

**Third Session – Forty-Second Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**DEBATES**  
and  
**PROCEEDINGS**  
**Official Report**  
**(Hansard)**

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Myrna Driedger  
Speaker*

**Vol. LXXV No. 44 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 7, 2021**

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

*The House met at 1:30 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Madam Speaker:** Introduction of bills?

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Standing Committee on Justice Third Report

**Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Chairperson):** I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Justice.

**Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk):** Your Standing Committee on Justice—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

*Your Standing Committee on Justice presents the following as its Third Report.*

#### Meetings

*Your Committee met on April 6, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building.*

#### Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 27)** – *The Administrative Tribunal Jurisdiction Act / Loi sur la compétence des tribunaux administratifs*
- **Bill (No. 46)** – *The Court Practice and Administration Act (Various Acts Amended) / Loi sur la pratique et l'administration des tribunaux (modification de diverses dispositions législatives)*
- **Bill (No. 51)** – *The Limitations Act / Loi sur les délais de prescription*

#### Committee Membership

- *MLA ASAGWARA*
- *Ms. FONTAINE*
- *Hon. Mr. FRIESEN*
- *Hon. Ms. GORDON*
- *Mr. LAGIMODIERE (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. MICKLEFIELD*

*Your Committee elected Mr. MICKLEFIELD as the Vice-Chairperson.*

*As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 6, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).*

#### Public Presentations

*Your Committee heard the following presentation on Bill (No. 51) – The Limitations Act / Loi sur les délais de prescription:*

*Shawna Finnegan, Private citizen*

#### Written Submissions

*Your Committee received the following three written submissions on Bill (No. 51) – The Limitations Act / Loi sur les délais de prescription:*

*Christian Korell, Association of Manitoba Land Surveyors*

*Darryl Harrison, Winnipeg Construction Association*  
*Karri Hiebert, Association of Consulting Engineering Companies*

#### Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 27)** – *The Administrative Tribunal Jurisdiction Act / Loi sur la compétence des tribunaux administratifs*

*Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.*

- **Bill (No. 46)** – *The Court Practice and Administration Act (Various Acts Amended) / Loi sur la pratique et l'administration des tribunaux (modification de diverses dispositions législatives)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 51)** – *The Limitations Act / Loi sur les délais de prescription*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

**Mr. Lagimodiere:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

### Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Third Report

**Mr. Jon Reyes (Chairperson):** I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

**Clerk:** Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

**Some Honourable Members:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Third Report.

#### Meetings

Your Committee met on April 6, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

#### Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 14)** – *The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2020 / Loi corrective de 2020*
- **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2020 (2) / Loi corrective n° 2 de 2020*
- **Bill (No. 55)** – *The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2021 / Loi de 2021 visant la réduction du fardeau administratif et l'amélioration des services*
- **Bill (No. 68)** – *The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative*

#### Committee Membership

- Hon. Mr. GOERTZEN
- Mr. ISLEIFSON
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Ms. MARCELINO
- Mr. REYES
- Hon. Ms. SQUIRES

Your Committee elected Mr. REYES as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Mr. ISLEIFSON as the Vice-Chairperson.

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 6, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

#### Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2020 (2) / Loi corrective n° 2 de 2020*  
Zainab Mansaray, Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society Inc.

Your Committee heard the following six presentations on **Bill (No. 55)** – *The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2021 / Loi de 2021 visant la réduction du fardeau administratif et l'amélioration des services*

James Beddome, Leader, Green Party of Manitoba  
Sudhir Sandhu, Manitoba Building Trades  
Jim Silver, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives  
Shawn Kettner, Private citizen  
Patrick Falconer, Private citizen  
Michelle Dallmann, Private citizen

#### Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 14)** – *The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2020 / Loi corrective de 2020*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 19)** – *The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2020 (2) / Loi corrective n° 2 de 2020*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 55)** – *The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2021 / Loi de 2021 visant la réduction du fardeau administratif et l'amélioration des services*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 68)** – *The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

**Mr. Reyes:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), that the report of the committee be received.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Madam Speaker:** Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Manitoba 150 Award Recipients

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations):** Madam Speaker, I stand before you today to proudly introduce the Manitoba 150 honourees in my constituency. Each of these individuals exemplify what can be accomplished through a lifetime of volunteerism.

First, Tim Arnason, an Icelandic Festival of Manitoba member for over 40 years, remains on the board today mentoring others and escorting the Fjallkonas in their duties for the past 25 years.

Donald Halldorson, always the first to extend a helping hand volunteering to share over 50 years of his carpentry experience in his community, and my community of Oak Point.

Maxine Ingalls is a volunteer, preserving Icelandic culture and heritage on the Hecla Island for the past 20 years, serving as president and as a member of The Descendants and Friends of Hecla Island Heritage.

Dilla Narfason, a member of the Gimli Icelandic Canadian Society for 30 years, volunteers at Betel home, Gimli Community Cemetery committee and the New Iceland Heritage Museum.

Oli Narfason is a founding member of the Westshore Community Foundation that has now put over \$1 million back into communities, and was also involved in the establishment of the Evergreen Festival of the Arts, along with the band program at Gimli High School.

Helga Sigurdson, now over 100 years old, has volunteered for community organizations and boards in Lundar for over 50 years. She has been a member of the Icelandic National League of North America for over 70 years and co-edited the Lundar history book, Wagons to Wings.

Philip Thorkelson served from the ground up in the development of the Arborg and District Multicultural Heritage Village. His involvement is ongoing and includes the role of tour guide.

Madam Speaker, I wish to recognize and thank each of these individuals for their contributions to Manitoba and for the role that they play in improving the quality of our lives in our communities.

### Providence Therapeutics

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans were anticipating the vaccine rollout for months, but it's been incredibly slow, which will continue to place lives in danger.

The rollout has not received the attention and investment it deserves from this government, and I worry that this carelessness could lead to a third wave of the pandemic.

The Pallister government has focused on tax cuts that predominately benefit wealthy Manitobans, rather than invest in health care, education, child care and small-business supports.

Now the Pallister government has signed a deal with Alberta-based Providence Therapeutics worth \$36 million. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) is giving Providence \$7.2 million up front. This is non-refundable, even if the project fails. That's \$7.2 million out the window whether the vaccine ever comes to market. And the vaccine has not been developed, trialled, or approved by Health Canada.

This is non-refundable, out-of-province deal supports a firm that has Conservative connections. This is another example of this government putting their friends above Manitobans.

This government is focused on their friends and public wealth for private benefit, and they are doing this over the health and safety of all Manitobans. With over a \$2-billion deficit from last year alone, Manitobans are still not getting the help they need.

Madam Speaker, this government is reckless with taxpayer dollars. These contract terms should never have been agreed to. Manitobans would be much better served if the \$7.2 million went towards the current vaccine rollout—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wasyliw:** —so more Manitobans are immunized before a third wave strikes.

This money could also be used to create new small-business supports and eliminate some of the deficits in education for both Pembina Trails and Winnipeg school divisions to hire teachers, librarians and English-as-additional-language supports.

Thank you.

### Gateway Get Away

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** I would like to take this opportunity to tell a story of Gateway Get Away, one one-stop shop in the small community of Mariapolis.

Yvan and Louise Gallant, owner-operators of the Gateway Get Away, are originally from La Salle, Manitoba. Passing through Mariapolis many times while travelling to their cabin, they quickly made friends and fell in love with the beautiful village in the constituency of Turtle Mountain.

They first purchased the Mariapolis Motor Hotel. Unfortunately, this—huge lease payments created a financial strain that became a crushing burden. So, they—it was a sad day for everyone, especially the Gallants, when they had to close the doors for the hotel for the last time.

Fortunately, Yvan and Louise had no intentions of leaving their home and friends in Mariapolis. The couple decided to purchase the former Gateway Market building. They went to work, transforming the huge space into a business opportunity.

Madam Speaker, the people in this community saw the efforts of—Gallants and were so inspired by the couple's determination, they decided to help the Gallants transform a vacant building into a local community meeting place.

The true small-town spirit, community members pooled together their money together, held fundraisers, collected donations to fully renovate the space of a one-stop shop that the committee badly needed.

The front of the building became a grocery store with a beer vendor and a liquor store, while the back was transformed into a restaurant and lounge with a bigger kitchen to enable to accommodate a wider variety of meals. The outdoor patio area was a—perfect for summer socializing, with a BBQ that will fill the air with the aroma of grilled steaks.

\* (13:40)

This project could not have been accomplished without the dream and the outpouring of support from the community that made this business opportunity a reality.

Thank you for everyone who supported the project in any way, whether it was financial, with sweat equity, discounting materials, professional guidance or moral support.

Looking for a great meal? Stop by Gateway Get Away at Mariapolis. You won't be disappointed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### NorWest Co-op

**Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Today, I want to recognize an organization that is making a real difference in Notre Dame constituency and across the northwest parts of Winnipeg. NorWest Co-op is Manitoba's only health-care co-operative, and their work focuses on improving the health and wellness of community members.

NorWest Co-op provides health and wellness services at several locations through a variety of different initiatives, including primary health-care services, community development counselling and support services, early learning and child care, services addressing family violence, immigrant and refugee supports and substance abuse during pregnancy.

They also established Winnipeg's first youth hub in 2017 and have been providing integrated services for youth ever since.

NorWest Co-op has taken an important lead in the community during this COVID-19 pandemic. They have launched public health campaigns in multiple languages to address a—vaccine hesitancy and coping with COVID strategies.

NorWest Co-op, in partnership with Community Food Centres Canada, has pivoted their existing programming to include grocery delivery to isolated, low-income seniors and other community members. Food deliveries have also included, to date, 25,000 healthy flash-frozen meals prepared by professional chef Ben Kramer and his team.

Community food security is a consistent program priority for NorWest Co-op. These examples I've highlighted are not exhaustive of all they do, but with all they do, they've taken a grassroots, community-centred approach to health that is frankly impressive in its ability to cultivate trust and responsiveness in the community.

NorWest is an organization that recognizes that a person can only be truly healthy if her family, her neighbours and her community is safe and thriving too.

Please join me in thanking NorWest Co-op for their leadership, innovation and compassion in Notre Dame.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Precious-Joy Olowoyeye

**Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley):** Madam Speaker, today I have the great pleasure of delivering a private member's statement honouring Waverley constituent, Precious-Joy Olowoyeye.

Precious-Joy is 9 years old, but don't let his age fool you. As a student at Holy Cross School, he is able to explore his love of science and develop bold new ideas.

His teacher, Dr. Anju Bajaj, has supported her students and helped foster their love of science and technology. She was proud to partner and collaborate with Let's Talk Science organization's Horizon Project.

With the help of Food Banks Canada and other organizations, free STEM kits at home were provided. It has two activities to be entered into a draw, including a drawing or writing about what interests them when they dream about the future and completing the Little Inventors challenge to design a solution that protects and improves the health of our oceans.

Most recently, Precious-Joy came up with an idea he calls Detective Danger, an initiative to protect animals who live in the ocean through new technological systems. In his own words describing his drawing for this concept, the sensor at the bottom of the sea reports to divers that help an animal in danger. The divers have a pod that helps them to locate an animal. They will be able to help the animal or take it back to a safe space.

I am excited to share that Precious-Joy's Detective Danger idea was selected from over 500 participants by the Little Inventors organization, who select the top five–15 ideas to make into a reality. His concept to help protect our ocean life through a complex system of satellites and sensors will be part of a unique online exhibition which will be held–launched in May 2021 as part of Science Odyssey week, and it will also celebrate the launch of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in 2021.

I am tremendously proud to support Waverley youth who strive for innovation and sustainability at such a young age.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honouring a budding scientist, Precious-Joy Olowoyeye of Waverley, for his curious and innovation idea. I am excited to see what the future has in store for him.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Future Provincial Budgets Premier's Retirement Plans

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, while people were waiting hours in line for a vaccine, while doses were sitting in fridges and freezers, while Manitobans were struggling to find ways to pay their rent, what was the Premier's response?

Well, his response was to go out and use taxpayer dollars to rent a set of tables and chairs to talk about the metaphorical kitchen table. Very relatable, Madam Speaker. I mean, who can't relate to having your political staff run out and rent a kitchen table. Who doesn't believe that now is the time for gimmicks during the most serious crisis of our lives?

At a time when Manitobans have been condemning the government for failing on vaccines, why is the Premier continuing to run away, and will he continue that prospect of running away today? Is this going to be his last budget?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I appreciate any question on cowardice from the member opposite, who has a record, before coming here, of running away and continues it.

He runs away from responsibility when it comes to facing up to the misconduct of the member for St. James (Mr. Sala), who harassed a civil servant—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —an honest civil servant. He runs away from the challenge of standing up to his colleague who decides to organize a protest rally in front of my house. And he runs away from the challenge of standing up to his colleague from St. Johns, who insults all of us here with her 'conduct'—conduct on a daily basis.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Kinew:** And then, Madam Speaker, who gets their political staff to rent a kitchen table and then doesn't actually bother to sit at it? Seems like an inefficient use of taxpayer dollars to me.

Again, it doesn't seem like there's much energy on the other side of the House. As we heard in the Free Press just this week, one veteran Tory MLA said: When you take into account everything that is going on, I'm honestly not sure if I have the energy to go on.

You know, Madam Speaker, that quote gets sadder the more that you read it, and it is a sorry reflection of the state of the member's caucus opposite.

But, again, upon further reflection, we know that the member for Fort Whyte is a veteran Tory MLA.

So was it, in fact, the Premier who spoke to Dan Lett this week?

**Mr. Pallister:** Anyone who thinks that the Free Press column the member just referenced is a substantive source of honest data, probably thinks that the Flintstones was a documentary.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, enough with the prehistoric pop culture references. That was about as relatable as the whole kitchen table gimmick from last week.

We know, again, when we see the recycling of these tired attacks from the members opposite, it's not just the Premier, it's not just the Cabinet ministers, it's any member of the caucus on the other side of the House who could have said those words that, quote, when you take into account everything that's going on, it's—honestly not sure if they have the energy to continue on, Madam Speaker.

Again, Manitobans know what they need in terms of solutions to the vaccine issues, in terms of fighting the pandemic. They need a team with real energy.

So will the Premier admit today that he simply ran out of energy, and will he tell Manitobans whether or not this will be his last budget?

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable—[*interjection*]-the honourable First Minister.

**Mr. Pallister:** —and that's for sure, so I congratulate our Finance Minister.

I know why the NDP leader doesn't like us to reference a kitchen table, Madam Speaker, because he and his party have a record of taking money off it. They have a record of taking money off it because they don't care about Manitobans who work hard to get their money. They want to take it from them.

That record of theft—that record of theft, Madam Speaker, taking money away from hard-working people—is not an enviable record and one that the NDP should not be proud of, frankly. Nor should their leader be proud of that record of theft, of taking money away from hard-working seniors, of taking

money away from hard-working families, of taking money away from hard-working small-business people.

\* (13:50)

Madam Speaker, they took it away. We're putting it back where it belongs.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

### COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Vaccination Rate Concerns

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, we all know that it's the Premier who took money away from Manitobans by raising their hydro rates during the pandemic—absolutely shameful.

And if it wasn't bad enough that he's taking money off of that rented kitchen table, what's perhaps worse is that there's still doses sitting in the fridge, Madam Speaker.

We know what is needed in terms of getting the vaccine situation rectified, and it's certainly not having a Health Minister who is satisfied with the slow rollout. It's certainly not about having a Premier who thinks that, yeah, things are going pretty good as we are the second worst in the country in terms of rolling out the vaccinations. What is needed is urgency.

So will the Premier simply tell us today: How many more people will he hire immediately to fix the slow vaccine rollout?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Yes, Madam Speaker, you know, I think it's an issue of public safety in a lot of ways.

I think this budget stands for what we stand for as people on this side of the House: protecting people, protecting vulnerable people, making sure that we're leading the country, Madam Speaker, in investing in health care, making sure that we're leading the country in investing in families—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —making sure that we're leading the country—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —in investing in education.



And that, Madam Speaker, we have done since we became government, and that we intend to continue to do.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Kinew:** Yes, you're right—or, he's right, Madam Speaker. There is more of the same from this government. They're going to continue doing what they've been doing all along when they've been cutting health care, damaging the economy and completely failing to prepare for the second wave which everybody in the entire world knew was coming.

Of course, we know why this team on the opposite side is failing. It's because when they hear news, an update that says we're not going to be able to get everybody in Manitoba vaccinated until next February, they've got a Minister of Health who says that she's satisfied with that. They've got a Premier and a leader who hears that it's going to take until next year and he says, yeah, we're getting the job done pretty well, in his estimation.

These are all failures, Madam Speaker. We know what is needed: a dramatically sped-up approach to the vaccine rollout.

Will the Premier tell folks today what he plans to do immediately to ensure that no further doses of the vaccines are wasted?

**Mr. Pallister:** I do appreciate any question from the NDP leader on waste, because it was the waste of the NDP government that caused taxes on Manitobans to rise year after year after year, that caused them to raise the PST, that caused them to put the PST on essential goods, on essential services like home insurance and haircuts and things like that, Madam Speaker, that cost every working Manitoba family more money every day.

Because they had so little regard for the working families, for the seniors and the small businesses of this province, they decided to raid their kitchens, they decided to steal from them. They did.

We're putting the money back that they stole.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, while the members opposite are still fighting the 2016 election, what Manitobans are actually worried about when it comes to waste is the fact that this government has wasted 2,000 doses of the COVID vaccines.

Madam Speaker, this is a problem that was identified early on in the vaccine rollout. As early as December, people were asking for a solution to vaccine waste.

We sent a letter to the Minister of Health asking for a plan to ensure that no precious doses of the vaccine were wasted, and what did they proceed to put a plan in place to do? They executed a plan to waste 2,000 doses. That's 2,000 more Manitobans who could've been protected against COVID-19.

Now that they've wasted four months of time and we have seen many people miss out on those inoculations, will the Premier, finally, today announce a real plan to ensure that that team doesn't waste 2,000 more doses—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I—again, I appreciate any preamble from the member that involves references to waste, Madam Speaker. It is a cleaning up of that waste that we have focused on as a government, and it has allowed us to take that wasted dollar and move it back to Manitobans in support for them by reducing their taxes, by supporting their health-care system, by supporting their families' investments, by making sure their education system is strengthened.

These are the things Manitobans want us to focus on, and this is what today's budget is all about. But I would say to the member: disrespecting health orders is not a way to demonstrate your sincerity when it comes to protecting people, and that's exactly what he did. And he should take the opportunity, in his next preamble, Madam Speaker, to stand in his place and apologize to the people of Manitoba.

### **COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Distribution Rate Concerns**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans aren't satisfied with the Pallister government's vaccine rollout. We all know that. They see that vaccines are sitting idle for too long before they're being put to use.

We need an accelerated plan that gets vaccines into people's arms. We must narrow the time when vaccines arrive in Manitoba until they are dispensed. Otherwise, we'll continue to see what we have seen: a growing number of vaccines in freezers and not being dispensed.

Why is the minister satisfied with this situation, and where is her sense of urgency?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** Well, the member opposite, being a health-care professional themselves, should know that certainly we put the safety of patients first always. And there are many incidences where vials are cloudy and we cannot inject those into Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Now, if members opposite are saying that we should jeopardize the safety of Manitobans, Madam Speaker, I say that we take a much different approach than they do.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Union Station, on a supplementary question.

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, only somebody who knows nothing about health care would make an accusation to a health-care provider of that nature.

Madam Speaker, the Province's vaccine rollout is not performing. It's not even reaching the low targets—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —the minister herself has set. But the minister says that things are going quite well.

Now, that's really concerning, as the minister seems unwilling or unable to agree on basic facts. It's taking too long to get shots in arms, and if this doesn't get resolved, the Province's inventory in freezers is going to grow.

The minister's reference to appointments, in some cases, are for bookings weeks down the road. We need more urgency from this minister.

When will the minister have a plan to increase the pace of these vaccines?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Member—Madam Speaker, the member opposite should know that sometimes needles and syringes—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Madam Speaker, sometimes—the member opposite and members opposite should know that sometimes needles or syringes are contaminated before they are actually injected in a person, and if they are contaminated they should not be injected in a person.

This is why some of those vials are disposed of and some of those doses are disposed of, Madam Speaker. So it's very important that we put the safety of Manitobans first.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Union Station, on a final supplementary.

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, other provinces—many other provinces—have added other locations to increase vaccine distribution. Manitoba's has simply been limited and, as a result, it's taking far too long for vaccines that this province receives to get into the arms of its citizens. The minister knows this. It's not enough to just say that shots are there or they're spoken for; the turnaround time must be significantly reduced and the volumes dispensed every day have to increase.

A botched vaccination rollout leaves all of us exposed to a deadly third wave.

When will the minister have a plan to quicken the pace and increase the amount of vaccines distributed every single day?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, Madam Speaker, we are in—we are administering almost triple what we were just a short time ago. We are increasing the volume of numbers that were—of doses that we're administering every single day as we get that supply from the federal government.

So, when it comes to COVID-19, we won't be satisfied until every eligible Manitoban gets the access to that vaccine that they need, want and deserve.

\* (14:00)

### **Sale of Social Housing Units Government Position**

**Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson):** I table a briefing note from the Department of Families. It asks, I quote, why is Manitoba Housing selling assets within the portfolio when there was a current wait-list of individuals and families requiring housing? End quote.

The answer: To allow Manitoba Housing to unlock some cash equity in its own owned assets.

I ask the minister: Why is she selling social housing for cash when thousands need housing now?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I'm always pleased to take a question about housing from members opposite because we know that our government, since we formed office, we have created 714 new units of housing for Manitobans. We have also taken a better approach to managing the wait-list for coming into Manitoba Housing.

You know what the members' opposite approach was? They kicked 26 per cent of all recipients off of the wait-list if they couldn't provide last year's tax returns to get into Manitoba Housing. We know that that is not an effective strategy for a lot of our vulnerable population; people who were precariously housed may not have last year's tax return.

We have created low barriers to entry into housing, we're creating more housing units and we're making sure that all Manitobans have a safe, affordable place to live in the province.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Thompson, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Adams:** Madam Speaker, the Pallister government has cut the annual spending for maintenance and modernization to social housing. It has been cut by tens of millions of dollars a year. Social housing units are falling apart.

I table another document where it says that there are 1,800 units vacant because they need repair. It also says that the Pallister government way of addressing this is just to sell these units, rather than fix them.

I ask the minister: Why is the Pallister government selling social housing? Why won't they fix these units?

**Ms. Squires:** I would like to remind the members opposite that when we inherited government, we inherited a \$1-billion deficit in maintenance on Manitoba Housing stock.

Last year, Budget 2020, we invested a historic amount; record numbers of dollars went into investing—fixing up our Manitoba Housing stock. And we are going to continue to ensure that we've got Manitoba Housing for all Manitobans—a safe, affordable place.

We have also increased the Rent Assist budget by 62 per cent since we formed government, and we're just getting started, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Thompson, on a final supplementary.

**Ms. Adams:** Madam Speaker, the Pallister government, in their own words, say they're selling off social housing units to unlock cash equity for the government, but that money isn't being reinvested into housing. Hundreds of units have been lost and none have been built. The current units are falling into disrepair. The annual investment for repair and 'modernization' has fallen by tens of millions of dollars.

Again: Why is the Pallister government selling social housing and not fixing up the units?

**Ms. Squires:** Because our government is making historic investments in fixing up existing Manitoba Housing units. Since January 31st of this year we have been able to fill 735 vacant housing units with people; 118 of those people were people experiencing domestic violence and were fleeing domestic violence. We were able to find those families and their children safe, affordable housing. We were able to find housing for 304 people who were previously homeless or precariously housed and 313 people who were temporarily sheltered.

We found them a home because we're fixing up the housing stock and getting people living in those homes.

#### **Nutrition Programs for Children in Poverty Effect on Education Outcomes**

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, Bill 64 doesn't address the biggest influences on education outcomes: poverty and nutrition. When kids come to school hungry, they have a hard time learning. When they don't have what they need at home, it's that much harder for them to succeed at school.

Unfortunately, the Pallister government is not meaningfully addressing this.

Will the minister commit today to a real plan to address nutrition needs this school year with a universal program that ensures children don't start their school day hungry?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education):** I appreciate a question on education—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cullen:** —from the members opposite; obviously, the party of status quo.

We have stake—taken steps as a government. We have invested in poverty reduction. We've already reduced poverty—child poverty by 25 per cent, Madam Speaker.

And, Madam Speaker, you're going to hear more good news later today.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Transcona, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Altomare:** Madam Speaker, despite a federal enhancement to the child benefit since 2016, child poverty here in Manitoba has been headed in the

wrong direction. That's according to the minister's own briefing notes.

That's obvious, too, from the consultation for the K-to-12 education review. A primary concern was addressing basic needs of children, including poverty and nutrition.

We can make a real difference with a universal nutrition program to ensure children have that basic need met.

Will the minister ensure this happens this school year?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, Madam Speaker, not only are we addressing child poverty, we've also invested \$5 million in the Home Nutrition and Learning pilot program. This puts nutrition—nutritious breakfast to 3,400 children each and every week.

Madam Speaker, we've made great strides. More to come.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Transcona, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Altomare:** Implementing universal nutrition programs, increasing access to transportation and creating a task force to focus on how socio-economic conditions affect access to education, these were all issues that were included in the consultation briefings to the education review.

But it seems this government hadn't read them. They were all unaddressed in Bill 64.

We have a plan, a plan that includes universal nutrition programs to ensure children have this basic need met.

Why won't the minister or this government support it?

**Mr. Cullen:** Well, this coming from the party of status quo.

Madam Speaker, we have a strategy, and I hope the members opposite take time to actually read the strategy. And the strategy talks about high-quality learning and outcomes, improved learning and outcomes for all students across the province, make sure we engage our students and build on 'compensies' for lifelong success—future-ready students.

Madam Speaker, we have a plan; NDP don't. We're going to engage this plan and make things better for Manitoba students.

### **Death of Eishia Hudson Call for Public Inquiry**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Tomorrow is the one-year anniversary into the death of Eishia Hudson, an Indigenous 16-year-old girl who was shot and killed by the WPS.

The Chief Medical Examiner's office has determined the cause of Eishia's death was homicide, but the IIU has cleared the officer of any charges. This, Madam Speaker, while the officer was not even required to be interviewed in the totality of the investigation.

The Chief Medical Examiner has recently called an inquest into Eishia's death, and while this is one small step, a provincial public inquiry is what is needed.

Will the minister do the right thing today, stand up and call a public inquiry into the death of Eishia Hudson?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, our government has been clear that we want the changes from The Police Services Act review to be the right kind of changes. That is why we paused amendments on the IIU, in order to re-engage with all the grand chiefs in Manitoba.

\* (14:10)

I can inform all members of the House that this has been a very productive and collaborative conversation assisted by our minister from Indigenous and Northern Relations. We have every confidence that this work that we're doing together to collaborate will be good for all Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, on a supplementary question.

### **Death of Indigenous People by Police Call for Public Inquiry**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** In the last many years, 19 people have been killed by the WPS. Of those, 12 were Indigenous and, in at least 16 of 19 cases, the conclusion was that the officers' actions were justified and no charges were laid.

Each of these individuals that were shot and killed by the WPS are loved and missed by their families, Madam Speaker. These numbers speak to inherent and systemic racial discrimination within our justice system that must be addressed immediately.

Will the minister commit to a broader public inquiry into police-related deaths of Indigenous peoples in Manitoba today?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** In our ongoing collaboration with each of the three grand chiefs in Manitoba, what has emerged is that there is confidence in things like the Independent Investigation Unit.

However, at the same time, these groups are saying that there needs to be changes. These—the work of the IIU needs to reflect the communities it is there to serve. We will make sure that is done. We will make sure that the IIU reflects the communities it's there to serve.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

**Ms. Fontaine:** The mayor of Winnipeg and the Winnipeg Police Service police chief have publicly stated that systemic racism is an issue that affects all institutions, including the police. At the same time, the Premier isn't even able to define what systemic racism is or even to confirm that it exists within our institutions. Instead, the Premier has said, and I quote, actions matter at least as much as adjectives. End quote.

Manitobans want to see action from the Premier and members opposite that truly tackles systemic racism within Manitoba's justice system, and this includes calling a public inquiry.

Will the Justice Minister stand up today and call a provincial public inquiry into the deaths of Indigenous peoples by the hands of police?

Miigwech.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** As opposed to the previous government, of which the member opposite was close and was employed for many years, which got nothing done, Madam Speaker, we will address these issues because actions speak louder than words.

#### **COVID-19 Vaccine Priority Vulnerable Patients in Hospital**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I just received a call this morning from a Manitoban whose father is in hospital in Portage la Prairie. His father's been there for a few months, has a high risk of getting very sick from COVID, is over 75, he has underlying conditions and has not yet been vaccinated.

When his son called the hospital to ask nurses about whether he could be vaccinated, the response

was that vaccines were not available. They are waiting on the vaccine task force to contact them, and they don't know when it is going to happen.

Does the Province have a plan to vaccinate vulnerable patients in hospitals, or are we going to have to wait again?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** Certainly, Madam Speaker, if the member opposite has a case that he wants to bring forward or an issue with a constituent or someone that he knows, that—it would be most appropriate to bring it to my office.

We want to ensure that we look after all Manitobans, those in hospital and those who need medical care.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Lamont:** This is clearly more than just one case; this is an entire hospital. But the patient in question is high-risk for COVID and has had to travel back and forth between Portage and hospitals in Winnipeg for heart tests and MRIs.

We know hospitals are risks for outbreaks of COVID; there was one declared just today at HSC. So if we have people who are vulnerable, long-term patients in hospitals who are travelling back and forth between possible COVID hotspots, can the Premier explain why they are not at the top of the vaccine priority list?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I can just tell the member that our vaccine task force has worked diligently to get vaccines in arms, that we have—and I know members of this Legislature will be pleased to know—reduced the number of outbreaks by 85 per cent in our personal-care homes, and that's thanks to the strategies that they used.

And I know they'll be continuing to utilize advanced strategies to move forward, to make sure that we protect our most vulnerable and all of us, Madam Speaker.

#### **Schools in Low-Income Areas Parental Engagement Concerns**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, the government wants to eliminate school boards. The government wants to use school boards as the scapegoat for their own failures in education. To improve school performance, the government needs to

provide most help to students who are struggling the most to improve.

A major problem with the government's proposal is that the very schools which are located in low-income areas where children are struggling the most are the very schools where engagement of parents and effective community school councils will be the least likely.

Why is the government going to implement in Bill 64 a system in which those children who need the most help will receive the least help?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Unlike the members opposite, Madam Speaker—and this member just personified it with his comments—ill-advised comments at best—we won't give up on the parents of this province, nor will we give up on children who live in poverty.

Madam Speaker, these reforms are designed to assist and uplift what is the greatest opportunity for equality in our society: the public school system, which the Leader of the Opposition has never been part of and refuses to support now with his own decisions.

So, Madam Speaker, we will not give up on the public school system. We will not give up on the teachers in it. And we will most certainly not give up on the parents who live in poverty in this province.

Our reforms are designed to assist most of all this group of children and these people.

#### **Supports for Crime Victims Funding Announcement**

**Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière):** Madam Speaker, our government recently announced we are providing \$6.4 million to enhance supports and services to victims of crime through the Victims Assistance Fund.

Can the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage and Minister responsible for the Status of Women update the House on this significant investment and how this funding will benefit these agencies?

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** I'd like to thank my colleague for that very important question.

You know, in recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, I was pleased to join the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) and the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke) to announce \$6.4 million to support 24 grassroots

organizations who provide critically important resources to victims of crime, including survivors of sexual violence.

I'm also pleased to share our government's investment of \$850,000 to three community-based organizations to enhance supports for victims of gender-based violence, including women, girls and the L-G-D-P-Q communities—plus communities. These programs respond to the 231 calls of justice for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and aligns with our government—

**Madam Speaker:** The member's time has expired.

#### **Lazy Bear Expeditions Issuance of Permits**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, last year Lazy Bear Expeditions was given two permits allowing it to use Churchill Wildlife Management Area's off-road trail network. New permits for this area have not been issued since 1984.

The permits were given with no local consultation or input, and this is extremely concerning. An independent review previously concluded that the current number of vehicles be maintained as is due to environmental impacts on bear habitat.

Why has the Pallister government pushed over this advice and awarded these permits with no local consultation?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development):** Madam Speaker, this issue is before the courts, so it'd be inappropriate to comment on this.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Wolseley, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Naylor:** Madam Speaker, Lazy Bear Expeditions is led by a former Conservative candidate who has contributed the maximum allowable to the provincial PCs. The minister knows that more vehicles on the ice was not recommended and no consultation preceded this award.

In short, this deal is suspicious but familiar from a government that rewards their friends, even when it hurts the environment.

\* (14:20)

I ask the minister: Did he personally approve these permits, and will he do the right thing and now—

and rescind them? Unless, of course, he's waiting for the courts to tell him that it's illegal.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Crocus cover-up, rushed stadium debacle, Madam Speaker—

**An Honourable Member:** Tiger Dams.

**Mr. Pallister:** —oh, Tiger Dams—Tiger Dams, untendered contract after untendered contract. Madam Speaker, that's the way it used to be done, not the way it's done now.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for—*[interjection]* Order, order.

The honourable member for Wolseley, on a final supplementary.

### **Polar Bear Habitat Government Position**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, the Province should be enhancing protections for polar bears, and I can't believe that anyone disagrees with that. Unfortunately, in a recent briefing with the Minister of Conservation, I was told directly that plans for polar bear park have been abandoned.

So we're—the PC government is rewarding their friends at the expense of the environment and pulling back plans for future protection of polar bears.

Why is this government abandoning protection for polar bears and their habitat?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** We aren't, Madam Speaker, but why does the NDP always support the night shooting of animals—innocent animals—out in the wild with high-powered rifles and floodlights? Why do they think that's such a good thing?

I don't think it's a good thing. Do you think it's a good thing, Madam Speaker? Because the NDP think it's a good thing. And it isn't a good thing. That's why we did away with it.

### **Rural Agriculture Services Closure of MASC Offices**

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Madam Speaker, 21 MASC and ag offices closed this month. The Minister of Agriculture says this is what farmers have been asking for. We disagree.

Actually, the fact is that the producers do not believe that losing these offices benefits them in any way.

Will the minister change course today and commit to reopening the MASC and ag offices he has closed?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development):** Madam Speaker, in case the member missed it, two weeks ago today, the federal-provincial-territorial agriculture ministers agreed to remove the reference margin limit on AgriStability, which allows more farmers to participate in AgriStability, particularly helping mixed farms and cattle operations who are—had expenses that were not eligible under the previous plan.

So here we are helping farmers again, unlike the NDP.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Burrows, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Brar:** I'll bring back the minister to the topic.

Madam Speaker, modernization should not mean that in-person services close to home become completely unavailable. Fast Internet access is not always available. To transition to a greater reliance on online services is simply not realistic for many farmers and ranchers. This is not modernization; this is cutting important services and good jobs in rural Manitoba to save money.

Will the minister commit today to reverse his decision and open—and reopen MASC and ag offices?

**Mr. Pedersen:** It's unfortunate the NDP have such a poor attitude to farmers. They're technologically advanced; they want to improve on their communications; and we are trying to catch up to farmers because they're very modern today.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Burrows, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Brar:** We need infrastructure to do that.

Madam Speaker, the minister has left positions empty and then cut the vacant positions. It's a real loss to rural communities. We know, too, that these office closures are a recipe for further lost jobs in rural Manitoba. It just won't be feasible for people who will have to travel over an hour to get to work.

Will the minister commit today to keeping valuable services and good jobs in rural Manitoban communities by reopening MASC and ag offices?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, I could do another Flintstones reference, but I won't, Madam Speaker.

The member doesn't understand modern agricultural operators and how they have advanced far more rapidly than government services have, but I'll leave that for his contemplation.

I would encourage all members, though, to listen intently to this budget. This is a budget that's the result of a tremendous amount of work, and I think we should all show our appreciation of the staff in the Finance Department, Treasury Board of our government for their work in preparing this year's budget.

I note the lack of applause from the members opposite, but I hope it isn't followed up by a lack of listening, because this is a budget that demonstrates very clearly that this Province is not only addressing the urgencies of COVID but the need for future recovery.

And so I would encourage all members to listen intently and to respectfully observe the fact that this Province is going, Madam Speaker, after years of not going in the right direction, it is now going in the right direction.

**Madam Speaker:** Time for oral questions has expired.

### PETITIONS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Thompson. The honourable member for Thompson, on a petition?

**Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson):** No petitions at this time.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

The honourable member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie)? The honourable member for Keewatinook? No?

The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin), petitions?

The honourable member for Elmwood? The honourable member for Elmwood, on a petition. Where's the honourable member for Elmwood?

### Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to present the following petition—

**Madam Speaker:** Oh.

**Mr. Maloway:** The background on this petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most medical clinics.

(2) Dynacare blood test labs have consolidated their blood and fluid testing services by closing 25 of its labs.

(3) The provincial government has cut diagnostic testing at many clinic sites, and residents now have to travel to different locations to get their testing done, even for a simple blood test or urine sample.

(4) Further, travel challenges for vulnerable and elderly residents of northeast Winnipeg may result in fewer tests being done or delays in testing, with the attendant effects of increased health-care costs and poorer individual patient outcomes.

(5) COVID-19 emergency rules have resulted in long outdoor lineups, putting vulnerable residents at further risk in extreme weather, be it hot or cold. Moreover, these long lineups have resulted in longer waiting times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they are able to give their samples at the time of the doctor visit.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately demand Dynacare maintain all the phlebotomy, blood sample sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition is signed by many, many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** I understand that the honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak would like to do a petition.

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background for this—

\* (14:30)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member's mic is not working.



Is the headset plugged in? There is no sound.

I'm afraid, then, we will move on, then. Thank you.

Grievances?

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** As is traditional just prior to the budget, as we prepare to present the budget, I'm asking the House for a five-minute recess followed by a one-minute ringing of the division bells to summon the members back for the budget.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House for a five-minute recess to be followed by a one-minute bell to summon MLAs back to the Chamber for the budget? *[Agreed]*

So the House will now move into recess.

*The House recessed at 2:31 p.m.*

*The House resumed at 2:37 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The House is now back in session, and I would recognize the honourable Minister of Finance.

### BUDGET ADDRESS

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that the House approves in general budgetary policy of the government.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**Mr. Fielding:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the Chamber to deliver our government's sixth budget.

This budget reflects the priorities of close to 51,000 Manitobans who participated in our public engagement process. We thank you for your valuable input to identify what matters most to you as Manitobans.

The month of March marks one year since COVID-19 arrived in Manitoba. The pandemic has created a year like no other. COVID-19 has 'unpended' lives, caused hardship and tragedy for

many Manitobans. Together, we have felt the loss of loved ones. Our lives and livelihoods have been impacted by stress, uncertainty, financial hardship and disclosure–dislocation.

As we enter the second year of the pandemic, it is clear that Manitobans have endured much more than they could've ever anticipated. We thank Manitobans for their resilience, their patience and their optimism during the time of a great challenge.

The government will not rest until COVID-19 has been put to rest, Madam Speaker. We recognize that our province and our people will continue to face profound health, social and economic impacts and uncertainties due to COVID-19.

\* (14:40)

We are not out of the woods yet, Madam Speaker. COVID-19 variants means public health restrictions cannot be fully lifted yet. Even though we have not yet–through the darkness, we must begin to plan the light of recovery that lies ahead for all Manitobans.

Today's budget does–just does exactly that with two clear goals: first, protect Manitobans through COVID-19 and second, advance Manitoba's economy past COVID-19. Protecting our people, advancing our province; that's what Budget 2021 is all about.

Madam Speaker, for the last year our government's top priority has to–been to protect Manitobans at each and every turn of COVID-19. To do so has required unprecedented support from the government. Our pandemic response has been amongst the most generous in the country. To date, we've committed more than \$3.2 billion in supports on our health care, our education system, for vulnerable Manitobans as well as business.

Budget 2021 continues that support. We'll make record new investments in priorities that matter most to Manitobans.

We'll invest more in health care and COVID-19 supports, with a clear focus on mental health supports, child-care access, reducing wait times and providing health care closer to home.

We'll invest more in jobs with new actions to grow our economy, boost skills and attract newcomers to our province.

We'll invest more in economic growth by encouraging private sector investments and further reducing job-killing red tape.

And we'll keep making life more affordable for working families. We'll bring in much-needed tax relief.

This government's fiscal plan is clear to all Manitobans. We will continue to invest in the quality of services that you depend on, and we'll lower taxes and not raise them, and we'll do so with a balanced approach to eliminate the COVID-19 deficit and put Manitoba back in balance within an eight-year time frame.

Madam Speaker, our government worked hard over the last five years to fix the financial mess that was left by the previous government. We did just that, balancing the budget in 2019 and '20—the first balance in 11 years. We balanced the budget while making record investments in health care, in education, in social services—and we did so by lowering taxes for all Manitobans.

We did all this while replenishing the rainy day fund that was drained away by the former government. Our physical preparedness allows us to combat COVID-19 and emerge in a better financial shape than would otherwise have been the case.

Nevertheless, the virus has ravaged our finances too. Manitoba now has a COVID-19 deficit of significant proportions. This is a result of two things: first, unprecedented additional spending in health care and supports for people in business; second, a drop in revenues from the equally unprecedented economic shutdown.

As we carry on our curr-over current and anticipated costs through COVID-19 into this fiscal year and its lingering impacts on our economy and expenditures, we today are forecasting a budget deficit of \$1.597 billion for this fiscal year, which is down from over \$2 billion last year.

These are big numbers—part of the COVID-19 legacy—now added to the public debt of our province. Every taxpayer will be responsible for decades ahead for the growing public debt, and this is why our government must always be responsible of how we spend our money—your money—on behalf of you.

Our commitment to financial responsibility is on record. We balanced the budget once, Madam Speaker, and we're going to do it again.

Our path to balance will be gradual and balanced. We will not stop investing more in priority public services that Manitobans count on. We will grow our way out of the deficit and back into balance by

investing more in jobs and tax relief and economic growth.

And that is why, despite the ongoing financial and economic challenges posed by the pandemic, this budget continues to make record-high investments in priorities of Manitobans. Manitoba invests more on a per capita basis in health care, education and social services than any other province in Canada. Budget 2021 increases this investment in priority areas by close to \$1.5 billion.

Our government's top financial priority has been to direct critical funding to front-line fight versus the COVID-19. Today's budget sets aside \$1.2 billion in COVID-19 supports and contingency funds for future needs. This principally includes over \$230 million for personal protective equipment, testing, vaccine site infrastructure, contact tracing as well as preparations; \$350 million in additional health-care investments to prepare for future pandemic waves; \$160 million in supports for schools and education needs over the next school year; \$100 million for vaccine programs; and \$40 million for our Manitoba Restart capital program initiatives at the municipal level.

Budget 2021 will provide—or, protect—or, further protect our health-care system through COVID-19 with record new investments and initiatives to provide better care sooner, as we build an even stronger health-care system for Manitobans.

Budget 2021 increases the overall health funding by \$156 million from last year to a total of \$6.98 billion—the highest level in Manitoba history.

We are building a stronger health-care system to deliver better care soon. This includes better access to health-care services closer to home. That's why Budget 2021 confirms over \$812-million capital commitment to rural and northern health care under a five-year clinical and preventative care plan.

The pandemic requires us to redirect resources at all levels, including front-line health-care personnel, to deal with urgent COVID-19 cases. By necessity, some surgeries and procedures had to be put on hold. Like other provinces, we now have a COVID-19 backlog which we'll tackle as we keep bending the COVID-19 curve.

Budget 2021 dedicates a minimum of \$50 million to reduce wait times in our health-care system to get better care sooner for Manitobans, \$40 million to shorten wait times for priority procedures and services caused by the pandemic, and \$10 million will further

reduce wait times for knee, hip and cataract procedures.

Madam Speaker Budget 2021 also includes an additional \$23 million for CancerCare treatments and \$2.7 million to expand dialysis treatment for nearly 200 patients.

Madam Speaker, our seniors require our support and care always. This budget increases the overall investments for the new department of Health and Seniors Care, including \$9.3 million for personal-care homes expansion in Steinbach and Carman that will add more than 120 beds, with a focus on small-house model of care with safer single-resident rooms.

Budget 2021 also commits \$1.3 million in funding for the Manitoba Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, which supports local and regional projects that contribute to the development of culturally relevant, healthy food systems, while improving the health and well-being of Indigenous people and communities.

Madam Speaker, we're all grateful for our hard-working public health professionals. This budget recognizes the importance of their work by dedicating an additional \$2.7 million to public health activities, including hiring more staff.

Families with children with type 1 diabetes have told us the daily challenges they face in helping their kids cope with the constant need of testing and monitoring blood sugar levels. Better tools exist, and the government wants to help families access them.

Budget 2021 includes funding to establish a new program to pay the cost of continuous glucose monitoring devices for eligible children and youth under the age of 25. We will also increase the age limit of insulin pump program from age 18 to 25 so clinically eligible young children with type 1 diabetes can now receive support.

COVID-19's legacy of longer wait times have added urgency to our long-standing campaign for a real sustainable increase in the Canada Health Transfer from the federal government to reduce wait times for Canadians and Manitobans.

While we welcome the COVID-19 supports announced by the federal government, these are one-time only and do not meet the needs, the calls of all provinces to increase Health Transfer payments. We will not relent on our efforts to secure a long-term funding partnership for all Canadians.

\* (14:50)

In the meantime, our government will continue to invest more in health care of all Manitobans and shorten wait-lists and get patients, seniors and families better care, sooner.

More than a year of the pandemic has had profound impacts on the mental health of many Manitobans. A sad legacy of COVID-19 will be the side effects that it has created through stress and anxiety. We moved quickly to recognize these needs by establishing a new Department of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery, the first in Manitoba history.

Budget 2021 commits an initial funding foundation of \$342 million for programming and services as part of the new mandate. At the same time, it increases funding by \$1.7 million for mental health and addiction strategies, and another \$1.8 million for 24-7 housing supports for individuals diagnosed with mental health conditions.

It also commits another \$5 million to engage communities and stakeholders on developing and delivering a whole-of-government approach to addressing mental health for Manitobans.

COVID-19 reminds Manitobans of the importance we place on caring each-for each and every one, every day.

That's why the government has invested and will continue to invest in making our social services stronger and more resilient. The Department of Families will see a budget increase of \$34 million in its budgetary allocations.

Budget '21 makes major investments in early learning and child-care systems and increases budget by nearly \$4 million to meet the diverse needs of Manitoba families and create more options for child care, almost \$23 million more than when we first came to office, Madam Speaker.

With \$1.6 million in operating grants to child-care centres, we will support 392 licensed spaces that opened over the past year, and 149 new spaces that will open over the coming year, for a total of 541 new spaces. That's also, Madam Speaker, in addition to the 50 new home-based licensed care spots.

As a further step to help families cope financially with the difficult times, we are freezing child-care parent fees for three years.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2021 continues to lift more Manitobans out of poverty.

Manitoba's poverty rate has already decreased by over 18 per cent and child poverty rates have decreased by 25 per cent.

This fiscal year, we will be investing close to \$22 million in the Rent Assist program, the most generous program in Canada, to provide monthly financial benefits to low-income Manitobans living in private rental accommodations.

Rent Assist and non-EIA Rent Assist recipients will see an increase of up to 11 per cent, depending on the composition of their households. This investment will ensure that more Manitobans have access to safe, appropriate, affordable housing.

By investing in Rent Assist, we are providing financial supports to vulnerable Manitobans who might otherwise have gotten trapped in the cycle of poverty.

At the same time, through rent control, the annual rent guidelines will now be frozen through 2022 and 2023 to help Manitoba's renters catch up after the pandemic.

Funding of \$2.56 million is being made available to the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association to provide wrap-around supports to people experiencing homelessness so they can secure sustainable housing.

We're committing nearly—we also committed nearly \$5 million to Manitobans experiencing homelessness during the first phase of the pandemic, and we'll continue to support vulnerable Manitobans and youth through shelter and programming.

An increase of more than \$12.5 million for community living and disability services will help more than 7,000 Manitobans safely live and participate in our communities.

Nearly \$2 million will pilot three new training support programs for EIA clients. This partnership will offer specific EIA partner training and supports, so they're prepared to enter the workforce.

Madam Speaker, this government is committed to public education like no government before us. Budget '21 makes record investments in our public school system.

Our Better Education Starts Today strategy will be supported by an education funding guarantee of no less than \$1.6 billion of additional investments over the next four years. This year's Education budget will be over \$3 billion, the highest ever in Manitoba

history and the third highest amongst all provinces in Canada.

To keep schools open and protect students, teachers and staff will invest more than \$78 million through the Safe Schools Fund to help schools and COVID-19-related costs in 2021. At the same time, this government will embark on a long overdue improvement at the education system to put students first.

Our Better Education Starts Today strategy will be supported by new classroom investments that include more money in the classrooms for students of up to \$40 million where it belongs, rather than keeping it at the top-heavy administration, \$5 million to advance Better Education Starts Today strategy and \$5.5 million for special needs funding to ensure students can succeed.

COVID-19 has changed the way students learn and the way educators teach. We need to find new ways to support this new reality. Today, Manitoba becomes the first province to introduce a refundable teacher expense tax credit. Educators and child care in kindergarten-to-grade-12 facilities will be able to claim a 15 per cent refund of up to \$1,000 on eligible teacher supplies that are not reimbursed by their employer.

Budget '21 includes nearly \$4 million for virtual learning strategy and programs to support online, distant, remote learning for all Manitoban students regardless of technology options. Our \$1.6-billion education funding guarantee includes new and better schools.

Budget '21 invests more than \$260 million on school capital projects, which is an increase of over \$100 million to build new schools and additions, making renovations on existing facilities.

This commitment will accelerate the construction of our 20-new-school guarantee ahead of schedule. These new schools will address growing enrolment needs in communities like Sage Creek, Waverley West, Brandon, plus expanded French language education facilities.

Madam Speaker, our government promises to make life more affordable for Manitobans and their families, and we've delivered on this commitment. More than \$861 million in combined tax cuts and COVID-19 relief have already been returned to Manitobans since we took office in 2016.



Hydro, a debt now on the backs of Manitoba rate-payers for many, many, many years to come.

We must ensure this never happens again—never again. Full accountability to Manitobans is essential. Accordingly, our government will provide a formal response to each of the recommendations contained in the Wall report. This response will be based on inputs from the legislative Crown Corporations Committee.

Our government will protect against any privatization of Manitoba Hydro by requiring a binding referendum to be held so the public, the true owners of Manitoba Hydro, have their say, preventing future governments from keeping Manitobans in the dark.

Budget '21 makes important investments in public safety and keeping families safe in their homes and communities, keeping crime off the streets and bringing criminals to justice. This includes more than \$2.9 million to fix the backlog in the court system caused by COVID-19.

Investments in our justice system will support the development of the new Manitoba Criminal Intelligence Centre to help disrupt criminal activities and prevent crimes, increase resources for criminal property forfeiture, fund Citizens on Patrol more effectively and other key items to improve public safety and policing.

Madam Speaker, this government's ongoing efforts towards the truth and reconciliation continues. Budget '21 dedicates an additional \$815,000 to help support victims of crime in Manitoba by increasing supports for family violence and families of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.

We also commit additional \$1.2 million to restorative justice initiatives for First Nations and Métis communities.

Manitoba's new Public Safety Communications Services will launch this year, a modern radio system to help public safety organizations manage emergencies. Budget '21 dedicates \$16.5 million to protect Manitobans across the province and keep our community safe.

Madam Speaker, our first goal in the budget is to protect Manitobans from COVID-19. Our second goal is to advance Manitoba's economy past COVID-19.

This government has stood with businesses, with workers, with entrepreneurs throughout the pandemic. We've committed nearly a half billion dollars in COVID-19 supports to Manitoba businesses and organizations in the 2020-21 fiscal year, the most

generous per capita level of support in all of the country.

Madam Speaker, we utilize all means possible, including grants, targeted wage subsidies, rent supports, deferred rents and a number of other sources, to support businesses. We deliver the support rapidly and with minimum red tape.

These financial supports have directly assisted small-business owners and Manitoba non-profits, including food and restaurant, hotel, art, musicians, gyms, places of worship and many, many others. Our wage subsidy Gap Protection and Bridge programs have supported and issued more than 50,000 payments to Manitoba businesses and non-profits so far. This has helped directly support the creation of close to 17,000 jobs and assisted companies and individuals employing more than 175,000 Manitobans.

Over the 12-month period ending March 2021, our province posted the best job growth rate in the country. Madam Speaker, our labour force also increased by over 12,000 workers in 2021, and Manitoba has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country. The resilience of Manitoba businesses and entrepreneurs is very much evident. Our province is on the rebound. Now is the time to plan ahead, invest more to advance Manitoba's economy past COVID-19.

Madam Speaker, economic growth remains at the centre of our plan to restore a stronger, more prosperous Manitoba. A stronger economy will allow us to keep repairing our services while we restore the Province's finances. At the moment, Manitoba's economic outlook indicates a strong rebound in 2021 with a real GDP growth of 4.1 per cent, followed up by a solid year in 2021 of 3.6 per cent. The growth is dependent on continued success at beating COVID-19 by following the health—the public health fundamentals and getting as many Manitobans vaccinated as rapidly as the federal supplies arrive.

We know the pandemic has disrupted our economy and our citizens, but we are committed to helping Manitobans regain their livelihood. We'll do so in three different ways, Madam Speaker: first, by vaccinating Manitobans and safely loosening public health restrictions to allow the economy to safely reopen when the time is right; second, by investing in workers and businesses to hire people back to work, expand their businesses and keep their doors open; and third, by offering tax relief to those who need it

most. By reducing taxes we'll put more money on the kitchen table and thus more money into the economy.

This government's 25 per cent rebate on education property taxes this year for homeowners and farm owners and a 10 per cent rebate for commercial property owners is a \$250-million boost to our economy. Small businesses are the most at risk from the pandemic. Local businesses have made great sacrifices to protect Manitobans and prevent the spread of COVID-19, and we're providing some of the most generous business growth incentives in Canada to help them get through the challenging time and position for recovery.

Budget '21 takes five additional tax relief steps to help small businesses advance Manitoba's economic recovery: first, by lowering the payroll taxes for small businesses, a tax that discourages hiring. The exemption threshold is being raised from 1.5 to 1.75, and at the higher bracket, \$3 million to \$3.5 million. It will benefit approximately 1,100 businesses and completely exempt more than 240 Manitoba employers from paying the payroll tax whatsoever.

\*(15:10)

Second, we're going to enhance the small-business venture tax credit to help Manitoba companies raise business growth equity. An investor's maximum eligibility investment will be increased to \$500,000, with a maximum tax credit claimable annually against Manitoba income tax to be almost doubled at \$120,000.

Third, we're taking steps to further support Manitoba's growing film and video production sector. Budget 2021 temporarily adjusts the calculation of the frequent filming bonus and to stop the clock for two years to allow companies that had been shut down because of COVID-19 to regain fully eligible by March of this year—and '22.

Fourth, we're going to invest more in Manitoba's growing digital media sector. Budget '21 enhances the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit by eliminating the tax credit's expiration date and expanding its eligibility to allow add-on activities, such as downloadable content and other activities complementary to main products being developed.

Fifth, we'll provide ongoing tax relief to Manitoba cultural sectors. Budget '21 announces extensions to the cultural industry tax credit and Community Enterprise Development Tax Credit and makes the Book Publishing Tax Credit permanent.

Manitoba—advancing Manitoba's economic recovery means getting people back to work sooner. Manitoba has identified \$62 million in supports for specific new COVID-19 recovery job creation and workforce training that will help businesses and workers find jobs.

This funding will allow us to used—or help Manitobans re-enter the workforce, particularly those hard-hit sectors, groups disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic.

Specifically, this fund will assist employers to offset the costs of retraining returning and new employees who have been displaced by the pandemic. It'll support new digital platforms to provide training, mentorship and coaching for small businesses that require enhancements for new web-based e-commerce platforms to thrive in new online environment.

Madam Speaker, our government believes in the importance of continuing support for young Manitobans during these difficult times. Last year, our government provided wage subsidy supports for close to 4,000 young Manitobans, which has helped us keep our youth unemployment rate 2.4 per cent below the national average.

This budget includes a minimum of \$25 million identified funding for youth and student job hiring through a range of public and private non-profit-sector-focused employments that we'll be announcing shortly.

Madam Speaker, advancing Manitoba's economic recovery means planning for the future. Budget '21 sets out two big steps to ensure Manitobans become the best place to invest and grow in Canada.

First, we're going to create a new, private sector-led provincially economic development agency based on the recommendations of the Premier's Economic Opportunities Advisory Board. This agency will lead Manitoba's activities to attract new private sector investment, increase international trade and act as a single window for businesses and investors pursuing major economic development across the province.

Second, we're going to commence a tax competitiveness review and invite the views of Manitobans to ensure our province has a truly competitive tax system for growth and jobs. Lower taxes create jobs. If we are to recover strongly from the pandemic shock of our economy, we need to look

ahead to ensure Manitoba businesses and entrepreneurs are held back—are not held back for investing, building and creating jobs.

Building more infrastructure is a key to advancing Manitoba's recovery past COVID-19. Budget '21 makes significant new investments in infrastructure projects around the province to create jobs for Manitobans. We plan to invest more than \$2.1 billion this year on strategic investments across Manitoba, the largest in Manitoba history.

This includes more than \$630 million for highway and road construction and maintaining, including two major improvement and safety for Manitoba highways: Highway 1 and 16 intersection improvements and Highway 100–South Perimeter Highway at St. Mary's Road interchange.

In doing so, Budget 2021 commits to a three-year horizon of a minimum of \$500 million per year to aid the heavy construction industry and plan and ensure Manitobans get value for infrastructure investments that is needed most.

Madam Speaker, this budget also includes \$107 million through the Manitoba Restart capital program to drive new construction jobs and stimulate the economy with road repairs across the province for major projects.

In addition to our infrastructure program designs, over \$292 million for health facility infrastructure, allowing us to begin construction on the new St. Boniface emergency department and continue strengthening our emergency departments across the province.

Madam Speaker, it also includes \$415 million for the kindergarten-through-grade-12 education, post-secondary infrastructure investments, creating new schools; \$101 million for the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlet channels flood protection project. That's the biggest project in Manitoba infrastructure history.

This project will protect Manitobans from future flooding brought about by climate change. It advances Indigenous reconciliation by giving people their homes and their lives back and it will create hundreds of jobs in the construction sector in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2021 sets aside \$100 million for emergency expenditures to prepare us for the impacts of extreme weather like floods, forecasts, droughts and other items that address emergency needs.

Looking ahead, Manitoba sees infrastructure investment as a key to growing our economy and creating jobs. We must advance our way past COVID-19 with an infrastructure call to arms with our partners in the public and private sector.

Our priorities include cleaning up Lake Winnipeg with other major investments in the North End Winnipeg pollution control centre.

We're also going to be building an international trade hub by investing in a freeway-status Perimeter Highway that connects all of Manitoba's national and international trade corridors to ensure efficient movement of goods and services across the border.

We're also going to be building new water and wastewater projects in several communities in the province of Manitoba to encourage population economic growth needs, including more agriculture and pea production development, investing in green growth jobs across Manitoba and committing to new electric bus infrastructure in Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, we have good green infrastructure, shovel-ready projects that we want to get out the door. We've committed—we're committing our share of funding and call on the federal and municipal governments to join us in creating jobs, cleaning up our environment and helping Manitobans recover from COVID-19.

Budget 2021 includes over \$103 million to increase strategic infrastructure projects that match federal funds for priority projects under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. This government signals its full allocation for all these funds under the ICIP. Let's not delay. With our partners' approval, Manitoba can advance forward.

The pandemic has 'unpent' post-secondary education and job opportunities for university and college students looking for new jobs and careers. To advance our economy past COVID-19, we need to advance students through learning into good jobs in the workforce.

And that is why we are creating the new—we created the new Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration. This department will ensure post-secondary education is better linked to workforce opportunities. It will create stronger links between skill development and job needs, and will encourage more immigrants to come to Manitoba.



Budget '21 provides more than \$680 million to post-secondary institutions, plus \$10 million of support for priority maintenance in these facilities.

We remain committed to supporting students so they can pursue and complete a post-secondary education and we'll ensure that our Province continues to offer the lowest tuitions in western Canada, with increase capped at 3.75 for university tuitions and \$250 for college programs.

Budget '21 will increase funding to the Manitoba bursary scholarships by more than \$4 million, and that's going to help access post-secondary education. We provide right now \$55 million of interest-free student loans and increase investments by over \$1.4 million.

\*(15:20)

Madam Speaker, much of our economic growth occurs in our cities and our local communities. Budget '21 recognizes the importance of municipalities to advancing Manitoba past COVID-19. And that is why so much of our new infrastructure investment is aimed at growing our local communities.

Today's budget includes—or continues to give municipalities a fair say in how one of the most generous municipal funding programs in the country works. It provides basket funding of \$172 million in operating and \$137 million in capital. And we did—as we did last year, we'll be advancing operating grants to provide flexibility to municipalities during the time of the pandemic.

Budget '21 dedicates an additional \$5.6 million to the Building Sustainable Communities program and will fund more than 10 large-scale community capital projects that will benefit non-profits, charities, municipalities and Northern Affairs communities' councils.

To preserve our past while revitalizing our future, we're establishing a trust fund of \$25 million to redevelop the Hudson Bay building in Downtown Winnipeg. We encourage other levels of governments to join us and invest in this historical preservation and civic development projects right here in the heart of Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, we'll continue to support the diverse needs of municipalities as we collectively deal with the pandemic.

Madam Speaker, the pandemic has challenged our public services across the whole government to deliver much-needed public services in a whole new

way. I'm proud of the work that the—I'm proud of the work and proud to stand in this Legislature on budget day to salute the work on behalf of all Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, they kept their government services open and available to Manitobans throughout the province. COVID-19 has not just challenged the way governments deliver services now; it challenged the way governments to think differently about how we're delivering it in the future.

Throughout COVID-19, the province has kept its workforce working. No public servants' jobs were eliminated, no permanent job layoffs ensued. We're ensuring the job security as we direct resources to support the private, non-private sectors as they weather the pandemic storm.

As we advance past COVID-19, this government will invest in public services that are more citizen focused, outcome driven and technology connected. We'll increase broadband connectivity to rural and remote Indigenous communities to expand coverage gaps and to improve access to Internet-based distance learning and mental health services.

We'll create new opportunities that remote working provides to encourage hiring of public servants in rural and northern communities and we'll continue to work to shop smarter with new procurement approaches expected to save close to \$107 million over the next five years.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, Budget '21 has two clear goals: protect Manitobans and their services through COVID-19 and advance Manitoba on its economy past the pandemic.

Thankfully, COVID-19 will not be with us forever. With this budget, we begin our plan for what comes next.

COVID-19 has posed a historical worldwide challenge, but Manitobans are stronger, Madam Speaker, and more resilient than any the pandemic can throw at us. Now this budget plans for an equally strong and resilient Manitoba for the future.

Many challenges remain before us, but a road to recovery starts today with brighter blue skies ahead, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I move, seconded by the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), that debate now be adjourned.

*Motion agreed to.*

### Messages

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, I have two messages from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as well as the budget documents, which I'd like to table.

**Madam Speaker:** Please stand for the reading of the messages.

To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2022, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And that's signed by the Lieutenant Governor.

And the second message to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: the Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of sums required for the services of the province for capital expenditures, and recommends these Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

And that's signed by the Lieutenant Governor.

Please be seated.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Madam Speaker:** The House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Committee Reports</b>		Death of Eishia Hudson	
		Fontaine	2214
		Friesen	2214
Standing Committee on Justice		Death of Indigenous People by Police	
Third Report		Fontaine	2214
Lagimodiere	2205	Friesen	2215
		Pallister	2215
Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs		COVID-19 Vaccine Priority	
Third Report		Lamont	2215
Reyes	2206	Stefanson	2215
		Pallister	2215
<b>Members' Statements</b>		Schools in Low-Income Areas	
Manitoba 150 Award Recipients		Gerrard	2215
Johnson	2207	Pallister	2216
Providence Therapeutics		Supports for Crime Victims	
Wasyliw	2207	A. Smith	2216
		Cox	2216
Gateway Get Away		Lazy Bear Expeditions	
Piwniuk	2208	Naylor	2216
		Pedersen	2216
NorWest Co-op		Pallister	2217
Marcelino	2208	Polar Bear Habitat	
Precious-Joy Olowoyeye		Naylor	2217
Reyes	2209	Pallister	2217
<b>Oral Questions</b>		Rural Agriculture Services	
Future Provincial Budgets		Brar	2217
Kinew	2209	Pedersen	2217
Pallister	2209	Pallister	2217
COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout		<b>Petitions</b>	
Kinew	2210	Diagnostic Testing Accessibility	
Pallister	2210	Maloway	2218
COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout			
Asagwara	2211		
Stefanson	2212		
Sale of Social Housing Units			
Adams	2212		
Squires	2212		
Nutrition Programs for Children in Poverty			
Altomare	2213		
Cullen	2213		

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>**