and for the people that I represent, people that I will continue to work hard to serve.

But speaking of hard work, Mr. Speaker, I need to specifically take a moment to acknowledge a couple of hard-working people in Arm River, and they are my two constituency assistants, Lavonne and Katie. And both of these ladies are certainly filled with positivity, enthusiasm, and caring, and they do feel more like family than they do CAs [constituency assistant]. And they're absolutely the best. And, Mr. Speaker, proof that they are the best is that they have put up with me for three long years and they continue to smile. So they are absolutely the best, and I am truly a fortunate MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to have stumbled upon these two, Mr. Speaker.

But fortunate is certainly how I would describe myself when I consider my own family. And why they kind of still like me, I will never figure out but I really don't care. The fact remains that they do, and I am not going to take it for granted. But we've got some big changes in the Skoropad household these days, Mr. Speaker. Terrill moved schools this fall. She now works at St. Mary School, as a student support teacher, in Moose Jaw. And she's always up for a new challenge; case in point, she married me.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will say, the moment she realized that she was moving schools, she put herself to task, created an environment in her room, something that was going to be inviting and something that's going to be inspiring and motivating and support students. And maybe she should have hired the member from Melfort, because he knows a lot about construction, but she missed the boat on that one. The next move, I'll make sure we give him a call. I'll have to grab his card.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly, certainly look forward to her in her new challenge in her professional career. And that said, Terrill continues to be my rock and my anchor, and I am so blessed to have her in my life. And you know, we just celebrated our 23rd anniversary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I can't imagine someone actually not recalling how many years they've been married. I just can't even imagine that would happen to certainly nobody in this House, I'm quite sure. We take our relationships and those special moments very, very seriously in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As for the boys, we now have two more driver's licences in the family. One is a learner's, but the other is the full-meal deal now, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that I am certainly the luckiest person

in this Chamber, if not the planet. I really do.

Noah and Sol are just amazing. They are unique, though, from each other. But in their own ways they are each so amazing. One the spender, Mr. Speaker, one is the spender; one's the saver. Actually I went to him for a loan here the other day. He's got reasonable interest rates, so I'm okay with that. And the other is a fisherman, and the other gets his fishing groove on in the summertime. But both, Mr. Speaker, are young men that are filled with conviction and integrity and work ethic. They both fight like brothers, Mr. Speaker, but they also both love like brothers. And so we couldn't be happier with these two.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's funny how Noah and Sol have, as they get older, they learn to appreciate all things retro. Well for them it's retro; for me it's just the way it was. And you know the boys will often ask me about musicians and often ask me about rock bands and TV shows and movies and automobiles and all things that are new to them but really faded almost from my memory.

And they'll also quiz me, Mr. Speaker, as to what was life like when I was their age, when I was dating their mom, and other girls too. I hope my wife's not watching this right now. Honey, forget that. It's just you we talk about. Or what life was like when my children were born. They ask me about that.

And it was during one of these conversations, Mr. Speaker, about what life was like when they were born that I had an epiphany. And this epiphany went like this. I thought, my goodness sakes, my children were born under a Sask Party government. My son who's driving now, when he was born, the Sask Party, we had been in government. And so for them, as with others their age and others new to this province, for the past 16 years, they know nothing other than a Sask Party government. And this is a point, Mr. Speaker, that I do not make lightly.

Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that I disagree with much of what is said on that other side of the House, but last week there was something said that I really couldn't agree more with. In her remarks regarding the Throne Speech, a member opposite stated emphatically something to the effect of, the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's crucial for Noah and Sol, in fact all residents of Saskatchewan, to understand our past, realize our present, and to see our future.

Before entering politics, I did spend some time in the classroom. Actually I think it was last year we had a class here, one of the classes that I had taught. And I loved teaching. In particular I loved teaching history class. History just fascinates me. And you know, over the course of time, you get to know members on this side, actually both sides, but on this side. And the member for Batoche, he and I have something in common. We both have a love of Winston Churchill. And something Churchill said that really resonates with me: those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech presented last week encapsulates where we have come from, where we are, and where we are going as a province. And it reaffirms our commitment to protect the interests of all Saskatchewanians. Mr. Speaker, there are more Saskatchewanians living here than ever before.

Little bit of a history lesson: 16 years ago there was an NDP government in this province that scoffed at the concept of surpassing and sustaining over a million people in this province. But since November 7th, 2007, when we were given the opportunity to form government, we have seen steady growth. And in particular we have seen unprecedented growth in recent times.

This past year alone, as been stated a number of times in this House, over 30,000 people have made this place their home, Saskatchewan home. Mr. Speaker, what I'm saying is that this province grew by nearly an entire Moose Jaw over the course of the last 12 months. And what I am saying is this province grew by the size of a Chamberlain almost every single day last year. And what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is the NDP's vision for this province was and still is wrong.

Population is not the only thing growing in this province these days, Mr. Speaker. So too is our economy. Saskatchewan's economy led the nation last year and is slated to do it again. This is a vastly different reality from the narrative told by the other side, a narrative that describes our economy as a dumpster fire. To all the business leaders out there, be them small, medium, or large, this is emphatically not our position but theirs.

[14:45]

Ours is one that is proud of our economy and the direction it's headed, proud of the private investments, investments like the one we heard today — BHP investing another \$6.4 billion right here in this province, Mr. Speaker, the world's largest mining company with their largest investment right here in Saskatchewan.

And we're proud of our entrepreneurs, Mr. Skoropad . . . I withdraw and apologize for that on so many levels. And I will never refer to our Saskatchewan economy, Mr. Speaker, or any of the businesses that comprise it as a dumpster fire or any other thing that might reside in a dumpster.

Mr. Speaker, as was noted in the Throne Speech, Saskatchewan is an export economy. Our province has the food, fuel, and fertilizer that the world needs. You could probably add forestry to that mix as well. But, Mr. Speaker, it is the intangible asset that sets us apart. That asset is our reputation. The Saskatchewan brand of high quality, secure, and sustainable products is recognized globally.

We will continue to promote our Saskatchewan industries and products at every opportunity. Our Saskatchewan story, Mr. Speaker, is a compelling one and one we will continue to share through our nine international trade offices and strengthen with the introduction of our investment attraction strategy.

Saskatchewan holds the solution to challenges facing the world, Mr. Speaker. In a world that is growing by a population the size of Saskatchewan each and every week, it is incumbent upon us to provide more Saskatchewan to the world. In a world that is concerned with emissions, Mr. Speaker, it is incumbent upon us to provide more of Saskatchewan's sustainable products to the world. Because Saskatchewan, unlike what members opposite might feel, Saskatchewan is not the problem. We are the solution, Mr. Speaker.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, as we continue to provide the world with what it needs, we must also serve to protect our economic potential. And we will continue to build and protect Saskatchewan's reputation at home and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, past behaviour is a great predictor of future behaviour. Since forming government, we put to action our belief in the province by investing nearly \$66 billion in a place that we love. But, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look a little more specifically at some past and present behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, we have and continue to invest in education. Since 2007 we have invested in 60 new or replacement schools and 30 major school renovations. We have launched Saskatchewan Distance Learning Corporation to provide opportunities for students right across this province. And today in Saskatchewan there are more teachers, EAs [educational assistant], and student support staff working in schools than was the case in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind everyone of members' opposite past in education when they were in government. The number of teachers decreased by 400 in their last six years of government, and that side, as government, closed 176 schools. Mr. Speaker, history is neither good nor bad. It just is what it is. And I will tell you this: 176 schools. That's what it was, and that's what it is.

Mr. Speaker, health care is a priority for members on this side. We have and continue to make significant investments into Saskatchewan's health care system. Mr. Speaker, prior to 2007 the new hospitals in Humboldt, in Moosomin, North Battleford, Moose Jaw, and the children's hospital in Saskatoon, well I'll tell you what. They simply didn't exist, nor did the lengthy lists of integrated facilities and long-term care centres right across this province.

Under the NDP government, Mr. Speaker, their behaviour was quite the opposite. History plainly documents that their vision, their vision was to close health facilities. In fact they closed 52 of them. Well members opposite like to call this truth a tale, a yarn. We like to call it what it is, a fact.

Our investments in health go well beyond bricks and mortar. We have and will continue to invest in the people that bring us that care. Today there are 1,000 more doctors, 5,000 more nurses practising in Saskatchewan than was the case under the NDP. Mr. Speaker, in terms of numbers, we have an additional city of Humboldt of doctors and nurses working in this province today. We continue to work to expand our human resources in that area, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, since 2007 we have been committed to making life more affordable for the people of Saskatchewan. In addition to \$2 billion in annualized affordability measures, we have the second-lowest utilities bundle, as has been pointed out a number of times in this House. We have quadrupled the senior income support plan, removed 112,000 people from the provincial tax roll, and introduced a new Saskatchewan employment incentive program. And we'll be doing that this fall.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said previously in this Chamber, the highways and roads in this province are the veins and arteries that provide life to this province. To that end, since 2007 we have repaired or improved nearly 20 000 kilometres — or equal to half

of the earth's circumference — of the roadways in this province, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency of Arm River, in recent years we have seen improvements to highways 2, 6, 11, 16, 20, 42, 44, 219, and most recently Highway 15 east of Kenaston.

Vision and belief, Mr. Speaker, vision and belief in a province bursting with promise doesn't advise residents to go out and fix their own potholes. No, Mr. Speaker, it invests in infrastructure critical for growth.

This summer, Mr. Speaker, I had the good fortune to spend some time at one of my favourite places on the planet that of the shores of Lake Diefenbaker, touring a new residential development under construction. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the views are absolutely stunning here. And as the individual properties are being built, so too is the important work of securing the shoreline, important work to protect the homes from the wind and the waves and the erosion, to protect the dreams of those who chose to build something special at this spectacular location.

Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech outlines our intent to protect the shoreline of Saskatchewan and protect what we collectively have strived so hard to build and continue building, be it the Sask first Act, Mr. Speaker, which rip-raps the shoreline of our resource economy against encroaching waves of an unpredictable federal government, or Saskatchewan jobs plan, set on to protect economic growth this province has seen by recruiting, training, and retaining a highly skilled workforce.

We are steadfast in our commitment to building and protecting our Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, it goes much deeper than this. We are committed to building and protecting because we care for those with greatest need. We build and protect so that we can better assist those with mental health challenges, Mr. Speaker. We build and protect so that we can better help those gripped with a life of addictions. Here 500 new addictions spaces are important steps in the battle to take back our loved ones.

We build and protect so that we can better support families. And the creation of additional child care spaces — in fact, 2,500 more additional child care spaces in the coming months — is welcome support for parents.

In my own constituency, Central Butte and Raymore both have recently opened child care facilities. A little over a month ago, I attended a sod-turning in Outlook for a significant expansion of the Small Steps Early Learning Centre, and presently Davidson and Bethune are in the planning stages of their own centres.

Mr. Speaker, it stands without saying our greatest asset though is our people, the people that have chosen to plant roots here, whether it be a fourth generation or the first of many to come. Whether you're 8 or you're 88, you are our greatest resource. There's optimism and opportunity that continues to grow in Saskatchewan, and one need not look very hard to find it.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan truly is a special place. Just ask the owners of Twisted Sisters ice cream shop, a young couple from Ukraine who almost two years ago chose to invest in this small town called Chamberlain and are now an integral part of the fabric of that community, my community. Or ask the brand new owners of Folkster's restaurant in Chamberlain, owners that came just a little bit down the way from India to chase and follow

and fulfill their dream and make it a reality. Or just ask the owner of the Spruce Lane potato company why he decided to expand his potato business in a big way in the Broderick area, Mr. Speaker.

There are stories like these right across this great province, stories that inspire, stories that embody the hope, the optimism, and the opportunity that lives right here in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, it's for these stories and so much more that we must continue to build and protect our province and the quality of life of our people. And it is for these reasons that I will be supporting the motion to move the Throne Speech.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Cockrill: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to get up and speak in this House and an honour to speak on this Throne Speech which was presented here in the House by the Lieutenant Governor last week.

Before I get started speaking specifically to the Speech from the Throne, I just have a few people I'd like to thank. You know, number one, Mr. Speaker, my family. And I was able to introduce my wife and son here in the House last week. And you know, I couldn't do this job without them. But also, I mean, Meagan's extended family, my whole extended family, just a key support network. I often say, Mr. Speaker, in this job the highs are higher and the lows are lower than in any other job I've ever had before. And it's on those low days that your family plays the most important role for sure.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the two ladies that I get to work with in North Battleford in my constituency office. Gail and Claudette play such an important role in serving the people of The Battlefords and doing so in a way that is respectful and resourceful, Mr. Speaker, looking for opportunities to help people even if it's not a provincial issue necessarily, Mr. Speaker. We aim to help people find the help they need, and certainly those two ladies are at the tip of the spear on that one.

You know, I'd also like to just quickly thank my staff in my ministerial office here. Again, you know, when you switch portfolios . . . I should also pay some thank you to the staff that I got to work with in the Ministry of Highways. They were a fantastic team that the new minister gets to work with.

But I get to meet and work with a whole new set of people. And so, you know, every day now I get to work with Holly and Amy and Mitch and Aaron and Daphne, and really fantastic work. Mitch is actually from The Battlefords, so it's really nice to work with someone in my office from the town that I get to represent.

You know, we are though . . . Today's the last day of Daphne being in our office, which is kind of sad. But we're excited for Daphne, because for those members of the House, Daphne's going to be the new Leslie MacLeod. So you're going to get to see a lot of Daphne's name on news releases every single day and every single week. So we wish Daphne the best in her new role starting tomorrow.

I'd also like to thank my caucus colleagues and the Premier. You know, it is a real pleasure to work with these folks each and every single day. You know, when I served as the Minister of

Highways and Minister Responsible for Water Security Agency, I got an opportunity to travel all over the province and get a little window into many of my colleagues' constituencies and regions of the province. And that was such a rewarding experience, Mr. Speaker, and one that I certainly treasured, and it helped me get to know my colleagues a little better too.

And I can say that I've certainly appreciated my colleagues' support over the last several weeks through our special session and into this session as well. There's just a fantastic team we have over here on the government benches, Mr. Speaker.

You know, and I'll just like to pay a special tribute to the member from Arm River who spoke right before me. And you know, a number of our members are choosing not to re-offer again in 2024, and we're going to miss all of them, Mr. Speaker. But I could just say I'm going to in particular miss my colleague from Arm River. I've had a lot of opportunity to travel in his constituency with him, and I'm kind of jealous that I don't have Lake Diefenbaker in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, to be quite honest. It's a beautiful area, and I've sure enjoyed working with him and will enjoy working with him for the next year here before the next election.

[15:00]

So, Mr. Speaker, when we get to the heart of the Throne Speech, the "Build and Protect," you know, you don't have to get very far into the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, to come across a very interesting statistic. And that is, since 2007 we've got 200,000 more people in this province — and I happen to be one of them, Mr. Speaker — people that have come here because of the opportunity that we have in this province, people that have come here, you know, for a whole variety of reasons. But more and more people every single year are recognizing that this is not just a place to be from; it's actually the place to be. And those are people from elsewhere in Canada like myself. Those are people from other countries, Mr. Speaker. And it's really exciting to see our province grow and change.

You know, and I think it's really important for us today at the end of October 2023, but it's going to be really . . . it's going to be even more important a year from now, in October 2024, to ask, why is that? Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why do we have 200,000 more people in this province over the last 16 years than we did before? Why did the last 16 years see the population decline, Mr. Speaker, and yet we've seen it increase, the fastest population growth, Mr. Speaker, in over a century? That's going to be a question that I think all of us should ponder and really think about.

And so, you know, when it comes to that question, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important to understand what has been built in this province over the last 16 years. You know, I've mentioned it before, but over the last 16 years, \$66 billion of capital investment has been put into this province — hospitals, schools, highways — Mr. Speaker, incredible capital investment that really our province has never seen before, Mr. Speaker. And I would say in a number of those areas, Mr. Speaker, we're just getting started. There is exciting stuff on the horizon for this province.

But that \$66 billion, Mr. Speaker, that's just government

investment. That's just public investment. You know, woke up to exciting news today. I know the Minister for Trade and Export Development referenced it today in question period, but seeing the world's largest mining company, BHP, announce their investment decision on stage 2 of Jansen. Mr. Speaker, that's an incredible investment — \$6.4 billion just on stage 2, which brings BHP's total capital commitment to Saskatchewan somewhere in the neighbourhood of 18, 19, \$20 billion.

Think about that, Mr. Speaker. As a government, we've put in \$66 billion of capital investment over the last 16 years, and now we have the world's largest mining company making their largest investment in their history, Mr. Speaker, right here in the province.

So when we have that combination of public investment and private investment, that's what's fuelling the growth in this province. That's what's fuelling the population growth. That's what's fuelling the fact that we have jobs available, incredible opportunities for our young people and next generation, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, it's not just BHP, Mr. Speaker. We know that companies — Cameco, Nutrien, NexGen, and many others — are making significant investments or significant expansions in our province, Mr. Speaker. Those are good jobs, Mr. Speaker. Those are good jobs in Saskatoon, in Regina. Those are good jobs in Bethune, Mr. Speaker. Those are good jobs all across the North especially, Mr. Speaker. Really exciting for our province.

So if we look at that capital record, \$66 billion I said over the last 16 years, \$2.4 billion of that is specifically in education capital. You know, and I've had the opportunity a few times in the last couple weeks to stand on my feet in question period and offer some facts to the House, Mr. Speaker, you know, in terms of this government's record on education capital as opposed to the NDP's record on education capital, Mr. Speaker. But it really can't be, I mean it can't be avoided. I mean . . . The record, I mean again, the NDP closing 176 schools, you know, working out to every month they were in government, one school closed, Mr. Speaker. That math doesn't even, it doesn't even compute, Mr. Speaker, when you think about it. You know, nine schools closed in Regina. Three schools closed in Saskatoon. One in Lang, Mr. Speaker, you know.

But, Mr. Speaker, compare that to what we've been able to do, Mr. Speaker, investing that \$2.4 billion in education capital. You know, Saskatoon we've got 11 new or replacement schools, five major renovation projects that we've completed. In Regina, 14 new or replacement schools and two major renovation projects completed.

You know, Mr. Speaker, and I've said it before, but we've got 17 major school projects under way right now. Major projects. These aren't, you know . . . This isn't just, you know, replacing an HVAC [heating, ventilating, and air conditioning] unit, Mr. Speaker, or repaving a parking lot, Mr. Speaker. These are major changes that are creating better spaces for our teachers to work in, Mr. Speaker, for our young people to learn in, Mr. Speaker, to grow and develop their skills, and really get ready for the opportunities that our province has for them, Mr. Speaker. Seventeen projects, Mr. Speaker. I mean that's an incredible number and something that shouldn't be lost. I think about that.

That's almost a new school a month, if you want to think about it that way, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when we think about capital investment in the province . . . again all politics is local, Mr. Speaker. And I often drive around my community of The Battlefords and look at the things that have been built in the last 16 years. And wow, the changes in my community, the changes in our northwest region, Mr. Speaker, it's encouraging.

Mr. Speaker, obviously, you know, the flagship investment in our community, an investment that the NDP talked about and talked about for years and never got done, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Hospital — \$400 million investment, Mr. Speaker, a key psychiatric hospital in our province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was elected in 2020 and due to the pandemic I hadn't been able to tour through the Saskatchewan Hospital until this summer. And now the Minister of Health and I had the opportunity this last summer to tour the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford. What an incredible facility. What a gem of a facility for those people who may be our family members, our neighbours, you know, who are dealing with mental challenges, psychiatric challenges. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, they've got an incredible facility to go to in The Battlefords. And you know, really for our community, it's a major employment driver as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think about . . . You know, from the Saskatchewan Hospital you look out towards the southwest and you see another capital investment that we have just recently contributed to, the North Saskatchewan River truss bridge. Mr. Speaker, you know, an ICIP [Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program] project, so federal-municipal-provincial contributions, but really restoring an important pedestrian link between Battleford and North Battleford, Mr. Speaker. Can't understate the importance, the local importance of that project, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I think about the wastewater upgrades that the province has been able to contribute to in the town of Battleford and, again, expanding economic . . . the business growth opportunity, the residential growth opportunity in our community, Mr. Speaker. That's very important and something that does not go unnoticed.

Mr. Speaker, I talked earlier about highways, and the member from Arm River said it, in the last . . . Since 2007 our government has built or improved or upgraded nearly 20 000 kilometres of highways in the province. That's a lot of kilometres, Mr. Speaker. You know, when I think about specifically some of the work that's been done around The Battlefords, you know, I think through . . . It was my predecessor, the previous member from The Battlefords who was a key part in advocating for the upgrade on Highway 4 through the stretch of the town of Battleford. You know, Mr. Speaker, we still, locally we refer to the intersection of Highway 4 and 40 as "the four-way." But, Mr. Speaker, that's because it used to be two lanes through the town, Mr. Speaker, and stop signs there. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's this government that upgraded that. It's four lanes through the town of Battleford, Mr. Speaker. We've got a lot of traffic moving through there. And there's stop lights now, Mr. Speaker, at that intersection of Highway 4 and 40. And that's a busy intersection when we look at all the agricultural traffic moving through there, Mr. Speaker.

That's an important upgrade.

Mr. Speaker, something that I think almost everyone in our community notices are the passing lanes on Highway 4 North between North Battleford and the lakes, Mr. Speaker. And you know, there's been people in our community who have lost family members on that stretch. It's a busy stretch, especially in the summer months, Mr. Speaker. There's a heavy amount of forestry-related traffic coming from Meadow Lake down to the CN transload facility in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker. And when it was two lanes, Mr. Speaker, it was a zoo, Mr. Speaker. I'll leave it at that.

But over the last several years, passing lanes have been added, really improving the safety, and various intersection improvements as well, Mr. Speaker, you know, to add turning lanes, you know, at Highway 378, and the Iffley-Hatherleigh road, and the turnoff to Metinota, Mr. Speaker. And it has really made that stretch a lot safer, Mr. Speaker. And that's an improvement specifically that I think almost everybody in my community recognizes because we all love to go up to the lake or go up north. And certainly that highway has been very important.

And also I'll just say once you get to the lake, to The Battlefords Provincial Park, just last year we completed a major repaving project replacing nearly all the roads within the provincial park as well as a number of roads and parking lots in the campgrounds and by the service centre, Mr. Speaker. And again, that's a very busy provincial park. Our provincial park system has been growing in terms of visits significantly. And it used to be a fairly bumpy road in there, Mr. Speaker, but not anymore. It is a beautiful, well-paved stretch there in Battlefords Provincial Park.

Mr. Speaker, we also, you know, I talked about education capital. We've got a significant . . . One of those big projects under way right now is actually a major renovation to John Paul II Collegiate. And you know, we so appreciate working with Light of Christ Catholic school division on that project. We're committed to seeing that project through and get done. And I've had an opportunity to walk through the site a couple of times during construction and I can't wait until we are there at the ribbon cutting and can open a brand new . . . you know, a renovated facility, pardon me, Mr. Speaker, for the students in the Catholic division in The Battlefords. It's going to be a fantastic space.

Another piece, you know, we talked about Saskatchewan Hospital earlier. It was really exciting in last year's budget, because again this is something that I know I had been hearing from my community and been thinking about since I was elected in 2020. We have Battleford District Care Centre again in the town of Battleford, Mr. Speaker. It's actually the oldest building in the province providing patient care, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, our SaskBuilds staff have really, and Ministry of Health staff have done an admirable job over the last several years in terms of maintaining the building and keeping it in as good of a condition as possible, Mr. Speaker. But we know it's time for a replacement, and so planning dollars were announced in last year's budget. That commitment was renewed in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. And about a hundred-bed facility in our town that serves a wide region of people and look forward

to continuing that project and seeing that facility replaced, Mr. Speaker.

You know, others have mentioned it, but roughly 1,500 more staff in our schools since '07. Roughly 1,000 more doctors, Mr. Speaker. Roughly 5,000 more nurses in our province in the last 16 years. That is significant, Mr. Speaker. Those are professionals in all of our communities all across the province that are now here to support the growing province.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, we talked about buildings. We talked about people. But I think what's been built, Mr. Speaker, more important than any of those things is the mentality of this province.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I didn't grow up here, but I have family members who did. I've spoken with my colleagues who did grow up here, Mr. Speaker. What has changed in this province, it's a different mentality. It's a different place. It's an expectation, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to be successful, that we are going to grow here, that there will be an opportunity for our children and grandchildren in this province. And that wasn't always the case here, Mr. Speaker, especially under an NDP government, you know.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've thrown a lot of numbers out. But the other night I was actually watching one of my favourite speeches that I've heard in this building since I was elected. It was the portrait unveiling of the former premier Brad Wall, and you know, I would encourage all members to go back and watch it again. I found it a very impactful speech, titled "Not Likely," and you know, just a beautiful depiction of how this province evolved when the Saskatchewan Party came to government. But you know, Mr. Speaker, he had a line in there the other night that I kind of chuckled at. You know, he said, statistics are no match for faith, hope, and love. And I think when I talk about the mentality in this province, Mr. Speaker, that's what's changed.

And again, Mr. Speaker, that's what we need to protect. We need to protect the fact that people in this province now grow up expecting to be successful, expecting to have an opportunity, expecting that this is going to be the place that they can raise their families and get a good opportunity and continue building this province, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

You know, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about all the additional health care workers in our province, I've been really encouraged to see the results of our health human resources action plan really come to fruition in communities all across the province. But I've been really encouraged by the progress in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. Due to those incentives that the ministers of Health have worked so diligently on getting in place and ensuring that are available, we've filled over 30 positions in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker.

You know, that's really important for a regional hospital of our size at Battlefords Union Hospital. That is really fantastic news, Mr. Speaker. You know, it feels like every week or two I hear about another health care worker coming to our community, which is really encouraging to hear. And at the end of the day, that's good for my family. That's good for the other families in

my community to ensure that the care is there when they need it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was also really encouraged in this Throne Speech to see our nursing loan forgiveness program extended to a number of communities, but including North Battleford as well. And again as the Minister of Advanced Education works to expand nursing training seats around the province, you know, if there's a student that goes into a nursing program and needs student loans to finish, Mr. Speaker, that loan forgiveness program is available for them — forgiveness up to \$20,000 over five years. And that's on top of programs like the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker, which have been so key. That's on top of the other incentive programs that we have, Mr. Speaker. We're really excited about that.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take too much more time, but I do have a few more things to say. You know, when we talked about protecting the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, I'm lucky enough . . . we're lucky enough in The Battlefords that we have the largest RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachment in the province in our community, Mr. Speaker. We have some fantastic men and women who serve every day keeping our community safe, keeping our region safe, Mr. Speaker.

And it was really an exciting day to have the Premier join me at the end of September up in The Battlefords as we announced that the former SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] store in downtown North Battleford is . . . We're working on a leasing agreement with "F" Division here in Regina to ensure that there's more space available for the additional RCMP resources that have been added to The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker.

And there have been additional resources added to The Battlefords. We talk about investments on the PACT [police and crisis team] team that we've made over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker, a really important service now offered between the SHA and the RCMP.

I think about the crime reduction team. You know, we now have a second crime reduction team. We're in the process of setting up that second crime reduction team in The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. And when it comes to ensuring that criminals are apprehended and that criminals face the consequences of their actions, Mr. Speaker, those RCMP crime reduction teams are really a key part in making sure that we get those guys and we get illicit drugs, we get weapons off our streets, Mr. Speaker. And you know, again I have to thank the men and women of the local RCMP detachment really for the fantastic work that they do, and we're excited to support them by leasing this additional building.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I talked about the opportunities that we have in this province, and that's really, I think, what we have to protect. We have to protect the opportunities that we have. And you know, last fall when we were here, we passed *The Saskatchewan First Act*. And really in this session we look forward to referring a number of these harmful federal policies that are out there, Mr. Speaker, to the economic tribunal that will be set up under *The Saskatchewan First Act*: the clean fuel standards, the clean electricity regulations, the oil and gas emissions cap. Mr. Speaker, these are federal policies that will have damaging effects on this province's economy.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Lloydminster got up today and talked about a new, exciting project in the Lloydminster region. You know, it's going to be increasingly challenging for investments like that to be made as the federal government continues to make increasingly predatory policies that seem to be targeted at Western Canada, Mr. Speaker. And really that's what this is about, Mr. Speaker, protecting the opportunities that we've had the good fortune of building over the last 16 years for the people of this province.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, when you want to protect something, it's usually because you're proud of it. You're proud of your community. You're proud of the industries that support the people in your community. You're proud that we produce oil and gas in this province. Absolutely we are, Mr. Speaker. We're proud on this side of the House that we have men and women that work every single day to produce some of the most sustainable, sustainably produced oil and gas in the world.

And we hear members opposite that have no interest in supporting that. Mr. Speaker, I invite them to my community. That's not what people in my community want to hear because we're proud of the industries in this province, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of what we produce, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan and we're proud of how we produce it. That's what is important in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We're proud of the people in this province. We're proud of the people that do that work every single day, Mr. Speaker. We're proud to wear a poppy. We're proud to fly our flag, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud to support this motion. God bless Saskatchewan. God bless Canada. God save the King.

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

Ms. Ritchie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so proud to be on my feet here this afternoon entering into debate on this Throne Speech. And before I get into my substantive comments, I want to take a moment to thank the people that support me in the work that I do here in the Legislative Assembly, the constituents in my home constituency of Saskatoon Nutana, who I am so proud to represent on their behalf, bringing forward their concerns, their interests, so that they can be represented on the debates that matter and the motions that are before the floor here in their legislature.

I had the opportunity yesterday to introduce my constituency assistant, Kerry Schaefer. She was here in your gallery watching the proceedings, and I can't say enough about how thankful I am for the excellent work that she does in our constituency office, dealing with the caseload, the case work that comes in, dealing with issues around access to social supports and utility cut-offs, access to health care, and the like. And so, you know, it's vital work. She manages it with a high degree of professionalism and dedication. And I honestly don't know where I would be without her and the work that she does on behalf of our community. And so a big thank you to Kerry.

Also supporting Kerry in our constituency office for the past several months has been McGinnis Reeve. She's come on as a casual CA doing special projects and I am so grateful for her work. She's young and enthusiastic. She's full of enthusiasm.

She comes in after having completed her Masters in political science, and so with great knowledge and understanding of policy development and its effect here in Saskatchewan. And so she too has been a great addition to our office, and I've been just so happy to have her these last several months contributing to the work in my office.

I also want to take a moment to thank those of my constituency executive, the people that help me on the party side. Recently we had a change of leadership. I want to give a special thank you to Graham Mitchell, who has moved on in his career and relocated to Moose Jaw and a great position there. And I just want to thank him for all of his good work supporting the work in our constituency executive office.

And also to now welcome Lorraine Salt as our new constituency president, and just so grateful for the work that she has done for so many years, both running our fundraisers, acting as secretary, and also on provincial council, and now moving in to act as our president for the next term, ably supported by the rest of the executive, Tim Hutchinson, Brenda Baergen, and others. And I just want to give them a big shout-out of gratitude and thanks for all the work that they do to support our membership in Nutana — obviously a very robust, active membership, and one that I look to to offer guidance and advice and understand where their priorities lie — and just say what a supreme honour it is to represent the people of Saskatoon Nutana.

And I really cherished, especially this past summer, those opportunities to be out on the doorstep this past spring, summer, and into the fall, listening to my constituents and hearing their concerns. I heard so many stories about, you know, the failures and the challenges in accessing health care, about surgeries that were long waited for and then cancelled at the last minute. I heard stories of people being rushed through surgical procedures almost like they were on an assembly line, lacking in any adequate post-operative care, treatment, and support, you know, and observing a health care system that is deeply, deeply in crisis.

And we see how on the government side, you know, there's massive efforts under way to, you know, make a perception that everything's fine — nothing to see here, everything's fine on the health care front — when the reality is anything but. And I heard those stories on the doorstep time after time after time about those challenges.

But of course that wasn't all that I heard. A lot of concern over the manufactured moral panic around the ability of youth, vulnerable youth to be able to identify their pronouns, change their name, and how that represented misplaced priorities by this government.

And I mean it was just with absolute shock and dismay when we learned that later on that not only were they going to double down on pronoun policy, but this government was going to take that nuclear option and introduce a bill, call an emergency session, use the notwithstanding clause to ram through a bill on the flimsiest of evidence, you know, a mere . . . What was it? Seventeen people that were consulted? Oh, my . . .

An Hon. Member: — Eighteen, seven of which were parents.

Ms. Ritchie: — Right, right. Eighteen. My mistake. And of

which eight were actually parents. Well let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you I spoke to more than eight parents this summer on the doorstep in just Saskatoon Nutana alone that vehemently disagreed with that policy that, you know, are concerned about the high numbers of children in their children's classroom, about the lack of supports. The erosion of supports year after year after year under the watch of this government as they've cut back on educational funding, on per-student funding, to bringing our education system to the breaking point, to the point where we now have a 95 per cent support by the teachers across this province for action to be taken during these bargaining that are currently under way — 95 per cent.

Ninety per cent of teachers voted to achieve that level of unanimity by our teachers, further displaying the crisis that has been going on in our classroom that has been affecting parents and students, not only in my constituency of Saskatoon Nutana, but right straight across. And I find it interesting to note that the member for . . . Oh gosh. Which one was it? Skoropad.

An Hon. Member: — Arm River.

Ms. Ritchie: — Arm River. Thank you. Thank you so much. The member for Arm River.

[15:30]

I think it was him who was just recently saying that, you know, his children, you know, have really known nothing but a Sask Party government. And I just pity, pity those poor children that have had to endure, you know, an education system undercut, underfunded by this government.

And I say that with all sincerity. You know, my own children, thank God, you know, they saw the early days but thankfully they escaped and all graduated before, you know, the worst of it was to come.

And you know, it's something that I seriously and sincerely lament is the underfunding of our education system here in Saskatchewan. Something that we used to be very proud of, something that as you will all, you know, should recall that I had spoken on before and said that, you know, education is a value that on this side of the Assembly, we prioritize and understand the importance of, as an investment, how it contributes to our future success as a province.

And how I think every single one of us can also attest the difference that a strong, viable education system has made in their life. You know, having that teacher that was able to take the time to help them at a particularly difficult point in their education, whether it was with math or, you know, social challenges, issues on the playground, you know, in sciences, you name it.

But when you have a system that is chronically underfunded and you've got more than 30-plus students and lack of resources, that special attention can't be afforded. And it just breaks my heart to think about how our students are being failed, utterly failed by this government. And so it is no surprise that I heard that on the doorstep from my constituents time after time after time this past summer when I was engaging with my constituents.

So you know, it's a question of misplaced priorities. You know, we've got a government that called an emergency session to violate Charter-protected rights of vulnerable children with no evidence, no engagement. And I have to say I'm so proud of my team here on this side to go for 40 hours on that bill from 9 o'clock in the morning until 11 o'clock at night and really show the people of Saskatchewan, you know, who is ready to govern and who has the right priorities to see Saskatchewan into the future.

Not that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. Not the side that wants to, you know, dredge up, you know, fantasies and moral panic from south of the border, but a Saskatchewan NDP government represented on this side who understands the priorities of health care, of cost of living, of education, supports for mental health and addictions, homelessness. And I could go on, and I think I will. I'm not sure I know how much time I've got to do that, but we'll see. We'll see.

We talk about, you know, most recently about closing care homes and staffing shortages in hospitals and moving to, you know, virtual emergency care in the town of Radville. I mean there's just so many instances where this government is failing the people of Saskatchewan.

I got a note last week telling me that the anesthesiologist in Swift Current is out of commission right now. You know, they're without an anesthesiologist. I mean how on earth are they going to be able to provide operative care without that? You know, it's just example after example of real, real issues that, I mean, I'd be happy to sit here and debate all day long about, as opposed to, you know, a manufactured crisis around pronouns as a form of distraction by this government, to distract from their record and misplace that focus on things that are anything but a priority here.

You know, we see it in the most . . . I mean how bizarre — how bizarre — that this government would see the need to bring in a bill on poppies. I mean I don't want to get ahead of myself here. We'll, I'm sure, get to that debate soon enough. And I'm proud, don't get me wrong, I'm proud to wear my poppy, but really? A bill on the right to wear a poppy? And again, like, where's the evidence that this is actually an issue? You know, the government side has been unable to give any evidence or explanation as to why that bill's been brought forward, you know. Another case of missed priorities.

And that's what I'm hearing on the doorstep, is that people are frustrated. They're frustrated that they can't access health care, that their children's needs aren't being made in the schools. And you know, it's also reflected in the events that I had the great fortune to participate in over the last number of months since we were last in session in the springtime.

I think about the tour to École canadienne-française elementary that we took last June with the member from Saskatoon Eastview, member from Saskatoon Meewasin, member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre, and alongside of members from the government side — two members — those from Saskatoon Riversdale and Saskatoon northeast.

You know, we toured the school. We saw the gaping holes in the roof and, you know, the buckets and the plastic to redirect the waters, the crowded classrooms, the gymnasium that's too small,

the crowded playground, the daycare in the basement. I mean, my God, you know, they're stuffed into this school that's over a hundred years old with a roof that's leaking and so many other challenges, you know, begging for their students to have a proper, proper school, proper facilities.

And a call that they've been making, they had 200 parents sign a petition begging for those repairs and for those needs to be addressed, but no emergency session on that. No, that wasn't a priority. No emergency there. And yet there we were, debating in emergency session on pronouns and attacking the rights of vulnerable children.

I had the opportunity to also attend the convocation at the University of Saskatchewan. And I'm so proud of our graduates from our post-secondary institutions that are going to be able to be contributing members of our society. And you know, that's the investment that I'm so proud of, is in people. So whether it's in our community-based organizations supporting people that way, supporting people in the health care system, advanced ed, primary education, that's when we're our strongest and that's what we need to build and protect.

I wish I had more time to, you know, talk about the Throne Speech and all of the community outreach that I had such a privilege to undertake these past number of months, you know, whether it was in my critic areas, community-based events in my constituency of Saskatoon Nutana — the Fringe Festival, Broadway Street Fair, Saskatoon folk festival, Ukrainian Day in the Park, the YXE pancake breakfast, Wanuskewin National Indigenous Peoples Day, the Inclusion Breakfast, the Labour Day picnic that was sponsored by the SDLC [Saskatoon and District Labour Council].

But one that I do want to highlight in the few remaining minutes that I have is a tour that I was so happy to take with one of our newest members from Regina Walsh Acres up to the Cumberland river delta back in September to see the challenges. And when I think we talk about protecting, and protecting my resources, and I can't think of anything more precious than water and the need to protect that. And to go up to the Saskatchewan River Delta and see the massive devastation that is occurring there because of a lack of water and a lack of policy by this government to ensure that our ecosystems are protected and that our communities are protected.

And you know, it was only a couple weeks after I had returned that the community called a state of emergency. Their water supply was almost gone and there had been no communication from the Water Security Agency, from SaskPower to notify the community in dealing with that emerging crisis until they called that state of emergency. Just an absolute travesty that a community would have to get to that extent of a dire situation before government would step in and help them out.

And then further to that, you know, when they had reached out to me and I said, okay, well I'm going to look into this for you. I'm going to submit some written questions on your behalf. We'll get to the bottom of this. We'll find out what's going on. And when I did that, five legislative days later I get told that my questions have been commuted 180 days. This is a crisis, emergency situation, and they punted my questions out 180 days in an emergency. Such a shameful situation. Such a shameful

misplacement of priorities by this government.

You know, and so I know my time is up. And I do want to say that there is much more to be said and I wish I had time for it, but I will not be supporting this Throne Speech. I will be supporting the amendment moved by the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre and seconded by the member from Regina Rosemont amending the motion to read:

That the Assembly does not support the agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne because it fails to include adequate measures to address the cost-of-living crisis and the health care crisis the people of Saskatchewan are facing; and that further,

That the Assembly has lost confidence in the government.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin today by thanking my wife, Cheryl. Not only does she have a full-time career in health care, she is managing the day-to-day on our ranch while I'm away from home. I must also acknowledge there are some disagreements with the way things run when I do get home. Thankfully the disagreements in the pastures and corrals are not carried back home. Just a reminder to everyone here: you cannot hurt my feelings because I have worked cattle with Cheryl. Cheryl, thank you for everything you do.

Supporting his mom while I'm away, and especially supporting his dad when I am home or away is our youngest son, Thomas. Thomas, thanks for all your help and support. I would also like to say a thanks to the rest of the kids and their spouses. All our kids managed to find, fall in love, and marry their soulmates: Sarah, her husband Jeremy; Claire and her husband, Christian; Jill and her husband, Chris; Carla and her husband, Mark; Miles and his wife, Kayla. I also need to mention our wonderful grandkids: Ava, James, Owen, Blake, Madison and Ty. Miles and Kayla will also be welcoming their second child, our seventh grandchild, in March of 2024.

[15:45]

If I'd known grandkids were so much fun, I would have definitely had them first. It's the best when they gather around and want grandpa to read them a story. My stories usually begin with the big, bad NDP. I mean, sorry, I mean the big, bad wolf although there are some similarities — huffing and puffing and blowing hot air. To be serious, our kids and our grandkids are a huge part of why I'm in politics. I want to make this province better for them than it was under the NDP when I was growing up.

I never, never want to go back to the way it was under the NDP. Under the NDP people were leaving, leaving in droves, leaving searching for opportunities — opportunities for careers; places to live, work, and play; places to raise a family. Those NDP days were the days where families were encouraging their kids to leave and seek a better life. Those NDP days when a grade 12 graduation gift was a set of luggage and tearful parents helping their children pack in search of a new, brighter future outside of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is no longer the wee little province that former

premier Calvert boasted about. Saskatchewan is no longer the place to be from; it is the place to be. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has grown more than 200,000 people since 2007. In the past year alone, more than 30,000 people have called Saskatchewan home, the largest population growth in more than a century. As part of our Saskatchewan growth plan, we will be home to 1.4 million people living here by 2030. That's growth that is fuelling Saskatchewan's economy.

When the Sask Party was given the privilege to govern in 2007, do you know how many schools the NDP government had scheduled or planned to be built? Zero. Zero, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They had no plans for growth, no plans for building Saskatchewan. NDP premier Lorne Calvert's dream of keeping Saskatchewan a wee little province is now shattered, thankfully.

Mr. Speaker, since taking office in 2007, we have been building Saskatchewan with almost \$66 billion invested in our province: 60 new schools, 30 major school renovations; 35 major health projects completed, under construction, or in planning, including new hospitals, long-term care facilities, and urgent care centres; investment in post-secondary infrastructure; investment in parks and highways across the province; Crown corporation investment of over \$22 billion, including the expansion of wireless service to more than 99 per cent of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we announced the Jim Pattison Children's Hospital here in Saskatoon, there was some doubt that we could get it built. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to getting things done and something as important as a children's hospital, we knew we could get it done. Today it is a shining example of the top-notch health care we provide to Saskatchewan residents.

With additional facilities comes a need for additional health care staff. Since 2007 we have 1,000 more doctors and 5,000 more nurses practising right here in Saskatchewan. I am proud to say, Cheryl and I have a daughter working in the children's hospital, and our daughter is extremely proud to be working there too. Such a great facility providing quality care for Saskatchewan.

While surgeries were delayed and surgical wait times increased during COVID, in 2023 Saskatchewan surgeons have performed more than 24,000 surgeries in the first three months of this year. This is the largest number of surgeries performed in any three-month period. The surgical system is on track to eliminate the backlog and will return to pre-pandemic wait-lists by March 31st, 2024.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when talking about health care, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the arrival of STARS. Shock Trauma Air Rescue Service arrived in 2012, providing scene call and inter-facility transfer services across the province, an invaluable service that we have all come to rely on. Truly a life-saving service operated by the best trained professional staff anywhere. In fact one day after STARS launched in Saskatchewan, the first call was to Arcola, a community near my hometown.

Today STARS continues to provide their exceptional service to the people of this province, and I want to thank them for this life-saving service. After more than 10 years in operation, I cannot imagine Saskatchewan without STARS.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan has what the world needs. We have the food, fuel, and fertilizer, and we grow and produce it better and more sustainable than anywhere else in the world.

As part of the growth plan, by 2030 we aim to have \$16 billion in private capital investment annually. In 2023 we reached \$13.2 billion.

Agri-food exports in 2022 were \$18.2 billion, the second-largest on record. By 2030 we will have our agri-food exports reach or exceed our goal of \$20 billion annually.

While 2030 is still six years away, we have already surpassed our 2030 goals of increasing the value of exports by 50 per cent, and actually have increased it by over 70 per cent. Doubling meat processing and animal feed value-added revenue to more than a billion dollars — this was exceeded in 2021 with total revenue of \$1.1 billion. Increasing the value of manufacturing exports by 50 per cent, I'm pleased to say that exports have been steadily increasing and have also exceeded this 50 per cent target increase.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, build and protect. To build export opportunities and protect our economy, we have opened trade offices in nine countries: Vietnam, the United Kingdom, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Mexico, Germany, India, Japan, and China. These trade offices are necessary as we've been unable to rely on the federal government to promote our Saskatchewan products abroad.

To further promote our province, our Premier will be joining the Saskatchewan companies at the COP28 [Conference of the Parties 28] conference in the United Arab Emirates later this year. This will be a tremendous opportunity to promote sustainable Saskatchewan products and build and protect our export markets by providing the environmentally friendly goods and commodities the world is seeking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will introduce our new Saskatchewan job plan to recruit, train, and retain a highly skilled work force as part of our growth plan goal to create 100,000 new jobs in the province. A strong economy creates new job opportunities and careers.

Addressing the labour shortage in health care: increasing training seats and ensuring internationally educated professionals can have their credentials recognized in Saskatchewan.

Expand employment, educational and training opportunities for Indigenous people, particularly in natural resource sectors. Create opportunities for young people, new entrants to the work force by tailoring training and education opportunities to meet the needs of our communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture remains the spinal cord of the province. Although our farmers and ranchers have had mixed results in 2023 — severe drought in some parts while others produce record crops — overall our agriculture industry posted a third consecutive record year of agri-food exports in 2022, and this year is shaping up to set more records. January to June, agriculture exports are over \$10 billion, up 35 per cent from 2022.

We are very proud of our agriculture producers. They continue to be leaders in sustainable agricultural practices. However from time to time, producers face some challenges, challenges beyond their control, and we stand with them when they need assistance. Saskatchewan crop insurance average coverage has increased to a record of \$446 per acre in 2023. And SCIC [Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation] is forecasting to deliver over \$1.6 billion in payouts this year alone.

We are also supplying \$70 million to help offset extraordinary costs of feeding livestock and help maintain the breeding herd. Build and protect agriculture producers. I want to thank our farmers and ranchers for all the hard work, the blood, sweat, and tears they put into producing the food we all enjoy each and every day. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we continue to build a strong economy we must be mindful of the threats to our economic growth, such as global instability, inflation, and high interest rates. One of the biggest threats is our federal government and their insistence on increasing the federal carbon tax. A carbon tax is a tax on everything — everything we produce, manufacture, transport to market, and buy.

Last week the federal government decided to exempt the carbon tax on home heating oil for three years. This exemption will primarily impact the residents of the Atlantic provinces as over 40 per cent of homes are heated with oil. For years, residents of Saskatchewan have aggressively moved away from heating oil to a much cleaner burning natural gas.

There was not one mention by the federal government for the early investment of Saskatchewan people to a cleaner burning fuel. Early adopters of cleaner fuels are given no credit by this Justin-Jagmeet coalition government. It's like, what have you done for me lately. They will never be satisfied until they drive Saskatchewan's economy into the ground and our residents back to the Stone Age.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this federal carbon tax exemption for the Maritimes is an admission by the federal government that their carbon tax is making life more expensive. If you were to believe their talking points on the carbon tax, they would say you get back more than you pay. If this was truly the case, to make their talking points true they would actually increase the carbon tax on the Atlantic provinces. That way, Maritimers would get even more money back to help them battle the high cost of living.

But in reality, people know this is not true. The carbon tax is like giving yourself a blood transfusion from the right arm to the left arm while spilling half in the process. It provides no help, it makes a mess for someone else to clean up, and makes you weary and tired from the entire process.

Yesterday our government announced as of January 1st, 2024, SaskEnergy will no longer collect and remit the carbon tax on home heating natural gas, effectively levelling the home heating playing field with the rest of the country. And we don't even have to vote for the federal Liberals to get this done, contrary to what the federal Minister of Rural Economic Development, Gudie Hutchings, has said. She forgot that a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian, even if they don't vote for the Trudeau Liberals.

Also yesterday this legislature unanimously passed a motion to call on the federal government to remove the carbon tax from everything. Thanks to the members opposite for seeing through their cloud and fog to support our amendment, a united voice to be sent to the Justin-Jagmeet coalition government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not so long ago Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was gleefully giving Loblaws money to retrofit their freezers and coolers to make them energy-efficient. Lately he's paraded the heads of several large grocers around Ottawa, blaming them and everyone else for the high cost of food and overall inflation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Prime Minister has a theme, a theme when he speaks: he blames everyone else instead of looking at his own government's carbon tax policy for driving up inflation. His recent announcement in the Maritimes is finally a public admission that the carbon tax is driving up the cost of living for all Canadians. It's time to axe the carbon tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank my constituency assistants, Trisha Schulhauser, April Junk, and Marilyn Lamport. They do a fabulous job supporting me and working hard for the constituents of Cannington. Thank you to them for all their hard work and dedication. I would also like to extend thanks to the caucus staff here in the building — friendly, hard-working, and always willing to go above and beyond to assist not only myself but all the members of caucus.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that it was an honour to work and serve with all of my fellow caucus colleagues, beyond belief that MLAs from various communities across the province with varied backgrounds can come together and work as a united team.

To the MLAs not seeking re-election and retiring from provincial politics. The MLA from Kindersley, your quick wit and charming personality will be missed.

MLA for Yorkton, thanks for all your help to a new MLA. Your open-door policy was truly welcoming.

MLA for Carrot River Valley, I loved hearing your stories in the early morning coffee but especially loved your cooking — butter tarts, brownies, cornbread. Everything is definitely better with butter. You may have just missed your calling.

MLA from Moose Jaw Wakamow, you served your constituents very well, and unfortunately a bike crash slowed you down for a time. I look forward to seeing you back on your feet soon. Heal fast.

[16:00]

MLA for Batoche, our resident historian and auctioneer. Post-politics, I fully expect him to have his own antique travelling road show or perhaps guest appearances on *Pawn Stars*. Get well and see you soon.

MLA for Arm River, our sharp-dressed MLA — no offence to Saskatoon Riversdale and Last Mountain-Touchwood — I'm sure you had to build onto your home to accommodate your entire wardrobe. Proud to be a part of the class of 2020 with you.

MLA for Canora-Pelly. You made a newly elected MLA feel

very welcome. I always enjoyed your company, even if it was Boston Bruins stories. I'll even forgive you for leaving our 132 office for 105. Keep your elbows high in the corners and keep buying the grandkids ice cream.

MLA for Saskatoon Southeast. He always said you can never have enough lawyers. The jury's still out on this one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was an honour and a privilege to work alongside each and every one of them. Enjoy your retirement and enjoy spending time with your families and friends.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I will not be supporting the amendment of the opposition. I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne 2023 as moved by the member from Saskatoon Southeast and seconded by the member from Lumsden-Morse.

God bless Saskatchewan. God bless Canada. God save the King.

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

Mr. Bonk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start my comments today as I should, and that's by thanking my family. And it's been mentioned many times in this House that we as politicians do not serve alone. None of us would be here without the love and support of our families.

And I'd like to start off today by mentioning my wife, Candace, and thanking her so much for her love, support, and unconditional support. In my whole working career, in everything I've done, she's never questioned. She's just said, if you want to do it I'll be here for you. And I really do appreciate that. And I want to also thank her for keeping the home fires burning, making sure everything's running well. She manages some of our businesses and does a lot of the bookwork and just sort of manages everything and keeps it all together.

She also is quite busy with her new role as the honorary consul of Hungary to Saskatchewan. And this is something that she's taken on with great gusto and doing an amazing job. And it's one of those things that she does like she does everything else, just with effortless charm and elegance. And I just wish her all the best in that and I know she'll do a great job representing Hungary here in Saskatchewan.

Also like to thank my daughter Emma. Many people here know Emma. She's a bit of a force of nature, that girl. She's currently studying in Hungary and she did change her major. She was going into equine cardiology and a year ago she started to hang out with quite a few international law students and now she's switched majors to that. And it's really interesting to have discussions with her about some of the courses that she's taking and some of the material she's covering, and sometimes she'll even call me and ask me for some advice or just to get my opinion on things. And the last time she called me she said, you know, Dad, as a non-practising intellectual, what do you think of this? And I'm not sure exactly how to take that, but that's typical in the way she responds with me.

But I'm quite proud of Emma actually. Emma currently has received just under \$200,000 in academic scholarships. So she puts a lot of hard work into her academics. She does really well,

as well as being involved in many different clubs and many different activities in Budapest and getting to know her family there and her culture and her heritage. And yeah, I just wish her all the best and I couldn't be more proud of her.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank my parents. So my parents live about 15 minutes south of me on the family ranch and I work quite closely with them on the ranch there. And without their support, I couldn't be here doing this job. And I want to thank them so much. The wisdom and just the solid foundational approach they have to everything, I just can't thank them enough for that. Very, very wise, clever, good people and I just really do appreciate them.

I'd also like to just mention my mother-in-law and thank her for all the support and love that she's given to us, and I'm happy that we can also support her. She's had a difficult year with my father-in-law passing away at the end of COVID and it's been a difficult year for her but she's doing well. She's got lots of friends. She's got lots of family. She's got a big support network and she's probably the busiest retired lady I've ever met and just another one of those good, good people that Saskatchewan is made of.

A few more people I'd like to mention is we have some very good neighbours out where I come from and I'd like to mention in particular Frank and Sharon Gorniak and their son Derrick Gorniak. They do so much to help us with our ranch. We help them when we can, and we trade back and forth. And we do as much together as we can, but without their knowledge of, particularly mechanics, I don't know what we would do. I really do rely on them. They've been lifelong friends.

And just to give you a little story about the way my neighbours think: my mom and dad, they really like to go to church every Sunday, and they don't miss. They go every Sunday. And it was last spring we had that terrible storm. I don't know if everybody can remember. We were stuck here in the legislature. We actually couldn't even get home. And on the Sunday morning, Frank Gorniak came over to my dad's yard with his John Deere tractor with a snowplow mounted on the front, plowed eight miles to Glenavon so that my parents could get to church. Just good, good, good people and I really do appreciate them.

The next neighbours, just down the road from Frank and Sharon, are Stan and Peggy Jeeves, and also very good neighbours. They helped us in the time of need last spring. During that storm we had a tractor, our front-wheel-assist tractor go down, and he offered his and came over to help. And I just want to say to them, like, we really do appreciate the support. And it's a sad thing happened this summer when Peggy, she had a tumour and she unfortunately passed away. And she was just a gem of a human. We really do appreciate all the things that she's done for the community, for our neighbourhood, and she'll be sadly, sadly missed.

A lot of people here have mentioned their constituency assistants. Well I have a pretty good constituency assistant. He is quite new to the role, and he is just doing a wonderful job, and his name is Garry Beckett. And he runs our constituency office in Moosomin, and Garry knows everyone. And Garry's a very interesting guy. He can do just about anything. He knows a little bit about almost every subject. He's met everyone, I think, nearly in the constituency by now and everyone loves him. He does tend

to get to be on the short end of some of the jokes that are around, but really just a very good, good man, does an excellent job running our constituency office.

And what I really appreciate about Garry is no matter when you call, doesn't matter who you are, when you call Garry or you come to visit Garry, that's either the best call you've had that year or that's the best visit you've had that year. And this is something that I think you can't teach, and it's something that's just in Garry. He's just doing an excellent job.

I'd like to thank mostly the good people of Moosomin constituency. Now I thought I knew a lot of people in Moosomin, in the whole area, until I got elected. And when I started travelling around, especially during the nominations, it is amazing how many just excellent people there are that I'd never heard of, never bumped into them before, but just incredible people. And I really want to thank them for putting their faith and trust in me to represent them here in Regina. I will try my best. I'm humbled by their support and I'll do my best to represent them to the best of my ability.

I'd like to welcome the new members, the member from Walsh Acres, the member from Regina Coronation Park. Welcome to the Assembly. I hope you are reasonable and do a good job, because they need it over there. But I've had the opportunity to have just real short conversations with them and yeah, just welcome to the Assembly. I hope that you fit in here, do a good job for your constituents, and yeah, just welcome.

I'd like to make a special welcome though to the new member from Lumsden-Morse. Now the member from Lumsden-Morse, I knew well before he got into politics. And I was actually Chair of a committee that he was an industry rep on, and my goodness, that is one sharp, knowledgeable individual. He knows his stuff. And he does everything in such a humble and . . . a humble, yet articulate and knowledgeable way. You can't fool him; he knows. And just if you listened to his maiden speech, you realize what just a quality individual, just a man of dignity, and a man of integrity, and I couldn't be more happy to call him a colleague.

To offer a few comments on this year's Speech from the Throne, the title was grow and protect. And when we think of the growth and the growing side of that speech, it made me think while I was discussing this with my wife a little bit, about some of the settlers that first came to Saskatchewan. And she was talking about some of the first Hungarian settlers who came to the Bekevar region which is just south of Kipling in the Moosomin constituency

And I don't know if many members know this, but Saskatchewan is home to the first three Hungarian settlements in all of Canada. And these were settled in the late 1800s, early 1900s, and they came to Saskatchewan. They settled on the flat prairie, and nothing there; they had to build their own communities. And some of the stories that we've heard. We actually got a box of old letters given to us, and we were reading through them. And they're all in Hungarian of course.

And one of the letters mentioned about — this was in 1901 — how they had come from Hungary. They had settled on a homestead. They had spent that year turning some sod as was required for your homestead, but they had made a lot of hay for their livestock and they were getting prepared for the winter.

They thought they'd be okay. They had a place to live and they were getting organized. A fire came through, burned all the hay, burned all the livestock feed. Not only that, burned all their belongings, all their clothes, all their supplies. Just to read some of these letters were just heartbreaking.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? They had a strong community even though it was new, and it was built up of other Hungarians that had settled there. But they had a strong community there to support them, to make sure that they were okay through the winter, and to help them rebuild for the next year. This is the Saskatchewan spirit. This is what made this province great. As our motto says, "from many peoples, strength." When our neighbours or our friends are in need, we're always there to help.

But more important than having a strong community, they had strong, strong families, and this is still evident today throughout Saskatchewan. You can see that. That's something that our whole society is built on. And this is something you can . . . If you've paid attention in the last few throne speeches and in our budgets, you'll always see strong families, how can we support families, what can we do to strengthen the bonds of families in this province, because they're the backbone of our society.

Now what those settlers did, over time many of them were . . . They came here as farmers or agrarians and then they started to develop businesses, built businesses, created income, created GDP [gross domestic product].

Did you know that in the early part of this century, or last century, that Saskatchewan was the third-most populous province in Saskatchewan, or in Canada? We were on track to actually become one of the major powers in Canada at that time. And then I remember my grandpa saying to me he remembers when Tommy Douglas, former premier Tommy Douglas and his party got elected in Saskatchewan. He said there was just a veil of poverty came over the province. Everything stopped. Our population declined. Business declined. It just was a horrible time for the people in this province.

And from going from being the third-most populous province in Canada, look where we ended up in 2007 when our population was at that time even still declining. But since 2007 we have grown our population by over 200,000 people, 30,000 people in this last past year alone.

[16:15]

In 16 years of the last NDP government, unfortunately when they were here and governing, guess how many people that came to Saskatchewan, overall. The population in this province actually declined. Negative growth, which is kind of a theme we can get back to on that side of the House over there.

But in 2007 when we had the honour to form government in Saskatchewan, we had an interesting different take on the way things should go. Our motto would be kind of, allow private business to flourish and just get out of the way. Let them do their thing. It's not the government that runs the economy; it's the private business.

There's nothing more powerful, nothing has lifted more people out of poverty in the history of the world than people being

allowed to pursue their own self-interest, and that is the way that capitalism works. That's the way that our province succeeds. That's the way that the Western world has succeeded, and I'm so nervous to ever think that the members opposite and their socialist ideas could ever get back into government here.

What that does, Mr. Speaker, is it has allowed us to increase our GDP and it's a lot different than the way they think of it. When they think of the socialist way to create GDP, you have government control on the means of production. What that does, basically means you're just shuffling money around inside the economy, right.

What we propose and what we suggest is that when you unleash people's entrepreneurial spirit, you create something that you must have someone else who's willing to pay you for it, which in fact will bring in new money into your economy instead of having just money float around. You're actually multiplying the amount of GDP or money that's in your circulation.

For example, I'll give you a good example today. Because we have a predictable, stable, reliable government here in Saskatchewan, today we had an announcement of \$6.4 billion from BHP, the largest investment from that company, which is the largest mining company in the world. They're investing here in Saskatchewan. That is unprecedented. Here's something else that's interesting. That is new money coming into our economy. That's not money that's already been here. That is new money coming into our economy, growing our GDP.

Mr. Speaker, there was a mining company called K+S. K+S also has invested in our province in the last decade, major investment in a new potash mine. Did you know that in the '70s the NDP actually nationalized the K+S mine? They not only chased them away; they took their mine and chased them away. Can you imagine that? That is in North America in the last century here. It's unbelievable. It's crazy. So in this province, we welcome investment. We want new investment to come here. We want to grow our population.

Here's something else. I just had heard this in the speech or two previous from the member from Saskatoon Nutana. She said that she was glad that her children escaped from Saskatchewan. Can you imagine? Like, there's very few things that the member from Saskatoon Nutana and I agree on — actually, almost nothing. I think even when it comes down to values, we were absolutely diametrically opposed. But to say that you are glad that your children escaped from the province that you represent, that is just reprehensible as far as I can see.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that really is growing our economy and something that I really am proud of, something I really enjoy, is the exports of this province. We are an export economy. I think we do it better than anyone else in the world. I've had the great pleasure of my whole working career working in international trade and exports. And I can tell you, the producers in this province, they are leading the world when it comes to engagement. They are leading the world when it comes to doing it efficiently. They are leading the world when it comes to doing it environmentally sustainably. And the world wants what Saskatchewan has, but they also want Saskatchewan products. We do it as good as you'll ever find, and I have to say I'm so thankful that our province supports them. Our government

supports them.

We have trade offices now that support our producers when they need to get to different parts of the world, do a little bit of market intel or connect directly with government or with buyers. Mr. Speaker, our government is there to support them.

I'd like to just highlight some of the investments that we made in our government since 2007. And it's pretty interesting how you can have \$66 billion invested in our province — \$66 billion invested in our province — and the NDP think that we're not doing anything for the people of this province. I don't think they understand what \$66 billion is. It's unbelievable.

Sixty new schools or 30 major renovation projects. Thirty-five major health projects completed, under construction, or in planning — hospitals, long-term care facilities, or urgent care centres. Nearly 20 000 kilometres of highway repaired or improved. 193 million in capital investments in our parks, and we have some of the most beautiful parks in, I think, the whole country to be honest. 780 million invested in post-secondary infrastructure, and over 22 billion in Crown corporation capital, including the expansion of wireless service to more than 99 per cent of the province. Mr. Speaker, those are just a few of the highlights of what we've done in the last . . . and that is really high-level highlights.

When you come to my constituency, I can tell you more directly. Moosomin airport, which I have to thank the Minister of Education, who was formerly the minister of Infrastructure. He helped us get the government portion of that project up and going. So thank you very much for that because that project is going to save lives, that project is going to bring economic activity to our area, and that project is just another example of how our government takes seriously the prosperity and well-being of our citizens.

The Grenfell Long-Term Care Home, we gave \$10 million to this. I couldn't be more proud. That has been a project that's been in the works for a long time. It's a project that is needed, of course, and there's always more to do when it comes to supporting our citizens. But I just want to paraphrase the mayor of Grenfell who said, it's going to be so nice to see kids come from school, walk down the street, and go see their grandparents in their nursing home. It's something that . . . it's here for our people. We want to support them.

Mr. Speaker, our government is here to protect. I couldn't be more proud of what our government did and our Premier did yesterday when he said that we are going to stand up to the inherent unfairness of the carbon tax in the way that it's being applied across Canada. Mr. Speaker, that should be just blatant for everyone to see now, how our Premier is standing up for the people of this province, protecting our families, protecting our businesses, protecting our communities. And, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't be more proud. I know this government fully supports him in that.

We fully support this Throne Speech. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I will be supporting the government's Throne Speech put forward by the member from Saskatoon Southeast and seconded by the member from Lumsden-Morse.

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

Mr. Nerlien: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's an honour for me, a humble servant of this government, to stand in my place and speak to the Speech from the Throne. I have the challenge of following some outstanding speakers today on this side of the House, and I've listened intently to their words, and I'm so proud and so pleased to sit on this side of the House with my colleagues. Each and every one of them brings something to this House and inspires us each and every day to be better people.

I want to take just a couple of minutes to thank my family, my wife, Giselle. And I do remember how long we've been married — 46 years. We met on a Friday the 13th on a blind date and the rest is history, as they say.

I want to thank my executive, my constituency executive who are always very, very supportive. And I'm very, very proud that we've had a consistent executive pretty much since my nomination, and I'm very pleased with them. But I do want to mention one person specifically, and I did a member's statement a while ago about Bonnie Wallin.

Bonnie Wallin served my constituency for 45-plus years in various capacities on the executive, most recently as membership Chair. But she just moved out of the constituency to be closer to family, and I just want to take this opportunity again to thank Bonnie profusely for all the work she did for the constituency and for me. She was very, very helpful in my early days in terms of giving me good guidance and advice based on her years of experience.

I want to thank my constituents in the constituency of Kelvington-Wadena. I have had the great pleasure of meeting many, many, many constituents across the constituency. And like my colleague from Moosomin was just saying, we have so many people that just inspire us with their work ethic and good business skills and good farm skills and just good homemaking skills, and people who have just wonderful values. And we're very, very honoured to represent them.

I too have a wonderful constituency assistant. Chris has been with me since day one, and I'm just so blessed to have her with me because Chris just has a way about her of looking after the constituents' concerns and issues and recognizing opportunities. And the thing that we work really well is we understand full on that we can't fix people's problems; we can only help them move forward. And that's kind of been our philosophy since day one is our role is to help people move forward with their issues and concerns and with their opportunities. And Chris has just done a marvellous job of that and I can't thank her enough.

This year's been a bit of a change in family circumstances. I think I had mentioned last time that my mother's husband, my stepfather, had passed away pretty much two years ago, I guess, two and a half years ago. He was 102. Well this year my mother decided it was time to move into long-term care and that was a pretty significant transition.

And first of all, I do want to say, just to the incredible people that we have in our long-term care facility, and thank them so much

for being so welcoming and so supportive and so helpful to Mom. But Mom took it in stride and she said, I guess this is my new apartment and I'm just, you know, happy to be here. She's very happy with the food and she's happy that because most of our family is very close, we try to get over there and visit pretty much every day if we're around. You know, and she has a cousin just down the hall so she is very, very happy with that.

But it's an interesting time because after living 92 years on your own, or you know, in your own circumstance, you accumulate a lot of things. And so we've gone through this summer, dispersing a lot of that accumulation. And it's been quite interesting because we have discovered things about Mom that we didn't know before, but we also discovered a lot of memories and it's been a real pleasure to kind of relive some of those memories as we've gone through old photo books and albums, and things you do when you have this opportunity. So we cherish that, we truly cherish that, and we're so proud that she has been our rock throughout.

I want to just, you know, before I get into sort of the Speech from the Throne, I do want to recognize and thank the people that work in our health care, the law enforcement, the folks that work in our emergency services. We had some of them here today. I want to recognize and honour them.

[16:30]

I also want to thank the teachers who are going through some challenges right now, obviously in the middle of a contract, but also fully recognize that over the last few weeks, there's been some, you know, conversation back and forth that has impacted our teachers. And I really feel for them because I think they've taken some unfair hits from some really rude and obnoxious people on social media. And I just want to shout out to the teachers that we have great respect for you. We appreciate you. We respect you. We thank you for your service, and we just don't think that that's right or fair in any way, shape, or form.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nine years ago yesterday was my nomination meeting. And in my nomination speech I talked about growing and building. But the interesting thing that I was saying during the nomination speech was that in my constituency, the people of my constituency had gone to other places to grow and build because we . . . Throughout our history from our constituency and yours probably and many of my colleagues, the people that I grew up with went to northern Ontario and built the mining industry or the forestry industry, went to northern Manitoba and built the mining industry there, went to British Columbia and built the forestry industry. You know, I too went to northern Manitoba to work in the mining industry. So many of the young people from my age bracket had to leave the province to work.

And I just want to sort of transition that to the evolution into the Saskatchewan Party government. And I want to bring to your attention that Elwin Hermanson in 2001 introduced what was called the Grow Saskatchewan plan. And he assured the people of Saskatchewan that we would grow by 100,000 people in 10 years, so by 2010.

Many of my colleagues have canvassed that we actually have grown by 201,800 people in the last 16 years. So put that in

perspective, Mr. Deputy Speaker. 201,800 people is the population of all the cities in Saskatchewan except Saskatoon and Regina, the entire population of all those cities, or it's almost the size of Regina.

So when we're talking about challenges in schools, in health care, in providing services, what would you expect when you grow by that kind of number in a short period of time? Of course there's going to be challenges. Of course there's going to be infrastructure challenges. Of course there's going to be human resource challenges. It just makes sense. It happens when you grow. The members opposite wouldn't understand that because they don't understand the concept of growth. So let's keep that in perspective, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And every Speech from the Throne since then has been positive and forward-looking, and that's so important to keep in mind. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what would you rather: a government that looks forward, that's focused on building and strengthening Saskatchewan, or one that is finding the dark cloud behind every silver lining?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a year from now the people of Saskatchewan will have a choice, and there's never been a starker difference in political philosophy than we have between the Saskatchewan Party and the New Democratic Party. When we go to the polls next fall, this side of the House will be focused on the people of Saskatchewan, ensuring that every person matters, with opportunities that suit abilities and with supports that meet the challenges of the day. That side of the House, the provincial NDP, will be mired in divisive politics, angry bickering, and a desperate search for vision.

One needs to only look at the recent national NDP convention to see the dysfunction of the NDP as to try to figure out what they stand for, if anything. From the near riot that opened their convention to the division of society through identity politics into as many subclasses of citizens as possible, and the tepid support for the leadership, the new NDP was on full display. Let's not lose sight as well of the odious policy positions put forward that even the resolution committee struggled to place on the public agenda. But enough about them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've said many times that the economy in Saskatchewan is grounded in rural Saskatchewan. I've never seen a potash mine, an oil well, a forestry production facility, a uranium mine, or a farm in downtown Saskatoon or Regina. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the creation of wealth is, in large part, in the hands of hard-working people across rural Saskatchewan. It's true that a lot of the wealth accumulates to urban centres, but we can never, ever forget the people who create our economic wealth, and it is in their values that we are built.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last night we had Saskatchewan Polytech here for a reception. We just had announced recently a \$200 million investment in the renewal of Sask Polytech in Saskatoon. I believe, if I recall correctly, it was bringing together 11 different facilities into one and creating an innovation corridor just east of the university. Interesting, I know I had spoken with Dr. Rosia last year because we'd been in Wichita and we were talking very succinctly about the innovation corridor that I had seen down there, and I'm really interested in seeing how this is going to develop in Saskatoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan in the world, if measured by GDP, would be equivalent to the 70th largest country in the world. We are a force to be reckoned with. Global trade is what we are all about.

And I want to just talk very, very briefly about the history of trading as it applies to Canada and Saskatchewan because I think it kind of puts everything in perspective. What is referred to as Turtle Island, and specifically Canada, was built throughout history on trade. There's long-standing evidence of trade between Indigenous Nations and subsequent trade between Indigenous communities and the early Europeans.

Approximately 300 years ago, Henry Kelsey ventured west from Hudson Bay and was sort of taking a look at the opportunities that might be initially, you know, under the guise of the Hudson Bay Company. And his vision was to reach out into the West and have people come back to Hudson Bay to trade. Well obviously, for the foreseeable future, that didn't play out very well because the folks on the plains and the folks in the northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan forest land didn't see why they should have to go all the way to Hudson Bay to trade. And so it didn't fare very well in the early years.

What actually happened about 60 years later — roughly 250 years ago, and in fact I think there's an anniversary coming up pretty quickly — Samuel Hearne ventured out into the same territory and went a little further. And interestingly, he had a different vision. And his vision was to develop trading posts across the West and actually bring European goods to the West to trade for product going back. And another interesting aside, it wasn't necessarily fur at that time that they were looking for. In the North they were actually looking for copper to trade.

So fur and copper were the actual driving forces of the early European trade. And sort of coincidentally, at the same time the Strait of Juan de Fuca on the west side was being explored by the Spanish. And the Russians were coming down the West Coast by Alaska. And interestingly the British started to come up to the West Coast as well with James Cook. So all of that was happening at the same time and resulted in a kind of an explosion of opportunity for, you know, what was to become Canada in terms of trade.

So why does that all matter? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the more important things that I think that is in this Speech from the Throne is the discussion around the concept of trade corridors. And I am so pleased that that is in the Speech from the Throne because I want to take a tiny little bit of credit. I first met Shane Getson, the MLA from Alberta who chaired the committee on trade corridors in Alberta and developed a very strong policy statement on that, and over the course of the last couple of years I've had opportunity to interact with him and MLAs from Manitoba as well. And we've had conversations around this.

And I know that the ministers of highways and infrastructure have been involved, as have other ministers, but I think it's a really important conversation that's going to continue. And that's particularly important for my constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we in northeast Saskatchewan are very heavily reliant on ag trade in particular, but on so many other things: forestry, obviously, in your area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and sort of by extension as well the mining industry that's developing. But that

trade corridor that may end up going up into the Hudson Bay area, sort of revisiting the Hudson Bay opportunity, is extremely important to all of us in that part of the province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also would just want to touch on trade offices around the world because, again, we're so invested in trade in this province. And we opened recently a trade office in Vietnam. I've had the opportunity to go to Vietnam twice in the last few years, and I can't tell you how impressed I am by what is happening in Vietnam and in that part of Asia. Vietnam has exploded in opportunity in the last eight years since the first time we were there. And I was just there last year, and I was absolutely blown away by the opportunity that is advancing in Vietnam and the foreign investment that's occurring there right now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could talk at great length about so many opportunities that folks are taking advantage of in my constituency, some of the growth in agriculture, some of the incredible . . . You know, you just have to drive down the highways — and my colleagues in the ag communities will understand this — drive down the highways today and see the vineyards. It is absolutely amazing the development of agriculture in this province and how critically important it is to our economy, but look at the vineyards. Look at the amount of investment that's going back into our communities across this part of the province.

I want to mention just real quickly some incredible investment that I've been blessed with in my constituency by the Ministry of Highways. We've had some work done on Highway . . . And I want to thank the Ministry of Highways and in particular the member that's holding up a sign now telling me I'm done. But Highway 38, Highway 23, Highway 349, a number of bridges, culverts, a number of passing lanes. I want to really emphasize how important passing lanes are. The safety aspect of that just is unbelievable, and it affects each and every one of us as the travelling public.

I'd be remiss if I didn't reiterate and mention again the incredible announcement this morning by BHP, the investment in the Jansen mine of 6.4 billion for the second phase on top of the 12 billion that they've already committed to on the first phase, so a total of over 18 billion. And I'm particularly honoured because in the new boundary configuration the BHP mine is in my constituency. So I'm particularly pleased with that.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my time has quickly passed. And I do want to just say again how proud I am to serve with my colleagues on this side of the House. And I will obviously be supporting the Speech from the Throne, and thank you so much.

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

[16:45]

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's an honour to rise in my place today to reply to the Throne Speech. It's always a good opportunity to discuss family contributions to this job, as so many of my colleagues on both sides have said.

I would like to thank my family members for their support and their love, for keeping me grounded so I may serve the people of

Saskatchewan Rivers. Doug and I will be married 43 years tomorrow, on November 1st. Our family has grown from four children and their spouses, and we now have 10 grandchildren, as Lacey and Seth had their second daughter, Camilla Grace, this past spring, March 23rd.

So now we have six granddaughters and four grandsons, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm very blessed and fortunate to have them in my life. They inspire me, challenge and support me in many ways. Each has very different skills and passions, and I'm very, very blessed to have them in my life.

At my Sask Rivers office, Donna keeps the office hospitable and warm. And the Sask Rivers constituency that I represent has the best tourism in the province, in my eyes.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last week's Throne Speech was typical for the Sask Party, patting themselves on the back for a job well done in years passed, continually quoting achievements going back to 2007. This Premier had to rely on the record of Premier Brad Wall instead of his own from these past five years.

The reality is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the state of Saskatchewan, it's got poor health care, crime, taxes. The cost of living, the economy, or the state of rural communities has much to be desired. And as we've become accustomed to the party opposite, their Throne Speech was full of conservative talking points but liberal spending and management strategy. They puff themselves up by throwing money at the problems instead of addressing the deeper issues of management and efficiency that plague this government.

The first troubling aspect of this government Throne Speech was their failure to include any mention of parental rights. The government used the word "protect" often in the Throne Speech, yet they did not acknowledge the continued need to protect parental rights. We just had an emergency session to pass parental rights legislation. This government was forced to adopt or lose their rightfully angered voting base.

There is still work to be done in protecting parental rights, assessing the new legislation's effectiveness and continuing to make it easier for parents to be involved in the public education of their children, seeking parental involvement on the curriculum and reforms to it, while partnering with parents in this government's plan for education, unlike their 2030 education plan which completely omitted parents.

It was disheartening to hear that parental rights is no longer a priority of this government considering it was omitted from the Throne Speech. It shouldn't surprise us though. The government did not want to act on the issue and only did so when it was made politically impossible for them not to act.

I was dismayed that crime was not even addressed in the Throne Speech where there's protection for the most vulnerable, for our communities that are experiencing the results of record-high crime. The drug and crime epidemic that is plaguing our province should be one of the top priorities of this government. Are they not listening? Are they not reading the same reports?

Their words about protecting our province are hollow, nothing but rhetoric with absolutely zero substance behind them. How

can a government function allowing this level of crime? The basic function of government is to uphold the rule of law. Without it, we do not have a province. If a government cannot uphold its own laws, then it has lost its legitimacy to govern.

If a government cannot protect its own people, it has failed its most basic mandate. Let me read the shocking statistics on crime in this province once again. Saskatchewan has the highest crime rate out of all provinces — it's double the national average. The crime rate for the province is at a 15-year high.

The violent crime rate is the second highest in the country. Robbery and theft are now the second highest. Violent crime last year was the highest ever recorded in 25 years of the crime severity index. Last year, youth violent crime increased by 30 per cent. Non-violent crime is the highest in the country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The homicide rate has been breaking record highs consecutively for four years in a row now. The homicide rate is the highest in the country, and is three times higher than Ontario and nearly six times higher than Quebec, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I continue to bring up these statistics in this Assembly because they are emergency-level numbers. This is the lived experience of the citizens this government represents, and yet in the Throne Speech, they don't even acknowledge it. How ignorant of reality can they be, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Where's the comprehensive plan to tackle the escalating drug and crime epidemic? The omission of a clear strategy to address these urgent public safety concerns is a disservice to the people of Saskatchewan and leaves our communities vulnerable.

Our communities are grappling with the devastating impacts of drug addiction, gang activity, and record-high levels of violent crime. I expect the government to prioritize by pressing issues in the Throne Speech and present a robust plan to combat the root causes of this crisis. Unfortunately the government's speech failed to provide the necessary solutions and left Saskatchewan families without hope for a safer future.

A comprehensive approach is needed to address the drug and crime epidemic. I call on the government to collaborate with law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that will ensure the protection and safety of all Saskatchewan citizens.

Saskatchewan is facing unprecedented challenges due to a global economic downturn. Again I was disappointed that the government did not offer bold solutions or concrete measures and investments in local manufacturing and value-added processing. It lacked a robust plan to promote and protect the agriculture sector, a necessity for one of the largest agriculture-producing provinces in Canada.

I was disappointed but not surprised that there was no plan to reduce taxes or bureaucratic waste and mismanagement with the ever growing problems in agencies ballooning the size of the government while the delivery of existing services continue to suffer.

We have been pushing for tax cuts all year from the PST to the provincial fuel tax, which is the largest tax on fuel in Saskatchewan, larger than the Trudeau carbon tax. Alberta,

Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador have all cut their gas tax to alleviate pressure on residents at the pump. Where is the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We are the second-largest oil-producing province in Canada, and yet our people pay the third-highest province-wide provincial gas tax in the country. Why won't this government cut its taxes?

They talk a big game. They love to put on a conservative blue suit when they talk to the voters, but reality is this is a liberal government run by liberals — no tax cuts, bigger government, more bureaucracy, waste and mismanagement, exorbitant high crime, and an unwillingness to listen to their constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's been hollowed out by this government, whether it be poor roads, high tax burden, record rural crime, a decline in rural health and well-being, while everyone gets centralized into the cities. This government has all the hallmarks of a liberal party. They just pretend to be conservative to the voters.

I was disturbed to hear in the government's Throne Speech a recommitment to being net zero by 2050. In all of my communication with residents across the province they have been very clear. They do not want net zero. It is not in the interest of this province or our people.

This government has made a show out of going against the Trudeau government's targets for carbon emissions by 2030. However the Trudeau government has committed to the UN [United Nations] goal of net zero by 2050. Why is this government insistent on following the lead of the UN and the Trudeau government for net zero by 2050? The commitment is against the interests of Saskatchewan, our energy sector, our agriculture sector, our economy, and the livelihood of our people.

Net zero is often confused with carbon-neutral, however they are quite different. Carbon-neutral accepts carbon as a reality of a modern society and seeks a balance with carbon capture and absorption. Net zero, on the other hand, seeks to have no carbon emissions at all.

The Fraser Institute stated, "The net zero mission will cause widespread economic and social harm." They go on to say, the biggest sectors at net zero will be catastrophic. It's the oil and gas sector and the agriculture sector. These are the two pillars of our Saskatchewan's economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Net zero for Saskatchewan means our energy and agriculture sectors are gone. How is this protecting the interest of our province by our people? If this plan is allowed to continue it will cause economic and social harm that will take decades to remediate.

I will continue to hold this government accountable from this side of the House, promoting conservative values and standing up for the hard-working people of this province that this government has failed to protect. I will continue to pressure the government to adopt common-sense solutions on crime, provincial autonomy, parental rights, taxation and the cost of living, and health care reform.

Our beautiful province, Saskatchewan, deserves a government that understands how to protect its citizens, its critical sectors like agriculture and energy, and put Saskatchewan first without entangling us in out-of-province agendas like net zero by 2050. The Saskatchewan people deserve a government that listens. The

Saskatchewan people act . . . It prioritizes the needs of its citizens, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

For those reasons, I cannot support this government's Throne Speech, and I will be voting against it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would be amiss if I didn't mention my constituency assistant Donna. Donna looks after the office, and she's so great in the office. She listens to all the people from across Saskatchewan that call in.

For many years now people of Saskatchewan have been telling us that their MLAs are not getting back to them or they're laughing at them for some reason instead of talking about highways and social services. I even had a fellow from SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] from Saskatoon bring his SGI problems to me because his MLA from Saskatoon would not listen to him. I have people from all over Saskatchewan coming. So we've kept our office open, and I do appreciate all the constituents from across Saskatchewan that call in, email, out of 61 constituencies. I'm glad I kept my office open during the last few years.

So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity. And again I say I will not support the government's Throne Speech and I will be voting against it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time now basically being 5 o'clock, this Assembly stands recessed until 7.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Lori Carr
Minister of Highways

Hon. Jeremy Cockrill
Minister of Education

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for
Saskatchewan Telecommunications
Minister Responsible for
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Minister Responsible for
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Hon. Bronwyn Eyre
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Hon. Joe Hargrave
Minister of SaskBuilds and Procurement
Minister Responsible for the
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