

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

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**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

Monday, April 12, 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? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**Sandi Ferguson and Carrol MacDonald**

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance):** Today I want to recognize two dedicated Kirkfield Park constituents who are working hard to keep our community litter-free while inspiring others to do the same, Sandi Ferguson and Carrol MacDonald.

April is Earth Month, an opportunity to celebrate our planet for all it has to offer while pause and reflect on our home and what we can do to treat it better. Little actions make the world a better place and can include things like planting a tree, picking up trash while you're out on a walk, recycling or being mindful of our own resources we're using.

In Kirkfield Park we are fortunate to have the Assiniboine River winding through the constituency. Where Oxbow Bend Road meets the river is a peaceful place where people like to read their books on a rock, launch a canoe, go fishing or have a picnic.

Unfortunately, there always seems to be litter blowing around, a problem that's not unique to Kirkfield Park. Instead of waiting for someone else to clean up the garbage, Sandi and Carrol took it upon themselves this past Saturday to go with friends and family and neighbours to get together in the afternoon to pick up the trash along Oxbow Bend Road and Camp Manitou Road.

This is the second year that they organized a cleanup with the support of Take Pride Winnipeg! and

I was happy to join them with my kids this weekend. A total of 67 bags of garbage were picked up, Madam Speaker, garbage that won't make it into the Assiniboine River.

I want to thank Sandi and Carrol for your initiative and positive contribution to our community. Kirkfield Park is better place for people like yourselves and remind all of us that little and small actions can contribute to a healthier place for all Manitobans.

### Mental Health, Addiction and Poverty

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** This budget has failed to support Manitoba's most vulnerable. This government, despite establishing a new department, still refuses to make the investments necessary to help Manitobans struggling with mental health, addictions, poverty and precarious housing.

Manitobans deserve a government who takes the growing drug crisis seriously. In the first nine months of 2020, there were 259 fatal drug overdoses in our province—an all-time high. The Pallister government has fallen behind other provinces on reporting this much-needed data. This government needs to step up and support the bill I introduced last week, Bill 224, The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act (Overdose Death Reporting). This bill would require the Province to publish the number of drug overdose deaths as well as the type of drug on government websites in a timely fashion.

Two years ago, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) tossed the safe consumption space report on the floor, showing his clear disdain for Manitobans who need help. He and his government have shown the same disdain for Manitobans experiencing poverty. Low-income Manitobans thought this budget might give them a break, but the Premier is only looking out for himself and his wealthy friends. His politically motivated property tax change will do nothing to help the thousands of Manitobans who rent and whose rent can still go up exponentially under above guideline rent increases.

The Premier and his PC caucus refuse to listen to the needs of the community. I call on him and his government to support a safe consumption site, increase local mental health supports, increase affordable housing, be more transparent in reporting overdose deaths today and support Bill 224.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

**Clare Agnew and Gary Gilmour**

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and congratulate Clare Agnew and Gary Gilmour, two Morden-Winkler constituents who received the Honour 150 award.

Clare Agnew is a committed volunteer in the city of Morden for 30 years. She co-chaired the 1996 Manitoba Summer Games, the 2019 National Women's U18 Championship and chaired the 2017 Esso Cup female midjet hockey championship. She spent many years coaching baseball, soccer and basketball.

For the last 10 years, Clare co-ordinated the Morden MS Walk, taking over when the future of the event was in doubt. It is noteworthy that Clare is directing her \$500 donation to the MS Society, Manitoba division. Clare has invested thousands of hours in making the community a better place.

Gary Gilmour is an instrumental leader in the city of Winkler, serving as a director, adviser, secretary, organizer and coach. For 20 years he worked with the Winkler Community Foundation. He helped set up the Youth in Philanthropy program. As a member of the Winkler Lions Club, he was integral in setting up the Amy Janzen fund, which assists parents with seriously ill children. He won the Lieutenant Governor's make a difference award in 2011 for his years co-ordinating blood donor clinics.

He taught sports. He taught tennis. He was on the board of Tennis Canada. He was a founding member of the group that formed the Winkler Flyers. He has served his church, the bar association, the law association. And, interestingly, he held the role of president of the constituency association for five different PC candidates: Arnold Brown, Jack Penner, Don Orchard, Peter George Dyck and the current guy.

Gary has selected central service community station to receive a \$500 donation.

Congratulations, Clare Agnew and Gary Gilmour. On behalf of grateful communities, we thank you for your service.

**Budget 2021**

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** Times continue to be tough for Manitobans, and Budget 2021 will now make life harder for folks in the province.

The pandemic has exposed the realities of the Pallister government's underfunding in education and

health, and Budget 2021 cuts more services and the programs that matter to Manitobans.

The Pallister government has imposed wage freezes on educators for years, underfunded last year's Education budget by \$8 million and now the Premier (Mr. Pallister) says that teachers should spend their own money on school supplies.

This is terrible, Madam Speaker. This is not leadership.

And now, Budget 2021 underfunds learning and outcomes which are vital to help improve literacy and numeracy for Manitoba children. This government has also cut supports for kids with additional needs across the province.

Manitoba educators and families deserve a properly funded education system, and the budget brings us further from the reality.

Cuts are also continue in the public sector. In Budget 2021, the Pallister government has cut funding to long-term-care homes and home-care services, reducing the funding to health authorities and cut acute care by \$13 million.

The Pallister government has also frozen the physician and nursing recruitment programs and retention initiatives.

We are in the worst health-care crisis of our province, and this government did not put forward a plan in the budget to accelerate the vaccine rollout for Manitobans.

\* (13:40)

Madam Speaker, the government simply does not show leadership in education, health, or any other aspect of their governance. They have no—they have not learned any lesson from the pandemic, and this budget is evident—Budget 2021.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ken Wark**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Today I would like to honour and recognize a gentleman and friend, Mr. Ken Wark, who passed away this winter.

Known as Kenny to most, he was a dedicated conservationist who flew for the Department of Conservation from 1970 to 2003. Ken got his pilot's licence in the fall of 1968, followed by his commercial and instructor rating by 1970.

In 1949 the Helio Courier was designed, and little was it known at that time, one of the best pilots to sit in the cockpit would be Ken. Ken flew wolf and

moose surveys, fire and night patrol to protect our resources. I had the opportunity to fly with this amazing pilot and always felt safe knowing he could likely land the Helio on the top of a spruce tree if need be.

Ken was notably one of the best pilots in western Canada. A familiar sound to his dedicated ground crew was W242S80, I got a light working in your area.

Ken will be remembered for his humour. He was such a comedian. He loved gathering with family, friends, and, upon departure, his words were: It was an honour and a privilege.

Ken was a creative and captivating storyteller and he lived for the moments to spend time with his loving wife Donna and family. Ken had a tenderness which extended to the love of his cows, dogs, cats and wildlife.

Ken will be missed, and his vast array of knowledge, intelligence and experience will be treasured by his children and grandchildren. His contributions to conservation of Manitoba's natural resources will be a lasting legacy.

Ken, as Jaclyn St. Vincent says: Even the skies, where you spent so much of your time, have gone grey and heavy with your loss. What were once your eyes on the skies will now be ours as we search for you in many kinds of clouds and jet trails you'd always tell us so much about.

You'll be missed by every heart you touched. W242S80, we have an angel working the skies.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And, Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask for leave to include all of Ken's family and grandchildren into 'Hansford.'

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to include those names in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Thank you.

*Ken Wark's family: Donna Wark, wife. Children and spouses: Blair and Janet Wark, Wanda and Jon Kopytko and Kim and Roch St. Vincent. Stepson and spouse: Aaron Brager and Eileen Fowler. Grandchildren: Kenneth, Alex, Taylor, Jenna, Cory, Ryan and Jaclyn. Step-grandchildren: Keianna, Kohl, Crosby and Gracelyn. Great-grandchildren: Logan, Mackenzie, Jessie, Tyson and Tristan. Predeceased by Mac and Anna Wark, parents; Rob, brother-in-law; Jason, nephew; and Shirley, wife.*

## Speaker's Statements

**Madam Speaker:** I have two statements for the House.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to Jim Crean, the longest serving current member of the Hansard team, who passed away on December 8th, 2020.

Jim joined Hansard in 1988 as a transcriber-proofreader and became a supervisor in 1992. Starting in 1990, Jim worked on the Hansard night shift, reviewing the daily transcript before its final layout and formatting. Jim was the last line of defence for the exemplary work done by Hansard every sitting day.

Jim brought an encyclopedic knowledge of parliamentary procedure and a love for the English language to his work. He had an uncanny knack of being able to spot errant commas and other errors as he proofread at speeds at which most people wouldn't even be able to recognize the paragraphs flying by.

Over the course of his 33-year career at Hansard, Jim made important contributions to Hansard editorial policies. Perhaps more importantly, though, he was a mentor to so many Hansard staff. He cared deeply about those he supervised and had a gentle way of bringing out the best in those with whom he worked. Always ready to share his wisdom, he was a teacher first and foremost, and on every shift, those who worked with him learned something new.

Outside of Hansard, Jim had a long career in education, most recently at Red River College, where he taught in the English language program, working with newcomers to Canada. He spoke fondly of his students, who came from all over the world, and would be beside himself with pride whenever he told anecdotes of how they progressed or found good jobs after finishing their ESL program with him.

Jim loved the opera, eating out at restaurants and enjoying a glass of good red wine with his meal, and spending time at his cottage in Wisconsin with his wife, Lorna. He was a true gentleman who would not think twice about helping you brush the snow off your vehicle after a long winter night's shift at the Legislature. Although always soft-spoken, he had a wonderful sense of humour and a delightful twinkle in his eye that accompanied his classic dry wit.

He was the kindest of men and will be sadly missed by all of his colleagues at Hansard.

I ask the members of the Assembly to join me in sending our deepest condolences to his wife, Lorna, his family, his friends and his colleagues.

I would like to draw members' attention to the table today, as I am pleased to introduce to the House our new Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Cam Steel.

Cam comes to the Assembly from the Winnipeg Police Service, where he recently retired at the rank of patrol sergeant. He earned the WPS exemplary service medal in 2015, and among his many other accomplishments during his 25 years with the WPS include serving as supervisor in CCTV processing, uniform patrol and central processing; training and mentoring officer in the child abuse unit; and forensic artist unit supervisor and certified forensic artist.

Cam's first day with the Assembly was Tuesday, April 6th, 2021, and today is his first day in the House. Starting a position with the Assembly during session is very much a hit-the-ground-running proposition, but we are confident that Cam is up for this challenge.

Members may know that LAMC recently authorized an enhancement of the deputy sergeant position from sessional to 0.6, along with an accompanying increase in responsibilities. The new position is now on par with the sergeant's position in terms of its focus on security as well as ceremonial responsibilities.

Deputy Sergeant Steel, on behalf of all honourable members and all Assembly staff, I welcome you to your new role. We are very happy to have you here with us.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### COVID-19 Vaccinations Distribution Rate

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of our team, I want to extend a sincere welcome to Mr. Steel and wish him great success in his service, both of the Chamber and of our province.

Manitoba's test positivity rate has doubled in recent weeks. On Friday, public health officials confirmed that we're now at the start of a third wave.

And yet, for some reason, the Premier seems to think that cases won't happen on the weekend. I say that because the pop-up clinics and FIT teams wind down their operations on Sundays week after week. This is leading to a slower vaccine rollout than Manitobans would like.

It's unacceptable when every single day and every dose delivered helps us to bring the end of the pandemic that much nearer.

Will the Premier today tell us what the plan is to expedite the vaccine rollout, including keeping the clinics and FIT teams running on Sundays?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Welcome, Mr. Steel. Thank you for your past service and, in advance, for your future service here.

We are currently ranking fourth in the country in vaccines. The vaccine team tells me that their plan is to move us up that list as early as later this week.

Last week, the opposition reached a new low here when they brought my wife into the education tax debate. And we know that the NDP leader has a long history of reckless behaviour, but this claim that he has changed is—he has a chance to refute it by apologizing today for bringing my wife into the debate. There's not a reason to do that.

And, Madam Speaker, the NDP was wrong to bring my wife's taxes into issue. There's no justification for bringing our families into these debates. And so I would ask the NDP—if he would mind rising in his place today and apologizing to my wife.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, Manitobans want the vaccination campaign to succeed, and some of the most effective ways for us to combat this third wave that has now arrived here in Manitoba, unfortunately, are stuck in freezers and fridges even as we meet here today.

There are some 125,000 doses sitting there, unused as of this moment. Even at the current rate of roughly 5,000 a day, Manitoba will only be administering about half of the doses that we are to receive this week.

Things are proceeding far too slowly. We need innovative and new ways to increase access and to get those doses into people's arms more quickly. Drive-throughs, clinics, doctors' offices: all of these offer expanded capacity to our vaccine rollout.

\* (13:50)

Will the Premier work with doctors and incorporate these 'onner'—other innovative ideas so we can increase the speed of vaccinations in Manitoba?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, we are.

And the member is letting the Free Press do his research for him again, Madam Speaker.

The fact is, it's sad that the NDP leader would—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —choose not to apologize. Under my leadership, the PC party has never, Madam Speaker—in a decade—has never brought a family member of an opposing colleague into a debate. We have not done that and we will not be doing that.

The member needs to do the right thing. This is twice in the last three weeks where he's chosen to bring my family into debates, where he's chosen to orchestrate a protest and take pictures of my house and put them on a website and then to accomplice himself with the Free Press and have them do the same thing last Friday.

Madam Speaker, I hear the—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —noise from the members opposite, but they know this is wrong. They know this is wrong and they need to understand it's wrong and they need to admit it's wrong.

What has happened—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —to the respect that this place—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —has always demonstrated for the family members of MLAs? What has happened to that? So much for that respect. The member has to rise in his place and apologize. It's the right thing to do.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** So, this is what the government was up to on Sunday while they wound down the vaccine clinics and the FIT teams?

Again, the Premier was not outraged about the Free Press's headline when we met here on Friday, but apparently his staff and his advisers were cooking this up all weekend.

Back to reality for a second: Manitobans are wondering why they couldn't get the doses into their arms at an expedited rate this past weekend. Why were the FIT teams being slowed down on Sunday?

Why were the pop-up clinics being arrested from continuing their good work of delivering doses to people in our province?

Madam Speaker, this is a public health emergency that has stretched on for more than a year. We can now see a light at the end of the tunnel, but the Premier seems to be distracted by any number of things other than the No. 1 priority that every single Manitoban shares right now, which is getting the vaccine.

Will the Premier simply tell us today what the plan is to dramatically increase the number of Manitobans who get a shot each and every day?

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, I'm not at all distracted by the importance of respecting others' families. I don't think that's a distraction.

I think the NDP leader broke health—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —orders, Madam Speaker. The NDP leader broke health orders during a pandemic, and now he speaks about the importance of protecting health. And there was no story in the Winnipeg Free Press on that. But on the front page on Friday, there's a reference to my wife's taxes. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** The Free Press—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —news department has embarrassed itself throughout this pandemic, Madam Speaker, and the NDP has helped it to do that and has joined in doing that.

Madam Speaker, the NDP wants to return, the members opposite want to return to the good old days where they got subsidies from the taxpayer. And the Free Press wants to return to the good old days where it got subsidies from the NDP. Neither of those things are going to happen.

What I would like, Madam Speaker—and I think it would be in the best interests of all of us here—is to return to the good old days when we respected each other's spouses and children in this place.

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

### Manitoba Hydro Workers Wage Freeze Order

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, not only is the Premier disrespecting the families of all those Manitobans who could be getting vaccinations on Sundays, but he continues to disrespect the families of those 2,300 IBEW Manitoba Hydro workers.

Now, do you remember the last time we had a severe out-of-season snow storm in Manitoba? Do you recall that the members opposite attempted to praise and highlight the good work of Manitoba Hydro workers? I sure don't, because the way that they have treated these workers is absolutely shameful.

While Manitoba Hydro makes huge profits each and every year and this team raises the rates on the average working family in this province, they have the temerity, they lack the sagacity to speak against the bad moves of the Premier (Mr. Pallister), who then turns around and orders a wage freeze on those very same Manitoba Hydro workers that the rest of us were singing the praises of.

Will the Premier simply get out of the way and allow IBEW workers to negotiate a fair deal with Manitoba Hydro right now?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Legislative and Public Affairs):** Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite feigns concern about families but, as already has been raised, this is a member who doesn't demonstrate it in anything that he or his caucus does.

I've been in this House a long time, and I've never seen the attacks on an individual MLA's family. Each of us have responsibilities as elected officials, Madam Speaker, but we expect that that won't extend to the families.

What the NDP has done—and done it together with the Free Press, Madam Speaker—and believes that women in 2021 shouldn't own property or shouldn't pay taxes—maybe the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) can speak to his leader about in 2021, that's acceptable.

But what isn't acceptable in 2021 is going after MLAs' families, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, what the member for Steinbach should have been rising in his place to say is that the power outage that his constituents faced in

recent days is the result of this Premier's failed Hydro policy.

Even as Manitoba Hydro turns a huge profit this year, even as this government orders that rates be increased on every single working family in our province, they still have the nerve to turn around and order a wage freeze on these Manitoba Hydro workers. I'm not surprised that the Premier doesn't want to answer for his actions when it comes to Manitoba Hydro, because they are, in fact, failing Manitobans so severely.

Will the Premier ask the member for Steinbach to stay in his seat for this question and simply rise now to commit that he will remove the wage-freeze order on Manitoba Hydro workers?

**Mr. Goertzen:** The member opposite might have a history of telling other people to stay quiet, Madam Speaker. Maybe some of those people even listen to him. But I have a responsibility and he has a responsibility in this House. His responsibility is to act in a responsible way.

If he wants people to take his questions seriously, whether it's this question or any other question in this House seriously, he has to demonstrate that in his own personal actions. And to start, Madam Speaker, he can do that by respecting families of individual MLAs. He can come and he can attack me as he's attacked others. That's fine. But it shouldn't extend to families.

He allows his caucus to do it. He demonstrated it by encouraging it himself. It is never acceptable, Madam Speaker, and he should apologize, and then we can have a reasonable discussion about reasonable issues.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on—[interjection]—on a new question. [interjection] No?

**An Honourable Member:** No, third question.

**Madam Speaker:** Oh, pardon me. Final supplementary?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, final supplementary.

**Madam Speaker:** Final supplementary, my apologies.

**Mr. Kinew:** Let the record show that, as our team came into this hallowed hall each and every day to stand up against the pandemic, to stand up for Manitoba Hydro workers and to stand up for a more affordable quality of life, all of the members opposite stood up merely to talk about themselves.



And that is very, very revealing, Madam Speaker, but it is particularly galling at a time when there are 2,300—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —families of—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —Manitoba Hydro's IBEW members who are on strike right now because of the failure of this government to allow—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —them to negotiate a fair deal.

These 2,300 workers have asked for—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —arbitration. These 2,300 workers have asked for a fair deal. These 2,300 workers have come here and challenged the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to simply have a conversation. And what did he do? He hid in his office, refusing to engage with them directly.

Will the Premier finally face up to the Hydro workers out there and announce today that he will end the wage freeze and allow them to negotiate a fair deal?

**Mr. Goertzen:** Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite is right about one thing: that this is a distinguished place, and one should act in a distinguished way.

But he does not distinguish himself. Nor do his colleagues in his caucus distinguish himself by continually going after family members, Madam Speaker.

We've seen in Ottawa where there's been extraordinary measures taken in Ottawa to increase security in the homes of Members of Parliament, Madam Speaker. We've seen in Saskatchewan where public health officers have had their homes violated. We've seen the Governor General's home.

\* (14:00)

This is an extraordinary time and it requires leaders to be extraordinary in their ability to be distinguished and to be rational and to be reasonable, Madam Speaker, in all the things that they do and all the things that they ask.

I ask the member to bring himself up to the standard that so far he has failed to achieve.

### **Surgery Backlogs Impact on Women**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, last week we raised the concerns of hundreds of women who are awaiting surgery.

Dr. Margaret Burnett at Women's Hospital says that surgeries there have been, and I quote, slowed compared to many other sites and disproportionately affecting women. End quote.

While other provinces have done much more to already address their surgical backlogs, the Pallister government is, once again, missing their window for action.

Why has this problem not been addressed and when will women get the surgeries that they need?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** I guess this is the member opposite doing their research in the Free Press from an article from quite some time ago, Madam Speaker.

But what I will say is that I have worked very closely with Doctors Manitoba. I've met with Dr. Boroditsky. I've met with others who are involved in women's health. And I want to thank them for the incredible work that they do.

I know that, as a result of the pandemic and the safety of all Manitobans, that we had to curtail and shut down some of the surgeries that were taking place in the province, out of the safety of all Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

Those surgeries are back up and running again, Madam Speaker. While they're not completely to where they should be, we've certainly made significant strides over the last number of weeks.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** I'd like to thank the Free Press for raising Sara Corrigan's case and bringing it to our attention, along with hundreds of other Manitoba women.

Sara experiences pain like a never-ending—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —contraction every single time she menstruates. Over the last six months, she's had

surgeries cancelled twice and she currently has no date for surgery at all.

And since we raised this, Sara wrote the Minister of Health, explaining that her surgical ward can't operate because they don't have enough post-op nurses or recovery nurses. Because of this, Sara says women like her are waiting still—waiting, rather, and suffering while they await surgery.

Now, she wants direct answers to direct questions.

Will there be enough staff in post-op and recovery at Women's Hospital so she can get her surgery booked this month, yes or no?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Certainly, the floor of the Chamber is not an appropriate place to be discussing individuals' personal health matters, Madam Speaker. My office will certainly be in touch with Sara. And, obviously, we don't want any Manitobans, women or anybody, wanting—waiting for surgery in Manitoba.

The fact of the matter is we had to take necessary steps and—to protect our public, Madam Speaker. We're in the middle of a worldwide pandemic and those—that had to take place.

Obviously, we are working with officials to ensure that we get those surgical procedures up to capacity again, and we won't stop until they are, Madam Speaker.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, other provinces responded to their backlog a year ago. They used the times in between the waves of the pandemic to build capacity and bring their surgical backlogs right back down. But in Manitoba, over a year into this pandemic, our backlog has barely budged.

Sara Corrigan says that the Pallister government has recently announced changes but the minister was vague on how and when.

Now, that's a familiar concern from a government that doesn't plan well and doesn't respond until an issue is well into the crisis stage.

I ask the minister again: Will she staff up post-op and recovery? Will she get Sara her surgery this month?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Well, again, Madam Speaker, we'll work with Sara and others who are awaiting surgeries to ensure that they get the surgeries that they need.

But I will remind the member opposite and others opposite, Madam Speaker, that when we took office, we inherited among some of the highest and longest wait times in the country. So we've done it before; we've cleaned up their mess. We'll continue to do that and work towards ensuring that all Manitobans who need surgical procedures are able to get it. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

### **Prenatal Support Programs Funding Reduction Concerns**

**Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Madam Speaker, parent-child coalitions support parents, early-childhood educators, as well as teachers and nurses to support the healthy development of young children. Last week, the minister denied that funding had been cut to parent-child coalitions. There was no such cuts, the minister said.

I'll table the minister's own briefing notes, and I'll quote: Program budgets for parent-child coalitions have been reduced. End quote.

Why has the minister misled this House? Will she apologize and, more importantly, will she restore the funding she has cut from parent-child coalitions?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Families):** I'd like to point out that families in St. James are still waiting for their apology after that member for St. James (Mr. Sala) fear-mongered with families, with children and parents about the parent-child coalitions—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** Our government recognizes the importance of these parent-child coalitions, and that is why we are continuing to fund the parent-child coalitions, working with them. We're working with all child-care providers as well, to ensure that we've got a robust system in the province of Manitoba. That's why we're investing \$25 million more each and every year than the NDP ever did on early learning and childhood education.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** I'll quote again from the minister's own briefing notes: Were any programs cut, the note asks. Yes, program budgets for parent-child coalitions have been reduced. End quote. Also cut: intervention and outreach teams; the Healthy Baby Prenatal Benefit; and the healthy baby milk program.

These are all programs that support babies and women to get the best possible start in life.

Why is the minister cutting programs that support babies and new moms, and why has she misled this House?

**Ms. Squires:** We know that the members—the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), took a lot of creative licence with the truth in telling his memoirs. He takes a lot of creative licence with the truth when he comes into this House every day, and now we see members of his caucus doing the same thing: fear mongering—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** —taking creative licence with the truth. Our government is investing more in—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** —early learning and childhood education, \$25 million more than the NDP ever spent on early learning and childhood education. Our government is also investing in—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** —ensuring all families have access to the services that they need. We have enhanced the outcomes—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Squires:** —for many families in the province of Manitoba—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I'm going to ask the table to stop the clock.

I'm going to ask members to please be respectful to those that are standing, whether they're asking a question or answering a question. I could not hear anything the member was just saying in her response, and if you expect me to do my job and be able to determine whether or not there's any breach of the rules, I have to be able to hear.

Plus, it's also hugely disrespectful to hear members, you know, heckle down their own members or to be heckling another member. That really is not the best way to demonstrate democracy at its best, at its finest. So I would please ask for your co-operation.

\* (14:10)

I'm going to give the member 15 more seconds to complete her sentence. I did not hear it.

**Ms. Squires:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate your guidance on this. We know that the NDP, they like to come in here and put mistruths on the record, and then when they're confronted with the truth, they don't want to hear.

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

**Ms. Marcelino:** In the first eight months of 2020, 30 babies were born with congenital syphilis. This is completely preventable. It's an abomination in a rich province like Manitoba.

Unfortunately, the situation has no doubt gotten worse. Pre- and postnatal interventions are needed now more than ever, yet this minister is set on cutting critical supports and then misleads this House about it.

Parent-child coalitions, prenatal benefits, and milk for babies: all cut. Shameful.

Will the House—will this minister apologize for misleading this House, and will she restore the funding she has cut to support the healthy development of children?

**Ms. Squires:** What is shameful is this member's complete disregard for the truth. She knows that our government has invested \$25 million more than the NDP ever invested in creating early learning and childhood education spaces. She knows that this government has done more to help eradicate child poverty.

We are pulling more children out of poverty than the NDP ever did. Under that government it—we were the child poverty capital of the nation. We are—we've got more work to do, but we're working to get all children out of poverty. We're investing in a breakfast program—\$5 million right now—to ensure that children have breakfast before they go to school.

We've got a lot of work to do, but our government is moving forward in the right way to pull all children out of poverty and to give all people a quality of life in Manitoba. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

### **MPI Agreement with Autopac Dealers Appointment of Conciliator**

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** Manitoba Public Insurance is in uncharted territory as they have cancelled their agreement with Autopac dealers and repair shops.

Just like with insurance brokers, the Pallister government is making a mess. Auto dealers know that the Pallister government interfered before and are again asking for a conciliator.

Will the minister be doing so for auto dealers? Yes or no? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services):** Certainly, on this side of the House we respect the process, Madam Speaker. We respect that the Automotive Trades Association and the Manitoba Motor Dealers Association are working with MPI for the betterment of all Manitobans.

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

**Mr. Sandhu:** Automotive trades are now seeking a court injunction against MPI. They are asking for a conciliator just like what IBAM got.

We know that action cost Manitobans an additional \$23 million. It set a bad precedent.

It is the government's—is this government going to once again appoint a conciliator?

**Mr. Wharton:** The information the member from The Maples just put on the record is false, Madam Speaker. We know that the negotiations between IBAM and MPI were successful for Manitoba ratepayers. We know that over \$20 million will be saved, put back on the kitchen tables of Manitoba families, through that process. We respect the process, unlike members opposite.

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

**Mr. Sandhu:** Maybe the minister can also talk to the employees. I'm sure he got the money for the IBAM, but not for the employees.

When this government interferes it cost us all more. No one can blame auto dealers for representing their industry. What—it is government's job to serve the public, which they fail to do last time.

Their interference cost us \$23 million. Now, auto dealers are seeking a court injunction. They want the same treatment.

Will this government again be appointing a conciliator, yes or no?

**Mr. Wharton:** We know the members opposite have a record—have a history, Madam Speaker, of interference and they—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wharton:** —matter of fact, they're No. 1 at interfering, Madam Speaker. We know that they also put mistruths out in the public when it comes to things like raising the PST. Well, they denied they would ever raise the PST in 2011. Not only did they raise it; they actually broadened it.

We're going to put money back on the kitchen table for all Manitobans, Madam Speaker. We urge all parties between ATA—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wharton:** —and MMDA and MPI to get back to the table. Let's do the betterment for all Manitoba ratepayers.

#### **Animal Diseases Amendment Act Request to Withdraw Bill 62**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** The Premier's (Mr. Pallister) ag gag bills which are currently before this Legislature will make it illegal for Manitobans to document or witness or aid farm 'ammils' during transportation.

Bill 62 is so vague, even the act of bearing of witness to livestock in transportation trucks or production facilities or the slaughterhouse could be considered against the law here in Manitoba. Letters from legal professionals across the country have come forward demonstrating an—the constitutional problems with these bills, Madam Speaker. These ag gag laws will not hold up to constitutional scrutiny.

Will the minister withdraw them today?

**Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development):** Madam Speaker, there are some organizations who have never produced an ounce of food, and yet they constantly accuse farm families and food processors of unsafe and inhumane practices. And those organizations are supported by that member and the NDP.

Our government will stand up for farmers and for food agri-processors all the time because they're the ones who are producing the safe, nutritious food that shows up on everyone's plates.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Under Bill 62, an individual could be fined up to \$10,000 or imprisoned up to one year for giving farm animals water, Madam Speaker. This is twice as long as a person convicted of an actual animal abuse under Manitoba's Animal Care Act.

Lawyer Kaitlyn Mitchell raises important questions that should be explored, and as she's written, any interaction with any animal could be considered an offence. So, is eye contact, Madam Speaker, singing to an animal is offence? Ms. Mitchell believes this bill is a complete overreach and is not a bio-security bill.

Will the minister stand up today and withdraw Bill 62?

**Mr. Pedersen:** After Bill 62 was introduced, my department received notification from a producer—a chicken producer—about an uninvited visitor at their home last December. This individual switched off the main power—the hydro source. It was also noticed that packs of matches were left behind on the ground, and the individual drove around the barns on the property.

These are the kinds of actions that are being endorsed by the New Democratic Party, and it's shameful and it affects the safety of our farm families and their livestock.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** The Ford government's own ag gag bill is currently before the courts in respect of a constitutional challenge to its validity. Alberta has similar ag gag legislation that is also being contemplated for court challenges. And here we have the Premier in the midst of a global pandemic that's following his Conservative buddies and putting forward ag gag legislation before this House.

The minister's approach on this issue verges on the—paranoia, Madam Speaker, just to put it bluntly here. This legislation is the government's priority in the midst of a global pandemic.

It simply won't bear constitutional scrutiny, so will the minister stand up today and withdraw Bill 62?

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Pedersen:** Madam Speaker, the real question is why, in the middle of a global pandemic, when there's more emphasis on safe food than ever, the NDP would now want to create unsafe food conditions for those farmers and agri-processors who are producing the food—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pedersen:**—that we enjoy each and every day?

Madam Speaker, I'll table a letter from Keystone Agricultural Producers, Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, Manitoba Beef Producers, Manitoba Chicken Producers, Manitoba Pork Council, Manitoba egg farmers, Manitoba Pork Council, Manitoba Turkey Producers, all supporting Bill 62.

It's time the NDP got on board with Manitoba farmers.

### COVID-19 Third Wave Prevention Measures

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** In the last week, we've seen daily COVID case rates higher than we've seen in months, and the test positivity rate has doubled in the last week. Now, in emails and calls from Manitobans, we're hearing that hospitals could be storing vaccines, that doctors in acute-care hospitals want to vaccinate but can't.

People have asked for hotspot lockdowns where there are outbreaks; they're asking for mobile vaccination units to be giving shots in the community, a standby list to call people at the end of the day so not a drop is wasted and a public campaign to warn about the dangers of new variants. All thoroughly common sense. It was all needed weeks ago.

Is any of this going to happen, or are we going to sleepwalk into a third wave?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I can't thank the member enough for raising the question about the pandemic. It's nice to know that he's concerned, as we are on this side of the House, about the new variants that are making their presence known right across the country.

I tell him that Manitobans deserve to be applauded for following the public health orders we have so very diligently developed here and that we have promoted actively through various means, through advertising campaigns.

And thank you to the members for following those guidelines whenever possible. Most of us have certainly done that.

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

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Response Responsibility for Pandemic Management**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** In the last year, we've warned again and again to get ready and not be complacent, but this government has kept letting its guard down. We've been in code red for months and the new COVID variants are different: they're more aggressive, they attack younger people. In Minnesota, over 70 per cent of the cases are people under 65.

Now, Madam Speaker, we know Dr. Roussin isn't in charge of public health. We know the vaccine task force is in charge of vaccinations. Under existing pandemic plans, emergency—the Emergency Measures Organization is supposed to be running the whole show.

So, a year into the pandemic, I'll ask the question: Who is actually in charge of the Province's overall pandemic response? Because if it's the Premier, it would certainly explain a lot.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, speaking of 'somnia ambulation', Madam Speaker, the member has just demonstrated that he's walking in his sleep with that assertion.

What we aren't doing on this side of the House is anything but being proactive in the prevention of COVID and the transmission of it. That's how, in part at least, you see our present week-over-week rate of cases being half of British Columbia's and Quebec's, a third of Saskatchewan's and Ontario's, and a quarter of Alberta's, Madam Speaker. That is success, and Manitobans deserve the credit for that, most certainly. So we need to continue with that, and that's why diligence is critical.

I was pleased to hear the comments—certainly a rarity, Madam Speaker—from the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) last week, but I praise her genuinely for encouraging Manitobans to get vaccinated. Encouraging Indigenous Manitobans and all Manitobans, when they can, to get vaccinated is a key part of this. But being careful, being diligent, that's what the health orders are about; that's what this government is about.

### **Home-Care Services Self-Managed Care Program**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Home care should be the first option for seniors who need it. Important steps to facilitate it—facilitate this are, first, to ensure shut-in seniors can receive the vaccine in

their home and, second, to improve access to self-managed care.

Right now, the self-managed care program is confusing and too many seniors are being treated with hostility and resentment for wanting to use it, and they are being deterred from using it.

When will the Minister of Health act to make sure that the self-managed care program is working more smoothly and is adequately resourced to ensure more seniors can continue to live in their own home instead of having to move to a long-term-care home?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care):** Well, Madam Speaker, we certainly agree with that approach. We want to ensure that we find ways for seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible with their loved ones.

And certainly we recognize that and we are working with Shared Health, with the regional health authorities, to ensure that we put together a plan to ensure that that takes place, Madam Speaker.

With respect, the member opposite mentioned the COVID vaccine, getting it out to as many communities as possible. That's what we have been doing, with respect to our pop-up clinics, as well as our FIT teams, Madam Speaker.

We'll continue to work with those to ensure that we have greater access to all Manitobans, who need, want and deserve the vaccine.

### **Innovation Growth Program Recipients for 2021**

**Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain):** Madam Speaker, over the past year, COVID-19 has made a significant impact to Manitoba's economy. We know that businesses are doing the best they can and need supports.

Our government has been working side-by-side with businesses, ensuring that they are able to weather this pandemic.

Can the minister update this House on the province's current round of Innovation Growth Program recipients?

**Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Jobs):** I want to thank the member for the question.

As part of government's Economic Growth Action Plan, we are working with Manitoba businesses by offering non-repayable financial assistance

to assist in developing and commercializing new and innovation products and processes.

The current round of innovation growth recipients for four local companies are—have an additional 177 full-time jobs, \$13.6 million in export sales within five years. Together, our recipients are building a strong and sustainable future for all Manitobans.

### **Overdose Death Reporting Request to Support Bill 224**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** The addictions crisis is raging in this province, but still we don't know the full impact.

Manitoba is much slower than other provinces in producing information. Two hundred and fifty-nine people have died of overdoses in the first nine months of 2020. It's an alarming rise, but a situation we did not learn until many months after the fact.

I recently introduced Bill 224, which would hold the government responsible to provide more timely and more comprehensive data on overdose-related deaths in Manitoba. Timely information should inform our response. It is a tool to hold government accountable to this—to act.

Will the minister support Bill 224 today, yes or no?

**Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery):** I thank the member for the question.

What I would like to ask of the member is when the member's going to thank our government for establishing the first Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery Department and ministry in this government? And I also want to point out for the member that we are the second province in Canada to establish this ministry, and I just want to thank our First Minister and Premier (Mr. Pallister) for his vision and his willingness—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Gordon:** —to support those who are struggling with the challenges associated with mental health and addictions.

I also want to point out to the member all the great work that is being done right in the department by the VIRGO team to establish recovery housing, opioid agonist therapy programs—

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

The time for oral questions has expired.

### **Speaker's Ruling**

**Madam Speaker:** I have a ruling for the House.

\* (14:30)

During members' statements on Wednesday, March 24th, 2021, the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) raised a matter of privilege, contending that the failure of the government to call a meeting of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations to consider the annual reports of Manitoba Hydro affected his abilities to perform his job and breached his parliamentary privileges as an MLA. At the conclusion of his remarks, the honourable member moved, and I quote, "that the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations be immediately called to discuss the current state of Manitoba Hydro."

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) also contributed advice to the Chair. I then took the matter under advisement in order to consult the procedural authorities. I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

For the information of all honourable members, in order for a matter to be ruled in order as a *prima facie* case of privilege, members must demonstrate both that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity, and that sufficient evidence was provided to support the member's claim that their privileges or the privileges of the House were breached.

The honourable member for St. James indicated that the issue had been raised in the media on the previous day and that he was therefore raising the matter at the earliest opportunity. I will note for the honourable member that the issue could have been raised a little earlier in the sitting day, such as immediately after the prayer, instead of interrupting a category of routine proceedings to raise the matter. I will not make a determination of no *prima facie* case of privilege due to the issue of timeliness, but I will encourage the member that the issue could have been raised a little earlier in the sitting day.

In terms of the second test issue of whether sufficient evidence was provided to persuade the Speaker that a *prima facie* breach of privilege had occurred, the issue raised does indeed fall short.

The honourable member for St. James quite correctly noted that subsection 10(3) of The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act

directs that when an annual report is laid before the Legislative Assembly, the annual report, subject to any other act, then stands permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, unless the Assembly otherwise orders. The annual report of Manitoba Hydro is captured by this provision. Similarly, subsection 46(2) of The Manitoba Hydro Act states that, and I quote: "Upon being laid before the Legislative Assembly, the report of the board stands permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations of the Legislative Assembly."

However, where the honourable member's contention of a breach of parliamentary privilege falls short comes from a lack of a legal requirement in both The Crown Corporations Governance and Accountability Act and The Manitoba Hydro Act to outline or define a deadline or time frame for when the annual reports of the corporation must be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations for consideration.

I would also note that this is not the first time the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Sala) has raised this issue, as he raised a matter of privilege on March 12th, 2020, regarding the lack of a standing committee meeting to consider the annual reports of Manitoba Hydro. I had ruled on November 2nd, 2020, that the issue fell into the category of a complaint against the government and was not a breach of parliamentary privilege.

I have not changed my mind on this issue. Given that there is not a legal requirement or reference for mandating when the Manitoba Hydro annual reports must be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, I would once again find that the matter raised does not fulfill the criteria of a prima facie case of privilege.

## PETITIONS

### Public Child-Care Grants

**Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislature.

The background to this petition is follows:

(1) The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible for all Manitoban families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet

funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early-childhood educators leaving the sector.

(3) While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with loss of parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and has spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional financial supports.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government has cut the nursery grant program, doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and less-accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, which 'budgimen'-budget implementation and tax status amendment act, which removes the cap on child-care fees for private businesses.

We petition the Legislature of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the changes to the nursery school grant and to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitobans.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable and accessible child care and has demonstrated that the government has failed to ensure child care is accessible to all Manitoba families.

(2) Over 90 per cent of Manitoba children receive child care through non-profit, licensed centres, and yet funding has been frozen since 2016. These cuts have resulted in many early childhood educators leaving the sector.



(3) While child-care centres have faced increased costs associated with lost parent fees due to COVID-19 closures and spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional support—financial support.

(4) The government spent less than 1 per cent of the \$18-million temporary child-care grant, and instead gave KPMG double their contract, nearly \$600,000, to conduct a review that will raise parent fees and lay the groundwork for privatization.

(5) The provincial government cuts to nursery school grants is doubling parent fees for hundreds of families, making child care less affordable and accessible.

(6) The provincial government passed bill 34, the budget implementation and 'stax tatutes' amendment act, which removed the cap on child-care fees for private sector businesses.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reverse the changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoba families.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

### **Cochlear Implant Program**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) People who suffer hearing loss due to aging, illness, employment or accident not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, relatives or colleagues; they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

A cochlear implant is a life-changing electronic device that allows deaf people to receive and process sounds and speech, and can also partially restore hearing in people who have severe hearing loss and who do not benefit from conventional hearing aids. A processor behind the ear captures and processes sound signals which are transmitted to a receiver implanted in the skull that relays the information to the inner ear.

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic

founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 50 devices per year.

\* (14:40)

There are no upfront costs to Manitoba residents who proceed with cochlear implant surgery, as Manitoba Health covers the surgical procedure, internal implant and the first external sound processor. Newfoundland and Manitoba have the highest estimated implantation cost of all provinces.

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement Program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available. The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than in other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

In Manitoba, pediatric patients under 18 years of age are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

It is unreasonable that this technology is inaccessible to many citizens of Manitoba who must choose between hearing and deafness due to financial constraints because the costs of maintaining the equipment are prohibitive for low-income earners or those on a fixed income, such as an old age pension or Employment and Income Assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide financing for upgrades to the cochlear implant covered under medicare, or provide funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program to assist with the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

Signed by Irene Varnes, Gerry Varnes, Henry Neufeld, and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

### **Diagnostic Testing Accessibility**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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 wait times for services and poorer service in general.

(6) Manitoba residents value the convenience and efficiency of the health-care system when they're 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 show all Manitobans—allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

### **Dauphin Correctional Centre**

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May of 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

#### House Business

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 21, The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) and Related Amendments Act; Bill 29, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2020; Bill 32, The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act (Government Advertising), Bill 49, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act; Bill 52, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2021; and Bill 54, The Personal Health Information Amendment Act.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet

on Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 21, The Conflict of Interest (Members and Ministers) and Related Amendments Act; Bill 29, The Reducing Red Tape and Improving Services Act, 2020; Bill 32, The Election Financing Amendment and Elections Amendment Act (Government Advertising); Bill 49, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act; Bill 52, The Minor Amendments and Correction Act, 2021; and Bill 54, The Personal Health Information Amendment Act.

\* (14:50)

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 45, The Public Schools Amendment and Manitoba Teachers' Society Amendment Act.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Wednesday, April 14th, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 45, The Public Schools Amendment and Manitoba Teachers' Society Amendment Act.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, April 20th, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 15, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claim Dispute Tribunal); Bill 22, the caisses—The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 30, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act; and Bill 48, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet on Tuesday, April 20th, 2021 at 6 p.m. to consider the following: Bill 15, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act (Claim Dispute Tribunal); Bill 22, The Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Amendment Act; Bill 30, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act; and Bill 48, The Fiscal Responsibility and Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act.

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**Mr. Goertzen:** Could you please resume debate on the budget.

**BUDGET DEBATE**  
**(Fourth Day of Debate)**

**Madam Speaker:** Resuming debate on the motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Boniface, who has nine minutes remaining.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Nous sommes très déçus du budget.

Vous pouvez m'entendre bien?

**Translation**

*We are very disappointed in the budget.*

*Can you hear me okay?*

**English**

Can you hear me okay?

**Madam Speaker:** No, there is some difficulty in hearing him.

**Mr. Lamont:** Can you hear me—oops, hold on a second.

**Madam Speaker:** That's better.

**Mr. Lamont:** Can you hear me now? Is that okay?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Lamont:** Okay.

Merci, Madame la Présidente. Nous sommes très déçus—pardon?

**Translation**

*Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are very disappointed—pardon?*

**Madam Speaker:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Lamont:** Sorry, I'm not quite—somebody's talking to me, so I'm not quite sure what's going on.

**Madam Speaker:** One moment, please.

**Mr. Lamont:** Translation from the floor, Madam Speaker?

**Madam Speaker:** This has something to do with the member needing to, firstly, mute original audio if the member is going to speak in French, and then unmute when he finishes. Is the member good to go with that?

**Mr. Lamont:** Okay, that I think I can do.

**Madam Speaker:** Go ahead, then. [*interjection*] No, the member's muted his own audio.

I'm going to suggest that we are going to have somebody phone the member and help him work through the technology of that, and then, in the meantime, we are going to call the honourable Minister of Conservation and Climate, and then we will come back to the honourable member for St. Boniface after somebody will give him a call.

So we will call now for debate, the honourable Minister of Conservation and Climate.

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate):** As the Minister of Conservation and Climate, I am happy to speak to the many aspects of Budget 2021 that will improve our environmental resilience, reduce GHG emissions and move Manitoban closer to being the cleanest, greenest, most climate-resilient province in Canada.

I'll start with our recently announced Green Impact Bonds, a first of its kind in Manitoba organics green bond. A joint initiative with the Department of Families, this program is facilitated through the—through Innovative NRG, a Manitoba-based waste and energy company. They will use their patented innovative technology to process organic waste such as animal byproducts and wastewater sludge through a gasification process.

Thermal energy released in this process will be captured and used to heat buildings or water for industrial processes, thereby reducing use of fossil fuels.

The technology is a made-in-Manitoba innovative clean tech solution. This is a new approach to supporting green projects. It signals progress on the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, the carbon savings account and growth in Manitoba's green economy.

Madam Speaker, \$1.2 million has been committed for our Climate and Green Plan Implementation Office, allowing the resources required to ensure that our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan advances the important government-wide projects and initiatives this government is implementing to continue to protect our environment.

I look forward to another great year of work from the office and I'm excited to move forward with 2021's programming.

Our Conservation and Climate Fund, up this year to a total of a million dollars, is a results-based program designed to provide funding to exciting and

innovative carbon reduction projects that align with our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

Through a competitive process municipalities, non-profits, Indigenous communities and businesses can pitch projects to the fund to reduce GHG emissions in Manitoba. Last year's intake saw eight successful proponents and I look forward to launching this year's intake and funding some exciting GHG-reducing projects.

We know that Manitobans expect smart investments that will help us become Canada's most climate-resilient province. Our budget speech had a sneak peak at something that I'm excited to provide more details on in the near future—a \$20-million endowment fund for the jewels of this province—our parks. As a reminder to the House, our parks are not for sale.

While the members opposite continue to fear monger Manitobans, this government is committed to improving Manitobans' adventures in nature. Our Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan protects Manitobans from a high and ever-rising federal carbon tax. Manitoba deserves to be recognized for its clean, green grid and the billions of dollars that have been invested in clean energy in this province.

We will continue to advocate for fair treatment of Manitobans.

Our plan is better for Manitoba's environment and Manitoba's economy.

Conservation and climate isn't the only department in this government making green commitments. Infrastructure, Municipal Relations, Agriculture and Resource Development, and Central Services have budget items that continue to show that this government is committed to keeping our environment clean, our communities and waterways safe, and our GHG emissions trending down.

Some of these initiatives include \$101 million for the Lake Manitoba Lake St. Martin outlet project to prevent floods, \$100 million for potential emergencies such as floods, forest fires, and drought, \$126 million for the North End Water Pollution Control Centre, and we're also committing to new electric bus infrastructure in Winnipeg.

We are also increasing the Watershed Districts Program funding to near \$6 million, mitigating floods and drought, supporting farmers and municipalities and, most importantly, protecting our water quality.

Budget 2021 once again proves this government's commitment to climate mitigation in Manitoba unquestionably. We're implementing initiatives that will help us meet our 2022 carbon savings account goals and moving forward with exciting projects that will help mitigate and reduce Manitoba's carbon impact.

I'm quite happy with my department and this government's progress on our climate file, and am excited to bring forward 2021's initiatives for Manitobans.

We will become Canada's cleanest, greenest, most climate-resilient province by working together with Manitobans, innovators, municipalities, Indigenous groups, and business to implement what works for Manitoba.

As the MLA for Fort Richmond, many of the other aspects of the budget speak volumes to my constituents. Budget 2021's additional \$4 million in bursaries for post-secondary students, additional \$1.4 million in interest-free student loans and \$700 million to post-secondary students mean more success for our students.

\* (15:00)

This is an important priority for me, as the representative for Fort Richmond, and the thousands of students who live within my constituency.

Due to this pandemic, I think that we all could use a break. Thankfully, this government is implementing tax breaks that will put money back on Manitobans' tables and help them to worry less about their bottom line. Thanks to initiatives like our \$2,020-tax-rollback guarantee, this government is keeping their promise.

Phasing out the education property tax means equal footing for Manitoba students and financial relief for property owners. We're reducing property taxes by 50 per cent over the next two years for residential and farm properties. That's an average rebate of over—of \$800 over the 2-year period.

I know many of my constituents and many Manitobans could use the extra money after the year that we've gone through.

On a personal note, I was ecstatic to see this government continues to protect Manitobans by providing continuous glucose-monitoring devices to children and youth under 25, and expanding the insulin pump program.

I would like to make a special shout-out thank-you to Mrs. Dorothy Ross and Patrick Tohill of the JDRF national team, who have advocated very respectfully and well over the last 5 years that I have been a part of this government, and I know that they celebrate these achievements along with our government.

*Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember advocating during the previous NDP government to implement a program that would cover the cost of insulin pumps for children under 18, and it was an arduous, long process, and I celebrated when there was an announcement made to cover up to 17 years old.

As a mother of a type 1 diabetic child, ultimately, the goal is for a cure, and the investments in the research, I believe, will one day achieve that ultimate goal. All advocacy groups aim for a cure, but in the meantime, the supports that are offered through various governments are much appreciated, and I know that they would go a long way for the health of Manitobans living with type 1 diabetes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, rent control guidelines freezes means that there are more security for renters, of whom many have struggled in the past year due to the COVID-19 panic-pandemic. Child care—or, child-care free freezes and \$22 million for rent assist also means more support for Manitobans who need it most.

Budget 2021 has prioritized many things. Manitoba families, students, health care, education, environmental mitigation and the COVID-19 response. This means more support for Manitobans now, when all are struggling.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak to this year's budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson):** We will now revert back to the member from St. Boniface, who has nine minutes remaining.

**Mr. Lamont:** Merci. Et ce qui—et ce que fait ce budget c'est pas tant un budget qu'un vol; c'est un pillage massif du trésor public, où nous allons emprunter des milliards de dollars pour faire des chèques aux vaillants pipelines du Manitoba.

Il n'y a pas que les propriétaires, et le Premier ministre (M. Pallister) aime bien parler de la table de cuisine, mais tout cela va aller à la table du conseil d'administration. C'est complètement inacceptable en temps de crise.

Ce qu'il faut maintenant c'est de l'équité; ce dont nous avons besoin en ce moment c'est de l'honnêteté, surtout en ce qui concerne les vérités dures. Mais quand on nous dit cela : Vous savez qu'il y aura 400 à 800 pièces aux cours des deux prochaines années pour le Manitobain moyen c'est-à-dire, encore une fois, avec le budget, nous continuons de regrouper plusieurs années.

On ne cesse d'exagérer les chiffres; on entend dire que, parce que trois ans, les investissements dans l'infrastructure ont été regroupés pour donner l'impression d'être plus gros. Et le gouvernement a toujours promis des choses qu'il n'a jamais faites.

Ils ont toujours exagéré; ils ont toujours été sous-performant; ils promettent de l'or et livrent de la pyrite parce que à 400 \$ par ménage, c'est 200 \$—c'est-à-dire deux mois—et plus que 50 pourcent des Manitobains sont actuellement à 200 \$ de l'insolvabilité.

Les chèques pour les impôts de la propriété seront donc couverts pendant deux mois, et cela va coûter des milliards à tout le monde parce que nous allons tous devoir les rembourser. C'est de l'argent à emprunter. Nous allons ajouter 8 milliards de dollars au déficit pour payer cela, et cela va aller aux propriétés commerciales et aux propriétaires des propriétés commerciales.

Plusieurs personnes ayant plusieurs fermes pourront recevoir plusieurs chèques. Les gens qui ont plusieurs propriétés pourront obtenir plusieurs chèques. La concentration de la propriété est bien pire que la concentration des revenus.

C'est donc l'une des réductions d'impôts les plus injustes que vous puissiez imaginer; les gens qui sont au sommet de l'échelle des revenus, qui possèdent des dizaines de milliers d'acres de terre agricoles, des gens qui possèdent des centaines de millions de dollars de biens immobiliers obtiendront des remboursements massifs, et l'idée que cela va être bon pour l'économie est absolument fausse.

Parce que quand vous donnez tout cet argent supplémentaire aux gens du haut, je ne crois pas en l'économie des retombées. Mais quand vous donnez tout cet argent supplémentaire aux gens du haut, les gens qui créent les emplois sont les entrepreneurs. Les gens qui créent les emplois sont des petites entreprises aux cours des cinq premières années de leurs activités. C'est connu.

Et ils n'ont pas l'accès à du capital. Ils doivent mettre des choses sur les cartes de crédit; ils doivent mettre des choses sur la marge de crédit; ils doivent

hypothéquer leurs maisons pour être payés parce que le gouvernement ne veut pas intervenir.

Mais au lieu de ça, nous allons acheminer des millions et des millions de dollars aux gens les plus riches du Manitoba, et que vont ils en faire? Ils ne les remettent pas en affaires et ils les investissent dans les choses comme les immobiliers de luxe, ou ils les acheminent vers un paradis fiscal. C'est dégoûtant.

Je vais parler de certaines histoires difficiles que j'ai entendues au cours de l'année, des histoires de gens qui ont été pris avec cette pandémie de l'aide d'urgence que nous avons demandés pour demander de l'aide. Parce que ils n'ont pas d'autre endroit où aller.

L'un d'eux être la question de diabète. En même si le gouvernement a augmenté la couverture des MCGs et des pompes à insuline jusqu'à 25 ans, comme ils ont dit, les jeunes ne sont pas tous admissibles. Et le diabète de type 1 ne termine pas à l'âge de 26 ans.

Alors, même si les gens étaient reconnaissants parce que tant de Manitobains ont perdu leur assurance-maladie privée et n'ont pas les moyens de se payer des médicaments vitaux, il n'y a pas autre endroit à aller. Mais cela a toujours été le cas pour les personnes de plus de 26 ans au Manitoba avec le diabète de type 1.

J'ai parlé avec des électeurs, avec des personnes âgées qui ont les larmes aux yeux parce qu'elles doivent dépenser 300 \$ par mois pour les médicaments contre le diabète et lorsque le gouvernement a annulé le programme des médicaments spéciaux, une de mes électrices, âgée de 80 ans—plus de 80 ans—a dû tout à coup payer pour de l'insuline avec sa carte de crédit.

De toute évidence, quelqu'un dans la cinquantaine n'est pas en mesure de faire un quart de travail supplémentaire chez McDonald's pour couvrir les pertes de médicaments qui sauvent des vies.

Alors—donc, vraiment décevant. Parce que cela aurait dû être couvert. Lorsque nous—diabète de type 1, ce n'est pas différent d'une personne qui perd une organe. Lorsque le cœur d'une personne cesse de fonctionner, nous lui donne un stimulateur cardiaque; lorsque le pancréas d'un organisme cesse de fonctionner, nous devrions lui donner une pompe à insuline. C'est ainsi que ça devrait fonctionner.

Pour ce qui est de l'aide sociale, j'ai parlé à des électeurs qui—dont l'aide sociale avait été coupée parce

qu'on soupçonnait qu'il venait—qu'il bénéficiait de la CERB. Il y a eu des crises, des pannes terribles dans la combinaison entre l'aide sociale et logement Manitoba.

\* (15:10)

En ce qui concerne des locataires, j'ai très précisément exprimé mes préoccupations au Ministre des finances (M. Fielding) parce que ce qui se passe au cours de la dernière année, que nous avons vu sur les médias sociaux, ce qu'on appelle des rénovations, des—il y avait des jeunes hommes qui ont obtenu un prêt, acheté un immeuble d'appartements à St. James-Assiniboia, expulsé les 28 appartements, et ensuite vanté quand il est allé gagner deux millions de dollars au cours de la prochaine année.

Augmenter les loyers de [*inaudible*] à 70 pourcent. Alors c'est 75 dollars par suite qui, en moyenne, seront puisés dans les poches de locataires. C'est scandaleux.

Et c'est effrayant parce qu'au cours de la dernière année, on a insisté à une accélération du prélèvement d'argent des poches de la classe moyenne et de la classe ouvrière; prendre de l'argent de la poche des pauvres et en mettre dans les poches des gens les plus riches de la société et accélérer ce processus.

Lorsque nous parlons de l'éducation de la petite enfance et du fait que les gens ne seront pas en mesure de retourner au travail, nous avons eu le pire—l'un des pires taux de mortalité de la pandémie dans les foyers de soins privés, mais nous ne voyons pas d'investissements dans les foyers de soins privés, sauf dans quelques endroits réservés au favoritisme dans le sud du Manitoba.

Les étudiants sont forcés de contracter de plus en plus de dettes; les terres de la Couronne n'ont pas de chances; nous—ils sont forcés de quitter leur terre; il n'y a rien pour l'achat local; il y a une crise dans les soins de santé mis à part l'autre, sans parler de l'échec total de la mise-en-œuvre du vaccin.

Et je dirais que l'an dernier, lorsque le gouvernement a choisi de conserver de façon permanente 338 millions de dollars qui ont été enlevés des enfants des Premières nations par les gouvernements néo-démocrates et les conservateurs, j'ai pensé que c'était l'une des choses les plus immorales que j'ai jamais vues.

Parce que chaque fois que vous entendez parler d'un enfant autochtone ou d'un enfant de premières nation qui est en difficulté, si vous entendez parler de

quelqu'un qui est sans-abri ou il y a des problèmes ou il a été porté disparu ou assassiné, il est probablement non seulement qu'ils ont été enlevés à leur famille par le gouvernement du Manitoba, mais aussi que l'argent leur a été pris—338 millions de dollars.

Au lieu de cela, nous avons ce budget, où les gens sont appauvris. C'est Robin des Bois à l'envers : en fait, on enlève de l'argent aux plus pauvres de la société et on le donne aux plus riches de la société. C'est un pillage éhonté. C'est la pire des choses.

C'est—je ne dirai pas que c'est la pire, parce que je ne dirai pas que c'est pire de voler de l'argent aux enfants des Premières nations qui sont placés en famille d'accueil et de les empêcher demander justice. Je suis sûr que ça serait pire chose que je verrai jamais, mais cela se rapproche parce que cela va décimer notre système d'éducation.

Il échoue notre—il continuera à échouer notre système de santé, et c'est le plus indifférent; un budget égoïste et gourmand que je pourrais imaginer à un moment où c'est la dernière chose dont nous avons besoin.

Nous devons faire face aux dures vérités et aux problèmes de cette province; nous devons être honnêtes; nous devons être clairs—

### **Translation**

*Thank you. This budget is not so much a budget as it is robbery. It is a massive pillaging of the public purse, by way of which we are going to borrow billions of dollars to write cheques to the valiant pipelines of Manitoba.*

*Landlords and landowners are not the only Manitobans. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) loves talking about the kitchen table, but all of this is going to go to the board of directors' table instead. This is completely unacceptable in a time of crisis.*

*What we need now is equity. What we need right now is honesty, especially when it comes to the hard truths. But when we are told, you know, over the next two years, there will be \$400 to \$800 for the average Manitoban, it actually means that with regards to the budget, we are once again talking about grouping years together.*

*Figures keep being inflated; we hear about three years of infrastructure investments that were consolidated to give the illusion of being bigger. The government has always made promises that it has never kept.*

*They have always exaggerated; they have always underperformed. They promise gold and deliver pyrite because \$400 per household is actually two \$200 months, and over 50 percent of Manitobans are currently \$200 away from insolvency.*

*Property taxes cheques will be covered for two months, and this will cost everyone billions because we will all have to pay them back. This is borrowed money. We are going to add \$8 billions to the deficit to pay for this, which will go to commercial properties and their owners.*

*People with several farms will be eligible for several cheques. People with several properties will be eligible for several cheques. Concentration of property is much worse than concentration of revenues.*

*So this is one of the most unfair tax cuts one could think of. People who are at the top of the revenue ladder, who own tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land, people who own hundreds of millions of dollars of real estate will get massive reimbursements, and the idea that this is good for the economy is false.*

*Because I do not believe that when you give all this extra money to the people on top, it actually trickles down. You may give all this extra money to the people on top, but the people that create jobs are the entrepreneurs. We know that the people who create jobs are the small businesses during their first five years of activity.*

*And they do not have access to capital. They must put things on their credit cards; they must put things on their line of credit. They have to remortgage their houses to get paid because the government does not want to intervene.*

*Instead of that, we are going to send millions upon millions of dollars to the richest people of Manitoba. What are they going to do with that money? They do not put it back in businesses, and they invest in things like luxury real estate, or send them to a tax haven. It is disgusting.*

*I am going to talk about some difficult stories I heard about during the year. Stories of people who asked for emergency help during this pandemic because they have nowhere else to go.*

*One of these stories is about diabetes. Even though the government increased coverage of CGMs and insulin pumps for people up to 25 years old, not all young*



people are eligible. And Type 1 diabetes does not end at age 26.

Therefore, even though people were grateful because many Manitobans had lost their private health insurance and could not afford life-saving medication anymore, there is no other place to go. But this has always been the case with type 1 diabetes.

I spoke with constituents, with elderly people who had tears in their eyes because they have to spend \$300 a month for diabetes medication; and when the government cancelled the special medication program, one of my constituents, who is in her eighties, suddenly had to pay for insulin with her credit card.

Obviously, a person in their 50s cannot do an extra shift at McDonald's to cover for the loss of life-saving medication.

So this is very disappointing. Because it should have been covered. Type 1 diabetes is no different from losing an organ. When someone's heart stops working, we give them a pacemaker. When their pancreas stops working, we should give them an insulin pump. This is how it should work.

As for welfare, I spoke to constituents whose welfare was cut because they were suspected of collecting CERB. There were crises, and terrible breakdowns between welfare and Housing Manitoba.

As for tenants, I very specifically voiced my concerns to the Finance Minister (Mr. Fielding) regarding what happened this past year, as we saw on social media—these so-called renovations. Some young men got a loan, they bought an apartment building in St. James Assiniboia, evicted the tenants of all 28 units, and then boasted they made \$2 million the next year.

Increasing rents [inaudible] to 70 percent. This is \$75 per apartment, on average, that will be taken from the pockets of tenants. This is scandalous.

It is frightening because last year has seen an acceleration of money being taken out of the pockets of the middle and working classes; we have seen money being taken out of poor people's pockets and put in the richest people's pockets at an accelerated rate.

Speaking of early childhood education and the fact that people will not be able to go back to work, we have had the worst—one of the worst death rates in personal-care homes, but we have not seen any

investments being made in personal-care homes, except for a select few in southern Manitoba.

Students are forced to get into more and more debt; Crown lands have no chances, they have to leave their land; there is nothing for local businesses, there is a health-care crisis on top of the other, not to mention the utter failure of the vaccine implementation.

And I will say that last year, when the government chose to permanently keep \$338 million that were taken from First Nations children by neo-democratic and conservative governments, I thought it was one of the most immoral things I had ever seen.

Because every time you hear about a struggling Indigenous or First Nations child, if you hear about a homeless person or someone missing or murdered, it is likely that they were taken from their family by the government of Manitoba, and that money—\$338 million—was taken from them too.

Then we have this budget that makes people poorer. It is a reversed Robin Hood scenario: we are taking money from the poorest members of society and giving to the richest. It is shameless pillaging. It is the worst.

I will not say that it is the worst, because I will not say that it is worse than stealing money from First Nations children who are in foster homes and preventing them from asking justice to be served. I am sure that that is the worst thing that I will ever witness. But it is a close second, because it is going to decimate our education system.

This budget will keep failing our health-care system with indifference. This budget is more self-serving and gluttonous than I could ever imagine, and it is the last thing we need now.

We must face the hard truths and problems of this province; we must be honest; we must be clear—

**The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson):** The member's time has expired. [interjection] The member's time has expired. [interjection]

One moment while we—[interjection]

There we go. Thank you.

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** I'd like to thank the member from St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) for cutting into everybody else's time here.

So, before I begin, I do want to point out a couple of different things. One is, as a rookie MLA first elected here, I was very fortunate—and I think all members on this side of the House—were

very fortunate to have members from Fort Rouge, St. Johns, Concordia, Point Douglas, The Pas-Kameesak, Flin Flon and Elmwood as our role models here in the Chamber over this year plus that we've been here.

And I say that because that's a very positive way and a very positive outlook and very great way to be welcomed into this Chamber to show the ropes, to show exactly where to go, how to go about parliamentary procedure, how to have your issues raised and how to speak up and how to have a voice.

And I say that with members of this side of the Chamber because I know members opposite who first became elected in 2016 and 2019. The only role model they've ever known is the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and that's very disheartening and very unfortunate.

And I want to tell them—and I want to make this comment before I get into my other comments—it's not too late. It's not too late to speak up; it's not too late to know that that's not the way to operate; it's not too late to know that that's not the way to represent your constituents; it's not too late to know that that's not the way to represent Manitoba.

And then, finally, it's not the way to have your voice heard in this Chamber. To be shut down, to be told what to say, told what to do. Members on this side of the Chamber have that freedom. We have that freedom to speak our minds, to raise our voice, to have our concerns heard and to collectively bring that voice forward. So, for that, I'd like to thank my colleagues on this side of the Chamber that have mentored us to this point today.

This government, Madam Speaker, with Budget 2021—of course, with the pandemic going on, there's a lot of reference to, we couldn't do this because of the pandemic, we financially are having difficulty because of the pandemic.

And while this may be true, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to a certain point, that argument weighs very thin. And I say that because during this pandemic, this government has still found the time to pay Mr. Brad Wall to do a so-called independent review. They've still had time to abuse an HR policy in this Chamber to help a friend of theirs. They've still had time to take First Nations to court over the channel project. And that's just a couple different things as to what they had time to do in lieu of the—of actually getting up and speaking for Manitobans and representing them and financially saying, we can't do this because of these reasons.

They've also taken that opportunity during the pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to raise hydro rates. They've taken funds earmarked for First Nations children—and in the middle of the night, mind you. So they had time to do that, but they don't have time to speak up for Manitobans. They took the time to attempt to shame First Nations people and Indigenous communities over the vaccine rollout—and telling First Nations and telling Manitobans that we're getting the vaccine over other Manitobans, which is not fair. That's not representing—a true representation of all of Manitoba.

And they've also taken this opportunity to increase their Cabinet—and by way of that, giving raises—at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, within that budget, doing layoffs and telling people they have to sacrifice for the greater good, for the economic well-being of Manitobans. But at the same time, they'll sit there and they'll pad their own pockets and they'll pad their own egos and they'll create a Cabinet bigger to, again, create some more deflection to be able to not hold—be held accountable.

And again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are just a few examples of where things have gone wrong with this government. And Budget 2021, while there are a lot of different components in there, it's still a lot of recycled. The primary issue during the pandemic of course is health care, but it's not the only one. But during this health-care crisis, we've heard time and time again in question period, in the media, in bills that are being proposed as legislation, that this government is failing in the health-care system; failing to the point where there came a time where they felt, well, the current Health Minister just can't do this, so let's try and do a reset. Let's appoint a new Health Minister so maybe the questions will stop. Maybe they won't ask the questions of the new Health Minister the same way they asked of the outgoing Health Minister.

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is those questions are still there because they are legitimate questions and they are legitimate concerns raised by Manitobans. So to have the former health 'minners' stand up and try to shame doctors, try to say that deaths in personal-care homes were inevitable—this is from the person who's the so-called, the buck-stops-here person in this Chamber and still has that attitude of saying this is inevitable, I'm going to wash my hands of responsibility here and let the things play out the way they play out.

There was no proactive response to be able to say, let's get ahead of this. Instead, while that was going on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they took the time to take a victory lap. And in that victory lap, in the middle—in between the first and second wave, we were touting zero cases, you know, for extended periods of time. And that was great because Manitobans were doing their part. So that was the time to prepare for the second wave.

So when we talk about being able to financially prepare—so, Budget 2021 and then by extension, Budget 2020—had that opportunity to actually sit there and say, here we're going to take a proactive approach to heading off second wave, to heading off third wave, to heading off—hopefully, never we talk about a fourth wave, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the way things are going, we're still going to get to that point, but this government still has a tunnel vision towards what we're going to do at all costs. We're going to do this at all costs no matter what.

They talk about replenishing the rainy day fund. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been pouring for quite some time now. Why haven't we tapped into that rainy day fund before this? Why have we waited for somebody else to come to the rescue?

\*(15:20)

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) talks about the federal government moving the goalposts and other organizations moving the goalposts at different situations and with different programs, but at the same time, it's the Premier himself that is doing that—that is blaming somebody else. He spoke about the Prime Minister, by not doing anything, it's his fault.

Well, by that same rationale, the Premier not doing anything, it's also his fault. Being able to sit there and say, let's invest in Manitoba, let's invest in health care in a proper way. Let's not sit there and go hat in hand to the federal government and say, where's more money and, we need more money, but at the same time, you're still not making the best use of the money you have here today.

I remember that question was raised to government when they were sitting there at Ottawa, asking for additional health dollars to help with their budget because they just couldn't afford it.

And the quest—the simple question was posed, is—are you truly spending those health-care dollars that you're asking for in health care? Are they making it to the bedside? And that question could not be answered. Instead, it came out to somebody else's fault. This is

why we couldn't do this. The government—the federal government has no right to ask those questions. Well, they absolutely do, and more importantly, we, as Manitobans have the right to ask those questions. And we have been asking those questions and, again, getting no answers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

All we see is deflection on that side of the Chamber and not answering the question, even questions raised in QP. For me, as a new MLA, a year-plus into my term here now, and being able to sit there and see what QP is all about and the questions that are raised, and the financial questions that are raised, and the total lack of response from the other side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is just disheartening.

And now, we're sitting virtually. We have a lot of members participating on Zoom, but we also now have a lot more Manitobans participating because Zoom—online is the way things are being done. So they have a lot of questions on that side, too. So they're seeing how this is work, and I think my colleague, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), kind of put everybody on notice on that side of the Chamber is, hey, it's going to come time. You know, you're going to have to answer for all these things that you're not doing, all these lack of speaking up.

You have that opportunity to speak up to your boss. You have that opportunity to say, hey, this isn't right; hey, I need to spend—I need to support spending more money in this area. And in this area in particular, we're talking about health care. And what are we waiting for? Are we waiting for a third wave? Are we waiting for a fourth wave? Are we waiting for more people to die? Are we waiting for more Manitobans to lose their lives, lose their jobs, lose their livelihoods? Is that what we're waiting for?

That's not a government that I believe is governing in good faith and governing in good conscious. And that's just one component, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's just the health-care component. And while I have only 20 minutes to kind of talk about the budget here, my entire—hours and hours could be spent just on the health-care component because there's so much more to do that, but at the same time, it's almost like trying to balance, like—wow, what they're doing in health care.

Now look what you're doing in education. Now look what's happening to our people in the education system, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We talk about—in Winnipeg, everybody's very familiar with the Winnipeg School Division, the WSD. For my area, where I come from, one of our schools in this contract

is the Frontier School Division, the FSD. But what's taking shape here in the province? The P-G-S-D, the Pallister government school division. And that's exactly what's happening here now.

It's a top-down approach, and no, I don't have a patent on that word. I don't have a patent on that organization because that organization should not exist. That's not something that should be in place. That's taking the voices away from our communities. That's taking the voices away from our students, away from our teachers, away from our community, away from our educators, who are on the front lines. But it's almost the way this government operates. Let's take that away. We're the be-all, end-all. We're the decision makers. We know what's best, even though we don't have a person in that system, or we don't have a group of people in that system, and that disconnect. It's not a connection that's happening. It's a strong disconnect that's now happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think of an elder in my community. Her name is Martha Bushie. She was in her 60s when she graduated high school, from our school. And she went on after graduation to participate in an elders' program in our school. And an elders' program in our school was about the elders coming together and being mentors for our children in the school, and being able to say this is the important thing that we have here. So, Martha came to our school, came to our community, has children, have grandchildren that went through the school system, and she's seen the importance of what that meant.

So, she herself, in her 60s, went on to graduate high school and to be a stronger role model than she already was. And then following that, participate in the elders program at the school, to be able to show those children in our communities—in our Indigenous community—where they come from, what their values were when they were children and what they should be growing up.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Martha was also a residential school survivor. So she's seen all the gamut of exactly what goes on in school; what school can do in a very negative way; what school can do in a very positive way.

So what did she choose to do? She didn't run away from that. She took those experiences and she brought them to the school. She brought them to the children. And now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under this—whatever this is going to look like in the end with Bill 64—whatever that's going to look like is going to take

away that connection. There's no longer going to allow that connection to exist.

And I just speak for my own community and my own experience. And those experiences are thousands and thousands and thousands of people wide, across Manitoba. That disconnect will now exist. We're now—the connection to community won't be there because I don't have a child in school, I don't have a grandchild in school, I don't have a connection—a blood connection to that school anymore, so now I'm not going to be allowed to participate. And it creates a division of the P-G-S-D—I'm going to say that again because that's exactly what this is forming to be—the Pallister government school division—that is going to oversee everything and is going to oversee everybody, and the accountability goes from them, only them.

So, the argument across that is, you know, we want to do away with trustees, we want to do away with boards, we want to do away with all these other organizations. But the reality is you're wanting to do away with that connection. And that connection won't—no longer exist in that way to those communities, to those children. So now you're taking away that ability of that child to feel like they mean something in the bigger voice of Manitoba. So when they come forward and they say this is what I want to do, somebody sitting in an office here in Winnipeg is going to make a decision for a community in the farthest reaches of this province, but have no concept of what life is like there, have no concept exactly what that means.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's something that was—that really struck a nerve with a lot of constituents of mine, which struck a nerve with a lot of Manitobans. And you can see, when that bill finally comes before this House, when that bill comes before committee, the number of people that are going to speak up, and not in support. They're going to speak up against that piece of legislation. Because when that education review—to me—and maybe this is just me being naïve—but the concept of the review is, here, let's do this review and let's—here's what we discovered, so now let's have discussions and let's look at changing that.

Instead, the review was already done and it had a predetermined outcome, much like the Brad Wall review had a predetermined outcome—this is what's going to happen because this is what I want you to put in the review, this is what I want you to put in the report. So, when it comes to the education component of that, those voices of those Manitobans are not being

heard. And I've heard—I heard the number last week, when we—when the budget was being discussed and being presented—about 51,000 Manitobans being able to participate. That's less than 4 per cent of the voting population.

So exactly who was engaged? And how were they engaged? In this time of virtual, in this time of online, we should have had engagement of 50 per cent, 100 per cent. Instead, it's very limited as to who can participate and whose voices can be heard. We've had the opportunity to sign up on various town halls that are presented. We voiced a number of questions. You never see them come to the light of day because they're screened out and they're meant to not be heard.

So I talked about health care, talked about education, and again, we could talk about those for ever and ever, but some of the things in Budget 2021 that are not addressed in any way are plain as day, are happening to us every day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We talk about things in justice, and one of the components that kind of highlights the justice aspect of it—and maybe that's just because of the large and the vast amount of components of that—but systemic racism also exists in almost every program and any ministerial—every ministerial department on that side of the Chamber: Justice, Families, Conservation, Indigenous, Education—every one of those aspects has a negative component of systemic racism in it, and it was not adjust—not addressed in any way in the budget. It's not addressed in any meaningful way to get that done.

\* (15:30)

When I talk about the Justice part of it, I've seen and heard the number \$1.2 million for restorative justice, to be able to go and have the restorative justice invested in by Manitoba. And primarily, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is earmarked for Indigenous communities, but, at the same time, that's just a drop in the bucket.

The basis, and I will—when we talk about reconciliation and I hear the word reconciliation—that side, it just doesn't exist. Restorative justice—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the basis and the validity behind restorative justice is acceptance of responsibility. And by that definition, members opposite and this government is not accepting its own responsibilities for its failures, but at the same time they want us to believe that it's okay to invest in that. They want us to believe that it's okay to invest in this restorative justice program for First Nations people in Manitoba when that's just simply not the case from this side of the government.

Budget 2021 is just a drop in a bucket—\$1.2 million. I believe—and forgive me if I'm off by a few dollars—but it's anywhere between 110 and 120 thousand dollars to incarcerate somebody for the year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do the math. That's 10 people, 10 people that are sitting incarcerated in this whole justice system in Manitoba are allocated in that restorative justice program. Just imagine how much money can be saved and how much time and resources can be saved and better utilized if the investment in restorative justice was a lot more by this Province.

I have the opportunity and I have the privilege of being from the Hollow Water First Nation. It is one of the founding communities of the Community Holistic Circle Healing Program and sentencing circles and restorative justice. And I've heard members opposite talk about that. I've heard members on this side of the Chamber talk about it, and it's an internationally recognized organization. And again, the basis of that is the acceptance of responsibility, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I think members opposite can take a lesson from even just those words: acceptance of responsibility. It doesn't have to be just in regards to justice. It's just that acceptance of responsibility of what's going on here today. Your acceptance of responsibility as to how this pandemic goes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's—I can go on and on, and I realize my time is running short and I do want to say kind of one thing a little bit to kind of end off my conversation here today is: I've had the opportunity to participate in the Chamber during the pandemic, to participate virtually during the pandemic. And I must say, one of the advantages of participating virtually is you have that ability to mute yourself; you have that ability to mute yourself, yell as loud as you want, bang your head on the wall.

And trust me, I've done that on numerous occasions, including almost falling out of my chair because I can't believe what's coming forward from this government. And I'm thankful that I can be muted because, trust me, it's unparliamentary language and conduct that's happening when you're able to do that, but at the same time I'm grateful for the opportunity to be able to present my thoughts on Budget 2021.

Miigwech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk):** Today, I would like to take this opportunity to start from a place

of appreciation: appreciation for all those in my constituency who have provided kind words of support and encouragement for our budget as we navigate the uncharted waters of the COVID crisis. Your words of encouragement and support mean more than you can imagine, and I'm truly humbled and promise to continue to advocate on your behalf.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, as a government we owe a debt of gratitude to all those Manitobans who help keep Manitoba safe and secure and I would like to thank all those front-line employees and families that do more than is expected, continuing to do their part regardless of the difficulties they face in their own lives. And to those who sacrifice time and opportunities to keep us all in a safer Manitoba: thanks to all of you. Manitoba is in a much better place moving forward.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, there are two major priority areas of Budget 2021. The first priority of Budget 2021 is to continue to protect Manitobans through the ongoing pandemic. Our second focus of Budget 2021 is to advance jobs and economic recovery past COVID.

I do not support any of the amendments presented, but I do support this budget for many, many reasons, starting with part A of the budget, which is focused on protecting all Manitobans. As a government, we continue on our path protecting Manitobans, representing the 2021 budget that will continue our sustained response to the COVID pandemic, while maintaining our top priority of keeping our most vulnerable protected.

The budget presented includes \$1.18 billion in '21-22 for COVID costs, including personal protective equipment, vaccine deployment, education supports and future needs. As a government, we continue to invest more per person on health care, education and social services combined than any other province. Budget 2021 increases funding in these priority areas by nearly \$1.5 billion. That includes \$156 million more for health care, \$91 million more for K-to-12 education and post-secondary and \$34 million more for social services.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, to this point in time, Manitoba has weathered the pandemic better than most Canadian provinces. This can be credited to the resiliency of the people of Manitoba, the resiliency of our diverse economy, the ability of our public and private sectors to step up to the plate and adapt quickly and position us in a place to rebuild quickly and,

finally, a solid financial planning and a rapid implementation of policies and protocols that have placed us in a position ready to move forward.

COVID has affected all Manitobans, all Canadians and the world. Global shutdowns have ravaged economies in countries around the world. Manitobans look to the government for leadership at a time of concern and uncertainty. Manitobans understand, as a province, we are facing challenges. The residents of the Selkirk constituency are pleased to see Budget 2021 as a plan to address these economic, mental health and social challenges brought on by the COVID pandemic.

COVID presented many new challenges. Revenues were down due to an economy suffering from cutbacks in all sectors. Expenses were up due to the need to develop and implement new programs, policies and procedures needed to keep Manitobans safe. Despite these pressures, our Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) was able to stay the course and keep Manitobans' finances on track. When revenues and expenditures are adjusted for the COVID impact, we are at balance.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we are continuing to invest in priority services. When it comes to health care, Manitobans will see health-care funding is at an all-time high. It amounts to \$6.98 billion, with key investments in strategic areas. I'm very happy to see we will be creating a program to cover the costs of continuous glucose monitors for eligible youth under age 25.

We are investing more in CancerCare initiatives. Budget 2021 will see an extra \$23 million is being allocated to CancerCare. I'm sure there isn't anyone in this House that hasn't been touched by cancer in some form or another. It is only by supporting ongoing research and treatment options that will allow us to make cancer a disease of the past.

As a government, we have seen the increase in surgical wait times brought on by the impacts of COVID. To address this backlog, Budget '21 has seen the government announce an additional \$50 million to be used to address the wait times in surgeries and services. And, finally, an additional \$812 million in health care is being allocated to capital commitments for rural and northern health care.

The pandemic has had a profound effect on the mental health and addictions of many Manitobans. To address this, Budget 2021 allocates \$342 million for programming and services within the new

department of mental health. Of this, \$5 million is committed to engage community stakeholders to develop a whole-of-government approach to addressing mental health, an additional \$1.7 million for our mental health addictions strategy and \$1.8 million for our 24-7 housing supports for Manitobans diagnosed with mental health disease.

\*(15:40)

While investing in priority services, Budget 2021 is delivering on a record level of investment in our education system. Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, no Manitoban should've ever been okay seeing our children, our future, score 10th out of 10 amongst provinces in Canada in core subject areas of math, literature and science. Unfortunately, the members opposite were happy with this standing. One needs to ask why. The answer's simple: for a socialist-based government, they know and understand that keeping education levels suppressed limits individuals' opportunities for a future. It keeps them in poverty, making them more reliant and dependent on government handouts.

Members on this side of the House understand a good education is key to lifting individuals out of poverty. I'm a prime example of that, having rising from poverty to sit in this House today. That's why I'm happy to be part of a government that sees and supports the important issues of increasing the education opportunities for our young people.

We're improving education by making a record investment, a record investment above \$3 billion in our public school system, investments to implement our BEST: Better Education Starts Today.

Budget '21 will provide more than \$78 million for COVID-19 costs through the Safe Schools Fund. This is to provide the biosecurity needed to help keep our teachers, students and support staff safe from COVID; \$5.5 million is being allocated for special needs funding and nearly \$4 million is allocated to support online, distance and remote learning.

The pandemic has resulted in the need to provide a new method of teaching and learning through online education options. We are meeting this demand by providing the funding needed to implement and support this new method. Manitobans will see we're introducing a new refundable teaching expense tax credit to help support those educators who made the personal choice and decided to provide the extra supplies to their students. Educators in child care and kindergarten to grade 12 can now claim a 15 per cent

refund for up to \$1,000 on eligible supplies that weren't reimbursed by their employer.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, advanced education will benefit from an additional \$4 million in bursaries, \$1.4 million for interest-free student loans and nearly \$700 million to support post-secondary institutions overall. Students can't learn if they are placed in substandard educational facilities, facilities that have problems with heating and air conditioning or proper ventilation, schools that have foundation problems or leaking roofs.

The NDP chose to ignore these needs for proper educational facilities for years. The number of schools that desperately needed repairs and maintenance grew yearly under the NDP governance. This had a negative effect on students trying to learn in compromised facilities. Budget 2021 sees school capital funding increase by \$100 million to accelerate the construction of 20 new schools.

In continuing to invest in priority services, I would like to highlight the important investments this budget is making in our justice system in a number of key areas. Budgeted investments in our justice system will support the development of a new Manitoba criminal intelligence centre to focus on disrupting criminal activities and prevent crime, while increasing our commitment to the funding of supports from the forfeiture of crime.

And this budget will see increased supports for family violence and families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, including \$1.2 million in investments in restorative justice initiatives for First Nations and Métis communities.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we are a government that is dedicated to making life more affordable. We continue to show Manitobans we are focused on obtaining value for Manitobans' money because we know it is their money. Manitobans have entrusted us to make decisions that are in the best interest of all Manitobans, and we are a government that takes that responsibility seriously.

We are a government that is in sharp contrast to the former NDP, who based financial decisions on unknown political criteria, never considering the financial impact on the average Manitoba family. Just the other day in the House, we were told by one of the members, cost doesn't matter. This statement was followed up with, doesn't matter what it costs.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, cost does matter. It matters to all Manitobans who want to ensure there's

value for the money spent. Manitobans are smart shoppers, always looking for the best value for the monies they spend. As a government, it is important that we also have this philosophy when shopping to provide the goods and services we are entrusted to secure.

After 17 years of NDP financial mismanagement, it was clear the only way the NDP knew how to budget was through deficit financing. Manitobans deserved a break. Budget 2021 continues to deliver on our government's promises made, promises kept commitment. Budget 2021 is about protecting Manitobans and advancing Manitobans.

That's why we are protecting Manitobans' incomes by reducing the amount of tax Manitobans pay on their hard-earned income. Our 2020 tax rollback promise to Manitobans has been met, but our government is not stopping there. We are continuing on our path to remove the education tax from property tax. Lower taxes, including lower education property taxes, will leave more money in the hands of Manitobans where it's needed most.

Budget 2021 is starting with a 25 per cent decrease in educational property taxes for residential and farm property owners and a 10 per cent decrease in commercial property education property taxes in '21-22. For the average Manitoba homeowner, this will leave around \$800 in their hands over two years, monies Manitobans can decide to spend in areas most important to them.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, our second focus of Budget 2021 is to advance jobs and economic recovery past COVID. Our commitment to over \$2.1-billion investment in strategic infrastructure will help drive construction, jobs and stimulate the economy. These investments will help grow our way out of deficit and back into balance by investing in more jobs, tax relief and economic growth.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, we lead the way in supporting businesses in all of Canada. When Manitobans look at our budget for economic development and jobs, they will see more than \$62 million is being set aside to help businesses retrain employees and develop e-commerce platforms, \$25 million is being allocated for youth job programs and nearly \$630 million for road construction and maintenance, which includes \$170 million of Restart money.

Hundred and one million will be set aside for the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin outlet; a hundred

million for potential emergencies, such as floods, forest fires and drought.

Our government is making it a 'priority' to clean up Lake Winnipeg through an investment in the North End water pollution control centre. In fact, all Manitobans need to know we have committed \$126 million to the City of Winnipeg for this project. Our government is allocating an extra \$103.5 million for priority strategic infrastructure projects that match federal funds under ICIP.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, according to the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics, in 2019 there were roughly 556,000 working Manitobans. Despite comments made by members opposite, we on this side of the House know that the majority of Manitoba's hard-working individuals are employed by our mom-and-pop small businesses. Our government's budget is setting a path for restoring fiscal balance and providing a direction to move forward, out of the pandemic.

Prior to the COVID pandemic, our government delivered on its promise to balance the budget, much to the approval of all Manitobans and our financial institutions. The previous government left Manitobans with one of the highest debt per capita ratios in all of Canada.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I doubt if anyone in the opposition party has even a basic understanding of budgeting. Budgeting is a science. It is a complex process of balancing the income and the expenses, tell you to balance results in deficits or surpluses. The previous government didn't understand that if you continually budget by borrowing, you will have a yearly deficit; eventually, you will slip deeper and deeper into debt year after year. This results in your debt rating going down and your interest rates going up.

For a government, this leaves less money to pay for essential services, like medical services, families and education, and places the responsibility for debt repayment on the next generation. Budgets provide a road map to guide us from where we are to where we want to be. It is not something to be taken lightly.

I am proud of our Finance Minister and all of the staff who have worked diligently to put us on a path to obtain our financial goals, with economic growth and job creation remaining at the centre of our plan for a stronger, more prosperous Manitoba.

\* (15:50)



When elected in 2016, there was no financial plan being followed by the previous government. Our debt was escalating due to the deficit financing policy. Despite the pressures of the COVID pandemic, our Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) was able to stay the course and kept Manitoba's finances on track. When revenues and expenditures are adjusted for the COVID impact, we are at balance. The pandemic deficit is not considered structural, and we are moving forward with a plan to restore balance through our fiscally prudent approach.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are glad to see we already have a plan to address and pay down the additional expenses from COVID, a plan that will see the COVID debt paid down over an eight-year period while allowing our economy to grow, keeping our most vulnerable protected and keeping taxes low.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to say, as Manitobans emerging from the effects of the pandemic, we still need to remember we need to be cautiously optimistic, understanding significant economic uncertainty still exists globally, nationally and provincially. Fiscal sustainability is not one decision, but the interaction of thousands of individual decisions that, taken collectively, guide and determine our financial future, decisions that need to be reviewed and re-evaluated continually. Manitobans need to understand uncertainty still exists, especially when it comes to predicting the behaviours of consumers. Our financial plan is the roadmap to move forward, to reach our potential as a province and a better life for all Manitobans.

In concluding my remarks today, I would like to once again say thank you to all Manitobans. To those who stand fast and keep it together in the face of uncertainty, to those who reach out to help a fellow Manitoban, to those who face the daily challenges of their jobs with the courage and determination needed to make a difference in the lives of others, to all of you, we say thank you.

Miigwech.

**The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson):** The member from The Pas-Kameesak.

Just get you to hold on for a moment, just so we— we don't have any sound here in the Chamber. If the member from The Pas-Kameesak—could just check your headset to make sure it's working. Try again. Okay, it looks like we're going to—can you try it again? It looks like you muted. It's—can you try again?

Member from The Pas-Kameesak, can you try again? It might be a setting on your computer.

Working on some issues here with the—technical issues—just—okay, everyone, we apologize; we just have some technical difficulties that we're trying to work on here.

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** Can you hear me now?

**The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson):** Oh, there we go. Do you want to try that one more time, the member from The Pas?

**Ms. Lathlin:** Yes. Okay.

**The Acting Speaker (Len Isleifson):** Okay, so we can hear you.

So if it's good, then we will move on with the member from The Pas-Kameesak.

**Ms. Lathlin:** It's an absolute honour to provide words to put on record on this budget as the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak. Kinanâskomitin. *[Thank you, I am grateful to you.]*

First, I want to take this opportunity to thank the clerks and the entire team who worked hard to provide us a safe place, like my home here in The Pas, to participate virtually for session and made it possible for us to do our jobs as legislators. Kinanâskomitin. *[Thank you, I am grateful to you.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with no doubt that this year has been quite like no other and, unfortunately, this is the beginning of a new normal. And now, we are entering into a third wave with a variant. With that, stay safe, everyone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened to the budget speech last week, and the only thing that I learned from this government's budget is that I extra do not understand how his government's budget will serve the North and their principles behind it.

In regards to education, how will the \$40 million in this budget serve our already-do-without schools and our education system in northern Manitoba? Education is No. 1 and should not be messed with. You need education in order to build strong, healthy communities.

My late father, Oscar Lathlin, our former MLA for The Pas, echoed that whenever he had the opportunity, and now I'm doing the same. I met with our superintendent and board chair for the Kelsey School Division a couple of weeks ago. There were

many issues that needed to be addressed. These issues need to be addressed by this budget.

Due to the expected impact of their recent arbitration rulings on upcoming union negotiations, our school division will be required to locate anywhere between \$350,000 to \$600,000 for the impending salary back-pay shortfall unless funding is provided by this government.

Kelsey School Division has accrued the salaries and have needed to build it into the budget for the future. With numerous cuts occurring only last year, there was no room to cut anymore programs. A savings for a new bus for our kids and repairs will need to be removed now. All planned capital projects in our division will not move forward. Layoffs will need to incur—occur for support staff and teachers. Without the funding to support the additional salaries, our school division anticipates cutting for every section, department, school to make ends meet. The Kelsey School Division reserve will be depleted so we will no longer have a safety net. Currently, the financial impact of further budget restrictions is of great concern.

The Kelsey School Division will continue to ensure safety measures due to COVID, but also need to create supports towards recovery learning. Our school division anticipate that class sizes would need to increase due to budget issues. At a time when school divisions will need more teachers and greater resources for teachers due to the pandemic, they'll be returning to less supports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how will the \$5.5 million in this budget for special needs funding serve our students in the North? Kelsey School has not had that position staffed for two years due to this government's cuts, and it is now the superintendent's job to do as well.

Our school division does have—does not have any therapist staffed and our students, who need these crucial services, are left behind. We need clinicians in the North. There is no structure plan to support varying student needs of communities throughout the province, specifically for our regions—northern, remote and rural—where there are increased barriers in assessing education and supports.

The Pas lost our last clinician last month. All other staff are hired on short-term contracts for community visits, check-ins from southern communities. Locating available staff takes a lot of phone calls, letters and networking.

\* (16:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2019, 1.1 per cent of the division budget was allocated to these services, not because there isn't a need, but because we cannot attract the required services, and there is limited personnel to assist. In fact, 2.2 per cent is the provincial norm. Having specialists bought into the division for contractual work adds up to multiple additional costs such as airfare or mileage, lodging costs, meals, et cetera that have to come out of the overall budget.

Kelsey School Division do not receive additional funding to supplement these additional expenses. This means we cannot afford as many services which take away from maximizing services to students. Here is an example: A recent five-day visit from a psychologist cost \$22,770 for 10 assessments. This was the most affordable service our school division could locate and is considered a bargain compared to the other quotes the division received. Some clinicians know that they are in need and adjust salary requirements.

Due to a posting vacancy, we have had a three-year delay for psychologist assessments for students in The Pas. This means a backlog of students requiring assessment in all of our schools. We currently have 70 students who are prioritized and awaiting assessments. Without these assessments, it means that academic programs are not meeting our learning needs. This means our student is struggling and not seeing academic success, increased frustration and stress and diminished self-esteem, which will diminish our students' mental health. This delay is causing students to become demotivated and some no longer attend school. This also means not being able to access higher education.

As another example of these cuts, the delay for the audiologist assessments has meant that there are 90 students who never received their screening in the school. Kelsey School Division have had to create a list of urgent assessments required for students with identified high needs. In some cases, schools report that some students sitting in classes without the FM hearing systems which are required for their hearing and learning.

Currently, the Kelsey School Division has no social workers to assist with students and families despite a recognized crisis in terms of mental health and addictions. Our Kelsey School Division no longer have anyone who can be used as an attendance officer to connect with students with their absenteeism from

school. Our school division have only limited trained counsellors which fall far below the needs of the schools and communities. We need the Province to address this deficit for students living in northern and remote areas of the province. A plan is required to help provide necessary supports to our location.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how will the \$4 million for the virtual learning strategy in the budget serve our students in the North? There was no mention in the budget for Internet connectivity for the North. How is that going to support online, distance and remote learning for our students in the North?

This government has not shown a full understanding regarding the lack of access to computers, technology and the connectivity issues experienced in the North. There has been no focus or planning placed on students living in the North or remote regions when first designing support plans. There is a disconnect to the different levels of access for families. More talks are required to create equity within the system for all students and to have provincial remote learning services address the impact and needs of distant, remote learning in the North. Internet connectivity in the North is a crucial investment that was simply ignored by this government. There is an urgent need for this budget to address this.

We know that—sorry—our student support services operating fund for 2019 and 2020 was, in 2019, 7.2 per cent of the Kelsey School budget was spent on resource services while the provincial average was 5.1 per cent.

And I just wanted to address, too, in regards to the budget, in regards to CFS, I just wanted to put on record my concerns that this budget combines spending for child protection and block funding to CFS agencies at \$497 million. That's 1 per cent lower than the previous fiscal year and well below the \$519 million spent two years ago. Funding for family services has remained flat, no increase for Child and Family Services funding.

In fact, there was legislation buried in the BITSA, stripped children in care of their right to sue the government for stolen funds designated for children in care. The Province's move to a block funding model meant that some agencies had to reduce pay—had to reduce respite pay in order to meet their needs.

Madam Speaker, in this budget, this tax relief on property taxes regarding the education tax sounds like a bad idea. This relief will only diminish our already-do-without education system in the North. How will

that revenue be made up? They're taking away the foundation of our children's education. Property taxes will need health-care aides, nurses and doctors, et cetera. How can we grow our children into the health-care field when we are taking away their basic education needs?

Madam Speaker, I feel absolutely confident to put on record that the K-to-12 education review was a sham review. Our educators, administrators and leadership just felt all optimistic as they entered the Wescana Inn banquet hall in The Pas where the K-to-12 education review was held. I was there as well and participated in the working groups. It was pretty awesome to be in a room with many of our educators from the North. There was that—but that was back in the day when we were all 'abre'—able to gather.

The memory I have of that day was the gathering for mental health. That was the largest group. In fact, the largest groups that gathered were on the issues of poverty and mental health. The issues—the stories we shared had a huge impact on me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this review was also a sham because there was only one representative from the North on that review committee. In the end, it was just all a severe letdown for all of us who participated.

And then Bill 64 arrived. On that—on the day of the announcement of this very bad bill, I was offended by the minister's response when asked by a reporter if there was going to be Indigenous representation on these authorities. Instead of immediately replying, yes, of course, the minister replied, skillsets will be looked at. As an Indigenous woman, this was offensive and the statement from this government just made me foresee a bad future for our large Indigenous population in the North. That spells out that regional representation will diminish.

The legislation report creates all sorts of new bodies that have no power or ability to make change when the real power rests solely with the minister and his political appointees. This newly introduced Bill 64 does nothing to improve our children's education and to keep classrooms small.

And with that, how will the \$156 million in this budget serve our already-do-without health-care system in the North? We had the chance to build a clinic in The Pas that would have housed specialists to come to The Pas. We need to meet halfway in order to provide more access to health care in the North. That was a missed opportunity to improve people's lives in the North.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

Travel—in fact, travel to Winnipeg is very stressful financially and physically, and everybody in the North hates the northern transportation program. That program does not serve us well. It just creates stress and—on our families, and with that stress, many of our people do not make it to their appointments and their health diminishes. As a human right, we all deserve access to health care.

As a First Nations woman, I'm a very proud member from Opaskwayak Cree Nation and I'm also from northern Manitoba. I must provide words of perspective from my view, which is very much needed on that side of the House, Madam Speaker. It's like screaming in the wind when we try to inform them on how this government's—and how this government ignores us. So please, listen and take notes. We need leaders that respect the rights of Indigenous people.

\* (16:10)

I have many First Nations in my constituency and the common theme when we're meeting together is that we all can agree that this government does not understand how to consult with First Nation governments. The Lake St. Martin channel—Lake St. Martin is part of my constituency and I've had—I have seen first-hand the aftermath of a flooding of a community. The community site looked eerily like a ghost town would. These communities were wiped out, along with lives lost and poverty faced by the community members who were displaced in Winnipeg.

That is why these communities deserve respect with their leaders and must fully engage to consult—be consulted with before any earth is moved on their traditional territories. They deserve to be at that table, too. Our Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke) should be the expert on that side of the House and be schooling her colleagues on these issues, constitutional rights for Indigenous people.

And with that, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to end with our Cree word of the day, that chief in council for OCN teaches us every day when they meet. The Cree word that I learned recently is the word nanakachinan. That Cree word means: take care of us. That is my message from my constituents to this government.

With that, I will stand with my colleagues on this side of the House and not support this budget and will

support our amendments to this budget. So once again, nanakachinan, Madam Speaker.

Ekosi.

**Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Jobs):** Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand in the House today to put a few things on the record in regards to Budget 2021.

First, I'd be remiss if I did not thank the people of Lakeside for the opportunity to be able to serve in this great Chamber. I know I'm only 28 days away from my 18th anniversary. It was a class of four in my class in 2003 and two have moved on to other things and, of course, Kelvin Goertzen, my colleague, is—or the minister—[interjection]—yes, I'm just a newbie. Just a newbie.

But it's a real pleasure. In fact, Madam Speaker, in—on—July the 18th is anniversary of three mile—three MLAs in 99 years in the constituency of Lakeside.

Also, I had the opportunity to serve as the minister of Agriculture. Our D.L. Campbell, longer serving MLA in Lakeside, was the Ag minister and the premier at the same time. So, I know he has a lot of things. His family is very proud of him but certainly the longer serving MLA. And I think Jim Maloway—or, the member from Elmhurst—Elmwood, Elmwood's where he's from. That's where he's from. He's been here so long I don't know where he's moved to. Anyway, he's trying to beat that record, I'm sure.

But on with what I want to talk about in protecting Manitobans, and protecting their livelihoods from the economic impacts from COVID-19 pandemic continue to be our government's priority. We recognize the sacrifices that Manitobans and businesses have made and continue to make to comply with public health restrictions to ensure our communities remain safe during these challenging times.

We want to ensure that those who want the vaccine get it as soon as possible. And another key priority for our government is to ensure that Manitoba's a place where business can succeed and grow.

This is why economic recovery and growth is the centre of our plan for a stronger, more prosperous Manitoba. We believe that a safe, healthy community includes a healthy economy. Our government is committed to ensuring that the steps we take towards rebuilding our economy are safe steps and that we have the right supports in place along the way.

Our government has supported and stood with businesses, workers, entrepreneurs throughout the pandemic, and that is why, to date, we have committed more than \$3 billion, protect and assist businesses in Manitoba. We have worked with our stakeholders to harness the leadership and experience that Manitoba business groups, to help us create recovery funding programs for sectors that have been hardest hit by the pandemic.

The last fiscal year we committed the most generous per capita level of support in a country, almost a half a billion dollars in COVID-19 supports to Manitoba businesses and organizations. We built our pandemic responses by establishing grant programs and targeted wage subsidies.

Through a partnership with Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Winnipeg, we have invested \$50 million in long-term recovery of sectors and workers who have spent—have been the most impacted by the pandemic.

I want to say thank you to Chuck Davidson and Dayna Spiring and your teams for sorting through what you heard and bringing recommendations forward to our government, the listening government.

Our financial supports have directly assisted small-business owners, Manitoba's non-profit sector, including restaurants, hotels, lodges and outfitters, passenger-transportation services, retailers, service providers and many others.

Over the 12-month period ending in February 2021, our province posted the best job growth in the country, our labour force increased by more than 12,000 workers in 2021, and Manitoba had the second lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

In 2021, we will continue to provide the support needed to protect Manitobans and, of course, advance our economy. Advancing Manitoba's economic recovery means planning for the future, and this budget includes steps to ensure Manitoba can—becomes the best place to invest and grow in Canada.

Look around, like—businesses like Roquette, Merit Functional Foods, O Foods, the Richardson Centre for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals have already discovered this and continue to grow our economy and employment within Manitoba; remain committed to creating conditions for our economic growth and job creation, which includes investing and new actions to grow our economy, boost skills and training and supports to attract newcomers to our province.

This ties in nicely with our skills, knowledge and talent strategy that post-secondary and immigration rolled out in February.

We're establishing a new private-led sector provincial economic development agency, based on the recommendation 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 business investors pursuing major economic development projects across the province.

As I've seen in the past year, our economy is a dynamic, and our economic recovery plans must be innovative, flexible and adaptive. As I talked about in one of my questions earlier today in question period, our innovation growth action plan: 177 new jobs through our programs this year, \$13.6 million in economic recovery over the next five years, just from those programs.

If our economy is to recover strongly from this pandemic, we need to look ahead to ensure we are supporting Manitoba businesses and entrepreneurs to take advantage of every opportunity to achieve prosperity and create jobs in our province.

This is why we are investing \$2.1 million, and our Innovation Growth Program provides small grants and medium-sized businesses to 'smur'—to spur on commercialization, innovative new products and services. And that's why we've committed to help young entrepreneurs launch and sustain successful businesses.

We're also moving forward with the tax relief steps to ensure our province has a truly competitive taxation system through fuel economy growth and of course jobs.

We're also enhancing Small Business Venture Capital Tax Credit to help Manitoba companies raise equities by increasing the tax credits and providing investors with an earlier return on small-business investments here in Manitoba.

We're also making Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit permanent by eliminating the tax credit's expiration date and expanding its eligibility to recognize changes to that sector.

We know that good jobs require skilled workers. Our budget includes supports for our workforce training that will help businesses find workers and workers find jobs.

\* (16:20)

This funding will be used to help Manitobans re-enter the workforce, particularly those in hard-hit sectors and groups disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic. It will assist employers to offset the costs of retraining returning and new employees who have been displaced by the pandemic.

From the beginning of COVID-19, the pandemic, our government listened to stakeholders so we could respond quickly, effectively and the needs of business owners and Manitobans who are very close to bringing an inter-provincial trade policy that will enhance trade between all provinces, something that our Premier (Mr. Pallister) has championed from the time we formed government in 2016.

I'm proud to say as a lead minister on the plan, we are very close. Stay tuned, as it'll be a huge win for all of Canada within our provincial trade. Remaining committed to listening to Manitobans to ensure we have the right tools in place to help create the conditions for a safe economic recovery, continued growth for our Manitoba economy.

I want to just talk briefly about the shop local program and how important it is to our small businesses. I want to share a story about a local greenhouse, and the pandemic had just kind of got started and, of course, they didn't have a plan in place to open up. And I suggested to one of the greenhouse owners to launch a website. He did so, and last year after they came up with a plan to make sure Manitobans were able to shop safely within their establishments, he had a record year last year doing three times the revenue that he normally had had in a normal year.

So it's important to support local and shop local. Restaurants need your support now more than ever. Some of my programs that we rolled out through the Restaurant Association was one for covering some of the costs on delivery of food. So \$2 million was established to help restaurants get food out to their customers, and I'm proud to say that it works well, and we're looking at another tranche of funding for them as we go forward.

Also, just on hotels, I know they've been hit really hard. The Manitoba Lodge & Outfitters have been hit hard. The hoteliers, we funded them by \$6 million to help offset some of their costs: taxation, insurance, hydro, other costs that they need to be able to maintain their restaurants and hotels as they look forward.

With the Manitoba Lodge & Outfitters, we funded them with \$2 million to assist them. Again,

they're wanting to do business, they want to do the right thing. They're not looking for government handouts to get them through, but they know it's something that they need, so we stepped up to help them through this tough time.

As we look and we go forward and we have money that's been allocated if we do have a third wave, we hope that the vaccine will help cushion that blow as we go forward. But, Madam Speaker, I just want to ensure Manitobans that we're a government that's listening to Manitobans, a government that cares and a government that's here for them today and tomorrow.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** It's nice to rise virtually here and put a few words on the record about the budget. So, last week this provincial government released their budget, and I want to just spend a little bit of time talking about what is not in the budget and from what I've been hearing from Manitobans and from my constituents in Tyndall Park, there's actually a lot of gaping holes in the budget and important issues that should be prioritized.

So, we can start with our health-care system, Madam Speaker. This government continues to hurt health care here in Manitoba, and this dates back to prior to the last election with—and all their decisions around hospitals, and I think specifically about the Seven Oaks hospital because I know it was used a lot by the constituents of Tyndall Park.

And, you know, Madam Speaker, when the Seven Oaks hospital was initially built, it was built with a helicopter pad right on top because it was meant to be utilized for so much more than it is being used for right now, and with the population continuing to grow especially at the rate that it is in the North End, it was a very poor decision to close so many of the services offered there. And I hope that the government goes and revisits that.

So, the government should be investing in our Pharmacare in more Pharmacare programs, Madam Speaker. Manitobans need to be able to access their prescribed medications, and we know right now people are having to choose between shelter over their heads, food on the tables, if they want that, or their prescribed medications.

I've actually introduced a petition to the House to urge the provincial government to encourage the federal government to amend the Canada Health Act by adding prescription medications, medicines

prescribed by a licensed practitioner, to the definition of covered services in accordance with an established formulary, and to urge the provincial government to develop, jointly with the federal government, a universal, single-payer, evidence-based, sustainable public drug plan that contains purchasing power to secure best available pricing, a list of essential medicines addressing priority health needs and the ability to expand into a comprehensive permanent plan that would promote the health and well-being of all Canadians.

So, we know that there are still many, many prescribed medications out there, Madam Speaker, that people depend upon that are not being covered, and this is just forcing too many people to have to choose not to take the prescribed medications. And it's a vicious cycle to be in, and it hurts and it ends up costing our hospitals and taxpayers much more money.

So I hope that this government does reconsider and they start working with the federal government as other provinces and territories are doing to develop more Pharmacare programs here in Manitoba.

There also needs to be an investment in our mental health. As we know, especially through the pandemic, mental health has declined. People's resources have been taken away and the ability to cope, socialize, see friends and family have not been the same in a very long time.

You know, Madam Speaker, therapeutic services should be covered. We need to better treat mental health, the way that we treat physical health. Members of this House often talk about how mental health is just as important. I want to see them put their money where their mouth is. Right now, if you break your arm, you go into the hospital; you know, with confidence, that they will treat you; they will fix up your arm; they will put a cast on your arm.

Unfortunately, if you're struggling with depression and you go seek out psychological services, counselling, therapy of any kind, chances are you're going to be pocketing out a hundred bucks, first day.

Madam Speaker, there's a contradiction here. We need to be treating mental health more fairly.

When we—when I start to think about education in the budget, Madam Speaker, we know that there are some issues that were—have been completely unacknowledged by this government and missing from the budget, issues that teachers, school administrators, school boards, parents and even

students have been raising, and this government is just choosing to ignore.

And we've seen this, through the lack of consultation with recent legislation.

So, this budget fails to recognize that in the COVID-19 pandemic, Manitoba's schools have gone above and beyond to do an incredible job of adapting to keeping students safe and educated.

Madam Speaker, teachers, school administrators and students, even parents of students, have had to make massive changes in their lives and structure in the school system to keep up with all the last-minute decisions that this government continues to make. There's no plan, Madam Speaker.

And, in addition to this, schools were expected, and continue to be expected, to keep up with these changes, to ensure children's needs being met with very little help and little additional resources from this government. This government continues to fail at being able to adequately assist children with learning disabilities in the K-to-12 education system by funding education below the rate of inflation. And, Madam Speaker, this gaping hole with respect to education in the budget also extends to post-secondary education.

Over the last few years, this government took away tuition rebates. They decided to charge international students for health care. They made post-secondary education facilities find cuts up to 30 per cent, and now they're jeopardizing our post-secondary institutions' tuition and unions and jeopardizing the importance of our elementary schools and high schools, based on budgeting for teachers.

Madam Speaker, we all hoped that the new minister would have considered all the harm that they have caused students and would try to address it with this budget, but no dice.

This government continues to cut and take away from our students, making Manitoba a less desirable and affordable place to study. With all of these cuts, when will the government invest in our education system?

\* (16:30)

We believe that there should be a limit on tuition increases. And we have an opportunity to attract more students and future residents in this crisis by investing in universities, colleges, all post-secondary institutions, making them more attractive; not more expensive and further deter students from attending.

We should also be setting students up and helping them succeed during their post-secondary education, yet this government is doing the opposite. An example of this, Madam Speaker, is when they took away the tuition rebate. So many students used that rebate to pay off student debts, to put the down payment on their first homes. By taking that away it's a huge deterrent.

You know, Madam Speaker, there's been a lot of talk about seniors as well, and that's why I was so disappointed with the lack of mention of it in the budget. Seniors, in addition to health care and education, it's something that our province is lacking big time on, specifically this government and their decisions. We talk about long-term-care facilities needing major reforms.

And, you know, I want to clarify for the government and even for the NDP members, because they don't quite understand that personal-care homes are not the only care homes where seniors reside. There are a lot—the greater umbrella is long-term-care homes, because personal-care homes are one of supportive housing homes as well—retirement homes, 55+ homes.

Madam Speaker, a lot of our seniors are also going through hospitalization stays, and some of them are even in hospices right now. We need to be using terminology of long-term-care homes, not just personal-care homes.

So, in the short term, Madam Speaker, there needs to be investments to increase staffing in long-term-care facilities and all congregate living. Staff in our seniors homes have been drowning for the last year, and this government won't do anything about it. They won't even help us be able to reach the minimum level of care that we know seniors deserve. I've had many constituents reach out to me about this, as they work in care facilities and they're feeling overworked. They're feeling unnoticed, and they're not being properly acknowledged and thanked.

We believe that the creation of an independent office for a seniors advocate is an essential part of caring for seniors now and into the future. A seniors advocate would be a non-partisan person who, no matter who is in government, could stand up for seniors and ensure their needs are being properly met. And, you know, Madam Speaker, we have these wonderful, potentially, templates laid out for us. We can look to the BC Seniors Advocate, mirror their office, learn from their office.

And when I've talked about this in the House before, I've had questions around, like, well, how would a seniors advocate be funded? Madam Speaker, we have something called a children's advocate here in Manitoba, and I don't see why not look off that department, look off that—the children's advocate to learn how we could potentially fund a seniors advocate. We have the resources; just look at them.

We also need to be talking more about creating opportunities for seniors to remain in their homes so that they can take care of their health. You know, Madam Speaker, my colleague from River Heights talked about this earlier today. We need to be enabling home care, home repair, and we also need to be talking about these day programs that the government doubled the cost of in their first mandate. It used to cost about \$8 for seniors to go out and go swimming, and there were different day programs, and now they're about \$16 an hour, and this was prior to COVID, Madam Speaker.

When I think about home care, I think about home-care workers who are not feeling rushed from one end of the city to another end of the city. Right now, they're having to get from Charleswood to the North End to then Island Lakes within 20, 25 minutes. That leaves very little time. What, five minutes inside of people's homes to take care of the person you're supposed to be taking care of?

And home repairs. I've said this many times as well, Madam Speaker. I'm sure the members of this House are getting annoyed with me giving some of the similar examples, but sometimes it's the smallest home repair that would enable a senior to reside in their house for years to come. Maybe it's a ramp going from their doorstep up to their door. Maybe it's a handrail from the bottom of their staircase to the top of their staircase. If we were to have some form of budgeting for this, to lend out to seniors to enable them to stay in their homes, think about how many less seniors would be forced into care facilities within a couple of years.

Madam Speaker, just before wrapping up I do want to say a couple more thoughts about how disappointed I am and have been in this government's lack of efforts in supporting our economic stability and growth here in Manitoba.

*Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

I recognize we couldn't have predicted a pandemic, but now that we've been in one for over a year, this government needs to start demonstrating



support for each other and our own, and this means buying local, contracting projects locally and providing assistance for all of our small businesses and restaurants that make Manitoba what it is. We can all be doing a much, much better job at this, Madam Speaker.

So, overall, not impressed by this budget, not impressed that this government wouldn't break into our rainy day fund when there's literally a pandemic happening, and we're not impressed that this provincial government has made us lose out on money because of their inability to work with the federal government.

We will not be supporting this budget.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The honourable Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage.

**Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage):** It really is a pleasure—

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** Hang on for a second. I didn't have my mic on.

The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage.

**Mrs. Cox:** It really is an honour to be here today, to be provided the opportunity to speak to our government's Budget 2021.

I'm very proud of the actions that we are taking to support Manitobans as we respond to this global pandemic, and just this March marked the one-year anniversary since COVID-19 first arrived in our province. And throughout the year, Manitobans have been challenged with the pandemic: they've lost loved ones, they faced stress, they faced financial hardship. But we are resilient, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am optimistic for our future thanks to our Budget 2021.

First of all, I would like to thank all Manitobans for their resilience, their patience and optimism during this challenging time, and I'd like to extend a very special thank you to our front-line health-care workers, those working in our personal-care homes, our teachers and administrators, those working with our most vulnerable in care homes, our early childhood educators who stepped up early to ensure parents and front-line workers had safe, reliable child care for their children.

I'd like to thank our grocery and retail store employees who stocked shelves and responded to the needs of Manitobans. I'd like to thank our police and

emergency response workers, our transportation drivers and those on the assembly lines who kept the Manitoba economy moving throughout this pandemic.

Our government recognizes that our province and people will continue to face profound health, social and economic impacts and uncertainties due to COVID-19. And although we are not fully out of the woods, we must plan for the recovery here in our province of Manitoba, and Budget 2021 has two clear goals: protecting Manitobans and advancing Manitoba's economy past COVID-19.

Budget 2021 continues to protect Manitobans as we fight COVID-19. Our pandemic response has been amongst the most generous across the country, and to date, our government has committed more than \$3.2 billion to support health care, education and vulnerable Manitobans and businesses.

Budget 2021 will increase funding by nearly \$1.5 billion, which includes \$156 million more for health care, \$91 million more for K-to-12 education and post-secondary, and \$34 million more for social services—more than ever before.

I know in my very own community of Kildonan-River East, small-business owners have personally reached out to me, thanking me for our government's support through the Manitoba Bridge Grant, which provided them with \$15,000 in grants and really made the difference in them potentially having to close their doors.

For many of the small businesses receiving those grant payments, that money was a game changer, and expanding the Bridge Grant to include home businesses, home-based businesses, who are primarily owned by women, meant they could continue to grow their businesses and allow them to support their families, even while maintaining, you know, just a—their livelihood but during COVID-19.

\* (16:40)

Budget 2021 includes \$1.8 billion in '21-22 for COVID-19 costs and I, again, I'm going to say that our government has developed the most generous support programs across the country to help businesses bridge through the very challenging time and get back to doing what they do best—employ Manitobans.

And some of the support programs include the Manitoba Bridge Grant, which I just mentioned, that provides up to \$15,000 in direct financial support to

businesses, non-profits and charities impacted by code level red restrictions.

To date, Mr. Deputy Speaker, approximately \$205 million has been paid out to over 14,000 eligible applicants, and approximately \$178 million has been provided to more than 11,700 storefront businesses and organizations and \$26 million to more than 2,500 home-based businesses.

And our Risk Recognition Program—\$120-million program—also offered a one-time payment to frontline workers who took extraordinary risks. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 80,000 Manitobans received \$1,500 payments. It benefitted workers employed in businesses that provide the retail sale of food or consumer goods such as grocery stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, butcher shops, bakeries, markets, hardware stores and all other retail businesses—all businesses that predominantly employ women.

And through our hospitality support program, we provided \$8 million for the creation of a new hospitality relief sector program to provide financial relief to Manitoba's accommodation and tourism sector—again, businesses that predominantly employ women.

And I'm proud of our government's Caregiver Wage Support Program that provided \$35 million to individuals who worked with our most vulnerable. The Caregiver Wage Support Program provided a \$5 per hour wage top-up for front-line direct support workers.

And I'm very pleased of what our government has done to help women throughout this pandemic. Just last week I was pleased to join our Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen) and our Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke) to announce \$6.4 million of programs to 24 community organizations, to deliver programs that address the diverse needs of victims, including \$850,000 targeted to support survivors of sexual assault. This is a historic amount, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's because our government recognizes the need to provide critically important support to victims of crime.

We know that grassroots organizations are in the best position to develop the programming and the resources required for women. This investment of \$6.4 million reflects a diverse range of programming, which includes culturally based trauma-informed supports, such as counselling and healing, crisis services and peer support. And this funding supports several key government priorities, including the

231 calls for justice from the final report of the national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

And all of this was as a result of our government's Gender-Based Violence Committee of Cabinet. We recognize that you can't work in silos, Madam Speaker, and that we must work together to address gender-based violence in our province. This framework also complements the work that's under way to implement the calls of justice and to address missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

And I wanted to mention to the members in the other side of the House here that even the British Columbia government, an NDP government, noted that our gender-based violence framework is one that they want to copy, minister—Mr. Deputy Speaker, as one as a document that they feel is something that they should use to drive forward their plan to address gender-based violence.

I was also very pleased, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it's our government who partnered with homelessness Winnipeg and family information sector and we have invested over \$100,000 for a new Integrated Case Management System which will ensure that our women's shelters can provide better service to women who are facing some of the darkest days in their life.

This homeless case—this Integrated Case Management System will enable shelters and agencies to share data in a much more quicker manner to ensure that they can identify where beds are available across the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And our government partnered with the Manitoba association of women's centres to fund \$25,000 for a new online family awareness program, a training program for civil servants and front-line workers.

And I'd like to thank Marcie Woods [*phonetic*] from the executive director of Willow Place for developing this new self-directed program.

So we are doing much, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to promote ways to ensure that women are safer in our province of Manitoba and ensure that we addressed gender-based violence. And there's much more to do, but I would like to just tell you about a few of the programs that did receive funding through our recent announcement that we made.

So, Ka Ni Kanichihk, the Heart Medicine Lodge were provided \$250,000 that will be used to increase

the capacity of the Heart Medicine Lodge to support Indigenous survivors of sexual assault.

And the Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre, which provides hope, healing and recovery to women right across our province—well, not across our province. I'm sorry—in the Interlake-'eastman' region, \$300,000 to increase current programming and to expand and cover new areas of the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this is also going to allow additional training for volunteers and ensure that maybe they will be able to have a sexual assault centre. They're exploring the feasibility of that right there in their home community.

And the Western Manitoba Women's Regional Resource Centre Inc., which is located in Westman, in Brandon. And they are looking at a co-ordinated sexual assault response services right in their city, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The program would establish crisis-based sexual assault services in Brandon, and it would mean that they have additional partnerships that they can provide through Indigenous-led healing. And that's \$850,000 of \$6.4 million which is going to go directly to assisting women involved in domestic violence.

We also have three other areas that we're providing money. MKO, with their project—is for Indigenous men and boys, which is called, a part of a solution to building healthy and safe communities, will receive \$900,000 for northern Manitoba. And the MKO Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Liaison Unit will develop and implement land-based cultural programming as prevention and intervention of male-perpetrated domestic violence against First Nations women, girls or two-spirited people in 20—and this will benefit people in 25 northern Manitoba First Nations communities.

The Manitoba Metis Federation will receive \$300,000 for their MMIWG Family Support Project. They will develop a registration process in which families can register and gain information and support to access much-needed resources and services.

And the Southern Chiefs Organization will provide Preventing and Addressing Family Violence—that's the name of their project. They will provide an advisory circle that will work with Southern Chiefs to focus on improving the quality of service and creating a network of support for the 34 southern First Nation communities across our province. And that is a \$300,000 project, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And the Clan Mothers Turtle Lodge are receiving \$298,000 and the project seeks to develop the plan for

job skills and training to operate social enterprises that will create sustainable revenue for Clan Mothers healing village. And the Ka Ni Kanichihk which I've already mentioned, \$250,000.

\* (16:50)

And the Manitoba Moon Voices Inc., the project is reclaiming our power and place, and that's \$150,000 as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that will be here in Winnipeg to address the violence and the trauma it engenders. Manitoba moose—Manitoba Moon Voices Inc. and two-'spirit'—two-spirited people Manitoba Inc. plan to work together to deliver the reclaiming our power and plan initiative.

And the Portage la Prairie Bear Clan will be receiving \$99,000. This project is a biweekly, where we provide a biweekly meeting place for women to collect, distribute and share information regarding missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

And another stream, and I'm very proud of this one, \$800,000 is going to go to the West Central Women's Resource Centre for their Strengthening the Circle project, and this program seeks to provide long-term supports to victims of gender-based violence from before they leave the relationship until they feel confident enough in their independence.

And this will be done through counselling, support, navigating legal and employment systems, support for immigrants, intergenerational programming, education and training to others working in the victim assistant fund sector.

And the NorWest Co-op, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will receive \$500,000 for their men's family violence program. This project offers individual and group support to men, both victims and perpetrators, and they aim to raise awareness and knowledge of gender-based violence, inter-intimate partner violence, as well as family violence. And participants will report behavioural changes leading to improvements in current and future relationships and feel better supported to leave an abusive relationship.

And the Toba Centre for Children and Youth—\$400,000 for the collaborative table of community agencies enhancing support for victims of child abuse; and the Survivor's Hope Crisis Centre—\$300,000, which I've already mentioned, Mr. Deputy Speaker; and the Western Manitoba Women's Regional Resource Centre, another program that I've mentioned, \$300,000 for co-ordinated sexual assault response services, right in western Manitoba.

And the list goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Société de la francophonie manitobaine, they will receive \$300,000 for a province-wide program. The project is intended for victims of crime in the Franco-Manitoban community, based on the inclusive definition set out in the Franco-community enhancement and support act.

And Candace House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, receiving \$300,000 for their informed spaces project, and this project target audience is victims and survivors of violent crime with a primary focus on those impacted by homicide or the criminal fatality of a loved one.

And we know how sad it is to hear that Candace Derksen's story and all of the important and hard work that their mom and dad put into raising funds for Candace House, and we are so proud to be able to support Candace House over the years as the government on this side of the House.

And Mount Carmel Clinic Sage House receiving \$260,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a drop-in and outreach program that serves women, including trans women, who are street involved or in the survive—or in survival sex.

Family Dynamics—\$150,000 in southern Manitoba; The Pas, Aurora House, \$115,000 for the together we grow program; and \$100,000 to the Healthy Muslim Families incorporated to support victims of gender-based violence in the Muslim community.

And Genesis House in Morden-Winkler—\$100,000 to support their what about the men program, a partnership between Genesis House and Agape House. The pro—the project focuses on providing voluntary interventions for men involved in gender-based violence.

And the list goes on and on: we have Swan Valley, we have other areas across the province and, of course, my time is limited, so I would like to say, though, however, that I am very proud of our government for investing in a new mental health and wellness department. To me, it's so important.

Losing my brother Greg to suicide was, you know, very difficult for our family. It not only impacted my brother, it impacted my mother and my father and myself, our entire family. So recognizing the importance of this department means a world of difference to me.

And it's not only that act that is, you know, the final part of that individual's dark life, but it's all of those acts that preceded the death. And I can't tell you about the number of times that my husband and I went out searching for my brother when he would just disappear, you know, just without any warning.

Quite often, he could have been in the United States, he could have been in the inner city, but we never had any idea of where he was. And the heart-wrenching and the heartbreak that my parents experienced as a result of that loss is something that I will never forget—

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The minister's time has expired.

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Manitobans are frustrated, they're scared and tired, many are grieving and many are very angry with the Pallister government. They want a government that prioritizes health care, education, child care and the environment instead of their own political interests.

Right now, they really want a government who will prioritize the vaccine rollout and ensure that all of the available doses get in the arms of Manitobans as quickly as possible instead of sitting in freezers.

In spite of a global pandemic, the PCs continue to put money ahead of people. In this budget, they're spending less on health care this year than last year, barely keeping up with the rate of inflation.

This budget ignores seniors, who have suffered the most in the pandemic. This budget reduces funding to universities and colleges, raises tuition and privatizes the industrial training centre.

It's clear the vaccine campaign just isn't a priority for this government. Instead of working to get Manitobans vaccinated, this government is spending millions on a political report to justify privatizing Hydro, freezing wages for civil servants, school staff and Hydro workers, and cutting education and taking power away from educators.

The pandemic has been a test of leadership, and this government has been failing. They're just not focused on what matters most to Manitobans. They're attacking working families, continuing to cut health care and education and making life more expensive for families.

I have so many concerns about this budget, but I can't possibly outline them all in 20 minutes. So I've selected a few key areas to address, and as the official opposition critic on Environment and Climate Change, I will start there.

This budget and this government are not serious about fighting climate change. Despite the minister standing in the House today to brag about the budget for the Climate and Green Plan implementation office, they've actually reduced the budget for this office and they've reduced the budget to their Environmental Stewardship office.

Conservation and climate have at least 58 fewer full-time positions than they did in 2015-2016. Parks and Resource Protection has at least 22 fewer full-time positions than they did in 2015-16. There are also so many vacancies.

Year after year, this government is cutting positions, leaving fewer and fewer people whose role it is to protect the environment. Manitoba greenhouse

gas rates are growing 'exponentially' under this government, up 5 per cent in 2018, which was the last reported year.

The minister has said that her government's plan is not to actively work to reduce emissions, it's to let them keep increasing—just not as much as they might have if the government had done nothing, which is basically doing nothing. This is not climate leadership.

Instead of fighting climate change, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) spent millions of taxpayer dollars on a lawsuit to fight carbon pricing.

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The—when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 16 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1 p.m. tomorrow. *[interjection]*

Oh, 1:30–1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 12, 2021

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