

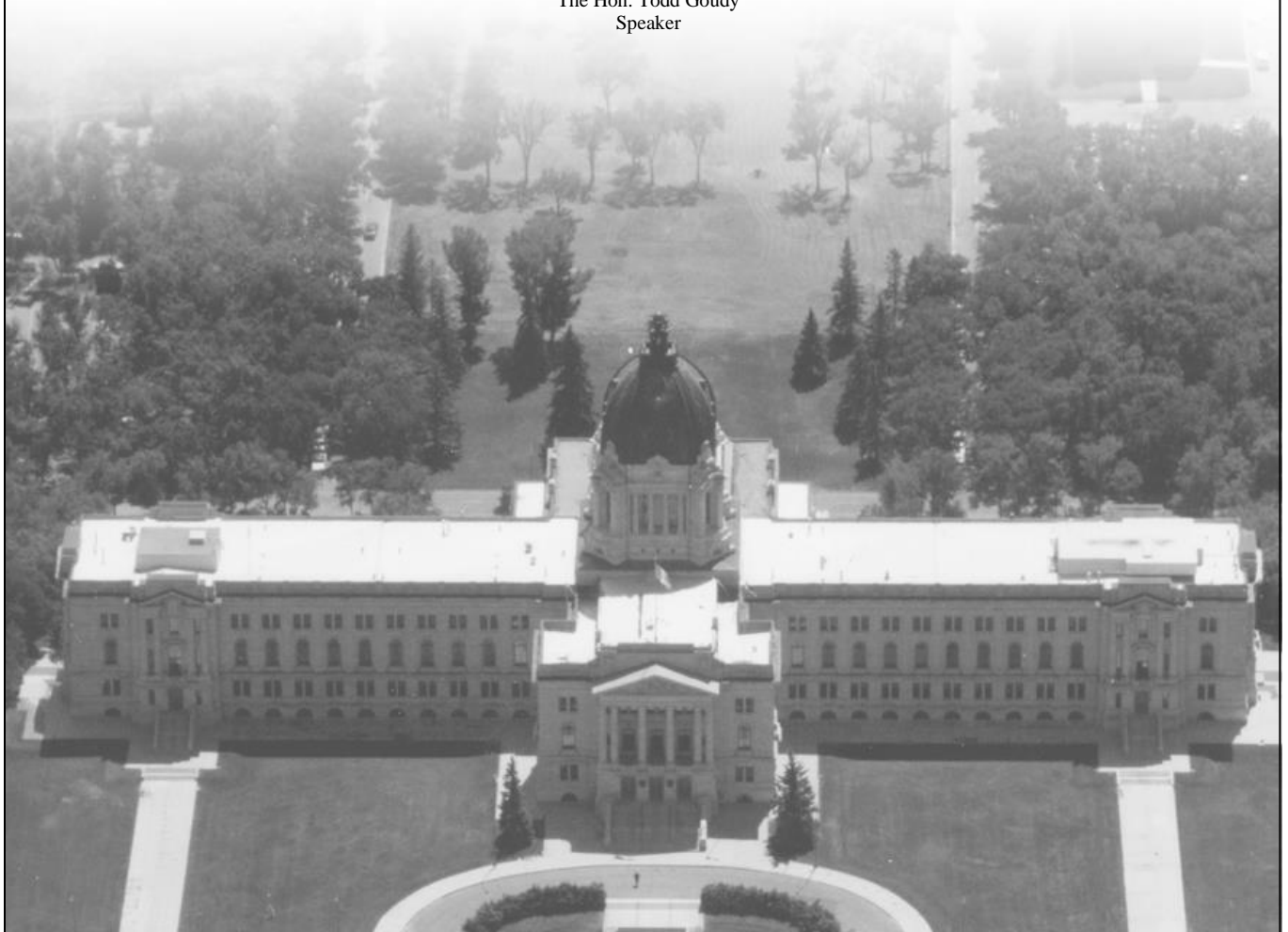
FIRST SESSION — THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
AND
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Todd Goudy
Speaker



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 30th Legislature

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Warrington, Darcy — Saskatoon Stonebridge (NDP)
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Young, Aleana — Regina South Albert (NDP)
Young, Hon. Colleen — Lloydminster (SP)

Standings

Government Caucus: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 34; Opposition Caucus: New Democratic Party (NDP) — 27

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[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

Speaker Goudy: — Well, it being 7 o'clock, we will resume debate.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Speaker Goudy: — And I recognize the member from Saskatoon Stonebridge.

Darcy Warrington: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the entire government is on the other side. I apologize; I didn't bring my guitar but maybe next time. I will address the House on behalf of the residents of Saskatoon Stonebridge in reply to the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that we are on Treaty 4 territory, traditional lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Nakoda, and the homeland of the Métis, Dakota, and Lakota. I'm from a small town called Marengo, Saskatchewan and have lived most of my life now in Saskatoon on Treaty 6 territory. It has been of great importance to me over the last two decades or so to have been shown the benefits that these lands have made possible for the successes of everyone I love.

My great-grandparents, Russell Coutts and Harry Warrington, settled here in the earliest years of the 20th century, and their prosperity was made possible by First Nations people and the treaties. Growing up in rural Saskatchewan, even as recently as the early 2000s, I understand that the education and lessons surrounding the First Nations and Métis hardships created by developments such as colonialism, residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop were mostly absent.

But I am encouraged to know that they are becoming, and perhaps have even become, a proper focus in the classrooms across the province. The children I have taught for several years listen attentively during land acknowledgements and stand at attention during the Treaty 6 anthem. They have set the example for us all.

First Nations and Métis ancestors of the area must also benefit in this relationship between the people and the land. We are all treaty people, but it is my belief that as the late, great, honourable Murray Sinclair once said, "Education got us into this mess and education will get us out of it."

The next generation and generations to come must know the treaty's importance and continue to become consciously — and in some ways more crucially, subconsciously — aware of them. Recognition of the treaties and their value should, for every person who lives here, be almost automatic and without thinking in order to achieve truth and reconciliation.

The advantages, privileges, and generational wealth that often can be accumulated by people who look like me must be considered as we aim to create a level playing field for the prosperity of Indigenous people and settlers alike. My students

from wâhkôhtowin School, a Cree culture school that I worked at recently, would expect me of all people to commit to improving their prosperity.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly address the absence of action and acknowledgement in the Speech from the Throne regarding important issues such as these. A significant segment of the population that identifies as First Nation and Métis people have been overlooked, and the increasing number of newcomers, permanent residents, and new Canadians are also not being appropriately recognized by this government.

I want to thank the constituents of Stonebridge, Avalon, and the Willows. I have endless people to thank. For the people of our constituency that have shown their support for me and have ushered me off to Elsa's castle, as my son calls it, they seek a better Saskatchewan for everyone.

The Saskatchewan New Democrats opposition will not be focusing on our own interests or the interests of out-of-province donors. However, we will value and act on the voices of the entire province, residents who want a Saskatchewan government that seeks to know and believe in everything that they hold true to their identity, that celebrates teachers instead of vilifying them, that concretely demonstrates dedication to improving the learning environment for students, that honours voices of health care workers seeking to improve quality of care for their patients and working conditions for their professionals, that recognizes the cost-of-living burdens that people have been struggling with for years.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon Stonebridge selected me and 26 other people within our party as agents for change that they seek, and I will aspire to reciprocate my appreciation at every opportunity. We spoke with over 51 per cent of our riding, knocking more doors than any campaign in the province, multiple times in many instances. They invited us in for coffee, tea, to warm up, and they shared with us deeply personal concerns and hardships, trusting that we will give them a voice when theirs is not amplified to the level of importance that they deserve. I will represent Saskatoon Stonebridge in the legislature whether you voted for me or for someone else. Regardless of differences or consensus of opinion, I will always aspire to be visible, approachable, and a contributing member of this community.

With so many to thank beyond those who voted for change and those who shared their dreams for our province on the doorstep, I must thank two people who gave up the most to get me to this floor. For 16 months prior to October 28th, balancing the duties of my role as teacher with campaigning and reaching out to every resident interested in sharing their story, my wife, Christina, and five-year-old son Miles — hi, Miles — too often gave up their husband and dad, respectively. Trips to the playground, dinners around the table, and tucking my son in for bed became less and less. And every member of this Legislative Assembly in front of me is fully aware of the sacrifices our families make to ensure a better tomorrow for everyone.

Christina and Miles, every day that I am away from Saskatoon working hard in this building and across the province on behalf of all families in Saskatchewan will be filled with grit, determination, motivation, and drive to ensure those sacrifices

were and continue to be justified. I love you so much, and I can never thank you for the time you encourage me to take with others and their interests. That was the hard part.

And on behalf of all of my colleagues on both sides of the floor, I thank all of our closest family members who made these exact same meaningful sacrifices for the betterment of all people across this great province.

It is also important that I show my gratitude to the Legislative Assembly Service staff and the caucus office staff for the support they've shown us rookie MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] over the last several weeks.

Marge the teacher, Vern the farmer, Gisele the teacher, Eleanor the pharmacist, and Grant the accountant, I'm so proud to be your son. You've supported me at every turn, and if I can manage to replicate an ounce of your good character and the good character of my entire extended family, Saskatoon Stonebridge will be proud to have me as their member of the Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

Angie, Chris, Stacey, John, Tim, Lorraine, Pat, Shelly, Steven, Rebecca — you know who you are — and so many more, your selfless management of our campaign and tireless efforts to elect as many empathetic and passionate New Democrats in this opposition will certainly make a positive impact on Saskatchewan where we live, work, and play together tomorrow and beyond. I would certainly not be here without them.

Andy, Nicole, Nya, Oliver, Ty, Daniel, and so many others who gave up their spare time, you walked through darkness, knocked doors in the elements, and found so many people ready for change. They helped with fundraising events, planning, donating, amplifying the well-received messages of our party, and I will never be able to properly compensate you. But I do share my gratitude with you from the bottom of my heart.

Shalene and Arden from wâhkôhtowin School; Miranda, Lori, and Tim from Sylvia Fedoruk School; and literally endless amazing educators, administrators, and staff that I've had the pleasure of working with. I will bring forward and draw on your energy and dedication to education at all times, guiding the work that we all know needs to be done in schools across this province. My initial intention to put my name forward as a candidate was because of this work in schools that I knew needed to become greater priority for this government. But I certainly know it will be attention to detail in many different ministries to create a truly prosperous Saskatchewan.

Our leader from Regina Lakeview has tasked me with critiquing the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. As a band, arts education, physical education, and social studies teacher who has been active in schools and community events over half of my life, I am grateful to be responsible to the people of the province in an area that I am so passionate and experienced in.

Winston Churchill is often cited for a sentiment regarding the value of arts and culture, especially during World War II. When questioned by the media about federal spending on these areas instead of the war effort, he reportedly responded with a notable remark: "Then what would we be fighting for? Then what would we be fighting for?"

Scholars are unsure whether he ever spoke these specific words, though he is credited with them, but the credit is irrelevant. His opinion and sentiment on aspects of preserving and valuing culture was evident throughout his career, and it certainly will be for me as well moving forward.

I'll close with two anecdotes regarding the kind of representative and person I intend and commit to being for Saskatoon Stonebridge. During the campaign countless amazing interactions with people and families occurred, but there are two that will definitely guide me. I can't walk or drive down any street in the riding without remembering a half-dozen incredible people who shared their stories with me.

I knocked on the door of a young male opponent supporter, and we had a very cordial conversation and a great dialogue. Their house was hosting my opponent's lawn sign. I still intentionally left my personal cell phone number in case they ever wished to reach out and share their perspective again. This conversation was memorable, but not as much as the call that resulted.

His spouse phoned me, and initially it could have been expected that she would have further criticisms to add. That assumption couldn't have been further from our actual conversation. She applauded me for knocking on their door, as they were obviously non-supporters in the residence, and for providing the extra contact information. Though she recognized we did not see eye to eye on policy, it was meaningful for her and her spouse that I stopped in to chat, listening to their concerns despite our differences.

This is how I intend to continue to represent our riding, and this is how we should all represent our ridings: listening to all, acknowledging everyone's perspectives, and being available and approachable to all.

The other resident was a former supporter of the governing party. He saw me and some volunteers knocking doors on Galloway Road, pulled over his vehicle, shook my hand, and struck up a conversation on how he admired me as a person, our campaign, and the work that was being done. With the fatigue of months and months of continuous voter contact, it was a great interaction. He asked that I would stop by his home to meet his family after our shift, so I did.

When I arrived, his wife, six-year-old daughter, and nine-year-old son met me at the door. For whatever reason, they were all grateful and even excited that I had stopped by. We had another great conversation about why they were supporting our party. And I was about to leave and the gentleman asked his kids to go get me something. They each brought me some artwork and kind messages that they made for me in advance.

The weight of all the work had hit me. I shed a few tears as I almost am now. I said to them all, I am going to need to grow a thicker skin if I'm going to be a politician. And he said, no, don't change a thing; your tears show you care and that you're passionate for making positive change for us all. I will take these moments forward, among so many others, to serve the best of my ability.

To close, Mr. Speaker, I wish to once more show my gratitude for the great people of Saskatoon Stonebridge for giving me the

great privilege to be their advocate for their health, prosperity, and their quality of life. I am humbled by your trust and I am ready to represent all of you in Saskatoon Stonebridge with pride and motivation for a better community and a better Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to support the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

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

Hon. Alana Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak in this House today. First, I'd like to welcome all of our new members and returning members to their Legislative Assembly, and I look forward to working with you in an effort to make the lives of Saskatchewan people better. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker and Mr. Deputy Speaker, on your new roles.

[19:15]

First and foremost, I want to thank the people of Prince Albert Northcote. Thank you for putting your trust in me to represent you for another term here in this legislature. I am deeply humbled and honoured. And I may be the one standing here on this floor today, but all the credit goes to my team of volunteers and family, who really won this election. I cannot thank them enough for the door knocking, the calls, putting up signs, donating time, resources, and all the moral support that they have given me over this time.

And I know Jean-Michel, I'm sure when he came to help me he had no idea what he was getting into, because I don't think he would have come if he did. I would also like to really . . . My constituency assistants are very amazing women, and they have done a wonderful job at helping and supporting our constituents and anyone who has come to our office seeking help over the last four years. And we will continue to do so for the people of Prince Albert.

And I would also like to thank the Premier. I am humbled to be appointed as the new Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport; Status of Women; francophone affairs; Minister Responsible for SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority], and Tourism Saskatchewan. It's exciting for me. It's such a diverse portfolio, and it reaches out and it touches so many aspects of our lives.

And my past too, like I think of the things I enjoyed as a young person, the things that families and friends enjoy. And this portfolio is so wonderful because it provides that opportunity to be able to support what we do in Saskatchewan for the people of Saskatchewan. We have such a wonderful province. It's filled with cultural richness. It's filled with diversity, wonderful people, talented artists, beautiful scenery, marvellous athletes. There's just so much to offer in this great province.

Our government is ready to get to work on achieving the targets set in the Saskatchewan growth plan. Thanks to a strong economy, we will be able to deliver on the commitments we made during the election campaign and we will continue to address the challenges of growth where they are felt the most — areas such as classrooms, hospitals, and other health care

facilities. We will work to ensure the professionals in these fields have the tools they need to support the people of Saskatchewan.

We also realize there are people in Saskatchewan who are struggling, and we will focus on making life more affordable for them. And while we do this, we will continue to keep our economy strong and strengthen safety in our communities. There are more people living, working, and raising families in Saskatchewan than ever before. Our government will work to ensure that it remains the best place in Canada to do this.

Health is very important to me. We recognize that there are pressures in health care, and we're working on making improvements such as the new urgent care centre in Regina. It's showing very positive results, and additional care centres will be constructed in communities around the province. Saskatoon is currently under development with more on the way in Moose Jaw, North Battleford, and I'm very proud to say in my community of Prince Albert.

Infrastructure is important to support patients and their needs, which is why we will continue to work on new hospitals like the Prince Albert Victoria Hospital project to meet the needs of not only Prince Albert but the surrounding areas. By increasing our health care capacities we also reduce our surgical wait times, and last year we managed to increase the number of surgeries performed to 95,000.

We will continue to build on the health human resource action plan, which is showing very positive results. Last year there were 1,160 more practising nurses and doctors than the years before. We rely on our professional nurses in Saskatchewan, and as a former nurse I value the first-hand knowledge that they obtain working in the field.

I am looking forward to the results as our government plans to further engage with nursing teams and unions across the province to establish a first-of-its-kind patient-focused nursing task force. Improving women's health also remains a priority for our government, but it is also very much a priority for me, being a woman, but also as the new Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

We are very excited to be one of the first provinces in Canada to offer women the choice of self-screening for HPV [human papillomavirus] as an alternative to Pap tests. Screening will be especially useful in some of our northern communities, offering the convenience of testing at home and not having to travel.

The upcoming breast health centre in Regina will give women more options for testing and treatment in a state-of-the-art environment while removing the pressures on some of our other facilities. Paired with our commitment for a \$3.5 million funding to increase breast cancer care and a \$1 million grant for ovarian cancer research, Saskatchewan remains committed in the fight against cancer.

Something that I heard frequently on the campaign trail, especially from seniors, were concerns regarding the cost of diabetic supplies. Our government remains committed to making life more affordable to those struggling with diabetes and the financial burden that comes along with that. This is why we will make good on our promise to deliver further supports by

expanding glucose monitoring coverage to seniors, and young adults up to age 25. Healthier communities are an important step towards a brighter future.

Among the challenges of growth, we have also heard concerns when it comes to education in our classroom, and we look forward to offering increased supports to our students, our teachers, and our parents, while building more infrastructure to match our growing population. We are excited to expand the specialized support classroom model to an additional 200 schools throughout the province. This includes two in my very own community of Prince Albert, with the Catholic and Sask Rivers school divisions. This program will help staff manage and de-escalate behavioural incidents in the classroom, providing Saskatchewan teachers with more time to instruct rather than managing disruptive behaviour.

I also had the opportunity to visit a classroom, Mr. Speaker, and with our former minister of Education, and see the very positive results and hear the teachers speak how positively that this plan is working. So I'm really looking forward to seeing its expansion. Our government is also increasing funding to school divisions, while hiring more teachers and education support staff to alleviate pressures in the classrooms.

One of the most important parts of meeting the growth Saskatchewan has experienced is building new infrastructure to match. Currently there are 14 new or consolidated school projects under development, with nine more in the planning stage, projects like the new Conseil des écoles fransaskoises that will replace École Valois and bring capacity up to 350 pre-K to grade 12 students. The francophone community in Prince Albert is extremely excited about this new build.

There are also new major renovation projects to ensure every child has a place to learn and to thrive in our province. While Saskatchewan remains the most affordable place to live in Canada, we do realize there are cost-of-living pressures facing all Canadians, including for young families, for them to be able to afford recreational and cultural activities for their children. The active family benefit and the income threshold, that benefit will both be doubled. This will help relieve the financial weight on families with children in cultural, recreational, and sporting activities. Our new playground equipment grant will provide \$3.75 million annually to schools, school council, and parent groups to ensure every child has a place to stay.

And the community rink affordability grant has also been doubled to \$5,000 for this upcoming winter. Last year funding was awarded to over 585 rinks in Saskatchewan, helping to maintain these vital community hubs.

This fall provided us all with an opportunity to connect with our residents in our communities and to really understand what matters to them. And I've only touched on a few of these areas. Our government will work hard to ensure that everyone, no matter where they reside in our province, will have a voice in this legislature. I look forward to delivering the best results for the Saskatchewan people.

Thank you for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley-Biggar and seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. Thank

you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

April ChiefCalf: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, hon. members of the legislature, visitors in the gallery, and residents of Saskatchewan, I would like to begin this evening by acknowledging that we are gathered here on Treaty 4 territory and the homeland of the Métis. I would like to pay my respects to the First Nations and Métis peoples of these lands, and it is my hope that we will work together in the Saskatchewan legislature in the true spirit of reconciliation and mutual respect.

It is an honour to stand here today in the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly as the newly elected MLA for Saskatoon Westview. I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the many people who have helped and supported me over the course of my journey to the legislature.

First I would like to convey my thanks to the people of the constituency of Saskatoon Westview. Over the course of the last several months I have had numerous conversations with residents of the neighbourhoods of Massey Place, Westview, Dundonald, and Hampton Village. I wish to thank the residents of the constituency for taking the time to speak with me on their doorsteps and share their concerns.

I would also like to thank the residents of Saskatoon Westview for engaging in the democratic process. As well, I want to congratulate those members of the constituency who voted in their first election, including new Canadians and young adults. I am honoured that the residents of Saskatoon Westview have placed their trust in me to represent them and bring their concerns to the legislature.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge the numerous people that assisted with the campaign, including volunteers, friends, family, and the campaign team. I am genuinely amazed at how many people dedicated their time, money, and support to the Saskatoon Westview New Democratic Party campaign.

Over 130 volunteers canvassed, fundraised, put up signs, made phone calls, brought food, served as scrutineers, and prepared and distributed brochures. In addition to the volunteers we also had a wonderful crew of paid canvassers on our team as well as the support from unions and union members. I want to thank each and every person who assisted with the campaign, including the members of the Saskatoon Westview executive and the many staff and organizers from the Saskatchewan NDP [New Democratic Party]. Through this campaign I rekindled many old friendships in Saskatoon while also making a number of new friends.

And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my family, especially my husband, Cal, my son Matthias, my daughter Kathleen, my son-in-law Mitchell, my sister Leslie, and my brother-in-law Jim. And I want to thank my father, George, for his wisdom and support throughout the process. I also wish to convey my appreciation to my extended family members who helped me with the campaign, including aunts, uncles, and cousins, and thank my husband's family who cheered me on from southern Alberta.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge my late mother, Lynne, who passed away unexpectedly in March of 2023. While Mom was not with me physically during the campaign, she was with me every day in spirit. And I just want to note that she used to love to watch question period every day. And I really wonder what she would be thinking right now if she was watching me here today.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Regina in a working-class home. My parents and grandparents instilled in me many personal and social values, such as perseverance and compassion. My paternal grandparents rented land to farm near the towns of Webb, and later Keeler. And my maternal grandfather worked as the custodian at Government House. Both of my parents studied psychiatric nursing and found employment in human services and health care. My father was also very involved in the labour movement, and my mom was very focused on caring for her family.

[19:30]

Due to limited job opportunities in Saskatchewan, I left Regina in 1987 and moved to Toronto where I found employment that enabled me to pay for university. I completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology and women's studies from the University of Toronto in 1991. I then returned to Regina to study at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, where I met Calvert ChiefCalf. We married in 1993 and started a family. We both completed degrees in Indigenous studies, moved to Saskatoon for employment, and pursued further studies in education.

Times were tough, and as a young family we struggled financially. It was a common practice for me to water down the milk to get it through to the end of the week. Mr. Speaker, the challenges we faced trying to buy groceries and pay rent and bills on a limited income led me to understand how systemic barriers can impact people's survival and success, regardless of how hard they work.

My husband and I moved to La Ronge in 2001, where we started new jobs in the North and established ourselves in the community. My husband worked as a teacher in several communities within the Lac La Ronge Indian Band while I was employed as a faculty member with the northern teacher education program and Northern Professional Access College, or NORTEP-NORPAC. The North became our home, and the people of the community were our new family.

Unfortunately NORTEP-NORPAC was forced to cease their programs in 2017 when the Government of Saskatchewan decided to terminate their funding. While the closure of NORTEP-NORPAC had a devastating impact on the North as well as on me personally, we did find our way forward. My husband and I decided to return to Saskatoon, where we have been working in Indigenous teacher education programs on campus at the University of Saskatchewan. The North has responded to the loss of NORTEP-NORPAC by creating new teacher education programs that are partnerships between Indigenous communities and universities. While I miss the North terribly, I have found new friends and a sense of community in Saskatoon.

The closure of NORTEP-NORPAC has been an influence in my

decision to run for public office, but my decision was also a response to the passing of Bill 137 in the Saskatchewan legislature. Mr. Speaker, I believe that too often governments forget that they are elected to represent the people. Making decisions without proper consultation that have such profound negative impacts upon vulnerable populations of people is so very problematic. I am here because I am determined to be an elected representative that listens to people in the constituency and works to help them.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to convey some of the concerns of the people of Saskatoon Westview in the Saskatchewan legislature. Saskatoon Westview is a constituency that is demographically very diverse. There are many First Nations and Métis people living in the area as well as numerous new Canadians. There are also many seniors residing in the constituency as well as a large number of young families. People residing in Saskatoon Westview also work in various occupations, including health care, education, retail, and many trades.

Although the people in the constituency are from diverse backgrounds, I often heard the same messages repeated on the doorstep. People in Saskatoon Westview are worried about the cost of living. They are worried about the lack of supports for children in education, and they are worried about our crumbling health care system.

Mr. Speaker, when canvassing in Saskatoon Westview I met families living in affordable housing units that are infested with insects and who fear they are one power bill away from being evicted. I spoke with people who are working two jobs but still struggle to make ends meet due to the cost of rent and the price of groceries. Seniors shared with me that they are worried about being able to continue living in their own homes. Young people told me they believe they will never be able to purchase a home of their own. As the new shadow minister for housing, I am deeply concerned by the number of people who do not currently have a place to live and the growing number of people who worry that they could also be without a home.

Mr. Speaker, I also met and spoke with parents who are frustrated about the lack of supports their children are receiving in schools. Several parents who have children with autism shared with me that they are unable to access resources to help their children. Parents of children who are gender and sexually diverse express their concern for the safety and well-being of their children, given the current stance of our government on transgender children and youth. I spoke with several teachers who are disheartened by the ongoing challenges they face in classrooms, such as overcrowding and underfunding.

Mr. Speaker, I also met with health care workers who are overworked and dismayed that the government does not take their expertise seriously. As the professionals on the front lines, they are the experts who can guide us through the improvements in health care. I also spoke with many individuals who do not have a family doctor — myself included — and people who have had to wait for an unacceptable length of time for surgeries, or who have had to pay out-of-pocket for procedures.

Mr. Speaker, given the concerns conveyed to me by many of the residents in Saskatoon Westview, I cannot support the Speech

from the Throne. Too many people in our province are struggling to pay their bills, find a home, and access health care and quality education for their children. We cannot claim to have a strong economy in our province when we have so many people struggling to afford their basic needs or when residents of our province are sleeping in parks and under bridges.

Mr. Speaker, most of the measures proposed in the Throne Speech are long-term solutions and do not address the immediate needs of people in the areas of health care, education, and affordability. The Throne Speech does not address the urgent situation of people who are currently unhoused as the weather grows colder. The government must take immediate action on this situation. Lives are at stake.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Saskatchewan people are caring and compassionate, and I do believe that we know how to take care of each other. I believe our province has enough resources to meet the needs of everyone in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I am committed to voicing the concerns of the people of Saskatoon Westview here in the legislature and ensuring that everyone in our province can prosper and thrive.

I will not be supporting the motion by the government. I will support the amendment by the opposition. Thank you.

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

Hon. Travis Keisig: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Always a pleasure to be on my feet and enter into debate on the Speech from the Throne. But before I get into that, Mr. Speaker, there's a few words I want to put on the record. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I have to congratulate you on your success in your new role as the Speaker, my former seatmate. So I will go down as infamy as the former seatmate with our new Speaker. Congratulations on that. You're going to do a fantastic job. I know you're going to perform all of your duties with the utmost respect for this very storied institution. And I have faith that you will command respect from each and every member serving in this Chamber.

All of us in this Chamber just went through the electoral process, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to put a few thoughts on the record. First and most importantly, I want to thank the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood for trusting myself with their vote. And I will strive each and every day to be worthy of their trust. I have to thank the many volunteers who worked so hard to help me in my re-election campaign.

And the very first one, Mr. Speaker, is my campaign manager, Mr. Speaker, Tina Knowles. She kept our entire team organized, motivated, and on message. Her work ethic is remarkable, and she is a very, very critical part of my electoral success. Her husband, Daboo Alalibo, was one of my very best door knockers. And this, Mr. Speaker, was his very first election he was able to vote in. And I'm not 100 per cent sure, but I'm very confident I was able to earn his support in the election.

Loretta Young was my financial agent, Mr. Speaker, and she worked very hard and is still working away on finishing up the books. And it's a very critical role for everyone's election campaign, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank some other people on the team. Arnold Tusa, former Speaker of the House, is

literally my best door knocker, Mr. Speaker. He worked diligently. And actually we were walking in and he phoned me right when I was about to walk in. I said, sorry, Arnold, I can't talk right now; a little busy. But he is a very remarkable individual.

Dale Campbell was another great door knocker, Mr. Speaker. Ed and Pat Ivey, Dennis Spilchak, they were the sign team. Did a fantastic job all through the constituency. I was out putting up signs early in the campaign election, Mr. Speaker, and I literally broke the post pounder. Had to stop in at a good constituent's place. He welded it up. Had to stay for lunch, and it was very nice to visit with Richard and Ann Barnsley.

Leigh and Marlene Bishop did a fantastic job, Mr. Speaker, helping put out lawn signs and just always there when you needed somebody to help with anything.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, we have to always thank the family. My daughters Shannara and Sharlize were stuffing envelopes, making phone calls, knocking doors whenever they had a chance in between their busy work schedule. They were able to come to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. I was very happy to host them here. My one daughter's a nurse; my other daughter's a vet tech. And you know, they're both working in Saskatchewan and I'm incredibly proud of them. And I'm incredibly proud of their work ethic and everything that they're able to do with their lives.

My sister Melanie is a nurse, and she is absolutely ruthless with advice on how to improve the health care system. She's been over 30 years being a nurse — very knowledgeable, but a great supporter and a tremendous team member.

My niece Laine did a lot of work, helped out all the time. Family is a core, core part of everything that we do in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to tell you a quick story, Mr. Speaker. One of the highlights of the election campaign was the grand opening of our campaign office in Southey. It was very early on in the election and it was that windy, miserable day. I think everybody remembers that. It was horrible outside. But I had rented a big shop as a campaign office. And there must have been 100 people there that day, and very nice and warm. And we had a very special guest pop in — the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook. And everyone was very excited to have the opportunity to visit with him.

So I know in this Chamber, we're not allowed any props, Mr. Speaker. And I know you're going to be ruthless in enforcing that rule. But once you leave this Chamber, things are a lot more lenient.

So in my campaign office . . . I had a neighbour of mine cut down a humongous tree, and I got him to cut me a nice two-foot-high stump. So I had this big stump in my campaign office. And there was so many young people at this campaign rally, Mr. Speaker. They really didn't have a clue what I was doing. But anyway, I educated them on what a political stump speech is. So I did my first stump speech during the campaign on this big old tree stump.

And it was a great speech, Mr. Speaker. I talked about the past, the present, and the future. You know, and I talked about the past,

how previous governments weren't focused on economic growth, and they weren't focused on creating opportunities for young people in the province. And then I talked about the present, and how this government was able to bring in investment from all around the world. The BHP potash mine, our growth in our canola crush sector at Yorkton and Regina, many other investments we were able to attract.

And then I talked about the future, Mr. Speaker. I talked about, you know, NexGen Energy and their new uranium mine forthcoming. I talked about Foran Mining. I talked about the fantastic work being done by the Saskatchewan Research Council in Saskatoon in their critical mineral processing plant, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, all of these exciting things happening are all for one reason that I feel, Mr. Speaker. It's to create opportunities for young people to stay in the province so people like my daughters, their friends, all of them, don't have to leave for Alberta. They can stay right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So I finished off my stump speech, and I asked the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook if he wanted to use it. He said no. And anyway he gave a great speech, talked to all of my supporters and everyone there. Everyone was excited to have the chance to visit with him, and it was a great way to spend an afternoon.

And it's surprising how many young people came out to that event, Mr. Speaker, like that 20-something age group, and you know, very young families. Really exciting to see young people taking an interest in politics and how important policy is for their jobs, their careers, their ability to afford their houses, and everything like that. It was a really great day.

[19:45]

After that . . .

An Hon. Member: — Hard to beat that.

Hon. Travis Keisig: — Yeah, it is hard to beat that. So on election day, Mr. Speaker, you know, I mean, everyone focuses on getting out the vote and how important that is, and everything else. And actually, I mean, I probably shouldn't say this, but sometimes I'm a very poor electoral campaigner. I spent the day of election day driving across the constituency. There's over 40 polls in my constituency, like to go from east to west is over a three-hour drive. It's huge.

And I spent the time that day driving across, thanking each and every person working in the polls. There was over 40 polls. I didn't get to them all, but I got to many. And I just thanked the people working them, because it is absolutely critical that we have people working in these polls, doing the job. They're not doing it for the money, Mr. Speaker. They're doing it to keep our democracy alive and well. And it was very nice to visit with everyone. They were very surprised to see me.

I am very, very old-fashioned in so many things, and we cannot overstate the importance of paper ballots in our electoral process. I mean, all we had to do was see the previous BC [British Columbia] election, and see the challenges they were facing, Mr. Speaker, with their electronic tabulators, with poor vote count,

and a slow election process, and everything else. And then you know magically they somehow find an extra box of ballots eight days after the election. Our election integrity has to be unimpeachable, and in Saskatchewan it is, and I'm very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

So we were very pleased to see the results come in on election night, Mr. Speaker. I'm very disappointed some of my colleagues weren't able to join us, but we were still . . . It was exciting to win my riding and to serve alongside so many of my colleagues.

On November 7th I had the privilege of being sworn in to cabinet as the Minister of Environment. A very incredible honour, Mr. Speaker, and Minister of Environment is a very diverse and exciting portfolio covering everything from agricultural plastics to zebra mussels — A to Z. And I'm very excited to work with the team: my chief of staff, Kenneth Cotterill; my senior administrative assistant, Mariia Mykolaichuk; ministerial assistant communications, Kielle Schmidt; and ministerial assistant casework, Kris Lowry.

I was humbled to be asked to serve as the new Minister of Environment by the Premier, and I look forward to embracing this new role and serving in this capacity. It is truly a privilege to take on this role. And one of the things, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about is, our government oversees the big game draw system through the online hunting, trapping, and angling licence system. That includes the application process, execution of draws, and issuance of licences.

You know, we've been listening to constituents all across the province, Mr. Speaker, and we recently piloted the big game management extended hunt program. This policy was brought forward in consultation with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, SARM; the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, the SWF; the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, SCIC; and hearing from many, many constituents all across the province dealing with excessive wildlife damage on property, on crop, on grain bags, everything else.

So in September the ministry was directed to implement an extended hunt for elk in five rural municipalities across the province. And there's a review of the big game draw program. It's done every five years to evaluate existing programs, Mr. Speaker, and the effectiveness of previous modifications to ensure they meet the values of all Saskatchewan hunters.

We are very proud to have listened to the concerns of rural Saskatchewan, and we will look carefully into the successes and challenges of this pilot program. But we expect, with some adjustments, extended hunts could be a useful tool to address damage caused by animals congregating on farm land, while also ensuring sustainable wildlife populations for rights-based harvest and harvest-by-sport hunters. Our government's main goal is to ensure that enough of this finite resource exists for not only conservation reasons but also sustenance purposes, Mr. Speaker.

The Ministry of Environment also plays a key role in managing all of the health of Saskatchewan's environment, but we know there's a critical balance that needs to be struck between environmental stewardship and fostering economic growth. Our economy depends heavily on natural resource industries, and we want to work collaboratively with all of our stakeholders and

rights holders by designing clear regulatory tools, engaging industry partners, and working with Indigenous communities in a respectful and responsible way to achieve our environmental outcomes. We have made-in-Saskatchewan solutions that ensure we keep fostering investment and protect the competitiveness of Saskatchewan's business while always ensuring clean environment, clean water, and clean air, Mr. Speaker.

We have an absolutely great story to tell here in Saskatchewan. When we work together, Saskatchewan can continue to grow while still protecting and conserving our natural resources.

I'm just going to talk about the Throne Speech for a little bit here, Mr. Speaker. So I do like telling stories. So during the 2020 election campaign, Mr. Speaker, I had an event in a town in my constituency, in Southey. And that morning we announced that if we had the privilege of forming government, we would cover glucose monitoring devices for young people 18 years and younger.

And then that afternoon we had a campaign event, and the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook was able to attend too. And a parent came up to both of us and thanked us for this support. Like this was going to be a game changer for her family. Diabetes is a serious thing, but if handled properly it's a treatable medical condition. And she stressed over and over again how important these glucose blood monitoring devices are to her and her family.

We were successful in the 2020 election, Mr. Speaker. I've had numerous, numerous constituents reach out to me in the previous four years and ask if that program can be expanded. And I bring those concerns forward to the Minister of Health along with many, many other of our colleagues, and he does his due diligence.

And in 2024 we ran on a campaign of expanded glucose monitoring devices. And you know, we look forward to bringing that policy forward. There was a gap. Eighteen-year-olds were leaving for university, and they still didn't have any coverage. So we're expanding that to 25 years old. That's going to help that group of people. And a lot of senior citizens were working, but as they retired their medical benefits got reduced. And so we're going to help those people out.

That diabetes support is critical, Mr. Speaker, and very happy to have this policy brought forward and very excited to talk about that in the Speech from the Throne.

Health care is always top of mind, Mr. Speaker, to every constituent you talk to on the door. Very proud to talk about the \$300 million health human resources action plan that has resulted in recruitment of 253 physicians from outside Saskatchewan, hiring of over 1,400 nursing graduates, and bringing over 400 internationally educated nurses from the Philippines. This government will always look for ways to innovate and improve our strong health care record by reducing administrative positions and costs in regional health authorities by seven and a half million dollars, with savings allocated toward front-line health care and long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker.

We will also help those caring for a family member in the final stages of life by extending palliative care leave from 8 weeks to 26 weeks. Here's also a bit of a history lesson for all the new

members. We've built or are expanding new hospitals like the Moose Jaw hospital, the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, and of course children's hospital that we're all very proud of. We've added 15 new long-term care facilities across the province, Mr. Speaker, and we've also hired 650 new doctors and 3,000 new nurses. We all know there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker, but we're listening to constituents all across this province. These targeted goals for our government to meet the challenges we're hearing in our health care sector.

You know, something else that we heard on the doorsteps too that's addressed in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, is affordability issues — one of the main concerns. That is why the party, we put in all these measures to help citizens across the province. We have support measures that will cut costs for Saskatchewan people. We announced income tax reductions, low-income tax credit, increase to the graduate retention program, and a freeze on the small-business tax rate. We will raise the personal tax exemption, spousal exemption, child exemption, and seniors' supplement by \$500 each year for the next four years.

We will make life more affordable for persons with disabilities and their caregivers by increasing the disability tax credit, the caregiver tax credit, and the income exemption limit under the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program. We will increase the Saskatchewan Advantage Scholarship by \$750 per year to make post-secondary more affordable to all Saskatchewan students. The increase to this scholarship will benefit an estimated 8,000 Saskatchewan students per year.

This government will eliminate charges for inter-hospital ambulance calls for seniors and reduce the maximum cost of other seniors' ambulance calls by over 50 per cent from a maximum of 275 per call to 135 per call. There are approximately 50,000 seniors' ambulance calls in Saskatchewan each year.

Our most precious resource are the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, and by increasing this grant we ensure that all young people have a bright future here, everywhere in Saskatchewan. We are supporting everyone across the province — seniors, youth, and those with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, coming from a small town — now proudly representing many small communities across the constituency — I know the importance of our community rink. I see how much of the impact it has in the vitality of the small towns. They are the place to come together and it creates a real community atmosphere, Mr. Speaker. It is at these places across our province where many memories have been created together whether . . . in times of celebration.

I'm proud that our government will increase financial support for recreational facilities in Saskatchewan communities by doubling the community rink affordability grant and introducing the new school playground equipment grant. This grant will support approximately 635 ice surfaces in 373 communities across Saskatchewan at a cost of about 1.7 million per year.

The school playground equipment fund will help fund 50 per cent of the cost of new school playground equipment to a maximum grant per playground project of \$50,000. The grant is expected to fund 75 projects per year or 300 projects over the next four years.

This investment will improve and enhance the quality of life all across Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that everyone deserves to feel safe in their business and in their neighbourhood. Our government will continue to fund more police officers and invest in support for victims of crime. This is why we're making amendments to strengthen laws, giving the officers the tools they need to ensure safety all across our province.

Amendments to address *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* will provide officers with additional authority to address public nuisance and shut down nuisance properties, such as the power to address an abandoned building that has been repeatedly broken into or has trespassers squatting in it, and additional authority to address intoxication on public property, vandalism, and individuals behaving in a disruptive manner on public property and public spaces.

Our approach to rural crime is providing stronger laws in support for our police officers. These measures will allow business owners to designate police officers as authorized representatives, giving officers the power to remove people from businesses without needing permission on a case-by-case basis.

We know that drugs and addiction are the main driver for crime, and that's why we're increasing the number of addictions treatment spaces as part of this plan. Safer communities and neighbourhoods plan builds upon investment in the '24-25 budget, which includes almost \$720 million, Mr. Speaker, to keep Saskatchewan residents and communities safe. This is a comprehensive and compassionate approach to meeting all of those needs.

Saskatchewan's strong and growing economy added 17,000 new jobs over the past year, according to the latest labour force report released by Statistics Canada. Mr. Speaker, we're proud to say that there's over 1.2 million people now calling Saskatchewan home. In making life more affordable, our government will increase the personal exemption, increase the disposable exemption, increase the child exemption, and increase the seniors' supplement by \$500 each year for the next four years. This amounts to a family of four in Saskatchewan saving \$3,400 and a senior couple \$3,100 in the next four years. The same family of four will not pay provincial income tax until their combined income reaches over \$72,000.

[20:00]

I see my time's almost up, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to take a hint from you. I'm going to take a hint from you, and I'm going to take this opportunity as the light is on and I have the microphone. I'm going to thank my mother. She is a huge fan of mine. She watches all the time, every proceeding. It's very interesting when we go to different functions because she feels like she knows each and every member in the Assembly, because she watches them on TV all the time. But nobody really knows who my mother is so . . . Anyway she is a great fan of this government and somebody that is very, very special to me.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would be absolutely remiss if I did not talk about the greatest supporter that I have in my personal career, in my personal life is . . . I mean, I think everyone knows here who

I'm going to talk about but it's my wife, Sheila Keisig. She works fanatically on my election campaign. We talk daily on different political subjects. She is definitely being groomed to potentially replace me in this position, Mr. Speaker. I would be terrified to run against her in a contested nomination and I'm hoping that it never comes to that.

But she is very busy in her own career. She's the administrator at the RM [rural municipality] of Tullymet, and she's the president of the Rural Municipal Administrators' Association. And once you rise to the rank of president, you receive a seat on the SARM board. So she is incredibly busy with RMAA [Rural Municipal Administrators' Association of Saskatchewan] meetings, SARM meetings, and also being my number one assistant, fan, I guess. I don't know what you . . . But she is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yeah, I know. I got that backwards. But she is a very remarkable woman, very passionate, very organized, very goal-driven, a wonderful mother to our two daughters, and a fantastic wife, Mr. Speaker. And I honestly would not be in this Chamber without her assistance. And I owe her so, so much.

I also want to thank the Premier. His work ethic throughout the campaign and through my four years has been absolutely remarkable. I have had the privilege of working with a lot of very good people, Mr. Speaker, but his work ethic, his stamina is really inspiring and it makes you want to work harder and do better for all the people of Saskatchewan.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the Throne Speech moved by the member from Kindersley-Biggar, seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. But I will not be supporting any amendments brought forward by the members opposite. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Regina Rochdale.

Joan Pratchler: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, hon. members, and fellow citizens of Saskatchewan. I acknowledge that I was born on Treaty 6 territory and I now live here in Treaty 4.

It is with a great sense of humility and thankfulness that I stand in this Chamber today as a newly elected representative of the constituency of Regina Rochdale. It is not lost on me that there is a tremendous amount of responsibility and accountability placed upon my shoulders by the faith of my constituents. I'm here to represent them and to advocate for them. It is an honour and a calling which I do not take lightly. And you, Regina Rochdale, have my word that I have your back. This moment belongs to you.

One never arrives at these moments alone and we are part of a much larger independent world of others. And that world whispers in one soul to express a gratitude for so much and so many.

First I would like to thank my immigrant grandparents, and to my parents who taught me the meaning of tenacity and hard, hard work on the farm. They also nurtured in us an insatiable curiosity to learn and to serve. To my family — my husband, my children — my mentors and dear, dear friends who continue to teach me, and sometimes they even use words. Ich danke Ihnen. Köszönöm szépen. Merci à tous. [Translation: Thanks to all.] Thank you.

To the steadfast team of volunteers who worked tirelessly on my campaign — day in, day out for nearly a year and a half — I owe them a great debt of gratitude. Hats off to the near over 300 volunteers, mostly teachers and nurses and executive women who had their faith in me, and they had the commitment in thought and in action to bring about a better future for yours and everyone's loved ones.

Today an indelible mark has been made on Regina Rochdale's and indeed Saskatchewan's history. If you were to wander through Regina Rochdale, you would see that it is not only home to breathtaking parks, many businesses big and small, vibrant elementary schools, care homes, two bustling high schools. It is also home to a community with a wonderful soul.

Rochdale is teeming with people who work hard and care deeply not only about their neighbours, but about our province. They see the big picture and they know that we must address root causes of issues, and they expect our government to do so. Caretakers, servers, teachers, nurses, engineers, executives, doctors, aestheticians, bakers, grandmas, grandpas, moms and dads, and children are all counting on our government to do what is right to ensure that their lives and the lives of their families and neighbours enjoy living in a vibrant Saskatchewan now and in the future.

To many in Rochdale, there is a worry that things are not vibrant that they had expected it to be by now. Seniors, they're worried that health care and aging-in-place services will not be there for them when they need it. Many residents tell me the waits for health care services is dragging on far too long. Families are worried that that prized education they received, that prized education that Saskatchewan used to be known for, is becoming more and more elusive for their own children. Some families tell me that things are costing too much and it's hard to keep up. That's not the vibrant Saskatchewan they have, and they want better.

They want a voice of credibility to articulate their concerns, to shine a light on issues that matter to them and to those across our province. They want a representative that will not only fiercely hold this government opposite accountable, but at the same time offer creative solutions to problems they thought would have been addressed by now. On behalf of my constituents, I plan to do just that. I am convinced that with the support of my constituents, by collaborating inside and outside of this House, we will make a difference and regain that vibrant Saskatchewan that Rochdale constituents envision and deserve.

Regarding health care, my constituents told me over and over again on the doorsteps that I should use my nursing voice — the voice of a profession trained to advocate — and creatively provide reasoned, evidence-based, upstream solutions to reduce and prevent issues before our emergency rooms are taxed to the limits and, worse yet, they can't access the health care that they and their loved ones need. My constituents asked me to reflect their experiences and pain, in many cases, in a way that demands that the system be made better not just for them, but for their loved ones, and indeed others in our province beyond the cities that also desperately need and deserve better health care. This is who Rochdale people are. We agreed. Nurses don't just talk about solutions; we make them happen if anyone in the government cares to listen.

Education is also a top priority for the people in Rochdale. Rochdale is home to many families with children and grandchildren in schools and home to many, many teachers. And the number one issue in education is student learning. Everyone is working hard to address the time and the curriculum outcome loss that exacerbated classroom complexity as a result of the jagged-edge attendance during the COVID years.

This continues to be compounded by the relentless reduction of funding over the past 10 years. They asked me to use my teacher and administrator voice to stand up for the desperately needed supports for student learning. They told me to never let up on advocating for the needs of children and do whatever it takes to reclaim that prized education that each and every one of them deserved, and to get Saskatchewan back into first place in education again and stay there.

To the good people of Regina Rochdale, who are a compassionate, future- and solution-focused community, know this: I am here for you, I care about you, and I will work diligently on your behalf. I want to listen to your concerns and successes, your ideas, and your visions for a better Saskatchewan.

To the hon. members in this, the thirtieth legislature, I look forward to working with all my colleagues, including those across the aisle, for solutions, particularly for improved health and health care, for stellar education, and for bettering the lives of all the people in this province. We are stronger when we work together to use our gifts and talents to serve all the people of this great province.

Public service is one of the highest honours there is. And lofty though that honour is, one should find it in the work of the political world and in politicians. People often ask, why bother being in public service? And why bother being a politician? Why bother?

I'll tell you exactly why bother. In this increasingly cynical world, we need good people in public service and we need good people in politics. Oh, how we need good people here. We need role models in leadership who hold strong and steady in sure and unsure times. The world desperately needs good people to inspire our youth, to give hope to our Elders, and for everyone in between.

We need good people in this Chamber, people who know right from wrong, who are daily examples of walking honesty and integrity. We need people who, having lived through suffering in life, carry the scars through which they see a deeper sense of kindness for their world, who are impelled to lead with a rich compassion and not with cheap pettiness and vengefulness.

We need people with a solid moral compass who welcome differences, who take the high road even when, at a weaker moment, it might so tempt them to slice back with acrimony and spite.

We need good people in public office, with creative minds and spirits, to do the hard things that are so important, good people to model the sophisticated skills required to deftly navigate the endless grey of the world, good people who earnestly seek wins for all.

Without good people in public office, those things don't happen. Democracy and the care of the common good is lessened, and our world becomes saddened as cynicism seeps in.

[20:15]

In this Assembly, absolutely we can disagree about policy. In fact rigorous debate should strengthen policy by ensuring it becomes the best it can be. Let us not forget that there is a way to do so without degrading, disrespecting, and disposing of others' spirits. That takes real self-control.

It is no secret that being in public office is not for the faint of heart, nor is it to serve the fleeting status of power. There is a difference between cheap power and deep power. Deep power takes a compassion built on kindness, for others, and for self. It takes grit and it takes courage. Yes, courage, my friends. Kindness and strength are the stuff of courage.

Being a good public servant matters because people in this province matter, and you matter. Mr. Speaker, good people need to step up and indeed in this Chamber, they have. Let us always do our best to be those people.

I will be supporting the amendment as moved, Mr. Speaker, and I will not be supporting the motion. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Terri Bromm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to acknowledge that I stand here on Treaty 4 territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis people. I would also like to join my colleagues in congratulating both you, Mr. Speaker, and the member from Lumsden-Morse, the Deputy Speaker, in your new roles. I am confident that you will both serve this Assembly admirably.

It is with gratitude and humility that I stand before you today addressing this Assembly as the representative for Carrot River Valley in this, the thirtieth sitting of the Saskatchewan legislature. I am deeply honoured by the trust placed in me to serve our incredible constituency, and today I want to share with you who I am, the journey that led me here, and the vision we'll pursue together to build an even brighter future for our province.

First I want to recognize the people who initially shaped me, my parents and siblings. Growing up, my parents, John and Dianne, instilled in our family the values of hard work, integrity, and the importance of education. They taught me that with determination and resilience, anything is possible. In a way, they provided a template on how to treat others — family, friends, staff, and customers. They supported and encouraged independence, solution-focused ideas, and thinking out of the box.

My sisters Tracy and Tanis, and my brother Greg were my first teachers in collaboration and compassion, showing me how to support others and work as a team, skills that have guided me throughout my life. They have each become successful in their chosen paths. We have been very supportive and vocal in each other's lives, and anyone who has been around for our family meals, card games, and lively discussions on diverse subjects can verify this. These lessons formed the foundation for my career,

my community involvement, and now my role in public service.

Mr. Speaker, my journey would not have been possible without the unwavering love and support of my husband, Ian, and grown children Logan and Sydney. Ian's career has been in agriculture and value-added agriculture industry. He has been and is my rock. We started dating when I was in high school, and with few breaks, we will soon share our 39th New Year's together. He is smart, caring, hard-working, and grounded. Words like "you can take the farmer off the farm, but not the farm out of the farmer" are very apt. Moving back from Alberta to Saskatchewan to live and raise our children Logan and Sydney was one of the best decisions we ever made. We have been blessed to live near our families and friends.

Watching our children grow up in Tisdale and both complete their Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology degree from the University of Saskatchewan fills me with immense pride. Both Logan and Sydney were part of the student trainer program, Logan with the Huskie men's hockey team, and Sydney with the Huskie women's hockey team. Our son Logan and his partner, Kailey, will both convocate with a Master of Physical Therapy from the University of British Columbia this coming weekend. Our daughter Sydney will continue her diagnostic medical imaging studies back in Ontario shortly for her final clinical placement. She is currently here in Saskatchewan on placement and we are thrilled to have her with us. Both Logan and Sydney have become amazing adults who are smart, resilient, and caring, and they continue to make me proud every day.

During our 33 years of marriage, Ian and I have lived long-distance for our work commitments. It has been awhile, but now as we circle back to that, I am blessed and thankful for him and his support. Together Ian, Logan, and Sydney have been my champions, cheering me on during the long days and late nights, assisting on the campaign, encouraging me to take on these commitments and challenges, and always reminding me of the importance of serving and improving the lives of others.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many thanks to share here tonight. This journey started 19 months ago, and through the nomination and campaign I have been fortunate to have support in many different forms. My sister Tanis, my campaign manager, you were and continue to be an immeasurable support. To Bryan, my financial agent, your assistance is invaluable. My heartfelt thanks goes out to Franz, Chris, Dawn, Bettyann, Katherine, Cathy, Gail, Richard, Ron, Debbie, and Shelley. I could not have done this without your hard work, time and energy, countless volunteer hours, insights, and enthusiasm while completing the tasks at hand.

Other people who are too numerous to acknowledge here tonight deserve my thanks as well. Thank you to those who door knocked especially during those hot summer days, put up and took down signs, and scrutineered. I would like to mention Patrick, Dylan, and Deanne, and all the staff at the party office for their work. And I am grateful for your help.

My gratitude goes out tonight to my predecessor, Fred Bradshaw, who has been a huge support. Thank you not only for your 17 years of dedicated service, but also for your kindness and generosity that has left an indelible mark on our constituency.

Acknowledgement, Mr. Speaker, also goes to Shelley Meyer. Shelley has been serving the people of our constituency as a constituency assistant for 24 years. I will be the fourth MLA that will have had the pleasure to work with her, and I am very grateful.

I want to acknowledge my parents, John and Diane, and Gene and Beth, my in-laws for your unwavering love and support throughout this process. To all of you who contributed along with my family and friends, thank you for supporting me, standing beside me, and inspiring me.

My career, Mr. Speaker, began in pharmacy. Early on I owned and operated a Shoppers Drug Mart, first in Tisdale and then in Lacombe, Alberta. Practising as a pharmacist for 25 years taught me the importance of hard work, problem solving, lifelong learning, and advocacy.

Later in my career my work as a business development officer for Community Futures Newsask allowed me to assist entrepreneurs and clients with their businesses. It was through these roles that I developed a connection to the people of Carrot River Valley, understanding first-hand some of the opportunities and challenges that we face.

Looking back, I have always represented others. Along with high school and university student councils, I served on Tisdale town council and the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals, then the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists. Through these opportunities I have gained considerable experience in collaboration. I have shown leadership and commitment to my profession and my community.

These experiences provided me the ability to address the needs of various stakeholders in a variety of settings. As well they have allowed me to connect with people and make a tangible difference in their lives. These experiences showed me the profound impact we can have when we work together and they also shaped my journey to step forward and be here today, representing the constituency of Carrot River Valley. They will serve me well going forward in this, my new role.

I am here to serve as a strong voice for our constituents, to listen with an open mind, and to always strive for the betterment of the constituency. To the residents of Carrot River Valley, thank you for placing your trust in me. Mr. Speaker, Carrot River Valley is a region of abundance and opportunity. Our agriculture and value-added agriculture sectors are powered by hard-working producers who feed not just Saskatchewan, but the world. Our forestry, mining, and tourism sectors provide jobs and fuel our provincial growth. And our beautiful lakes and land itself draw visitors from many places. From the farms to the forests, small businesses to industry, our strength lies in our resilience and our shared commitment to one another.

I am passionate about making a positive impact and finding solutions to our challenges while promoting our strengths and opportunities. Let us work together to create strong communities and a place where our families can thrive. And I am eager to serve our incredible constituency of Carrot River Valley.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent a government that supports our needs and has made, and will endeavour to make,

significant investments that strengthen our constituency.

In education, the funding for the newly-opened Carrot River Valley School is an investment in our children and their future. It represents our commitment to providing the tools and opportunities they need to succeed. And for Fred, go Wildcats.

For infrastructure: the announced phase 1 resurface of the Tisdale airport runway. That will enable connectivity, support health care access, and access for business and economic growth in our region.

For recreation and community, the provincial portion funding for the Hudson Bay Community Pool that opened in August 2023 and the announced increase in the grants for our community rinks are more than just the facilities themselves. They're about fostering community spirit and supporting the health and well-being of our residents.

The paving of 40 kilometres of Highway 55, Highway 3, and 23 located near Nipawin and Carrot River ensure safer and more efficient travel, connection for our communities, and enables the flow of goods and services.

But as we celebrate these achievements we must also look forward. We are motivated to ensure strong supports and programs for all the people of the province. Our work is not done. I want to turn more specifically to the Throne Speech. There are a few parts I would like to address.

Regarding health care, our government will work to ensure everyone in Saskatchewan has access to a primary health provider by the end of 2028. We will continue to increase the number of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals within the province.

[20:30]

I wanted to highlight the creation of the new diagnostic medical sonography ultrasound program at Suncrest College in Yorkton. A training program is now, for the first time, available in Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan students who want to train to provide these ultrasound services. My daughter, like others, did not have the opportunity to stay and train in Saskatchewan, but now other Saskatchewan students can. This is a component of our government's health human resources action plan to recruit, train, incentivize, and retain health care professionals. And it will contribute to the development of our health care workforce.

Regarding education, the government will expand its specialized support classroom pilot to 200 more schools throughout the province. There will be a focus on improving reading levels, specifically in kindergarten to grade 3.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said Bill 1 of the new legislative session will be the Saskatchewan affordability Act, legislation to enact the government's campaign commitments to make life affordable. The government will also strengthen *The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* and other legislation to keep our communities safe.

Together we will continue to improve health care and education, along with making life more affordable and communities safer.

We are motivated to continue to create and improve the areas in our province to ensure families thrive, businesses grow, and communities and municipalities flourish.

We will champion sustainable development of our resources and support the next generations of farmers, workers, and entrepreneurs and families. Aptly, our provincial motto translates from Latin to “from many peoples, strength.”

Mr. Speaker, as we work together in this Assembly toward a shared vision of prosperity and opportunity, I hope to do so with a high level of decorum and respect for this Assembly itself and for the members of the opposition. As I step into this new role, Mr. Speaker, I am filled with excitement and optimism for the future.

In closing, I will be supporting the original motion brought forward by the member from Kindersley-Biggar and seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. I will not be supporting the opposition’s amendment. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight.

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

Keith Jorgenson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to congratulate you on your election, and I want to congratulate members on both sides of the Assembly on their elections.

You know, I think the journey to stand before you, Mr. Speaker, is not a journey that we take on our own. It’s a journey that we get helped, that we receive aid from many people. I think we all take two journeys to arrive here. The short journey is the campaign to get elected, and the longer journey is to become the person worthy of being voted for. For both of these journeys I must give a multitude of thanks and a steadfast remembrance of why we are here and why our work is so important.

First, I want to speak about the short journey, although it didn’t seem short. Getting elected is a tremendous amount of work. Hundreds of thousands of steps taken by hundreds of people, hundreds of thousands of words earnestly spoken to thousands of people — that’s what allows me to stand before you and raise my voice to address the people’s business.

As a first-time MLA, when I walk into this building, it’s hard not to take in the grandeur of this building as well as the incredible role, trust that the people of Saskatchewan place in us to make consequential decisions about almost every aspect of their life. It truly is the great honour of my life.

I want to thank the people of Churchill-Wildwood NDP executive, the countless volunteers, my family, and of course the great residents of Churchill-Wildwood for bestowing this tremendous honour on me. In particular I want to thank Pat Keyser, Phil MacIntyre, Shelly Panchuk, Patrick Hopkins, Jennifer Coxworth, Michael Turner, Aiden Cobbe, Mary Scissons, Angie Fergusson, Cathy Surtees, Leta Atkinson, and Lori Hlady.

Now I want to talk about the longer journey here. I brought a number of items to my legislative office to remind me about where I came from, how important our work is. The first one is

my great-great-grandmother’s grade 8 school reader. Somehow miraculously after 100 years, this grade 8 school reader found its way to me in a box of donated books in a building that I worked at. And I absolutely love that book.

It’s a 110-year-old school reader from Swift Current, Saskatchewan. And because Emma Jorgenson naughtily wrote her name in it several times, I know it belonged to her. Her mother was killed and her father went back to Norway and left her with the neighbours near Stewart Valley. This is where my family tree in Saskatchewan begins. It started, Mr. Speaker, with loss and resilience, with co-operation and charity.

I love that book because it reminds me that, like most of us here in Saskatchewan, we all came from someplace else. We, or our ancestors, had incredible journeys filled with hardship and struggle and joy. Mr. Speaker, in the face of loss and hardship, our ancestors knew that we were stronger together.

I have in my office a photo of a little house at 1110 7th Street in Churchill-Wildwood. This was the house that my maternal grandfather built for himself. This tiny house was the centre of countless epic parties. And as Ukrainian Canadians, Christmas Eve was the most important meal of the day, or most important day of the year. An improbable number of people would squeeze into that tiny house. And, Mr. Speaker, if you came late, you’d have to ask the person seated with their back to the door to move because the table was set from the front door to the back door with kids in the basement and the summer kitchen.

And every one of us essentially had our last names misspelled because my grandfather, when he arrived here, could not read or write English. He could not even spell his own name. After supper the party would start in the garage. My grandfather fixed cars in the garage during the day. And my father often joked, as a result of these epic parties, that it was always advisable to have your car fixed before noon.

My baba spoke very little English, but she would smile lovingly at us kids. She would often say that there is always room for one more at the table. This photo reminds me of that, Mr. Speaker, that in a province that feeds the world, no one should go hungry.

I have a menu from a very fancy Christmas dinner that occurred in 1913 at the Empress Hotel here in Swift Current, Saskatchewan that members of my family attended. They had lobster and crab and half a dozen other kinds of meat. As my grandmother would say, they had done well.

In a little more than a decade, they lost everything at the start of the Great Depression. They went from eating lobster to lard sandwiches in a few short years. Mr. Speaker, it reminds me that we need to judge each other less and accept each other more. We need to outstretch our hands to others in welcome and aid.

I have my paternal grandmother’s wedding ring in a shadow box in my office. When I was just six months old, my mother left this world and my grandmother was there to provide me with everything that allows me to stand here today. I’m so grateful for the gifts that she gave me but aware as well, in the face of tragedy others are not as lucky as I was. Her ring reminds me that in the face of loss, it’s always cheaper to lift somebody up than to leave them down.

I have a memorial card for a Connor Lee. In the past 10 years, almost 3,000 Saskatchewan young people have died of overdoses. Thirty-eight of those were my students. One of them was Connor Lee. He was bright and intelligent and a tremendously affable young man. But sadly, Mr. Speaker, in the face of tragedy, he was not fortunate to have somebody give him all that he needed so he could be all that he could be.

I keep that card to remind me of two things, Mr. Speaker: one, the tragedy of the residential school system is not over. Young people continue to die simply because we allow them to. And two, tragedy is not free. We can see this play out over and over and over again in our streets, Mr. Speaker. We aren't saving money by allowing this to continue.

Mr. Speaker, for our entire history, our province has had one undeniable measure of progress — the increase in life expectancy. For the first time in our history, life expectancy is declining, and that's shameful.

Mr. Speaker, I have a certificate for my Guinness book world record. I hold the Guinness book world record for the world's longest doughnut. I made a doughnut that was around 20 feet long. It's not my greatest accomplishment. And Guinness does an absolutely incredible job. They send you a Purolator-like envelope that says "officially amazing" on the outside of it.

And I think, members, we can all agree that Saskatchewan is an amazing place. Our former colleagues here did amazing things. They set records of their own, Mr. Speaker — first public health care system in North America, first labour board, first bill of rights, first arts board. I brought that certificate to remind me that the people that work in this room are capable of doing amazing things again. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we're setting dubious records — last in health care, last in education, record homelessness, record overdoses.

Like many of us, Mr. Speaker, I have photos of my children. They're a blessing from God and a reminder of the importance of the work that we have to do here. My oldest child is Frances. She's a barrel racer and her partner is a bull rider. Her dream is to take over the nearly 100-year-old farm that we live in just northeast of Saskatoon.

Like many people in this province, my life is divided between urban and rural. This is the way it's always been, Mr. Speaker. And what makes Saskatchewan unique is nearly all of us can trace our history back to a farm, a piece of land from which nearly all of our economy flows. Mr. Speaker, policies that attempt to divide us based upon our postal code are simply wrong.

My middle child is Lily. She left Saskatchewan for Alberta this year. For the past 10 years this has been a story that's been told many, many times, Mr. Speaker. To be precise, 68,782 times. I'm going to say that number again: 68,782 times, young people and other people left Saskatchewan for other places. We've lost almost 69,000 people in net interprovincial emigration. If we include outward emigration in '23-24, that's more than the population of Prince Albert and Moose Jaw combined. It's as if two of our four largest cities moved to BC and Alberta. Instead of our kids and grandkids having to come home for Thanksgiving, we should be giving thanks that they can live close to home.

My youngest child is Parker. He is one of the many young people who has a diagnosis that requires his school to provide him with assistance that the school simply can't afford. Our kids deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, my kids attended a rural school. As many rural parents, we've always felt a sense of foreboding that our school would lose more grades, more programs, or maybe even close altogether as some schools have been forced to do because of population decline. This year we made the difficult decision to move our son to a school in Saskatoon because our rural school was unable to offer all the programs and classes that he required. Mr. Speaker, parents just want a government that focuses on supporting their communities, ensuring their kids' schools are properly funded and their kids are safe, focused on what matters.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about this building and this journey here again. This building is an absolutely incredible place to walk into, as one of my colleagues' sons mentioned, that his daddy worked in Elsa's castle. Perhaps when we're here it's easy to forget where we came from and what's truly important. As striking as how this place looks, I find the sound of this place equally noteworthy, whether it's the sound of one set of footsteps walking across the rotunda or the sound of hundreds of people speaking.

You know, when everyone's speaking in this building, it can be really hard to hear one voice. You really have to strain to hear among the din of sounds. And I believe that's our challenge here, Mr. Speaker. Among the din of sounds we must remember the voices of the people that elected us. Mr. Speaker, for me the short journey, the long journey, and all the voices that I heard on the way, whether it be my baba's or all the voters, are all telling me the same thing. They deserve better than this tired and out-of-touch government.

[20:45]

I met a mother whose child was horribly assaulted at their school. I met seniors having to choose between food and medicine because they couldn't afford both. I met a mother that found her son dead in their backyard of an overdose; absolutely breaks my heart. I met a woman that watched her husband near death in a car when they called 911 at a doctor's office and there was no ambulance available in the entire city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, through all the noise, these are the voices. These are the stories that must be told here in this Chamber, that must be heard, the voices of the people that we represent. It is an honour that has been given to all of us. And to the people of Churchill-Wildwood I say, it is not an honour I will take lightly. Your voice will be heard in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment as moved by the . . . Sorry. I will be supporting the amendment as moved and I will not be supporting the Throne Speech. Thank you very much.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton.

Kevin Kasun: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by first acknowledging my constituency that I represent, Prince Albert

Carlton, and its location on Treaty 6, and today I speak on Treaty 4 territory, both the homeland of the Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, although you have heard it a few times today, I would also like to join with my colleagues and congratulate you and the Deputy Speaker in their new role that will definitely keep you busy. With so many new members I am sure that there will be the odd reminder of all the rules that are very important to this House. I truly hope that we all heed your guidance and bring a higher level of decorum and conduct in this House. I am grateful that as many new members start this session, that we do so under a person of known integrity and a fair and honourable gentleman to fill the role.

Mr. Speaker, “A New Beginning.” What an appropriate title for the start of this, the thirtieth Legislative Assembly. As I stand here for my first time addressing this Assembly, I have my own new beginnings, as do many members here. In July of this year when the opportunity emerged for me to put my name forward and run as a nominee for the Saskatchewan Party, I knew that this was my opportunity to serve the people of Prince Albert Carlton and Saskatchewan.

But this is not a decision to be made alone, and for that I have to thank my wife, Shevawn, and all of her hard work, all her support and encouragement — working her full-time job, then coming to the campaign office after work, hitting the doors, and then coming in on her days off to help out as well. Our children, Elijah and Shiloh, after school and on the weekends, hitting those doors with my wife and I. I can’t thank my family enough.

My campaign team, which was led by my predecessor Joe and his wife, Fran Hargrave. Cole and Carter, who between the two of them led my door knocking team. Duane on sign patrol and Tami, the lady that just keeps everything running smoothly. Cherise, Dr. Nnamdi, Genesis, and all the other volunteers that helped every step of the way. To serve your community you have to learn to step back and let others serve you first. It was wonderful to speak to so many people in Prince Albert Carlton, hearing their concerns, listening to their suggestions and their passion for the future of this province.

I spoke to many people who were thinking about change, but I digress for a bit. As a former locomotive engineer operating trains that were 3400 metres — that’s 11,200 feet, just so you know — you can’t stop those things quickly. Large trains don’t like change. It takes miles to change the momentum of such a machine. You suddenly put on the brakes and try to change direction, it’ll be a disaster. Careful, thoughtful planning must be put into place.

I believe that that is what the Saskatchewan people ask this government for. Not a quick, dramatic move. Slight adjustments to keep on track and moving forward. Through conversation, people were more concerned about what kind of unknown changes there could possibly be rather than stay on the course for a bright future.

I must thank the people of Prince Albert Carlton for allowing me to be the representative for them in this House, a job that I do not take lightly. I’m excited for what we will accomplish in the next four years.

When the Premier and I graduated from high school together almost 30 years ago, the opportunities in this province were just not there. Our options were very limited. People would find that after struggling, working a couple of jobs to make ends meet, they would end up paying a higher personal tax. It was a cycle of working harder and never getting ahead, until finally a person would have to leave the province until they could save up enough money to come back so they could afford Saskatchewan.

But now what a great province to live in. By increasing the first-time homebuyers tax credit, allowing more people to achieve home ownership. And if you have a home, the creation of the home renovation tax credit allows people to keep their home and fix those things that every house needs to be fixed. The largest personal income tax reduction since 2008 will allow the people of Saskatchewan to spend their own money on products and services that they need in the way they want to.

It’s also exciting to know that this government will work with all levels of health care providers to come up with a team approach to health care. When I received my diagnosis of cancer this year, I’ve learned that doctors and nurses and health care staff must work as a team to come together on an individual’s health care plan. Not just a one-size-fits-all approach, but work as a team for the same end result. I believe that this is the approach that the government adheres to.

With the expansion of the Victoria Hospital in Prince Albert and opening additional urgent care centres in Saskatoon, North Battleford, Moose Jaw, Regina, and my city of Prince Albert, we are taking the pressure off emergency rooms across this province. And of course with these expansions, we are continuing to increase the numbers of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals as well as the support staff we need to keep these facilities running.

Mr. Speaker, I’m excited about our plans for education with a focus on improving reading levels specifically in kindergarten to grade 3, but even before the start of kindergarten providing funding for 12,000 additional new child care spaces. And once our children graduate, and if they choose to further their education, we will be there again to help them with the graduate retention program; then as I mentioned earlier, help them to buy their first home and keep going. What a different way to start than the way it was for us so many years ago.

Mr. Speaker, this government truly cares about Saskatchewan and its greatest asset, its people. The children are our future, and this government will be there to help them succeed at this journey in life.

Mr. Speaker, one career I chose many years ago was the trucking industry, one that I truly enjoyed and a trade that we desperately need people in. I am proud of our government’s introduction of a new \$5,000 class 1 truck driver training rebate. It’s exciting to know that this government will help people who choose different career paths if they don’t choose university.

I truly believe this government has listened to the people of this province. I believe that the people of Saskatchewan have trusted this government to keep our economy strong and growing, but has also trusted us to bring in the changes that need to be brought in to bring our province to the next level.

Mr. Speaker, as I enter this Assembly every day, my desire is to stay focused on making our province, our communities a better place to live, work, and play. Those are the reasons why I put my name forward, why I knocked on the doors and made myself known to the people of Prince Albert Carlton to be their representative in this House.

As I enter this majestic building every day and as I enter into this Assembly, I must tell myself that those are the same reasons that members on both sides of the House are here, as we on both sides debate our views on what we each believe is the best for this province. But as we do that, Mr. Speaker, it is my goal to maintain the high level of decorum and respect for this Assembly and all of the members of this House regardless of the side.

Thank you for letting me speak here today. God bless this House, God bless Prince Albert, and God bless Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in closing let me repeat what others have said and that I'll be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Kindersley-Biggan and seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Brittney Senger: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment as Speaker of the Assembly. I would also like to congratulate all the newly elected and returning members. It is a privilege to stand alongside such dedicated individuals as we work to serve our communities.

It is an immense honour to rise to address the Assembly for the first time. Representing the people of Saskatoon Southeast is both a privilege and a profound responsibility. I'm deeply thankful to the constituents who placed their confidence in me, believed in me, and trusted me to advocate for their needs with integrity and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, before I respond to the Throne Speech, I wish to acknowledge a few people in my life who supported me through what was an unexpectedly burdensome year and a hard-fought campaign. The victory we achieved was not mine alone. It was a victory for the entire community of Saskatoon Southeast. It was made possible by the collective efforts of countless donors, volunteers, members, and supporters. Though I cannot name everyone who contributed to this success, I am incredibly grateful to the dedicated team that rallied behind me. Their energy, passion, and belief in our mission were the driving forces behind the campaign's success.

I want to especially thank some remarkable individuals who were instrumental in this journey: my campaign manager, Kalen Leib, who not only organized and led my campaign but managed it with unwavering dedication; William Darragh, who always executed sound judgment and thoughtful decision making; and Elias Assefa, whose organizational skills were truly second to none. I'm also profoundly grateful to Craig Thebauld and Stephen Yardy, who brought a wealth of knowledge and expertise on policies and campaigns. And of course I owe a debt of gratitude to Jeff Klyne and Ryan Lipski.

From the moment I expressed my interest in running in Saskatoon Southeast, they believed in me wholeheartedly. They made countless sacrifices and offered steadfast support, inspiring me every step of the way. This journey would not have been possible without the incredible contributions of these individuals.

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to my grandparents, Rose and Dale Rawluk. My grandfather is a retired construction worker and business owner, and we have drastically different political ideologies. For the past 40 years my grandfather has always voted conservative. In fact he has been a Sask Party member, donor, and voter since their founding. That's why it means so much to me that over the past few months he has set aside his views and supported me.

My grandmother, on the other hand, has rarely challenged my political opinions; however she has inspired me throughout my life to be selfless and serve the community. From a young age, she encouraged me to volunteer, attend community events, and always be kind to others.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize my siblings Michael, Laura, and Ben, who provided me with words of encouragement when I needed them the most. Despite their busy lives and the distance between us, they each found time to be present throughout the campaign, and all of them stood by my side on election night.

And of course I must express my deepest gratitude to my parents whose unwavering support and guidance have shaped me into the person I am today. My mother in particular demonstrates fierce independence, bravery, and kindness. Her compassion, love, and authenticity taught me invaluable lessons about facing my fears, taking risks, and remaining true to myself in the process.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge a few extraordinary individuals in my life who believed in me even though politics may not have been their passion. Among them, Justin stands out for his boundless compassion, generosity, and kindness, qualities that I found truly humbling and deeply inspiring. Similarly, my best friend Meghan's unwavering commitment to serving the community is a constant source of inspiration, pushing me to strive every day to be a better person. Her unmatched compassion, patience, and kindness set her apart as a truly remarkable individual.

[21:00]

Lastly, I'd like to thank my predecessor, Don Morgan, for his 21 years of service to our community. That's more than two-thirds of my life. He carried himself with respect and consistently acted in the best interests of the constituency. I know I have some pretty big shoes to fill and, judging by the office, some pretty big filing cabinets too.

He set me up for success by leaving behind a few true treasures in the constituency office. I can't wait to make full use of the cutting-edge TV-DVD [digital versatile disc]-VCR [videocassette recorder] combo from the early 2000s — it's almost a historical artifact at this point — and the paper shredder that, by the looks of it, will qualify for a pension before I do.

Mr. Speaker, I have been given the honour of being shadow

minister for the Status of Women, disabilities, and community-based organizations, a portfolio that is well suited to my background. I come from the not-for-profit sector and have dedicated my entire career to working to improve the lives of those around me. Mr. Speaker, I was raised knowing that everyone can make a difference in the world. Volunteering and community involvement were not just encouraged in my upbringing; they were essential values. This led me to engage with numerous organizations, many of which focus on supporting women and advancing gender equality.

Women's issues have always been deeply important to me. I have experienced first-hand the pervasive challenges many women face: harassment, unwanted comments, and situations where I have felt uncomfortable or unsafe simply because of my gender. These experiences shaped my perspective and fuelled my passion for change. They also guided my academic journey, leading me to study political studies and women and gender studies. Learning about intersectionality and the systemic barriers faced by women and gender-diverse people had a profound impact on me.

In my early 20s, I recall a relative suggesting that I pursue nursing or teaching because those were practical careers for women. Less than a decade ago the idea of a woman pursuing a career in politics felt far less attainable. In 2016, however, I saw remarkable women running for office and elected to this very legislature. For the first time, I realized politics could be a viable path for me. Today I am proud to stand here alongside some of those trailblazing women, working together to create meaningful change.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, a reminder of the ongoing work needed to address gender-based violence. Over the next 15 days, the United Nations will campaign against this pervasive issue, a campaign that feels especially urgent here in Saskatchewan.

Our province has some of the highest rates of violence against women in Canada, and the resources to support those fleeing violence remain greatly inadequate. In 2022 the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission reported that 5,839 women were victims of intimate partner violence and 5,744 women reported family violence. Per capita, Saskatchewan's rate of gender-based violence are more than double the national average. Mr. Speaker, these statistics are staggering and unacceptable. The women, children, and families of Saskatchewan deserve better. They deserve safety, they deserve dignity, and a chance to thrive. I am committed to doing my part to help achieve this.

As I respond to the Throne Speech, I reflect on those who too often remain unheard or left behind. I think of the women trapped in abusive relationships because there is no support and nowhere for them to go. I think of parents of children with complex needs like autism, fighting for the resources they need. I think of transgender youth struggling to navigate their identities only to face the devastating impact of being outed before they are ready. I think of new Canadians who come here seeking a better life only to face barriers that hold them back. And I think of seniors who worked tirelessly to build a stronger Saskatchewan but now struggle to afford the dignity and quality of life they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, over the past several months I had the privilege of speaking with people from all walks of life in Saskatoon Southeast. One conversation in particular stayed with me. I met a couple in their 70s who had spent most of their life in rural Saskatchewan. The man proudly shared that he had always voted conservative, and he had even been approached by the Progressive Conservatives, long before I was born, to run. From the moment he opened the door, it was clear we disagreed on nearly every policy. His wife however was quieter. She encouraged him to hush up so she could hear what I had to say.

I noticed a few moving boxes in the room but didn't think anything of it until the topic of affordability came up. They explained that they had recently relocated to Saskatoon to be closer to family and to access health care. With no public transportation like STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] available, moving to the city had become their only viable choice.

Initially they were happy with their decision and their new home in Saskatoon Southeast. But then their rent skyrocketed, an increase of over \$200 a month or \$2,400 a year. On a fixed income this increase, combined with the rising cost of everything else, had them feeling trapped and uncertain about their future. Their story reflects a growing affordability crisis affecting so many people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I chose to run for office because I was deeply disappointed in the direction our province is heading. The rise in homelessness is heartbreaking. And our domestic violence rates, more than double the national average, are nothing short of devastating. These issues along with countless others are symptoms of a system that is failing to support its people.

As I spoke with residents across Saskatoon Southeast, it became clear that these challenges are not confined to any one group or demographic. People from all backgrounds are struggling with issues that could be alleviated through thoughtful and compassionate government action, yet they feel left behind.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech falls short of addressing these pressing concerns. It fails the people of Saskatchewan and does not offer the inclusive vision or comprehensive solutions that the province needs right now. Therefore I will be supporting the amendment and I will not be supporting the government's motion to accept the Speech from the Throne.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Darlene Rowden: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to address this Assembly tonight. I would like to begin by offering my heartfelt congratulations to you on your new role and also to the member from Lumsden-Morse in his capacity as Deputy Speaker. I have the utmost confidence that both of you will serve this Assembly well, guiding us with integrity and fairness.

I would like to acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 4 territory, the traditional lands of the Cree, Saulteaux, Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda, and Métis people.

As a farmer and rancher, I benefit greatly from the land's abundance and bounty. I am deeply grateful for the gifts it

provides. This land has provided for many generations of families, mine included, and I am committed to stewardship that respects both its history and future.

Mr. Speaker, as a newly elected member of the Legislative Assembly for the Saskatchewan Party representing the beautiful and historic constituency of Batoche, I stand here with a sense of immense pride and profound gratitude. I am honoured to be a voice for the people of Batoche, and I am eager to embrace the challenges that come with this new role. I understand the responsibility placed on me and am committed to serving with dedication and sincerity.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to introduce myself, my family, and my community to this Assembly. I am a proud farmer's daughter and even prouder to call myself a rancher, working alongside my husband, Richard Wilson, of over 32 years. Together we have built and grown our generational ranch, raising our three adult children, Blake, Amy, and Rikki-Jean. All three have chosen to build their lives in the agriculture sector here in Saskatchewan, a testament to the strong roots and values they developed on our ranch.

Blake has become the backbone of our cattle operation. The knowledge, skill, and cow sense instilled in him by his father and grandfather, along with his desire to learn and try new practices, serves our ranch and the industry well.

Amy, an agronomist to producers throughout the province, was educated at the University of Saskatchewan. She continues to broaden her knowledge and expertise in crop sciences while practising her craft at home and raising cattle with us.

Rikki-Jean, with her deep passion and love for animals, became a livestock extension specialist also educated at the University of Saskatchewan. Her knowledge and position is a valued resource to livestock producers in our province and at home. She also raises her herd of cattle on our family ranch.

Not to brag, Mr. Speaker, but all three of my children are showcasing their hard work and passion at Canadian Western Agribition this week right here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, my children were raised immersed in the Saskatchewan 4-H beef program where they learned the valuable life lessons of public speaking, animal husbandry, record keeping, financial management, and community service. They learned resilience and grace throughout the challenges they faced and successes they celebrated. These lessons have shaped them as well as our family, and remind me daily of the strength and beauty of rural Saskatchewan communities.

My passion for service and education also runs deep, Mr. Speaker. I dedicated 15 years to the Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Board, with the honour of serving as board Chair in my final years. This experience taught me the importance of collaboration, working with diverse personalities, and governing with fairness. What is best for students was always the focus, Mr. Speaker. I learned from talented colleagues like Barry Hollick, who exemplified statesmanship and the art of politics, and Arne Lindberg, who demonstrated the power of relationships and grace under pressure.

Collaborating with our Elders' council, Elders such as Liz Settee and Bette Huntley, I developed a deep appreciation for Indigenous ways of knowing. These women are not only respected Elders but are also dear friends, Mr. Speaker, who have enriched my understanding of the world.

Saskatchewan Rivers School Division serves a student body of over 50 per cent First Nations and Métis, Mr. Speaker. I am particularly proud of the work we did to support initiatives like Following Their Voices, our high school learning model, land-based education, and language revitalization programs. These initiatives are crucial in providing tools for success to all students, regardless of background, so they can reach their full potential. We all benefit from an educated society, Mr. Speaker.

To the people of Batoche constituency: I am humbled and grateful that you have entrusted me with this role. Batoche is a land of rolling hills, fertile farm land, and tight-knit communities. It is home to four First Nations, vibrant Métis communities, three Hutterian colonies, and the national historic site of Batoche.

[21:15]

Our towns are small but mighty, each with their unique traditions and celebrations, like Aberdeen Days in June, the Birch Hills Threshing Day in August, or the Pilger Pumpkin Festival in September. We boast several beautiful golf courses and the Wheatland Express Excursion Train, which provides visitors with a memorable Saskatchewan rail experience between the communities of Wakaw and Cudworth. I invite all members of this Assembly to visit Batoche constituency and experience our rich heritage and community spirit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my journey to this Chamber was not a solo endeavour. I owe a debt of gratitude to my campaign team and the Batoche constituency board of directors and my friends, Tricia and Fran Lucyshyn and Gail Lucyshyn. Their hard work, wisdom, and dedication were instrumental in my election. Real Hamoline, James Hauber, Steve Skoworodko, Paul Marten, Kevin Kirk, Don Kolla, and especially my husband and son, Richard and Blake Wilson: thank you for your tireless efforts and unwavering support. I also want to acknowledge Brenda Brothwell, who kept our campaign on track with her remarkable organizational and financial skills.

There is a whole other team I need to acknowledge and thank, Mr. Speaker. This team works out of head office here in Regina. It is the Saskatchewan Party senior team, Mr. Speaker. I recognize Patrick Bundrock, Dylan Pollon, Deanne Marshall, and many others in that office. The hours this team puts into planning, preparing, training, and executing a successful campaign is admired and appreciated. I will also say thank you for all the reassurances and for answering even the silly questions. From the bottom of my heart, I thank them all.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my deepest appreciation to my family. I lost my mom, Lois Rowden, during the campaign, Mr. Speaker. Mom was my champion in everything my whole life. I hear her voice — confident, reasonable, loving, and fun. I will carry her with me always, Mr. Speaker. To my husband and loved ones back on the farm, thank you for your sacrifices and support. My absence will be an adjustment, but I know you are prepared. I do hope you don't make the St. Louis pizzeria your second home at mealtime every

day though. No.

Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech, the government recognizes that most people voted for a strong economy and bright future for Saskatchewan. At the same time, many others voted for change. I am proud that our government will deliver both for the people of Saskatchewan, both change and a bright future. The Throne Speech focuses on health and education where the government will do better. The government recognizes these were priority areas heard on the doorsteps, Mr. Speaker.

In health care, the government will shorten wait times for surgeries by increasing surgeries to 450,000 over the next four years; open additional urgent care facilities in North Battleford, Moose Jaw, and on the border of my constituency of Batoche, in Saskatoon and Prince Albert so those in need will have timely access to mental health and addictions services.

The government will continue to increase the number of doctors, nurses, and other health professionals by building on its ambitious health human resources action plan to strengthen health care services across our province. This work will lead to ensure everyone has access to a doctor or nurse practitioner by the end of 2028. These are just a few positive deliveries in health care the Throne Speech indicates, Mr. Speaker.

In education the government will expand its specialized support pilot to 200 more schools throughout the province, creating a positive learning environment for students, staff, families, while providing students with supports they need, Mr. Speaker. The government will focus on early years reading levels, giving students every opportunity for success. More teachers and educational support staff will be added to deliver on these commitments.

The government will increase funding to school divisions and add more teachers and support staff to help meet the pressures of growing student numbers and the challenges of classroom complexity. The government will also be adding more schools and additional child care spaces to meet the needs of a growing province in the area of education, Mr. Speaker.

The Throne Speech also offers much in the way of affordability, a strong economy, vibrant communities, along with safer communities. This includes the largest personal income tax reduction since 2008; removing the carbon tax on home heating for another year; increasing the first-time homebuyers tax credit; increasing the personal care home benefit by \$1,000 a month; keeping the small-business tax at 1 per cent; and important in my constituency, a \$5,000 class 1 truck driver training rebate. The government is committed to making our communities safer, Mr. Speaker, with more police officers, more mental health support, and more access to recovery spaces.

All of these commitments, along with many more in the Throne Speech, help to ensure Saskatchewan continues economic growth while meeting the needs and services people expect.

Mr. Speaker, I enter this Assembly with a clear purpose: to work for a brighter future for Batoche and for Saskatchewan. My motivation is simple. I want to make this province a better place to live, work, and celebrate. Our best days are always ahead, Mr. Speaker.

I hope to engage in meaningful and respectful debates, maintaining a high standard of decorum. While our opinions may differ, I know that every member here shares the common goal of improving our province.

I will be supporting the original motion forwarded by the member from Kindersley-Biggar and seconded by the member from Sask Rivers. However I will not be supporting the opposition's amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak tonight, and God bless Saskatchewan.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silverspring.

Hugh Gordon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give my personal condolences to the member from Batoche on the loss of her mother during the campaign. I can't imagine how difficult that must have been for you and your family, and so I wish you nothing but the best.

Mr. Speaker, hon. members, and to the people of Saskatchewan, I come before you as the newly elected representative for Saskatoon Silverspring with immense gratitude and humility, having been given the unique privilege to serve the people of Saskatchewan. As such it is necessary for me to give thanks to the many people in my life that helped me reach this significant personal and professional milestone.

I'd first like to thank my wife, Kim, whose love and support and enthusiastic encouragement allowed me to make the commitment to run for office and to serve the people of Saskatoon Silverspring. Without her I would not be the person I am today, let alone would I be here standing before you. Kim, I love you with all my heart.

To my children Connor and Sophie: I am thankful for the love you have given and the joy you have brought your mother and I. I am proud to be your dad and hope that you see the nobility of public service and giving back to your fellow citizens.

There are also a number of people I need to thank, some of whom unfortunately are no longer with us to share this moment with me. To my late nan, Freda Schuck, a spunky war bride from England who came to Canada to raise her five children in Regina, I give thanks. She always taught me the importance of helping those most in need and having a government that looks out for working people and the disadvantaged. To my late grandad, Andy Schuck, a good old farm boy from Saskatchewan who always reminded me that it was the NDP that did those things and helped to build a province we could all be proud of.

To my mother, Lesley, who got to watch her son get sworn in as an MLA last week: you put the political fire in my belly during our many family dinner debates to take meaningful action to help working people, advocate for those who could not, and give me the desire to one day pursue this noble endeavour. And to my late father, Jim Gordon, who always told me, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained," and who reminded me that I could do whatever I set my mind to. He always showed great confidence in me. And whenever I doubted myself he would say, "If not you, then who? So why not you?" To them I owe a debt of gratitude I can never repay.

To the members of the Silverspring NDP riding executive, I give thanks to their support and dogged determination to bring change to Saskatchewan. Without them and the dozens of volunteers who knocked on so many doors, spoke with so many constituents, worked so tirelessly and for so many days on end, I say thank you for your efforts. And I will do my utmost to ensure your efforts go toward building a better province.

Finally to the good people of Saskatoon Silverspring: I thank you for the trust and the confidence that you have placed in me to be your representative. You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the great fortunes of my life was being given the privilege of serving in the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. Having been born in Regina and raised in St. Albert, Alberta, I did not know what was in store for me when I joined the force in 1997. Yet somehow the folks in staffing knew that the best place to send a green-eared rookie from the big city was to a little town called Spiritwood.

So there it was that I began my return to the province where I was born. And it was there, Mr. Speaker, in Spiritwood that I learned what it meant to be a police officer. I learned what it meant to serve and to protect, the importance of leading by example, to be counted on, and to truly help those when they needed it the most. Yes, there were many challenging moments for me and my colleagues, but through it all I revelled in having the privilege in serving my community, my province, and my country. And so it is with great humility today, Mr. Speaker, that I undertake that awesome responsibility yet once again, albeit in a much different capacity.

To the people of Saskatoon Silverspring, I pledge to serve you in the only way that I know how: to work tirelessly day and night, 24-7, 365 a year, to answer your calls for assistance, to help those most in need, and to give a voice to those who do not have one. I pledge to you today to do everything in my power as your representative to make Saskatchewan the best place to raise your children; to send them to school, college, or university; the best place to work in, to start a business, and to invest in. I will work to make this province the best place to get the health care you and your loved ones need without it costing your life savings.

I will work to make Saskatchewan a more affordable place to live, where you won't have to decide between paying the rent, the mortgage, or for food. I will help build a Saskatchewan where everyone has a place to call home, and where people who need mental health and addiction supports get them when they need them. I will fight for those who face hate and discrimination, because they are different and struggle every day just to be an accepted part of society. And it will be through all of those efforts, working with my colleagues on both sides of this Assembly, that I intend to leave Saskatchewan a much better place than I found it, Mr. Speaker.

[21:30]

So it is with that I am pleased to support the amendment put forward by my colleague, the member from Regina Walsh Acres, and I will not be supporting the motion from the government. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Hon. Warren Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and indicate my support for the Throne Speech provided yesterday. You know, the Throne Speech not only opened the first session of the thirtieth session of the Saskatchewan legislature, but it's also providing a new beginning. And it's a beginning that not only will keep our economy strong and the future bright, but it's also going to bring change for the many constituents who were looking for it. And it's those constituents, the constituents of Melville-Saltcoats that I would like to thank for their continued confidence and support in myself and the Saskatchewan Party, confidence that we will be able to continue the work that we've been doing to provide a quality of life that supports their family, their friends, and their businesses. And it's my family, my wife, Carla, in particular, who I appreciate every day for her support and encouragement, especially on the 10 per cent of the days that aren't that positive, and encouraging me to always remember the 90 per cent of the days that are good days, positive days, where we can make a difference in the lives of our constituents.

I always have to talk about the other reason that I continue in this career, and that's to always be there to support and provide a better life for our kids and our grandkids so that they can continue to believe that this is the greatest place on earth to live, to work, and to raise a family.

I offer thanks to my fellow candidates who sacrificed their time to take part in the democratic process that we've all been provided. I'd also like to thank my fellow Sask Party colleagues who are not back here in this House. Your sacrifices, your service to your communities and constituents, and contributions to your province are truly appreciated. Whether you have served here for a number of terms or just one term, you have left a mark on how I approach my work in and outside this legislature.

To those who are entering here for the first time, enjoy the moment. You're going to be surprised at how quickly your time here flies by. You're going to be involved in committee work. You're going to be meeting with stakeholders and attending events really every day that you're here. This is your new family, including that goofy uncle who tells bad jokes at Christmastime.

You know, you're going to have the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life. I've had the pleasure of engaging with billionaires to those attempting to convince others to leave gang life. From world-class researchers to just extraordinary, everyday people who are making a difference in their neighbours' lives. From those looking for an apology for the time in residential schools, to First Nations investing in billion-dollar infrastructure projects. My advice to everyone here for the first time is to make the most of your time, as it will end here quicker than what you probably will realize.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is a little bit of everything for everybody, whether it's the students that I talked to in Melville Comprehensive School, who are looking for increased funding for their schools and classrooms to improve their learning experience and helping their teachers out, to the seniors who may be suffering from diabetes who are looking forward to the expansion of coverage for glucose monitoring for seniors. This Throne Speech identifies the help that we're going to be able to provide for those looking for health care by improving their access to a health professional.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my two hospitals that are both operated by Emmanuel Health in both Esterhazy and Melville have received more doctors and have been provided additional nurse practitioners to help cover clinical visits. And I could even provide a public service announcement that if you need a family doctor, we have openings in Esterhazy.

Our human health resources action plan initiated in 2022 has converted permanent part-time positions in both hospitals to full-time which has resulted in a significant reduction in bypass experiences in both acute care facilities. Major development in Regina has been the opening of the urgent care centre. This is a facility that has redirected patients from the emergency departments of the two Regina ERs [emergency room] to a more wraparound system of care.

The urgent care centres treat patients that require non-life-threatening or limb-threatening injuries that need same-day treatment to more confidential and discreet, maybe mental health and addiction services. Patients can access those services from a range of care providers including physicians, nurse practitioners, mental health professionals, diagnostic technicians, to pharmacists. As the urgent care centre has been a success, we'll be opening additional centres in Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Moose Jaw, and another in Regina.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am so proud to live and have raised a family in this province. The opportunities that we have in front of us are exciting to be a part of. There is nothing that gets me more excited, than a Rider victory, than really telling a room full of high school students, discussing the incredible opportunities that they will have in front of them once they graduate from school, maybe even after they pick up some post-secondary training and then start applying for jobs.

As of last night, the SaskJobs website has 10,730 jobs posted on it, offering anything from an accreditation coordinator for the Meadow Lake Tribal Council to a manager of transit operations and training for the city of Regina. Opportunities for engineers, health care professionals, professional agrologists, IT [information technology] programming specialists. Jobs are available anywhere from Aneroid to Zealandia. And I like to tell students that their dream job probably doesn't even exist yet, but by the time they graduate it will be posted.

Small business is big business in Saskatchewan. As of 2023, Saskatchewan had nearly 149,000 small businesses who employed 31 per cent of our workforce. And we're continuing to support these entrepreneurs by keeping the small-business tax rate at 1 per cent.

As well, we are creating a young entrepreneur bursary. This is to support the young people like Lena Kohlenberg, who I introduced here in the legislature last spring. Lena was a high school student from Melville who has a small business called LK Crochet. If Lena wanted to expand her business, this bursary may provide her that opportunity. She would receive a \$5,000 bursary which would be applied toward eligible business expenses, not including salaries. She would also be paired to a mentor from the local business community to really help her as a new entrepreneur navigate through the early years of business operations. Mr. Deputy Speaker, every successful business person today started somewhere with a small idea that they are

able to bring to life.

We are also developing a new small and medium-size enterprise investment tax credit, and this tax credit will provide 50 per cent of a tax credit for individuals who invest in the equity of a Saskatchewan small and medium-size enterprise with 50 employees or fewer. We anticipate working with our Saskatoon and Saskatchewan chambers of commerce to pilot both of these new programs.

To keep our young professionals in our province, we are also increasing the highly successful graduate retention program plan by 20 per cent.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan has a lot of big business in this province. In 2023 our province exported nearly \$50 billion in production to 163 countries. We broke a number of our own export records in agri-food exports, ag equipment exports, exports to Latin America countries. Mr. Deputy Speaker, roughly 33 per cent or 200,000 jobs in this province are in industries which are dependent on international exports.

Another fun fact is that in 2023 we exported over a billion dollars worth of goods to four individual countries and five regions, including the US [United States], Brazil, India, Japan, the EU [European Union], the Middle East region, North Africa, Asian and Andean regions.

But this international trade just doesn't happen because our exporters really picked up the phone and cold-called the buyer in Brazil. No, it didn't occur because someone returned an email and maybe sent a letter to India. It came as a result of the very hard work, the perseverance of a number of very hard-working officials located in one of our nine trade offices located in China, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Singapore, UAE [United Arab Emirates], the UK [United Kingdom], and Vietnam. People are busy nurturing relationships, building trust with government officials and prospective customers within their respective countries, and they're following a countless number of leads generated locally in their business community.

And it's also because of the hard work and commitment by a number of incredible people who work in my ministry, the Ministry of Trade and Export Development, here in Regina, in Saskatoon, and La Ronge. And it's the remarkable people in TED [Trade and Export Development] who have helped Saskatchewan attract record new capital investment, private capital investment that's added up to approximately \$40 billion that has come into this province since 2020.

And our officials in the Ministry of Trade and Export Development supported 22 investment decisions worth a combined \$7.4 billion just in the last fiscal year. These are significant investments that have occurred in our mining, our oil and gas, our value-added ag, our fertilizer, our forestry and manufacturing sector.

These are investments that have occurred throughout the province, including in my constituency of Melville-Saltcoats and the surrounding Yorkton area. It includes major investment in the expansion of the potash industry in Mosaic in Esterhazy, Nutrien in Rocanville, canola crush expansions at Richardson Pioneer in Yorkton, Louis Dreyfus in Yorkton. These are billion-dollar

projects, billion-dollar projects that employ local employees and contractors, like Noble Construction or Saskpro or Crete-Tek or SECON in Esterhazy, or maybe Timco Construction or Goebel's Cabinets in Churchbridge.

These are full-time jobs happening in both rural and urban Saskatchewan. These are real companies making a commitment to stay in this province where they pay good wages and benefits, where they create a macro climate of business that supports their industry. These are companies that pay royalties and levies to the provincial government that in turn support the services that our constituents expect in health care, education, senior supports, social services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another contribution to keeping our economy strong is the contribution that Indigenous peoples, businesses, and organizations make to the economic well-being of the province. At the same time, we acknowledge the continuous and ongoing work we need to continue to increase prosperity for our Indigenous people and communities throughout the province.

Saskatchewan's Indigenous-led companies and organizations are growing our economy by creating thousands of jobs and opportunities throughout the province. Our government is committed to build on this success with the establishment of the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation which provides access to capital for Indigenous communities investing in Saskatchewan's key sectors.

Saskatchewan's efforts to advance Indigenous economic development continues to show positive results. According to the latest data released by Statistics Canada, 5.8 per cent of Saskatchewan's total private sector, the business sector, has a majority of First Nation, Métis, or Inuit ownership. This is the second-highest percentage among the provinces and is more than double the national percentage of 2.4 per cent. This dedication to supporting Indigenous economic opportunities was further demonstrated by the establishment of the Saskatchewan Indigenous Investment Finance Corporation, SIIFC, in 2022, and SIIFC was founded to provide access to capital for Indigenous communities and entities participating in Saskatchewan's natural resource and value-added agriculture sectors.

And there is a lot of excitement in our First Nations and Métis communities as they participate in the new resource development projects that are occurring throughout the province, such as NexGen, Denison, and Fission Uranium projects in northwest Saskatchewan, or Foran copper projects in northeast Saskatchewan, or the One Sky Forest Products OSB [oriented strand board] plant in Prince Albert, or the expansion of the Pro Metal Industries plant here in Regina.

These are projects that are supporting communities and the economy, which in turn is going to provide the necessary government revenue to support the education, the health, social services programs that our constituents expect.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a broken province. This is not a dumpster-fire economy. This is not a place that you can't be proud of, that so many of our colleagues unfortunately across the way have been quoted as saying over the last couple of years. And my hope is that our new colleagues are not going to continue

that narrative. There are areas that we need to improve in health care and education. This Throne Speech addresses those issues and makes commitments that will support health care and education to ensure that we have the support and services that our constituents have asked for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will support the Throne Speech as moved by the member from Kindersley-Biggar, seconded by the member from Sask Rivers, and will not be in favour of the amendment put up by the opposition. God bless our constituents, God bless our province, and God bless our country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Brent Blakley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first want to congratulate you and the Deputy Speaker on your election to your high offices in this Assembly. You are the custodians of the democratic traditions of this place, and I know all members will want to wish you well. May I also take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the cabinet on their various appointments and all members of the Assembly on their successful elections.

[21:45]

I'd like to pause for a moment here, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge Christine Tell for her 17 years of service to government and to the people of Saskatchewan. I thank Ms. Tell for her commitment and contributions to the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon and this evening I've sat here quiet and attentive with interest as members of the government delivered their speeches and will continue to do so. In the spirit of respect and decorum, I look forward to the same.

It is quite an honour, Mr. Speaker, to be standing here today in the Saskatchewan legislature and realize that things have come full circle. My dad worked here for the government in the 1970s and had an office on the bottom floor of this building. I remember coming here to this office as a kid on a Saturday and being awestruck by the sheer size of the building.

Standing here today I am aware that none of us got here on our own. All of us in the Assembly had teams of people helping us out, providing support, and cheering us on. My number one team is my family. My wife, Carla, and our children Janelle, Taline, Jay, and Kayla, were unwavering in their support and encouragement in this process that started several months ago.

In the midst of this journey, last June my wife was elected as bishop to lead the eastern synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. So while she represents the churches and pastors of Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic provinces, I'm here representing the people of Saskatchewan. We both jumped into the public arena at the same time because it's important work that needs people to step forward and accept the challenge.

Another team that I wish to thank and recognize are the volunteers on the recent campaign. I was fortunate enough to share resources with our members from Regina University and Regina Douglas Park. We had an incredible group of volunteers

who worked tirelessly, knocking on doors, making phone calls, delivering and collecting signs, and providing food for our campaign office. Just a fantastic group of people.

Also deserving of recognition here today is our amazing campaign team led by our campaign manager, Evelyn Riggs, and volunteer coordinator, Judy Vanta. Aidan, Dylan, Justin, Nicole, Brett, and Jonah worked non-stop in working toward our common goal.

My last and biggest thank you goes out to the constituents of Regina Wascana Plains for their involvement, engagement, and input and support in the months leading up to the recent provincial election. I had many conversations where I made it clear that if successful, I was to be their voice in the legislature. That's exactly what I intend to be: their voice in the Saskatchewan legislature.

I will be engaged and involved in the community. To do that, I need to meet with the people at cultural and sporting events, in the shops and places of business in the area. I intend to get out there and talk with the people of Regina Wascana Plains, to know their thoughts, opinions, and ideas. That's my main job: to represent the people of Regina Wascana Plains in this legislature.

The constituency of Regina Wascana Plains is a very diverse community with people from many different walks of life. It's a mosaic of several different cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds. The people here are young professionals, those that work in the trades, health care workers and educators, folks that work in retail and the service industry. The people of Wascana Plains help keep this city and the province running. These folks come from many different cultural and religious backgrounds and mirror Canada's rich and diverse makeup. New Canadians have come to Regina Wascana Plains from the Philippines, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, just to name a few, and all contribute to the fabric of this constituency and Saskatchewan.

My constituency is home to four elementary schools, two distinct business areas, the Sandra Schmirler Leisure Centre, and several seniors' complexes. It has varying residential areas with single detached homes, townhouses, semi-detached homes, duplexes, and apartments.

I am here today on a promise, Mr. Speaker, a promise to represent and advocate for the people of Regina Wascana Plains and the people of Saskatchewan to the best of my ability and effort. I believe another important part of my job is to keep the government opposite accountable. The people's government cannot govern without checks and balances. The fact that there are 27 of us sitting on the opposition tells me that the people of Saskatchewan indeed want some checks and balances in government.

I'm also here, Mr. Speaker, on a promise to the 2SLGBTQ+ [two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning plus] community to represent and advocate for them to the best of my ability and effort to ensure that they are afforded the same human rights, freedoms, and opportunities as everyone else in this province. People of this community are rightfully very concerned about recent political rhetoric in the province. 2SLGBTQ+ youth are five times more likely to consider suicide, seven times more likely to attempt suicide. Discrimination,

harassment, and violence are just some of the major risk factors that influence these sombre and sobering statistics. This is just one social issue that I hope to address in discussions in these chambers.

As I begin my service here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, being a retired teacher, I'm immediately concerned about the state of our education system in this province. And in preparation for this speech, as I'm sure many other members did, I conducted a little research referring to some maiden speeches of the past. I find it curious that in remarks made by the member for Regina Lakeview in May 2016 and the member from Saskatoon Eastview in December 2020, alarm bells were sounded in response to our declining education system in the province.

For the past eight years and prior to that, this discussion and debate has taken place in these chambers regarding our declining education system. And despite these warnings, we find our education system in last place in per-student funding in the country. There has been little to no response to the influx of new students in the province. There have been few provisions to properly deal with the increased student population. The result is overcrowded classrooms, schools that are bursting at the seams, having to use libraries and staff rooms as classroom space. Teacher burnout from lack of proper support to deal with the needs of all the students is leading to young teachers leaving the profession.

The government has responded reactively rather than proactively. In Regina Wascana Plains, instead of building new facilities when there was a call for it 10 years ago, the government has chosen to wait, and so the existing schools have nowhere else to put the students. Hopefully the janitors' rooms are big enough.

The government made some pledges during the election time to build a new elementary school and high school in The Towns area in Wascana Plains. They have vowed to get shovels in the ground and get those schools built. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a shovel in my truck. Mr. Speaker, if the government wants to get started on those schools right away, I'm willing to work with members opposite to make that happen as soon as possible.

School staff in the province continues to be an issue, with not enough teachers to handle our increasing student population. During September I had a short-term contract teaching at Sheldon-Williams Collegiate here in the city. I visited one teacher in her classroom who had 38 grade 11 AP [advanced placement] English students in one class. Half of them had to work on the floor in the hallway to get any productive work done.

A teacher in another school I spoke to in September had 38 high school biology students in his class. That day, one was added to make it 39. With such numbers in our classrooms, the teachers are working tirelessly and, despite their best efforts, continue to struggle to adequately teach, assist, solve problems, and handle classroom management. Furthermore, support in the form of educational assistants does not meet the needs of the students or the schools. After years of obvious warning signs and much debate, we still find ourselves with an education system that is failing our students.

The other area of immediate concern, Mr. Speaker, is the state of

our health care system. This was another prevalent area of conversation as I spoke with people in Regina Wascana Plains. In remarks made in these chambers by the member from Saskatoon Fairview in October 2017 and the member from Regina Walsh Acres in October 2023, concern was expressed regarding our underfunded, underperforming health care system.

Again, Mr. Speaker, seven years later we find ourselves with a health care system that is in last place for surgical wait times for hip and knee surgeries. It is plagued by overcrowded hospitals and ER rooms, ERs that are having to close its doors due to a lack of personnel, a shortage of family doctors, locally trained health care workers leaving the province.

In a recent visit to the emergency room here in the city, a young woman needed attention because she'd been attacked by a dog. The woman sat in the waiting room as the wounds continued to bleed, needing to have the wounds bandaged several times. I understand that ER rooms follow a triage procedure that says, more immediate cases first. But she sat in that waiting room for nine hours, for nine hours before she was attended to and her wounds stitched up, all because the ER room didn't have the staff or the room to attend the patients in a timely manner. These incidents, Mr. Speaker, are happening every single day and are evidence that our health care system is critical and in need of overhaul.

My priority and my work in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, will be to work tirelessly for the people of Regina Wascana Plains and Saskatchewan, to ensure that all are afforded equal human rights, freedoms, and opportunities, so that all can experience success and thrive.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment made by the member of Regina Walsh Acres. I will not be supporting the motion. And with that I move, Mr. Speaker, to adjourn debate on the motion. Thank you.

Speaker Goudy: — So the member has moved to adjourn debate. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Speaker Goudy: — Carried. And I just want to say one short little thing on behalf of the Deputy Speaker and myself. Thank you very much. We made it through our first day, and it was great to hear all of your responses. Thank you, and we will stand adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 21:57.]

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