

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

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Doyle Piwniuk): Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Radisson. The honourable member for Radisson?

The honourable member for Radisson, do you want to unmute your mic.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There we go.

Mr. Teitsma: I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A little trouble with the audio, there.

Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Seventh Report

Mr. James Teitsma (Chairperson): I wish to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development presents the following as its Seventh Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on April 19, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- **Bill (No. 25)** – *The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act/Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal*

- **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg*

- **Bill (No. 38)** – *The Building and Electrical Permitting Improvement Act (Various Acts Amended and Permit Dispute Resolution Act Enacted)/Loi améliorant la délivrance des permis de construction et d'électricité et la résolution des litiges connexes (modification de diverses dispositions législatives et édicition de la Loi sur la résolution des litiges en matière de permis)*

- **Bill (No. 53)** – *The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act (2)/Loi n° 2 modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal*

Committee Membership

As per the Sessional Order passed by the House on October 7, 2020 and further amended on December 3, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the April 19, 2021 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

- Mr. BUSHIE
- Hon. Mr. JOHNSON
- Mr. MARTIN
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WIEBE
- Hon. Mr. WHARTON

Your Committee elected Mr. TEITSMA as the Chairperson.

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

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record

- Mr. KINEW
- Mr. LAMONT

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on Bill (No. 25) – The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act/Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal:

Marc Lemoine, Senior Election Official with City of Winnipeg

Your Committee heard the following 20 presentations on **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg*:

Ivan Normandeau, Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM)

Kam Blight, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Stephen Kupfer, 5008735 Manitoba Limited

Marc Pittet, City of Winnipeg Public Service

Duane Nicol, City of Selkirk

Mayor Brian Bowman, City of Winnipeg Council

Lanny McInnes, Manitoba Homebuilders Association

Mayor Cheryl Christian, R.M. of West St. Paul

Brent Olynyk, Private Citizen

Cara Nichols, Private Citizen

Mayor John Mauseth, RM of Headingley

Michael Carruthers, Private Citizen

Allan Borger, LADCO Company Limited

Brad Erb, R.M. of MacDonald

Paul Bell, Private Citizen

Bryan Ward, Qualico

Sheila Mowat, RM of East St. Paul

Tim Comack, Ventura

Mark Olson, Private Citizen

Michael Lackmanec, RM of Cartier

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 38)** – *The Building and Electrical Permitting Improvement Act (Various Acts Amended and Permit Dispute Resolution Act Enacted)/Loi améliorant la délivrance des permis de construction et d'électricité et la résolution des litiges connexes (modification de diverses dispositions législatives et édicton de la Loi sur la résolution des litiges en matière de permis)*:

Lanny McInnes, Manitoba Home Builders' Association

Your Committee heard the following presentation on **Bill (No. 53)** – *The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act (2)/Loi n° 2 modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal*:

Dorothy Kleiber, Private Citizen

Written Submissions

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 25)** – *The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act/Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Your Committee received the following three written submissions on **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg*:

Trish Fraser, Municipality of North Cypress-Langford

Eleanor Link, Private Citizen

Bev Pike, Private Citizen

Your Committee received the following two written submissions on **Bill (No. 38)** – *The Building and Electrical Permitting Improvement Act (Various Acts Amended and Permit Dispute Resolution Act Enacted)/Loi améliorant la délivrance des permis de construction et d'électricité et la résolution des litiges connexes (modification de diverses dispositions législatives et édicton de la Loi sur la résolution des litiges en matière de permis)*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Darryl Harrison, Winnipeg Construction Association

Your Committee received the following written submission on **Bill (No. 53)** – *The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act (2)/Loi n° 2 modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal*:

Denys Volkov, Association of Manitoba Municipalities

Bills Considered and Reported

- **Bill (No. 25)** – *The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act/Loi modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- **Bill (No. 37)** – *The Planning Amendment and City of Winnipeg Charter Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill with the following amendments:

THAT Clause 22 of the Bill be amended

(a) in the part of the proposed clause 82.1(3)(a) before subclause (i), by striking out "60 days" and substituting "14 days"; and

(b) in the proposed clause 82.1(3)(b), by striking out "90 days" and substituting "14 days".

Your committee voted to defeat Clause 24 of the Bill.

Your committee voted to defeat Clause 25 of the Bill.

Your committee voted to defeat Clause 26 of the Bill.

Your committee voted to defeat Clause 27 of the Bill.

Your committee voted to defeat Clause 28 of the Bill.

Your committee voted to defeat Clause 29 of the Bill.

THAT Clause 38 of the Bill be amended

(a) in the proposed clause 149.1(2)(a), by striking out "major occupancy" and substituting "major development"; and

(b) in the proposed subsection 149.1(3), by striking out "an occupancy to be a major occupancy" and substituting "a development to be a major development".

THAT Clause 39 of the Bill be amended in the proposed subsection 151.0.3(3) by striking out "30 days" wherever it occurs and substituting "14 days".

Your committee voted to defeat Clause 61 of the Bill.

THAT Clause 65 of the Bill be amended

(a) in the proposed clause 240.1.1(1)(a), by striking out "major occupancy" and substituting "major development"; and

(b) in the proposed subsection 240.1.1(3), by striking out "an occupancy to be a major occupancy" and substituting "a development to be a major development".

THAT Clause 77 of the Bill be amended

(a) in the proposed clause 282.1(1)(a), by adding "or" at the end of subclause (i) and striking out subclause (iii);

(b) in the proposed subsection 282.1(3), by striking out "30 days" and substituting "14 days";

(c) in the proposed subsection 282.1(10), by striking out "A decision" and substituting "Subject to section 495, a decision";

(d) in the proposed subsection 282.2(1), by striking out clause (c); and

(e) in the proposed subsection 282.2(3), by striking out "30 days" and substituting "14 days".

• **Bill (No. 38)** – *The Building and Electrical Permitting Improvement Act (Various Acts Amended and Permit Dispute Resolution Act Enacted)/Loi améliorant la délivrance des permis de construction et d'électricité et la résolution des litiges connexes (modification de diverses dispositions législatives et édicition de la Loi sur la résolution des litiges en matière de permis)*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

• **Bill (No. 53)** – *The Municipal Statutes Amendment Act (2)/Loi n° 2 modifiant diverses lois en matière de droit municipal*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Teitsma: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Now we'll go on to tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

All Seniors Care Malaria Fundraiser

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the staff at Seine River Seniors always do an amazing job with organizing special events for their residents by keeping them active, engaged and entertained.

This year, one of those endeavours was the All Seniors Care cyclists putting Pedal to the Metal to make the world a better place, in observance of international malaria day, which will be taking place on April 25th.

All Seniors Care has aligned with the Against Malaria Foundation where 100 per cent of the money collected is used to purchase bed nets. During the month of April, between the 1st and the 23rd, All Seniors Care staff, as well as their friends and families, have been and continue to raise money for the life-saving mosquito nets as they virtually cycle through countries where malaria is still prevalent.

This is a very worthwhile cause, as malaria kills one child every 60 seconds, which is sadly about 1,000 children each day. The use of insecticide-treated bed nets has been shown to greatly reduce malaria

illness, which will help prevent the spread of this deadly disease.

On April 1st, as part of their kickoff, I was honoured to speak to the participants virtually via Zoom and applaud their teamwork for this cause. I also made a donation directly support the participants of Seine River Retirement Residence. There are still a few days left, so I encourage everyone to do the same.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to recognize Ronna Goldberg, Chantal Wiebe, Krzysztof Szulc, Danielle Cloutier and the entire staff at the Seine River Retirement Residence for their diligence in organizing, co-ordinating and running this multiple-week event for such a worthy cause while at the same time following all current health protocols.

These citizens exemplify the strong charity and goodwill that Manitobans are known for throughout the world, and I encourage others to follow their example whenever they can.

Please join me in applauding the good work of Seine River Seniors.

Child-Care Services

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): The federal budget was announced yesterday that intends to apportion to Manitoba an estimated \$180 million per year for the next five years for child care. Women across Manitoba are now all ears to see what this Province's response will be.

For the past five years, this government has taken a regressive, unimaginative approach to the child-care needs of women and children. First, this government froze operating grants, reduced inclusion supports and cut enhanced nursery funding. We heard in committee how these cuts have forced child-care centres to close, to fundraise for necessities like staff wages, to end children's meal programs. We heard in committee, listening to Manitobans, that trained early childhood educators with decades of experience are paid a pittance, needing two jobs to make ends meet and can't afford child care for their own children. We heard how, during the pandemic, this sector feels abandoned by this PC government.

But this government is not listening. They commissioned a KPMG report that's not worth the paper that it was written on, much less the \$600,000 that would've been better spent on children's snacks and school supplies.

After the minister finally showed the public the text of Bill 47, it was panned all around. According to

Dr. Susan Prentice, prominent Manitoba child-care scholar, Bill 47 is dangerous and proposes multiple risky challenges to Manitoba's child-care architecture. The bill proposes more cuts and privatization and putting scarce public dollars towards for-profit operations.

Bill 47 will make child care more expensive for parents and it does not address poverty wages or issues with workforce retention. Women have had enough. We need quality child care so that we can get to work, so that we can get educated and trained so we can better support our families.

The federal government is offering to go fifty-fifty on a national daycare program. Will this PC government continue to zig while the federal government zags? Will this PC government continue to leave women and children behind?

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Karl and Andrea Jaek

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, every April the Canadian Cancer Society honours and supports those affected by cancer with the Daffodil Campaign where people can buy daffodils and raise money for cancer research.

Daffodils survive long winters and bloom in early spring and are a natural symbol of hope and strength for the cancer survivors they have come to represent.

In previous years, I and many other MLAs have delivered daffodils around our constituencies, but this year I wish to honour two special Manitobans who epitomize this survival spirit. Rossmere residents Karl and Andrea Jaek were Manitoba's first couple to both have bone marrow transplants: Karl's, for mantle-cell lymphoma and Andrea's, for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Two thousand and twenty-one marks five years since Karl's 2016 transplant and 10 years since Andrea's younger brother ended her 10-year cancer battle with a life-saving bone marrow donation. On top of this, I recently virtually attended their 40th-year wedding anniversary. This is a year Karl and Andrea have much to celebrate.

They credit excellent doctors, the fantastic care at CancerCare and the decade-long care of their church community who provided meals, child care and housekeeping for 10 long years.

Karl and Andrea now serve that same church community by supporting and training others who

help those struggling with sickness or grief. They thank God for every day of their post-cancer life and are enjoying life and serving others.

Andrea recalls her desire to keep on living; there were still things that she wanted to do. She chose to focus on life-giving things, including completing two 60-kilometre walks and raising money for CancerCare even while undergoing treatment.

In the midst of her sickness, Andrea prayed that God would help her get through for the sake of their teenage children who were struggling. Today many people thank God for Karl, Andrea and scores of other cancer survivors whose courage, perseverance and faith inspire us to persevere and evaluate our own lives to make them count.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Throughout this pandemic, families across Manitoba have faced new and unprecedented economic challenges. For many, the loss of a job or a steady stream of income has meant it's been harder than ever before to make ends meet. Fortunately, for thousands across Winnipeg, organizations like the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre have been there to lend a hand when times get tough.

When Ma Mawi first imagined their Larsen Avenue community centre site, they had plans for a community drop-in centre in the heart of Elmwood. However, after the onset of COVID-19 forced their plans to change, they quickly adapted the space into an emergency food distribution centre.

Thanks to this creative problem solving, Ma Mawi's Larsen site has helped prepare and deliver thousands of indispensable emergency food hampers and baked-basis supports to those in need.

Since then, Ma Mawi has expanded to a small army of staff and volunteers, helping to get vital supports to countless struggling families on a regular basis. Last month, I had the pleasure of joining them to see their work being done on Larsen Avenue first-hand and help deliver hampers around northeast Winnipeg. As Ma Mawi continues to expand and serve the needs of a growing city, it's imperative that the Province provide them with fair funding and sufficient support.

Ma Mawi's commitment to serving the growing needs of Manitobans has unfortunately not been matched by this PC government.

The pandemic has made it clear that thousands across our province continue to struggle to put food on their tables for their families. That means kids are going to go to school hungry and are focused more on where their next meal will come from, rather than being able to pay attention in the classroom. It's become evident that the demand for a universal breakfast program in Manitoba schools is greater than ever and the government must make feeding hungry kids a priority.

* (13:40)

On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I wish to thank Ma Mawi for their invaluable work serving those in need and call on the provincial government to support them by making sure every child has a nutritious meal to start the day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

NorWest Co-op Community Health

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to feature some of the incredible work happening at NorWest Co-op Community Health. NorWest has taken the lead in spreading awareness and education on the importance of vaccination as well as staying safe during COVID throughout the pandemic by addressing vaccine hesitancy and providing credible and useful information to the public.

I know I find it incredibly motivating to see how engaged the staff and community partners have been in these initiatives. If you check out their social media, which I encourage you to do at NorWest Co-op Community Health, you'll be able to see their diligence and how they have engaged with the community through influencers, including but not limited to people from our health-care and education sectors and a few groups, including women of colour initiative, ethnocultural council of Manitoba and a provincial round table, which is a newcomer vaccine awareness group. NorWest has even met with a few of us MLAs virtually.

What I really admire about NorWest are their continuous efforts. Every week they send out an email highlighting social media posts about staying safe through the pandemic and the importance of vaccination. These posts are often in Tagalog and Punjabi as well.

I think that my favourite post that NorWest shares regularly are the ones where people hold up a sign saying: I Got Vaccinated For. Mr. Speaker. I have seen people write, I got vaccinated for my children,

for my clients, for my workplace colleagues. The relationships and reasons are really endless.

And I suspect it will still be a short bit before I get vaccinated, being 29 and healthy; however, when I do, I plan to write that I got vaccinated for my nephews.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend a huge amount of gratitude and thanks to all of the community leaders who have been participating in these campaigns and initiatives. Thank you for the work you are doing in keeping our community safe and cared for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health-Care System Reform Funding and Staffing Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Hallway medicine has made a return to Manitoba, and it's because of the PC cuts.

We know that this is unfortunately not happening by accident, either. The hallway medicine situation has been coming about because of the failed consolidation plan and the staffing shortages that have been implemented by this government year upon year.

This was the situation before the pandemic even arrived here. We know that the Grace Hospital was planning to be treating patients in hallways because of the resource decisions that this government is making.

We know that the situation has been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic. Nurses, health-care aides, health-care professionals are being burdened. They're feeling burnt out. They're feeling the impacts of the short staffing.

When will the Premier abandon his plans to cut health care and finally commit to undoing the damage that he's done to our health-care system?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, we're investing, as a government, three quarters of a billion dollars more than the NDP ever did in health.

Either the member has a short memory or is conveniently forgetting that it was, after all, the previous NDP government that promised that it would end hallway medicine and actually created highway medicine instead.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can only say to the member, he's complaining now about conditions in an emergency room this government built with \$50-million investment.

We'll continue to invest in health care. We'll continue and invest in our staff. We'll continue to make sure we make the necessary investments to continue the success we have had as a government over the last five years in reducing wait times in our facilities for Manitoba patients.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: The Premier doesn't deny that there is hallway medicine happening in Manitoba right now because he knows it's true. There's hallway medicine being practised at the Grace Hospital as a result of his cuts, as a result of the cuts handed down by the provincial Cabinet.

A 93-year-old woman spent five days in the hallway: five days under fluorescent lights, five days in a hallway because of the cuts signed off on by the ministers and Premier that make up that PC Cabinet. This is unconscionable.

I'll table the letter explaining the situation that says, quote, many patients were packed into the hallway, the majority of whom were in pain, immobile and all afforded little care, water or food—little water, care or food.

This is a first-world country. How is it that a government can let hallway medicine return to Manitoba? This should have been left 20 years in the past with the last Conservative—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable leader's time is up.

Mr. Pallister: What is unconscionable is, of course, the attempt by the member to use a pandemic as a chance to score political points. What is unconscionable is for the member to ignore the reality of the failed promises of the previous NDP government—promises that were broken and broken and broken again—that are being kept by this government because we committed to investing more in health care, and we invest more than any previous government in the history of this province.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can only say to the member, stop trying to score political points on the backs of patients in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: I've got a message from the people of Manitoba to the Premier: Start trying. Start trying to

fix health care. Start trying to listen to the patients. Start trying to listen to the nurses.

Because if you did, you would know that the hallway medicine situation at the Grace has not been caused by the pandemic. It is part of the long-term planning that that facility has had to undertake as a result of underfunding, staffing cuts and a directive and a predilection toward cutting and ending services that Manitoba families rely on.

We know that it's not right. We know that hallway medicine should have been left 20 years in the past.

If the Premier's not going to reverse his cuts, will he at least read the letter about the 93-year-old woman receiving health-care treatment in a Manitoba hospital hallway?

Mr. Pallister: Of course I'll read the letter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'll use it as motivation, as every member of this government has since we came to government, to fix health care and to fix the mess the NDP created.

They had two decades to address these issues. The member doesn't want to discuss that. He doesn't want to take responsibility for past actions. That's in keeping with his trend. But the reality is we're investing three quarters of a billion dollars more than the NDP ever did, and every time he says cuts, he's lying.

And so the fact remains, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

I just want to remind the First Minister that the—parliamentary language.

Mr. Pallister: Every time that he uses the word cuts, he's misrepresenting the truth wilfully and knowingly. And the reality is, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we'll continue to do our absolute best to correct the mess we inherited from the NDP.

The Canadian institute of health information says we are the leading province in shortening—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —wait times. In fact, we are the only province who is shortening wait times in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a different question.

Mr. Kinew: The Premier knows the rules. The only reason why he would want to push the envelope is because he knows he's losing the argument. The

reason he's losing the argument is because his cuts to health care have resulted in a return to hallway medicine.

I'll table the articles from the 1990s, the last time the Premier was in the building, the last time hallway medicine was an issue here. I'll table the document to remind him that it took a generation to fix the cuts of the last Conservative—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —government. The fear that Manitobans have is that it's going to take another generation to fix the cuts and the damage that is happening to health care in Manitoba today.

Ask a nurse. Ask a health-care aide. Ask a health-care professional. They will tell you that the system is in disarray, and it's because of the political decisions made at the Cabinet table.

When will they stop cutting? When will they end hallway medicine?

Mr. Pallister: Well, the member is right about one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is there's a growing demand for health care as our population ages. That's why, if you don't care about health care, you loved yesterday's federal budget, you absolutely loved it. *[interjection]*

* (13:50)

Well, the NDP members blurt from their seats but, apparently, late in the game they decided to support us in standing up for sustainable funding for health care in this country.

So, the member's right about the growing need for health care and the growing importance of addressing the funding partnership that has not been addressed by this federal government. But he is wrong to ignore the 17 years of NDP rule and he's wrong to allude to the fact—he states that if you're losing the argument, you disregard the rules. I guess that would explain that he's losing the argument on a daily basis because, on a daily basis, he and his colleagues fail to observe the rules around harassment. They fail to observe the rules around health orders. They fail to respect the rules of this Chamber.

And so I guess I can only say to the members opposite, if you're breaking the rules on a daily basis—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable First Minister's time is up.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: The Premier ignores the fact that he and his Cabinet voted against a requirement that any new health money coming from Ottawa actually be spent at the bedside. What does that tell you? It tells you that the PCs want to use health care as an issue but don't want to follow up those words with any real action.

We see what the impact here is in Manitoba. There is a 93-year-old woman who spent five days in a hospital hallway, in pain, limited access to water and food. That is what passes for health care under the Pallister government.

That's not what Manitobans want. Manitobans want real investments to ensure that every senior, everyone who needs health care in Manitoba can get that timely access close to home when they need it. They will never get that with a Conservative government.

Will the Premier at least admit that hallway medicine is wrong and that his cuts are causing it?

Mr. Pallister: To most common sense Manitobans, a three-quarter-of-a-billion-dollar additional investment doesn't qualify for a cut. I can only say to the member opposite that 17 years of NDP mismanagement—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —of health care resulted in the longest waits of any province: 17 years after the NDP came to power, promising to cure health care, they made it worse. And we're addressing that mess. We're going to fix it.

Now, the NDP commissioned a report called the Peachey report that would have fixed up a lot of things, but they didn't have the courage to implement it. They sat on their hands and did nothing. That was how concerned they were about situations like this when they were in government.

So the member can cry—he can cry crocodile tears today, along with the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), but that's all—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —they are. They're phony. They're fake. They're insincere. They're deceitful. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: They have nothing to do with the reality.

The reality is we're shortening wait times and we're addressing health care with the most significant investments in the history of the province of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: Well, if you want to talk about no guts, let's talk about the Premier, who we know doesn't have the courage to stick around to the next election.

When you talk about the issues that actually impact the people of Manitoba, health care is top of mind. The Premier is busy returning Manitoba to—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —hallway medicine.

Compare that to the situation that was just announced by public health today: 211 new cases, a test positivity rate that is at 6.3 per cent in the province's capital. Of course, we know that that suggests that community spread is happening at a rate that is going to be very difficult to reign in.

We saw in the second wave that the health-care system was overrun with an increase of case counts. What do you think is going to happen if we're already practising hallway medicine at the start of the third wave? It's clear that the Conservative approach to health care is an abject failure.

Will the Premier at least admit as much today and start to undo the damage his cuts have caused?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable—the first—leader's time is up. *[interjection]*

Order.

Mr. Pallister: We're addressing the challenges head on. I would encourage the member not to resort to personal attacks. He can if he wishes.

I can only say, if courage is the issue, and he wants to make it the issue, I'm fine—I'm fine with that. I've never failed to show up—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —for a court date. If I violated a public health order, I would have apologized, and did. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: If I beat my wife, I'd apologize for that. And if I broke the harassment rules and repeatedly harassed a civil servant out of the civil service, I'd certainly regret that.

So the member opposite need not lecture anyone on this side of the House on elements of courage or bravery—[*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —or character or principle, and he need not pretend that he has any idea of how to face the challenge this government is facing in the middle of a global pandemic. [*interjection*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Drug Overdose Deaths Public Reporting

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): My colleague, the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), has a bill before this House that would ensure timely public disclosure of 'overdeath'—overdose deaths in Manitoba. Unfortunately, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Cabinet are refusing to inform Manitobans on this public health crisis. It took the media to find out that 372 Manitobans died of drug overdose in 2020. That's an increase of 87 per cent.

This is an absolute tragedy and has devastating impacts on the lives of Manitobans, and yet this Cabinet is keeping those numbers hidden from the public, never mind actually doing work to mitigate that overdose crisis.

Will the Premier finally agree to regular and timely reporting on 'overdeath'—overdose deaths in Manitoba?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): Our government, contrary to what the member from St. Johns is putting on the record here today, understands that mental health is just as important as physical health.

That's why I was so pleased to join with my colleague, the Minister of Families (Ms. Squires), last week to announce \$1.2 million for mental health and addiction initiatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$60,000 of that for community living disabilities services clients for naloxone kits, and I haven't heard a question asked about naloxone kit distribution, but I want you to know that 30 First Nation communities, 130 retailers—it's an unlisted drug—and five RHAs.

We will continue to respond to the overdose crisis in a meaningful and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

Safe Consumption Sites Request for Government Support

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Three hundred and seventy two Manitobans died of an overdose in 2020, and we didn't learn about this alarming number from the minister or the Premier or anybody in Cabinet; we learned from the media.

The Premier's response to this is pathetic and quite clearly just flippant. An office open for a handful of hours is not going to address this crisis. Many, many people are dying who could've been saved with real interventions. This requires treating this as a public health emergency.

In the wake of these horrible deaths, will the Premier commit to real intervention, such as safe consumption sites, today?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): The loss of life due to overdose deaths is a tragic situation, not just here in our province but across the country, and our government has taken action. It was our government that created the first Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery to take strong action to address these issues.

Now, last week in the House we heard from the member of Point Douglas. She said it was a good gesture, creating this ministry. But for the individuals that are accessing care through our RAAM clinics, our opioid agonist therapy, withdraw management, hospital-based services, it's real action, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we will continue to respond in an action-oriented fashion to address these overdose deaths.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary question.

Ms. Fontaine: Arlene Last-Kolb co-founded Overdose Awareness Manitoba. Her son, Jessie, passed away from an overdose in 2014. She says the Province, and I quote, is not responding like this is an emergency.

And we on this side of the House completely agree: 372 Manitobans lost their lives. Experts are saying that the drug supply is poisoned. People who in other times would've been able to break free of their addictions are dying before they even have a chance.

* (14:00)

We need action. We need action today.

Will the Premier commit to real interventions such as safe consumption sites?

Ms. Gordon: Action is not fear. Action is our government creating a ministry, a stand-alone ministry, to address and focus on the issues of overdose deaths, mental health crisis within this province.

We are acting. We are working with our VIRGO implementation team to actively establish programs and initiatives to address the 125 recommendations that came out of that VIRGO report.

We are taking action. Our government is doing the right thing and we are going to stand with Manitobans and their families who are experiencing the loss of loved ones as a result of overdose deaths.

Planning Amendment Act Request to Withdraw Bill 37

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Last night, we heard from dozens of officials and community members concerned by this government's Bill 37. The bill overrules local decision making and puts it in the hands of unelected officials. We heard over and over again that the bill undermines local voices and will have the opposite effect of what this government intends, with a longer—not a shorter—approval process.

The mayor of Headingley, John Mauseth, calls the bill a threat, as it stands, that makes the local representation, quote, meaningless.

Will the minister listen to these stern warnings and withdraw Bill 37?

Hon. Derek Johnson (Minister of Municipal Relations): Since March 2020, when this bill was first introduced as bill 48, my department officials, the previous minister and—we've had approximately 50 meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders, including the City of Winnipeg. In fact, the City of Winnipeg has been a part of more than a dozen consultation sessions, including participating in the Bill 37 stakeholder working group and a full council seminar that my department officials have organized.

And this doesn't include the—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —regular ongoing discussions between senior officials in my department and the senior City officials that touched on this and other issues.

Unlike members opposite, we are—listening government and we will toe—take no lessons from members opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Concordia, on a supplemental question.

Mr. Wiebe: Despite being given an extra year to go back to the drawing board, this government continues to push through Bill 37.

Mayor Bowman also presented at committee last night, the first time that a sitting mayor has done so in nearly 10 years. He called the bill, quote, unaccountability by design. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: He called it dangerous. He called it reckless. Developers are given the right to appeal projects, but not citizens.

As currently constructed, Mayor Bowman said, Bill 37 represents an attack on local democracy. He certainly didn't mince words. It shuts citizens out. It overrules officials.

Will the minister listen and will he withdraw Bill 37?

Mr. Johnson: We are a listening government. We are open to what we heard—all stakeholders, including the City of Winnipeg—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —other municipalities, but also developers and the general public

In January, I created a multi-stakeholder working group which includes representation from the City of Winnipeg. It meets regularly to provide advice on Bill 37's implications, including potential legislative amendments and input on regulations and policies to modernize the planning, property zoning and development process.

Removing appeals on conditional use is just one example of the change made based on a City of Winnipeg and AMM recommendation. We will take no lessons from members opposite. On this side of the House we're listening to not just the mayors, reeves, CAOs—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

The honourable member for Concordia, on a final supplemental question.

Mr. Wiebe: Dozens of presenters expressed concern with Bill 37, including developers and planners and including members of the minister's own planning group. Several explained that in other provinces,

moves like this led to more, not less, red tape. We heard from people that these provisions will almost certainly push out small- to medium-sized planners and developers in favour of the largest and most established.

The combined effect is a system less responsive to its citizens and more onerous for development, less accountable and yet at a higher cost.

Will this minister just listen to these criticisms? Will he withdraw Bill 37 today?

Mr. Johnson: The members talk a great game about listening, but they're all talk and no action.

We've listened to stakeholders from all sides. For us, the consultation is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: —an ongoing basis. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Johnson: We've said what we've done. We've said what we're going to do.

I'll tell you what we're not going to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're not going to stand in this Legislature that represents our democracy and call the members of municipalities howling coyotes. That's what we're not going to do.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Smoking and Vapour Products Legislation Request to Withdraw Bill 56

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The Canadian cancer-care society has withdrawn its support for Bill 56 due to the absence of a consultative process that honours First Nations' right to self-government.

Even though this bill directly impacts Indigenous communities, this government has done no consultation with those communities, and Indigenous leaders received no advance notice of this bill. This is a clear failure of this government's duty to consult and blatant disrespect for First Nations. They deserve better.

Will the minister respect Indigenous sovereignty and withdraw Bill 56 today?

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

I'm not sure if the House members are aware, but tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death and over 2,000 people perish as a result of smoking every year in this province.

Manitoba believes the health of all residents is important, and we want to ensure that we create spaces across our province for all individuals to be able to benefit from smoke-free and vapour-free environments. And that is what this bill intends to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker: protect the health and well-being of all Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Smith: The Canadian cancer-care society has said that this bill is inconsistent with the requirements of The Path to Reconciliation Act. First Nations groups have already said that they are considering legal action if this bill moves forward.

Despite all of this backlash, this government continues to push through this legislation that isn't really about smoking, it's about control.

Will the minister repeal Bill 56 and commit to true collaboration with Indigenous leaders working forward—moving forward?

Ms. Gordon: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the exclusion of the operation of the provisions in this act to areas under federal jurisdiction is unique in Manitoba laws.

And, in fact, we in the Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery did a jurisdictional scan and we asked our counterparts in other provinces, does your jurisdiction have an exemption on federal lands similar to Manitoba? I want to give you a snapshot of the results: Saskatchewan, no; British Columbia, no; Alberta, no; PEI, no; Nova Scotia, no.

We are going to provide Manitobans with the same protection of health and safety, in terms of smoke-free and vapour-free environments, as other jurisdictions have done, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (14:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary question.

Mrs. Smith: The minister knows that this bill doesn't do what the minister says it does, and the minister also knows that this bill will likely be challenged in court.

First Nations have indicated their willingness to work collaboratively but only through a fair and consultative process. They oppose the minister's

heavy-handed approach. It's clear that this bill is just another one of this government's attempts to undermine Indigenous sovereignty.

Will the minister work within the spirit of reconciliation and withdraw Bill 56?

Ms. Gordon: In the spirit of reconciliation, we have invited all 63 First Nations communities to engage with our government on this very important bill.

And while the—our government has jurisdiction to pass laws of general application to protect and promote the health of all Manitobans, we certainly respect First Nations' rights to self-governance. That is why they can choose to pass their own bylaws to align with their views on smoking.

And we wish to engage with First Nations communities to support them in making decisions respecting smoking and vaping in their communities, and we will continue to reach out to all First Nations leaders in our province.

Paid Sick Leave Government Position

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Today, we learned, through an internal report by the Workers Compensation Board, that in the last year they accepted 1,227 COVID-19 claims. That is at least 1,227 confirmed cases of COVID-19 transmissions at Manitoba workplaces. That is at least 1,227 reasons why this government needs to implement a paid sick leave for all Manitoba workers.

Will the minister commit to a provincially supported paid sick leave today?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): There is a paid sick leave program.

That's thanks to Premier Pallister and Premier Horgan for—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I just want to remind the minister, like, if you're referring to an individual in this Chamber, it is either the title or their constituency name.

Mr. Fielding: Thanks—that's thanks to our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Premier of BC, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Mr. Speaker, that led the charge to have sick leave—a program with the federal government. The Manitoba government was the first in the country to pass legislation to make sure that Manitobans, as well as Canadians, got the sick leave provisions that are there.

We're glad to see the federal government made some changes in terms of length of the sick leave program, and that's important to all Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Lindsey: What this report shows us is that permanent paid sick days are essential for all Manitobans as we move forward through, and hopefully soon, out of this pandemic. While the federal government temporary benefit has been a small help for many Manitobans during this time, we believe that the province should be a leader in protecting workers, not just now but always.

No Manitoban should have to choose between putting food on their table or protecting public health, whether it's COVID-19 or the flu.

So I ask again: Will the minister commit to a provincial paid sick leave today, yes or no?

Mr. Fielding: Well, the member talked about being a leader in this field, and our Premier was a leader. In fact, he led the charge to make sure that we did a sick leave program.

I can tell you, in all the premiers' calls, as well as all the finance ministers' calls, this is a topic that we've pushed for, and we've lobbied effectively to make sure this program's extended. We're happy that we can work with the federal government.

Again, we are the first in the province of—Canada to pass legislation to ensure people had sick leave provisions associated with ours.

Our government has also provided numerous supports. Over 360,000 people got direct supports from this government during the pandemic, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary question.

Mr. Lindsey: This internal WCB report is only a portion of the workers who got sick last year at work. There are likely many Manitobans who are not covered by WCB. Teachers and many other Manitobans were not aware that they were eligible for this process.

The need for paid sick leave is clear, especially as we heard—head into a third wave and after seeing an increase in variants of concern. This is something that we need now and for tomorrow.

Will the minister commit to a provincial paid sick leave for all Manitobans for today, tomorrow and the future, yes or no?

Mr. Fielding: Our government is taking great pride in supporting Manitobans during the pandemic; over 360,000 Manitobans got some sort of direct support, somewhere up to even \$1,500 through the Risk Recognition Program, where over 80,000 individuals were supported.

That's why we pushed. We're going to continue to push at the federal level for enhancements, in terms of the sick leave program. We've got a bit of a step of the way there, in terms of enhancement, in terms of the areas, but we're not going to rest until we can get a further enhanced program at the federal level.

COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Vulnerable Populations

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yesterday, I asked the Premier about why front-line essential workers who work with the public, like teachers, people working in education and transit workers, are not a vaccine priority for this government. After I asked, I received letters from transit workers and teachers who are frustrated because the Province created a free-for-all for vaccinations without ensuring that front-line workers were a priority, because they were so busy working with the public, by the time they could try to book an appointment, there were none left.

Is this government going to make sure that people working in education and transit workers, who are at high risk of exposure to COVID, are made a vaccine priority?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Yes, our vaccine team has been markedly successful in getting vaccines out, and we expect with today's announcement, which will assist our international workers in the—essential truck drivers in being able to get vaccinated in North Dakota on their return to Manitoba, that will be able to assist them. That sector needs that support. They've been criticized and harshly treated by some along their routes, and that is not fair or right. But it will also have the beneficial effect of reducing what we hope will be ever-shortening waits for others to get vaccines as well.

And so that effort will continue, and we will remain focused on it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a supplemental question.

Mr. Lamont: The other group this government is still ignoring are some of the most vulnerable Manitobans: people with underlying conditions of all ages. Manitobans under 40 who are cancer survivors, people with spina bifida, diabetes or an autoimmune disease, who are at—most at risk of being harmed if they get COVID, are still not a priority for this government.

Manitoba is the only province that has set age-40 restrictions based on birthdate, not year. I received an email from a woman this morning who has an autoimmune disease, but no one will make an exception for her; she has to wait until her birthday in July to get vaccinated.

Is this government going to make sure that people over 18 who are medically fragile can get vaccinated now instead of just the free-for-all they've created?

Mr. Pallister: Well, what the member does again, today, is attempts to discredit the work of not just this government but the vaccine team, the 2,000 Manitobans that are working diligently to do a service to all Manitobans. I think that's disrespectful, to put it mildly.

The real problem is that we have a federal government that couldn't get vaccines to Canadians. So if he wants to speak about vulnerable people, he could talk about Canadians. Canadians as a whole are waiting longer than people all over the world for vaccines. And if the member wants to do something productive, he can support us and support the federal government, because it has taken—has endeavoured to undertake to get more domestic production for vaccines in the future.

That would be a positive undertaking and something that we could learn and benefit from as a consequence of this pandemic rather than dissing the work of Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary question.

Drug Overdose Deaths Safe Consumption Site

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): According to the preliminary data from Manitoba's office of the Chief Medical Examiner, who reported in a CBC article today, which I table, drug overdose deaths in Manitoba surged 87 per cent in 2020. This means 372 people died of a drug overdose last year here in Manitoba. This is a crisis that must be addressed immediately.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do want to extend our sympathies for all of the families and friends who have lost someone to overdose.

And I want to ask this government if they will commit to working with municipalities to immediately implement supervised consumption sites and offer better supports for those living with addictions.

* (14:20)

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): I want all Manitobans that are watching our session today to know that our government stands beside them during these difficult times, and I sympathize with the loss of every life of every individual in this province and what the families are going through.

And that is why our government created this ministry, so we could take a focused approach to addressing mental health issues and overdose—the overdose crisis that is affecting our province as well as other provinces across the country. And we have so many supports available within the health sector and outside the health sector. I'd be pleased to host a briefing with the member to share all the supports and services that are available.

Advanced Education Amendment Act Amendment Regarding Student Fees

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is a great province. It's a great province to go to university and receive a high-quality education that is one of the most affordable in Canada.

We know the minister and his ministry is actively engaged in listening to the concerns of Manitobans when it comes to post-secondary education.

Could this minister update us on how his ministry and this government is working with students?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to my colleague from Rossmere, for that great question in regards to post-secondary education.

By partnering and working with students, we've listened to their concerns over the language of Bill 33. We kept our promise and made an amendment to the legislation clarifying that student fees do not include fees set by or payable in respect of a student union or student association of a university or college.

I want to thank everyone who came out to committee last week to share their views, and I would

like to assure everyone that I am committed to working with students, faculty and educational leaders to make sure we have a world-class post-secondary education system right here in Manitoba. Student success is our No. 1 priority.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Public Health Amendment Act Vaccination Status of Workers

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Mr. Deputy Speaker, yesterday the minister passed Bill 67 and, as I mentioned yesterday, I was briefed, as was our House leader, that this bill was needed for public health purposes.

The minister, however, failed to mention that they would immediately use this to create a tiered system of work, in more than one health facility, dependent on vaccination status.

Now, this absolutely should have been worked through with health professionals directly, before this bill was even presented. It's a disrespect to those workers to proceed without working this through ahead of time.

Will the minister apologize for misleading this House, and will she repair the damage that she has done with front-line workers and professionals?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that the member opposite is not suggesting that those working in our health-care facilities, those working in personal-care homes should not get vaccinated. This—that's outrageous. That is what this member is suggesting.

That was always the case that the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer—that was announced before—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —this, Mr. Speaker—and I would suggest that if members opposite are trying to find ways—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —to drive a wedge between those health-care workers—from getting vaccinated in our province, I say shame on every single one of them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Public Child-Care Grants

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Adams: —I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms. Adams: The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) The pandemic has further emphasized the need for quality, affordable, accessible child care and has demonstrated 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 a non-profit, licensed centre, 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 the loss of parent fees due to the COVID-19 closures and have spent thousands on PPE, when open, to keep kids safe, the provincial government has provided no additional funding or 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's cuts to the nursery school grant 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 status amendment act, which removes 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 changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care operating grants while committing to keeping child care public, affordable, accessible for all Manitobans.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In accordance to rule 133-6, when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Vivian Sand Facility Project— Clean Environment Commission Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares, making it the largest claim ever given to a single company in Manitoba's history. It is larger than the city of Winnipeg, which is 46,410 hectares.

The amount of dry, solid sand mined, produced per year according to the EAP is 1.36 million tons, and much of this sand will be used in fracking.

A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, including both carbonate and sandstone aquifers, which covers much of south-eastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and abundance of wildlife and ecosystems. Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

The sustainable yield of the combined sandstone and carbonate aquifers has still not yet been established by provincial authorities.

The mine could cause leaching of acid and heavy metals and pollute the aquifer, as it will go down 200 feet into the Winnipeg formation of the sandstone aquifer. There is concern that the shale, which separates the carbonate and sandstone aquifers—sand and pyritic oolite itself contains sulphides—will, when exposed to injected air from the CanWhite Sands extraction process, turn to acid.

An additional concern with the proposed mine and plant is the potential to pollute the Brokenhead River and the aquatic food chain leading to Lake Winnipeg.

Residents in the area have also expressed fears of being overexposed to silica dust during production, as

there has been a demonstrated lack of safety and environmental procedures by the CanWhite Sands Corporation during the exploratory drilling phase. Signage and fencing has been poor; identifying and required mine claim tags were missing; there were no warnings for silica dust exposure and no coverings to prevent exposure of the silica stockpiles to the elements.

* (14:30)

Residents' concerns include the fact that boreholes, which should've been promptly and properly sealed, were left open for a year. The drilling of hundreds of improperly sealed boreholes yearly create significant risks of surface contamination, mixing of aquifer waters and drainage of surface fecal matters into the aquifer.

There is also a risk of subsidence around each borehole as a result of sand extraction.

There are also potential transboundary issues that need to be addressed as the aquifers extend into Minnesota.

This project should not proceed, as no licensing conditions and mitigation measures will alleviate the risk to all Manitobans and the environment since CanWhite Sands Corporation plans to use an unprecedented mining technique with no established safe outcome. The corporation has gone on record indicating that it does not know how to mine for the silica in the water supply and need to develop a new extraction methodology that has never been done before.

Contamination of the aquifer and the environment is irreversible and there are many surface sources of high purity silica that can be extracted without endangering two essential regional aquifers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to undertake a combined review of the Vivian Sand Facility processing plant and the mining/extraction portion of the operation as a class 3 development with a review by Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to include public hearings and participant funding.

To urge the provincial government to halt all activity at the mine and plant until the Clean Environment Commission's review is completed and the project proposal has been thoroughly evaluated.

Signed by James Shurnell [*phonetic*], Gavin Barkman, M. Herd and many, many others.

Diagnostic Testing Accessibility

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

The background to the petition is as follows:

(1) Until recently, diagnostic medical tests, including for blood and fluid samples, were available and accessible in most Manitoba—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 of the phlebotomy blood sample sites existing prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allow all Manitobans to get their blood and urine tests done when visiting their doctor, thereby facilitating local access to blood testing services.

And this petition's signed by many, many Manitobans.

Public Child-Care Grants

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I wish to present the following petition 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 not provided no additional 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 tax statutes 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 changes to the nursery school grants and to end the freeze on child-care's operating grants while committing to keeping public child care affordable and accessible for all Manitoban families.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close 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. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I wish to present the following petition 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 overcapacity.

* (14:40)

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.

Public Child-Care Grants

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And the background to 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 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's 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 tax statutes 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 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 petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Any further petitions? Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few matters of House business.

Pursuant to rule 33(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the

one put forward by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart). The title of the resolution is Keeping More Money on Manitoba Tables.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that, pursuant to rules 33-7, I am now announcing the private member's resolution to be considered for the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie. The title of this resolution is keeping more money on Manitoba's tables—Manitoba tables.

Mr. Goertzen: I'd like to announce that, in addition to the bills previously referred, that Bill 213, The Reporting of Supports for Child Survivors of Sexual Assault Act, trained health-care professionals and evidence collection kits, will also be considered at the Wednesday, April 21st, 2021, meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the Government House Leader that, in addition to bills previously referred to, Bill 213, the reporting of supports for child survivors and sexual assault act, trained health professionals and evidence collection kits, will be now—also be considered at the Wednesday, April 21st, 2021, meeting of the standing committee of—on Justice.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in anticipation of Committee of Supply and the examination of appropriations, I am tabling the Estimates order as signed by myself and the Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Government House Leader that the reports for the standing of Estimates be tabled to the Clerk's desk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And we'll go on to business of the day.

Mr. Goertzen: Could you please call for debate this afternoon, Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended), for second reading?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It was announced by the honourable Government House Leader that—calling on second reading of Bill 71, the education tax—property tax reduction act, property tax and

installation assistant act and the income tax act amended.

The honourable member for—is it all—*[interjection]*—pardon me—honourable Minister of Finance.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 71—The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended)

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), that Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended), now be read a second time and referred to the committee of the House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I'll table her—the message.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Finance, second by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 71, The Education Property Tax Reduction Act, property tax and insulation assistance act and the income tax amendment—amended, now be read for the second time and referred to the—a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message—the message is tabled.

Mr. Fielding: I'm pleased to rise again for the second reading of Bill 71, the education property tax reduction, property tax insulation act—assistance act and income tax amendment. This bill initiates our government's promise to phase out the education property tax in Manitoba and it's the beginning of what will be the largest tax reduction in the history of the province.

Amendments to The Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act will require government to provide rebates in respect to education and property taxes, and the community revitalization levy at a rate of 25 per cent for residents in farm properties and 10 per cent for other properties in 2021.

These provisions would allow for approximately 658,000 rate—rebate cheques to be sent to property owners in the coming months, totalling an estimated of \$248 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The average rebate for homeowners will be \$385; for businesses it

would be \$800 and farm owners almost \$2,000. And this is just the start.

The bill provides authority to increase rebate percentages in future years—just the start, and we will look forward to providing even greater tax relief in the years to come.

The phase-out education property tax will keep more money in the pockets of Manitobans that were taken from the NDP of Manitoba property owners and provide timeless boost to our economy as we look to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

The elimination of the education property taxes is part of our government's 2019 commitment to reduce taxes and fees for Manitoba households by 2020 by 2023, our 2020 tax rollback guarantee, which is really important to Manitobans.

It builds upon the reductions in the sales tax that was reduced to 7 per cent that was jacked up by the NDP. The indexation of personal income taxes; the elimination of probate fees; the reduction of vehicle registration fees and elimination of sales tax on property insurance as well as preparing wills and personal income tax returns.

*(14:50)

Budget 2021 further rolls back—further the rollback guarantee by eliminating sales tax on personal services, reducing vehicle registration fees further, of course, by starting the phase-out of the education property tax.

With these changes we'll meet the 2020 tax rollback guarantee by 2022-23, a full year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a full year ahead of our commitment. In doing so, we'll be removing over 12,500 Manitobans from income tax rolls—the lowest income individuals of Manitoban—Manitoba. With phasing out the school taxes, we'll be eliminated—eliminate all Manitobans for the education property tax rolls.

It will also pave the way for a new education funding system in Manitoba. A significant portion of the school budgets are funded through local property taxes which creates inequities between areas with varying degrees of assessable property values. Manitoba is the only province with an inequity funding model as we have under the status quo education funding system.

These results will miss—this results in a misalignment between the funding levels and student needs in some areas. Eliminating education property

taxes will provide tax relief to ratepayers or taxpayers as well as enabling governments to create a new funding formula that will focus on resources of where they're needed most and achieve better results for students.

The bill also provides corresponding reductions in various existing education property tax credits and rebates to provide a guaranteed reduction in net property taxes by 25 per cent for residential and farm properties, regardless of where the—where you qualify for existing tax credits or rebates or not. It also ensures these properties do not receive credits or rebates that exceed school tax payable.

It's expected that through these—through the market forces, the tax relief provided by rebates will share with renters over the time in form of rent adjustments to help residents in regard to the bills—the bill amendment. The Residential Tenancies Act will set the rent guideline at zero per cent—zero per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for 2022 and 2023.

In addition, government is reinvesting savings generated by reducing the education property tax credits by increasing the funding to the Rent Assist program by upwards of \$22 million and improving financial supports for vulnerable Manitobans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe the bill is a great step forward for our province, and I hope to see members of the House support its passage this spring so the rebate cheques can reach Manitobans before property taxes are due.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to—by the minister by any of the members of the following sequence: the first question by the official opposition critic or designate; subsequent questions may be asked by each of the independent members; remaining questions be asked by the opposition members. And no questions or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): This question's obviously to the minister: Now, your original stated plan from this government was to phase out education property tax after 10 years and only once the deficit had been eliminated.

Those things are not occurring now, and why has this government changed direction?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): And I know the NDP wouldn't know anything about balancing budgets, but we did balance the budget last year. In Public Accounts there's a \$5-million surplus.

Mr. Wasyliw: I guess I'll repeat the question for the minister because he didn't answer it.

Why is the government abandoning the pre-condition of having a balanced budget before making this change? Why is the government making this change now instead of waiting until the deficit is eliminated?

Mr. Fielding: Promises made, promises kept. We obviously balanced the budget last year.

If you look at Public Accounts, it showed a \$5-million surplus. We looked at the pandemic, we know that Manitobans need relief. We provided direct supports to over 360,000 Manitobans.

But Manitobans need relief and that's why they're getting a 50 per cent reduction in their property taxes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 658,000 Manitobans are going to see a 50 per cent reduction. If you're living in the city of Winnipeg that could mean upwards of \$481. A cheque will come to your house that's going to be much needed during the pandemic.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the minister: Am I correct in understanding that the government, in this bill, is giving itself the power to reduce property taxes further without having to bring in legislation or a budget?

Mr. Fielding: The legislation calls for a 25 per cent reduction. We're going to do the 25 per cent in regulation—in second year.

Mr. Wasyliw: Is this government prepared to eliminate the education property tax in four years, and if not, why not?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I'm surprised to hear the member opposite, who raised taxes by 40 per cent when he was in the Winnipeg 1 school division, talk about reduction—reducing taxes. But we are very proud of the fact that as a government, we're attaining our commitment to Manitobans: a 2020 tax rollback.

We're doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a year in advance. We've made a decision in terms of reducing the education property tax by 50 per cent over the next two years, and decisions will be made in the future. Our commitment for a 10-year phase-out is absolutely there. But if the situation does change on the ground,

potentially we could do it earlier; we could do it at the same time as what was first committed.

Mr. Gerrard: My question to the minister is this: Because the bill will reduce the education property tax but also reduce education property tax credits, the seniors school tax rebate, and make other changes, will the minister confirm or tell whether—tell the House whether the—everyone will actually see a reduction in their property taxes or will there be some who don't?

Mr. Fielding: There are 658,000 Manitobans that are going to see a reduction, a 50 per cent reduction in this. The premise of this is based on the gross, you know, reducing the gross amount by 25 per cent. So residents will see a 25 per cent reduction. Depends on your assessed values of your properties, of course, of what that will be, but the average citizen in Winnipeg would be around 400-and-some-81 dollars, a little bit less in other areas that may be the assessed value, may be a little bit less.

Mr. Wasyliw: I'm wondering if the minister can go on record and say that if this legislation isn't passed this spring, that they will not provide rebate cheques in June. I wonder if he can confirm that.

Mr. Fielding: As mentioned before, this obviously is a new credit program or rather a rebate program that's in place, and so we need legislative authority to do it. Quite frankly, I think it's probably up to the opposition to allow this legislation to pass.

We do know one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Manitobans need a break. This is a 50 per cent reduction on their property taxes over a two-year period. We think that makes entire sense to provide some support to Manitobans.

So we'll be interested to see if the NDP will be supporting this. It seems like a logical thing. It will also freeze rents for a two-year period, which we hear constantly from the NDP that needs to happen. This answers a—some—an issue that's been raised by the NDP for many, many months in this House.

Mr. Gerrard: My question to the minister is this—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: The government has a deficit this year and a significant debt. Why is the government borrowing money in order to give people a tax reduction?

Mr. Fielding: Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is taking great pride in providing supports to

Manitobans. Over \$2 billion of additional financing in terms of deficit was run this year to provide supports for individuals: 360,000 Manitobans. There's been over 50,000 individual payments for businesses. Manitobans need the support right now. We wanted to supercharge our commitment to reduce taxes in the first two years because we're in a pandemic and Manitobans need support.

Look at the unemployment rate here in Manitoba. Look at the types of individuals and types of services and the accommodation services, the tourism industry. If you talk to individuals like that, they'll tell you for sure they need some sort of tax break.

Mr. Wasyliw: Yes. The minister didn't actually answer my question and he sidestepped it. And I think Manitobans deserve a straight answer from this minister.

Is he prepared to commit today, now, that if this legislation doesn't pass, this government will not issue cheques in June? Yes or no?

Mr. Fielding: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need this legislation to pass. It's super important for Manitobans in terms of supports, relief during the pandemic. We know that renters, for instance, need a break and that's why it provides for things like rent control for two years, something that the NDP have been calling for for months and months and months.

* (15:00)

We're very proud of the fact that we're one of the longest serving jurisdictions that actually did have a temporary rent eviction as well as increases moratorium that's in place. But that's not good enough. That's why we've done a two-year commitment to that and we need the support to this Legislature to pass to get the cheques out before June. Manitobans need the support now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Does the honourable member have—for River Heights have any more questions? Are you—you have to unmute. Okay.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I do. Mr. Speaker, my question is this. It's unusual for a government to borrow money in order to give a tax break which will predominantly go to those who are well off.

Why is the government borrowing money in order to provide this tax break?

Mr. Fielding: Well, look at the example of the NDP. They borrowed a lot of money and they jacked up taxes. We're taking the opposite approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Look at our track record where we actually balanced the budget four years earlier than we anticipated.

So if you look at our track record, we believe that we'll be able to do this. This is a COVID deficit. We're going to put 'enough' supports to support Manitobans over the next two years to make sure we get the pandemic under control.

That's the No. 1 priority for this government. But we have a plan to get ourselves back into balance in an eight-year time period.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes—

Point of Order

An Honourable Member: Mr. Deputy Speaker, point of order. It's my turn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Oh. It's Fort Garry.

* * *

Mr. Wasyliv: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the refusal of this minister to give a straight answer to a straight question, I think is revealing and shows that this is more about political theatre than actually their inability to write these cheques in June.

So I ask the minister: if this—why wasn't this legislation introduced in the fall so it could meet all the legislative deadlines and pass by the end of the session? Why are they playing catch-up now?

Mr. Fielding: Well, unlike the members opposite, we actually go out and consult Manitobans. We consulted over 50,000 Manitobans in our budget consultation, and I can tell you that Manitobans asked for relief in a whole bunch of different ways. We think it makes sense to supercharge this right now, get some money in people's hands, especially during the pandemic. Makes a lot of sense.

So we're excited to see what the NDP will support this. Do they want tax relief? Do they want supports for individuals and businesses and farmers? Do they want rent freezes for two years that this legislation does?

So at some point, the NDP will have to make a decision. Either they support this legislation, they provide important tax relief, they provide rent controls

for people that need it, or, quite frankly, they don't. And I don't think they'll get elected if they choose not to do that.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. The member for St. Boniface will take over asking questions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Oh, the member for St. Boniface, sorry.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I know that there's been some talk back and forth about—it's clear that this is not—the property tax rebates are not something that are going to be equal. I mean, this has been something—they're—both the government and opposition have been pointing out the big rebates that each will get. But there are also pipelines who are going to be getting rebates as well.

Can the minister explain, sort of, what's the distribution? Who's—is there actually a document anywhere that would show who is benefitting the most, who pays the most in property taxes and who will get the biggest break?

Mr. Fielding: Well, 650,000 Manitobans are going to get the biggest break because they're going to get a 25 per cent reduction of their education property taxes this year and a 25 per cent reduction next year. That's 50 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those are the people that are going to benefit the most out of this legislation.

Mr. Wasyliv: I'm wondering if the minister can explain to us why he doesn't believe that the proper rules of parliamentary procedure should be followed in this case and why the Legislature shouldn't do its proper oversight in this bill and this should somehow be exempted and fast-tracked without the necessary legislative safeguards in place?

Mr. Fielding: Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the education property tax rebate is a brand new tax relief program and requires the authorization of the Legislature. It's up to the members of the opposition. If they choose to support this, well, then they obviously choose to support important tax relief for Manitobans. They would choose to support rent controls that they've been talking about for a long period of time.

So either they're, you know, hypocritical on this issue or they're not, and so we ask them to support this. We know this is very much supported by Manitobans. We know that over 650,000 Manitobans are going to get a tax break. Under this program, renters are going to be better off than the status quo NDP system.

Mr. Lamont: One of the measures in the bill is that it says after 2021 these percentages of rebates may be increased by regulation.

Why is this happening? Why are we—why is this going to be taken over by regulation and stripped away from the—out of the decision-making power of MLAs? I really don't understand what the reasoning behind this is. Could the Finance Minister please explain?

Mr. Fielding: Well, the legislation introduces a 25 per cent reduction. This year, obviously tax—with tax filings—or tax information going out from municipalities as well as the City of Winnipeg, we need to get this passed so people can get tax breaks into their hands.

We have committed and we're going to do that in regulation for the second 25 per cent to be passed next year.

Mr. Wasyliv: Wonder if the minister can confirm that a 300-unit apartment building is going to be treated the same under this legislation as someone's personal residence with both buildings receiving the same 25 per cent rebate. And if that is true, why aren't large apartment buildings being treated like commercial property under this bill?

Mr. Fielding: I can tell you that over 650,000 property owners are going to be better off in this plan and renters are going to be better off in this plan, as opposed to the NDP.

The member does bring up apartment blocks, so let's raise apartment blocks, I think, in his constituency. Let's look at, for instance, Adamar Manor. I could be saying that wrong but it's 110 Adamar. Under our plan, renters there will pay \$68 less than the status quo NDP plan. That's going to be a really tough explanation when the member from Fort Garry goes and knocks on those doors, knocks on the apartment doors and tells them that, yes, I support a plan that's going to put less money in your pocket.

We're not going to support that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Lamont: The other aspect of this bill is that the rent-control freeze—well, there's two aspects to it. One is that the Residential Tenancies board regularly rubber-stamps increases anyway, thousands of them.

We're also seeing 'renovictions', so there are enough, as someone—as one person put it, there are enough loopholes in rent control to drive an aircraft

carrier through, but the other is that we already have rent control for this year.

So why is it so urgent that we pass rent control for years into the future when we already have it for this year, and why are we expected to pass this by the end of day today?

Mr. Fielding: Well, the member is right on one thing. When the NDP were in power they passed over 1,079 above-rent guideline increases, and the member of Fort Garry was actually a part of that commission for all that period of time, so he may want to point his fingers at that member to find out why he passed all these amounts.

Rent control will take effect in terms of 2022 and '23; 2021, it's impossible to do because obviously we're well into the year so that would make an inequitable system where some rents would've gone up and some wouldn't. So we think it's important to control rents to make sure tenants are better off than they would under the NDP status quo plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I think where I would start with this bill is we actually have to look at it's history.

Originally, the Pallister government had said publicly that they were going to reduce the education property tax over 10 years and the other major pre-condition was only after the deficit had been eliminated.

So, what happened since then? Well, there—we're now two years and a bit out of an election.

Mr. Len Isleifson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We have pretty clear polling patterns that show that this government is deeply unpopular with Manitobans, that if an election was held today, not only would this government lose, they would be wiped out, especially in the city of Winnipeg, and I don't think it's lost on the MLA from Kirkfield Park that this might be several of his final years at the Legislature.

And this whole change of plan smacks of desperation. This legislation, if this government was actually a planning government, which we know from the second wave and the second lockdown they're not,

should have been tabled or introduced in the fall. And if they did that in the fall, they would have the ability to get it passed in the spring and would not have to play these kind of political games and engage in this sort of silly political theatre that they love so much. And they could get it done.

* (15:10)

Well, the reason why they didn't do that is because they didn't have the idea in the fall. That was not part of the plan in the fall. In fact, I had a bill briefing with the minister this morning. He admitted as much. He said that they only came up with this idea during budget. And so it's been alive in their minds for, you know, about a month, and that's it.

And so now they're struggling to catch up and they want these rebate cheques out by June 1st, and so they engage in this silly sort of brinksmanship that—this government, that hasn't really shown itself to be a serious government. So they're saying, oh, you know, people need their cheques. If you can't do this, then, you know, it'll be bad for you.

The problem with that is none of that is accurate or true. The minister admitted this morning in the bill briefing that they absolutely could pass this through the budget implementation tax statute act, the next version of it that comes along. We also know from previous years that they have given rebate cheques in the form of seniors' rebates, and they did so without any specific legislation going forward.

The third sort of, you know, example of why they don't have to do this is the minister hasn't committed to introducing new legislation for the remaining 50 per cent of the education property tax. And he has said to us in the bill briefing that he certainly would be open to that and that's on the options table for them. So acknowledging that he may or may not have to do it because, as he said, there's other methods that they could simply make these changes.

So, the only sort of real, factual, you know, issue here is that they want this to coincide with the upcoming election, which they know they're going to lose.

And this is save the furniture time. This is desperate, trying to buy Manitoban voters with their own money in order to save a handful of Winnipeg seats that they know for sure are lost. And I think Manitobans can see through this. I think they can see through how cynical this is, how disingenuous it is. And that's basically become the trademark of the Pallister government.

If anybody was in any doubt at this point, and I really don't know if you could find a person still in doubt, they further doubled down on the political theatre and cynicism. They want to spend \$1.3 million to mail out these rebate cheques with the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) signature on it. That's pure campaigning. That's basically using taxpayers' money to send out a campaign leaflet. I'm surprised, in this day and age, this is even allowed. This seems so over top and such an abuse of power and of the use of taxpayer dollars to further incumbency. There's no public policy reason to do this. They certainly could just simply do an adjustment on people's property tax and just don't collect as much as they need to in June. Or they could do an adjustment on income tax.

There's just so many different ways that they can do this without actually having to physically send out these cheques, but, well, if they did that, then they're worried they're not going to get, you know, credit for this political sideshow.

And, again, that's truly disappointing, because their stated reason for doing this is because they want to give Manitobans who have been through the recession and the pandemic a break. So to honour their sacrifices, they are borrowing taxpayers' money to buy taxpayer votes. So taxpayers in the long run are going to have to pay off the interest on the money that they're borrowing for this. So it's really not actually a tax break, because they are going to, you know, give with one hand and then take with another.

And then, of course, secondly, they're wasting taxpayer dollars on public relations stunts. And this has been a pretty common theme with this government. They have their hand in the cookie jar of Manitoba taxpayers time and time again and here we have the \$1.3 million to mail out these cheques. In the summer, it was the \$450,000 ready set go campaign where they plastered the province with mission accomplished banners while we went in and had the second highest mortality rate per capita in Canada in the second wave, and we had a horrible economic lockdown which they didn't plan for, they didn't have any supports for and had to be shamed into action.

So not only is it a horrible waste of taxpayers' borrowed money, it's completely cynical and it certainly is disrespectful for all the people who have sacrificed their businesses. Some people have sacrificed their lives because this government wasn't up for the challenge.

So, this government's going to borrow \$260 million at a time with record-high deficits for a

cheap political stunt. And so the minister says we're doing this to support the people because the people need support.

Now, I don't disagree with him; the people do need support. But when we actually look at how this tax rebate is going to operate, you have to ask the question: What people are actually getting supported here and which people will get the benefit most from this?

So let's talk about the first issue that's wrong with this tax rebate. It's a flat tax. It's a rebate of 25 per cent irregardless of the individual circumstances on all farmland, whether it's small or whether it is a factory farm; and all residential property whether it's a modest, you know, bungalow or whether, you know, it's some grotesque, you know, crass, Wellington Crescent mansion. It raises, you know, it affects everybody equally even though not everybody is equal.

And it becomes regressive and unfair when the tax burden is placed on those with the least ability to pay, and that's what this rebate does. It makes our tax system regressive.

So by the government's own numbers, the average homeowner in Manitoba is going to benefit \$385 from this rebate. And the point to be made here is that the government's increase of hydro alone will eat up almost all if not most of that for most Manitobans. So again, this is that bait and switch that this government loves to do that they, you know, give with one hand and take more from the other.

And then we compare that average homeowner in Winnipeg, that \$385 to the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) own circumstance. His \$2.5-million mansion on Wellington Crescent, his half-a-million-dollar country estate. He has commercial property in the city of Portage. We know from all those that it'll be a \$7,000 cheque going to this Premier.

We also know that he has a holding company which he hasn't disclosed the property in that holding company. So we can expect that many more thousands of dollars are going to be coming his way.

So I think that really highlights in a very visceral way the unfairness of this tax, that large expensive estates will get the lion's share of the property tax rebate and most Manitobans will see, you know, minimal benefit and most of that benefit's going to be eaten up by Pallister government increases to rent, increases to hydro, increases to child-care fees,

increases to tuition. And when you do the math, Manitobans are coming out losers from this.

So the people who have the ability to pay, that are the wealthiest and the most established, are going to get the largest benefit. Conversely, those who are least able to pay will get the least benefit from it.

So, the second sort of problem with this tax rebate is the more you own, the more you save. So, under the old system, if you had, say, a vacation property or a rental property, you could only claim that \$700 tax credit once and that was on your principal property and you would get nothing for any additional property holdings that you had.

* (15:20)

That's changed now. Now you're going to get a 25 per cent reduction on all your properties. So, if you're like the Premier and you have multiple homes and you have, you know, real estate holdings, you're going to get rebate cheques for everything.

So, again, who does this help? Large landowners. It's going to be a win for them. It's going to be a win for large estate owners. And who are going to lose out here is, you know, smaller home owners.

And then there is no distinction here between large landlords and primary residences. It's obscene. And again, the minister, he was cagey this afternoon, as he often is, but he admitted—he was a lot more forthcoming in the bill briefing this morning—that an apartment building, even a 16-storey high-rise with 300 units that's owned by a real estate investment trust or a large corporation—they will get the same 25 per cent rebate as that 900-square foot bungalow in the inner city of town.

Commercial buildings only get 10 per cent. So, there's no way somebody can classify a 300-unit apartment building as residential and not a commercial operation. And by doing that, that is a huge gift to corporate landlords.

It's a huge gift to out-of-province REITs, or real estate investment trusts, and that's where the bulk of this \$260 million is going. This is a loophole that they are creating and it's going to be a windfall for the largest landlords in Manitoba.

And of course, renters lose from this because, currently, they receive a \$700 credit on their income tax to make up for the fact that they're not getting this education property tax rebate—and of course, their landlords would get that windfall, we know that. And eventually, the renters are going to have their credit

reduced and eventually eliminated, while the landlords are going to keep benefitting year over year because a property tax is a wealth tax.

And essentially, we are reducing Manitoba's wealth tax on landlords and wealthy estate owners. And they're not going to have to pay this tax so they're going to make out like bandits every year, whereas the tenants are going to eventually see no benefit from this and will be worse off.

And we have to bring this back to the pandemic and the government's stated reason that they have to give people a break. Well, who've been affected by the pandemic? It hasn't affected everyone equally. We know that youth unemployment rate's at 19 per cent; we know female unemployment rate is at 9 per cent; we know racialized and newcomer workers have lost their jobs at disproportionate rent.

Well, these are the demographics of renters. These are the people that most need assistance, that are the most vulnerable, that are the most affected by the pandemic and the recession—and of course, knowing this government and their mean-spirited ways, they're going to get the least. And so, like everything this government does, they ignore or make things worse for vulnerable Manitobans while rewarding wealthy Manitobans who don't need government support. This is their hand in the cookie jar again.

And so, the Pallister government said: well, you know what, we're going to freeze rent for two years. Are you really? I mean, this minister has refused to make a commitment to extend the rental freeze past two years, and landlords had been granted 100 per cent—100 per cent—above-guideline rent increases.

So basically, they go to the Residential Tenancies Commission; they put in a application and it gets rubber stamped: 24,000 units have seen increases between 10 and 30 per cent. And they are not clamping down on this practice, they are not stopping it. They, in fact, have created this huge legal loophole which, you know, the landlords are using, and why wouldn't they? That's the law and they're going to use it to their benefit.

Again, the problem is, is that renters lose. So, yes, you can freeze their rent, but we know that the landlords will simply just go and get an above-rent-guideline increase.

And then of course, this government really has this hostility towards small business, which I just

don't understand. Every single decision that this government makes economic-wise, it's just a step backwards for small business in this province.

Small businesses are not going to receive any benefit from this at all. Their landlords, they're going to get a windfall. And there is no limit on rental increases for small businesses. And there's nothing in this to protect the small 'businesses' from rental increases. So, even though the landlord's getting, you know, an average of \$800 back, that's not going to small businesses. And, you know, the minister isn't committing to giving commercial landlords this 10 per cent pass this year, which again, is strange.

So, why this year, then, and not next year? Then, what's the policy reason for giving this 10 per cent at all, and if you are giving this 10 per cent, why aren't you passing it on to the small-business community, which has been absolutely devastated by the pandemic and the recession and by the absolute neglect of this government and the abdication of responsibility to support our small-business community?

Again, much like our young and female workers, small-business owners have taken the brunt of the pandemic and have been hit harder than other sectors in Manitoba. They are the people, as the minister would put it, that need supports, yet they get none from this.

And their landlords, ironically enough, who were part of the problem in the fall, who refused to co-operate with the federal government with the rent subsidy program—which is becoming critical for many small businesses and it was a question about, you know, survival—they are getting rewarded by this government.

And that just seems very on-brand for the Pallister government, that, you know, if there's somebody who's in a position of strength, who is taking advantage of somebody who's in a position of weakness, they always stand with those who are in the position of strength.

And, of course then, farmland; all farmland will receive 25 per cent rebate, regardless of size or productivity. And not all farmland is created equal. Farmland concentration's become a real problem in this province. And, of course, the small family farm is disappearing and, you know, if this government has any more time in office, you're going to see many more small family farms get bought up and consolidated.

And we're starting to see in Manitoba these huge, massive, 10,000-acre factory farms. And they're not family farms. The rhetoric of the Pallister government is to create some sort of emotional attachment here, that these are family—they're not. They're actually owned by investment trusts; one of the biggest ones is in Ontario.

So, these are out-of-province massive corporation investment trusts that own tens of thousands of acres of farmland in Manitoba, and basically, if anything, this is accelerating the elimination of small producers in Manitoba because there's no way they can compete with skyrocketing land prices, and this sort of, you know, cold war of having to buy up as much land as you possibly can. And for a small producer to do that, they have to take on such huge debt that it's not sustainable.

So, much like the 300-unit apartment building being treated like a personal residence, large corporate farms with 10,000 acres probably shouldn't be treated like a small family farm. Yet, under this bill, they're getting preferential tax status. And again, the lion's share of it's not going to the small farm producer, it's going to go to the big, out-of-province investment trust that has actually been, you know, damaging our small farmers.

And then, let's talk about what happens with the portion of your property tax—education property tax that remains.

So, we have The Education Modernization Act, where this government has put in legislation that your property tax mill rates are frozen in place—they're not going to be changed by this government, for the old school divisions, for 10 years, meaning you're going to pay the same mill rate in your part of Winnipeg as you did before, even though you can't vote anymore on your taxes and you no longer have a say on your mill rate or what your local education property taxes are going to pay for in your local schools.

Well, when we had local democracy in Manitoba, certain schools and communities spent money on their priorities. And they may raise their mill rates higher than some other parts of the city to reflect it.

So, the obvious example that comes to mind is at the Winnipeg School Division. They spend about \$80 million on special needs funding. Only \$16 million of that came from the Province, the rest was raised by local school taxes, and the Winnipeg School Division had a higher mill rate in order to pay for that.

So now that there's going to be one, you know, massive Winnipeg administrative entity—I guess you can't call it a school board anymore. First of all, they're going to lose control over their programming, and a lot of those special programs that you had in different corners of the city, they're gone.

* (15:30)

This government doesn't value public education. This government doesn't value local democracy, and they're going to get rid of, you know, nursery programs; they're going to get rid of, you know, Spanish bilingual programs; they're going to get rid of special needs supports; they're going to get rid of nutrition programs. This government is going to take an absolute hatchet to public education once they're formally in control of it.

But here's the kicker and the insult to the injury, is that depending on what part of the city you live in, you're going to have to pay more taxes because your tax rates were frozen when you still had a say. And the government is going to basically force one neighbourhood to pay more for the public education system over another. And they said, well, we're doing this because of unequal rates across the province, and we want to equalize it.

Well, no, you don't, because you had an opportunity to equalize them in The Education Modernization Act, and you've chosen not to. And so you're, in fact, exploiting these differences to make some neighbourhoods pay for less say and less local voice and less actual quality programming going to their schools.

And there's no accountability. Who do you complain to? There's no school boards or school trustees. So they've created this absolute perverse system.

So—and then, of course, we have tax increment financing that's going to be affected by this. This is a corporate welfare program. It forgives property tax portion on your development for 15, 20, 25 years, and if you add up the millions in lost revenue, that doesn't go to school.

The current system is unfair enough. The Winnipeg School Division would lose about \$5 million a year from this tax increment financing program. So the government would benefit from all kinds of taxes and everything from these developments, but the money wasn't flowing to the schools.

And the minister has confirmed this morning in the briefing that nothing is going to change. They're still not going to replace that lost revenue for schools because, again, this government has absolutely no desire or interest in developing a sustainable funding model for public education. This is all about rewarding corporate developers, large landowners and, quite frankly, donors to the Pallister government.

So, we know that, depending on your personal circumstances, this rebate is going to affect you differently. We know that a small group of Manitobans are going to reap most of the benefits, and we asked the minister, you know, like, have you done a gender analysis? Is more men going to get this rebate than women? He doesn't know; doesn't care.

How about breaking down the tax, you know, rebate based on tax bracket? Is the highest income earners going to get the most of the rebate? Minister didn't know, didn't care.

How about racialized Manitobans? Will they be left out of this? Is the benefit going disproportionately to white Manitobans? And, again, doesn't care, because they haven't done this analysis, and they haven't been interested enough to know what is obvious from anybody looking from the outside, that this is going to make our tax system less fair. This is going to make Manitoba less equal. And anytime you actually dismantle a wealth tax, it leads to further inequality in a society and this, essentially, is our version of that.

But the other major issue here that this government doesn't care—I doubt that—I think they probably understand, but certainly—or actually think it's a good thing—they're shifting the tax burden. Somebody has to pay for the public services we enjoy, and whenever you make a major change to the tax code, there are winners and losers. And the winners are obviously those that pay less and yet get benefit of the services that are being provided, and the losers are either those that have to pay more or they get less public services.

And the key principle in taxation is fairness, and if you—fairness is described as basically having the ability to pay. So you're obviously—if you're doing well in Manitoba, you're obviously benefitting from how this economy is working for you. And as somebody who actually gets the benefits from this economy and you have the ability to pay, you have a moral, ethical and proper duty to pay your fair share.

But you can turn that on its head. If you're not doing well in Manitoba, if you're struggling, this economy doesn't work for you. And we know that there's obviously barriers to the economy and lots of inequality in our economy that's holding people back.

So, instead of addressing that, instead of making sure we have a fair taxation, where those who aren't benefiting from the economy and don't have the ability to pay get a break, and those that are benefiting from the economy and can pay pay their fair share, this government is flipping this on their head. So it is making sure that the people who—with the least ability to pay, pay the most, and those with the greatest ability to pay, pay the least.

And what happens when you take wealthy landowners, large estate owners, commercial property owners out of the tax system? Well, you've just rigged the rules and you basically left small-business owners, renters, modest homeowners who—the law, they can't escape it. And the taxation system, basically, is going to affect them whether they like it or not and it means that they have to pay a larger portion of the limited resources they have in order to keep the tax system and pay for our public services—afloat.

So, by definition, this is making our tax system more regressive and more unfair. And the end result is, under the Pallister Conservative government, we have seen child poverty on the rise again. We see social inequality on the rise again. We are also going to see it's harder to have social mobility in Manitoba, that the circumstances you're born into is probably the ones that you're going to die into, and you're not going to be able to better yourself because, quite frankly, they are rigging the rules of the economy against you.

And how do they do it? They do it with legislation like this. They do it with laws like this. They allow for some people to get the benefits while the costs fall on others. This is the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet putting their thumb on the scale and they're weighing down Manitobans.

And there's something really gross about them turning around going, well, you know, we recognize your sacrifice during the recession, the pandemic, so we need to give you a break. But we don't really mean you, we mean your landlord; they need the break. Or, we don't really mean you, we mean that massive real estate investment trust from Toronto is the one that really needs the break.

And again, that's just who this government is. This is how they think. These are their values. They are putting their interests before that of Manitobans.

They absolutely could have made this more fair. They absolutely could have used this as an opportunity to get money into the hands of modest homeowners, into the hands of renters, into the hands of small-business owners. And when confronted with it, they just shrug and go we don't care.

And that's really sad because what we're seeing here is that Manitobans are getting the literal crumbs off the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) kitchen table. That's what this rebate is: it's the crumbs off the Premier's kitchen table.

So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): You know, today is a good day. Yes, today is a good day—or, at least, I sure hope it is.

Once again, the members opposite have an opportunity to show how much or how little they care about Manitobans. Today, the members opposite have an opportunity to show how much or how little they care about Manitoba seniors. They have an opportunity to show how much or how little they care for Manitoba taxpayers, and how much or how little they care for Manitoba's economy.

We have a simple bill before us, but one that we are assured is required before we can proceed. I think the members opposite need to ask themselves: do they think they should doubt the advice of senior non-partisan civil servants? Should they doubt the advice of senior legal members of our civil service? I really don't think they should, no.

The reality is that we need to pass this legislation in order to give Manitobans another significant tax break by sending them a rebate cheque for their—a portion of their education property taxes. Now, I say another significant tax break because, as you probably all recall, we've done something similar before. We rolled back the PST by a full percentage. And I will remind all members that we did that while returning the budget to balance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But it's time to do it again, because Manitobans pay enough taxes. I will say it again and I would welcome everyone to repeat it with me: Manitobans pay enough taxes.

* (15:40)

And you know, the NDP always want to divide Manitobans into different groups and pick winners and losers. This time they don't need to do that. I'd suggest to the members opposite that all Manitobans that get a rebate cheque in their mail and all Manitobans that get two years of rent freeze are all winners.

Now at the core of the question around the education property tax is the question of where and how taxes should be levied in this province in order to pay for education. So we on this side of House, we believe that provincial sales and income taxes should be used primarily to fund education.

Now, if I understand correctly, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv) is on the record saying much the same. We'll maybe hear a little bit more about that later. Using property taxes to fund education in Manitoba has resulted in a complicated and uneven tax regime. The member for Fort Garry just, you know, noted how uneven it was and how highly variable it seemed to be. And that's fundamentally unfair. So we need to work to eliminate that unfairness.

Now, I wonder what it's like today for the the member for Fort Garry. Maybe he has some selective amnesia. I trust he's smart enough not to be entire delusional. No, I expect he probably does remember some of the words he put on the record on this topic, if a radio program can count as on the record. Now this is way back when he was a trustee—not just a trustee, I believe he was the chair of the board at the Winnipeg School Division at the time. I might not have liked these words, but I sure hope he does remember them.

Shall we set the stage? In case you're following along, I just want to let you know, I'm not actually going to be talking about the kind of home the member for Fort Garry lives in or any of the other members opposite, or how it seems that the member for Fort Garry's education property tax bill is actually higher than the Premier's bill for his mansion just down the street and around the corner.

No, I suspect he would have himself really to blame for those high taxes. I'm assuming, of course, that he does live in a Winnipeg School Division catchment. If I understand correctly, he, as a trustee and later as chair of the board, presided over an astonishing 36 per cent increase in education property taxes; 36 per cent.

Wow. You know, I thought the increase from 7 per cent to 8 per cent PST was bad, but 36 per cent is something else entirely.

And you know, it's funny, I think the member for Fort Garry regrets it. He regrets that because he actually wanted to increase taxes even more. Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as crazy as that might sound to those on my side of the House, the member for Fort Garry, as he was nearing the end of his trusteeship and all the junkets to Texas and who all knows where else he went, you know, he voiced significant frustration that the then-Pallister government, in our first term as government, had limited the amount of tax increase that school divisions were allowed to burden their residents with.

He was mad about it. He had every intention of raising property taxes in the Winnipeg School Division by probably more than 40 per cent. The 36 per cent he already had wasn't enough for him. Wow.

So that's the backdrop for this radio interview that the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) had, I believe it was with Hal Anderson on CJOB a few years ago. And I'd love to have, you know, a transcription of the entire audio track, but I don't and time, I don't think, would allow. But perhaps I can paraphrase some of what the member for Fort Garry had to say.

He said they—and he's speaking about the provincial government—they should use income tax dollars. That's the fairest way to pay for education. They should use income tax dollars instead of property taxes to pay for education. I kid you not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is, in fact, what the member said. I'd love to remind him of these words and that is, in fact, what our government is doing by moving forward with this legislation.

But it gets better. I—it might be hard to believe, I know, but it does even get better, because after that, he went on to say if the government does that, I—and by I, I mean the member for Fort Garry—I will gladly come onto your show, Hal Anderson's show, and announce the largest property tax cut in Winnipeg School Division history.

Well, I have news for the member. Today is that day. Today is the day that the government—and with us, the member for Fort Garry—can go out and announce the single biggest property tax cut in Winnipeg School Division history and, in fact, in every school division in Manitoba's history.

Now I haven't, you know, reached out to CJOB to see if they want to get the member for Fort Garry on air to do what he said and proudly announce the largest property tax cut in Winnipeg School Division history, but if the member likes, he can let me know and I would be happy to do that for him.

Yes, today is a good day, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now, I'm not sure, but I suspect the member for Fort Garry might say that he doesn't need and he doesn't want a tax cut, and that's, you know, that's a laudable statement to make. He 'shertainly' should not allow that sentiment to prevent a tax break from going to tens of thousands of Manitobans who do need that tax break, do need a tax cut.

So I would remind the member that, if he does really prefer to give the money to the government, he is, in fact, free to do so. I know all my colleagues on this side of the House know exactly how to do that. But I'm not so sure about members opposite. You see, for years now, the entire PC caucus, every single member, has been completing the required paperwork to return the raise that was granted to us as MLAs back to Manitoban taxpayers. Perhaps the member's memory is defective on this point also. I distinctly remember his leader and his caucus committing the entire NDP caucus to do the same. But you know what, I don't think they ever did. A rumour I heard is that at most one of the members opposite actually completed the required paperwork to return their raise back to Manitobans—one. Well, at least that was the rumour.

You know, I haven't FIPPA'd my own government. That somehow seems a little inappropriate. But perhaps any media listening in might want to find out if the NDP, in fact, kept their word on that count or not. I suspect they did not. And I suspect Manitobans aren't surprised, because the NDP have broken their word before, haven't they. Yes, they have.

Now, the Liberals, on the other hand, did not even make the commitment, though I think I recall them mumbling something about possibly, maybe donating some money to charity. So, if they aren't already giving, what was it, 1 or 2 per cent of their gross salary to charity, I would strongly encourage them to do so, whether or not they're accepting that raise that every other member in this Legislature promised to give back to the Manitoba taxpayers. In fact, I would encourage them, like I encourage my own children, in fact, to donate a minimum of 10 per cent of their income to charity. You'd be amazed what kind of good

you can do with that kind of a commitment over a lifetime. But I digress.

Now, I'll return to the member for Fort Garry and all the members opposite—indeed, my own caucus—to note that we are free to donate our tax rebate cheques. In fact, I would encourage, especially, the member for Fort Garry. He could give it back to the Province if he wishes, if he really thinks that the government would do a better job of spending that money than he would. Or if he prefers, you know, I'd be good with him giving it to a charity in his community or a breakfast program at a local school or maybe an organization dedicated to those less fortunate in our society. That's certainly what I do every year.

So today is a good day. It's a day to do some good for Manitoba taxpayers. It's a day to do some good for Manitoba seniors. It's a day to do some good for the Manitoba economy. I sincerely hope that the NDP will recognize the need to pass this legislation and so avoid any unpleasant consequences that Manitoba taxpayers might be—might think appropriate for anybody who would block these cheques from arriving in their mailboxes.

Now, I just want to take a moment to talk about—I think the member asserted that, you know, the class that you were born in is the class that you will die in and that the ability to better yourself is simply not possible. I just don't understand where the member was coming from—such a foreign concept.

You know, my parents came here as immigrants. I'm a son of an immigrant. I'm a proud son of an immigrant. We were dirt poor. We grew up astonishingly poor, so poor that I had to wear hand-me-downs from my sister. All right, that gives you a sense of how poor we were. I'm not poor anymore. Certainly, I was able to achieve success in large part to the amazing education offered me at Murdoch MacKay public high school as well as at the University of Manitoba and the amazing IT industry that flourishes here in Manitoba.

So, today's a good day, as I was saying, and it's a day when I want to encourage all of us here in this House to work together. So let's all work together, shall we, to make sure that this day also ends well.

Thank you.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): It's always a pleasure to put a few words on the record, and today I get the distinct honour of following the member from Radisson, who also grew up in the same neighbourhood I did, who also had the same view of the CN East

Yards and who also had the great pleasure of attending our public schools, properly funded public schools, here in the old Transcona-Springfield School Division. I think he'll remember that name. I know that we certainly took great pride in that school division and it's one that really did a fantastic job of educating our youth.

* (15:50)

I just want to maybe rebut a couple of the points made by the member from Radisson talking about how much this current government cares about seniors. I'll tell you, I was a little taken aback by that comment simply because we have here in Transcona—we had here in Transcona a situation in November and December that was definitely regrettable, definitely preventable and definitely could have been acted upon by this current government, but wasn't.

I remember—and I need to remind this House—that the seniors in northeast Winnipeg and in part of Transcona were promised more personal-care-home beds. And as the member brings up, they care about seniors. Well, I'll tell you, the seniors out here are still in quads at Park Manor, are still in double accommodations, and nothing has been done to rectify that.

So I just want to remind the member from Radisson that when you make those comparisons and say you care about seniors, let's make sure that we're actually accurate in that assertion. Because I will tell you, the residents here in Transcona certainly haven't seen a whole lot of care for seniors, not in our part of the world. And I took a little bit of offence to that.

The other piece that I take offence to—and this is a philosophical difference—and I will tell you the residents out here in east Winnipeg don't see their school taxes as a burden. School taxes are not a burden out here; they're an investment in community. They take pride in that investment, one where they see their schools providing the services to the kids that live in our neighbourhood.

So when we say that those taxes are a burden, I will say that that member isn't talking about many of the residents that I represent. I will say that. I will say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when comments like that are made about our community schools, they do send a message. And clearly, the message being sent by this PC caucus is one where they value the dollar over the value of community, the value of our schools and the value of making the necessary investments in our schools.

So, those are the pieces that I just wanted to rebut and to have, you know, a lively debate over.

The member also talks about that this is a great day. This is indeed a great day, absolutely. Every day that we wake up or that I wake up, I consider it a very lucky day for me. And I take my role here as an MLA very seriously, just like everybody I believe does in this House.

And I will say that I take that seriously to the point where I am proud to debate about our differences, many of which are philosophical.

But I will say, coming from this part of the world and having the good fortune to represent our Transcona constituency here, I will say that we don't see things like school taxes as a burden. We don't see things like contributing to community a burden. We don't see things that a government, say, funds a nutrition program at a school as a burden. We certainly don't see that.

And I will remind the member too that when we do have these philosophical differences, this is the place to have that debate, absolutely. And I enjoyed these past couple of minutes in entering into this debate because at the same time I know that, when I will run into the member from Radisson, we will continue this debate and we'll do so respectfully.

And moving on to Bill 71, I will tell you this is another case of a poorly thought-out plan, one that was clearly rushed. You know, we had a government that—this current PC government, that said they were going to phase out the property tax over 10 years, you know. And when we're thinking about that, we're thinking about how we tax and how we fund our public schools. Absolutely, we needed to have that kind of dialogue, right?

Here is an opportunity to have a dialogue that really gets to the meat of how not only we fund our schools but what we want our schools to provide our children, our youth, our kids, our families. But here in the middle of a pandemic we have currently right now—even entering into a third wave that has many people in this province concerned—we have PMR this morning that is—completely misses the mark. We had a private members' bill that talked about some type of red tape reduction, and now we have Bill 71. Just as we're entering a third wave we have some bill that comes into place because this government can't get its act together or plan to—how to issue rebates. It's mind boggling.

And so as I sit here virtually, as many of us are, we're thinking, is this a swan song, then, for the Premier (Mr. Pallister)? As he enters retirement, as he contemplates this with his party down in the polls, what we have here is a swing for the fences, one where we're hoping that we can hit a homerun with voters by mailing them a cheque. How absolutely tone deaf is that.

And, you know, and people see through this type of stuff, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They see this as simply a bill that will lead the public education system funded at the whims of whatever government is in place. That's not how you do that. You set up—we have the responsibility as MLAs to set up a taxation and funding system that makes sense and is based on fairness, not one that is based on the political whims of a particular party at a particular time, when a party happens to be down in the polls, with a leader that is—I don't know—ranked nine of out 10 in this country.

And so we have this bill that magically appears. To do what? Provide a rebate? There are mechanisms in place already that can have a rebate into the hands of Manitoba taxpayers quite efficiently without having to cost the provincial treasury. That's what mind boggling about this.

And we won't even get started with Bill 64. I will remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that with Bill 64, you know, this government talks about consultation. Well it went through that whole sham of an education commission only to produce a bill that has no semblance of what was actually recommended by that commission.

And so what ends up happening? What do Manitobans do when a bill, based on some commission, comes forward that doesn't reflect any of the recommendations? What do Manitobans do?

Well, they get angry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Their voice is not being heard. So what do they do? They sign up for committee. As of right now, committee—the committee stage for Bill 64 has close to 220 presenters. Now if that isn't a message for this government and how they're running this province, I don't know what is.

But there are many other messages that are coming through. And I will tell you, Manitobans will be heard on that day and will be heard on those multiple days of committee when it comes not only to Bill 64 but to other bills that they're in strong opposition to. Why? Because they're being told by this government that they were consulted. How absolutely

insulting is that. Consulted and yet, at committee stage, we're close—we'll certainly be close to 300 by the time the fall comes around and we debate this bill properly, that being Bill 64.

But Bill 71 goes hand-in-hand with this government's consistent attacks on our public education system, one that we, as MLAs, regardless of partisan affiliation, are entrusted to ensure is fairly funded, properly supported and one that reflects the needs and desires of our citizenry.

So then what do we have?

We have bills that are created that exclude, that go out of their way to mute the voices of community members. And so what are we left with then? What we're left with, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is Bill 71 that talks about how we properly fund our public education system.

* (16:00)

And so what's happened, and the reason for this—why we're having this debate—and it's a necessary debate—is because the Province's share of funding public education had dwindled to 60 per cent in many cases; that was the average. As a matter of fact, there were many school divisions, many school boards, that were approaching 55-45 split where they had to raise close to 45 per cent of their revenue in order to make their budgets.

And these are tough budgets that were passed, but there is nothing in Bill 71 that speaks to the realities of what many of our school boards are facing. The realities being that when we have something as illegal as Bill 28 was and then you have the subsequent wage settlements that come into place—and of course, money has to be put into place to have those fair wage settlements covered—we have a system that is indeed in need of reworking, revamping.

That's the whole purpose of why—one of the main purposes of the education commission. And yet, what do we have here? We have a complete disavowment of what people were presenting at the commission and what the commissioners themselves brought forward as recommendations.

Many school divisions, many people in the province that have a stake and that really care about our public education system reached out to the department of—reached out to the minister, many since 2018. And by reaching out, they were hoping to engage in a dialogue regarding how we fund public education in Manitoba.

And the reason we know this is that many of these same stakeholders, many of these same school boards reached out to us. They reached out to us because they were saying and they're really quite frustrated with the lack of feedback they were getting from this government and from the Department of Education.

And many of the same lobby groups that lobbied for a reworking of how we tax and how we fund public education in Manitoba. We had met with Keystone Agricultural Producers, who have said and are on the record saying that they understand the need for a fully funded, well thought out public education system that they want to contribute to.

And I doubt that they want to be a party to something that really hollows out our rural communities, which is exactly what Bill 71, hand in hand with Bill 64, will do. And what people are wanting, what the citizens of Manitoba are wanting, they're wanting to have a spirited debate about how we fund our cherished public education system.

And what do they get for reaching out, for trying to reach out? Nothing. Stall tactics. They have no communication from this government or from the minister regarding how we're going to get this done. Not a word in response. And so what we're getting now, and what I'm receiving as the NDP education critic for K to 12, is I am now being cc'd on every correspondence from school boards to the minister.

And what are they expressing? Their frustration with—because they see themselves as representing their local voice—they have their frustration with a minister and a department that is certainly not hearing their calls and concerns regarding not only how we fund public education, but what's going to be left of public education once this government is defeated.

But here again, this government is more interested in pushing forward their agenda of austerity with their agenda of cutting first and asking questions later, to the point where, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where—on the fly—they begin to amend many of the bills, they begin to bring many bills forward, but then all of a sudden wonder why they're experiencing the sheer blowback that they get at committee stage.

Myself and the member from St. Vital were witness to that last week at Bill 33. Despite assurances from the minister of advanced education and training, many don't trust what's being said or put down by this government because they've been burned in the past, because of inadequate supports, and a government that says it listens but then, you know, not really,

right? Is then sitting there—and just like with every bill brought forward, there's nothing more than power and control, based on an agenda of austerity.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And I would—just for once, Mr. Deputy Speaker—would like someone on the government side, on the government benches to say that that is our agenda, to be truthful with the citizenry, with Manitobans, with what their true agenda is and with how it impacts everyday Manitobans.

So now we have Bill 71, where the Premier (Mr. Pallister) wants to write a cheque with his name on it, so that every Manitoban can see how benevolent this government is.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's follow this. For many Manitobans, living here, like—I mean, in the city of Winnipeg—we currently receive a \$700 rebate on our education portion of our property taxes. But under this bill, under Bill 71, this rebate will now be reduced to \$525, so that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) can mail out a cheque to everyday working families that will be about \$300.

My question is, why not just increase that \$700 rebate that currently exists on every one of our municipal taxes, why just not increase that to \$825 and have it at that? By making this simple adjustment, the Premier, the provincial Treasury, this government can save everyone in this province \$1.3 million.

Take that \$1.3 million—imagine; imagine the nutrition programs that could be funded with that \$1.3 million, instead of spending and sending cheques—cheques—to people.

How gross is that? What an abject waste of dollars. How tone deaf can that be? And the very cost of mailing these out, has to have—you know, we're asking the Premier, why are you doing this? Why is he mailing out \$190 million in education property rebate taxes to 658,000 properties owners? Why is that happening? Why can't you just reduce that off the piece of paper that we get every year?

The reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this is nothing more than political pandering, pandering in a hopes of garnering some support from a quickly dwindling support base that sees through this exercise of buying support and votes. It's nothing more than that.

The decision to offer a tax cut of this magnitude, while we're dealing with the economic uncertainty of

COVID-19 and it's out-large impact on those that are marginalized, those that work for minimum wage, those that don't have a choice but to go to work, because they're working two or three jobs to make ends meet. Instead of maybe having a bill that talked about for sure paid sick leave for those that don't have any? No, instead, what do we get? We get this bill, where we get to have a Premier mailing out cheques, instead of having a real bill that deals with the real, everyday realities of those that have no choice but to go to work.

And yet, here I am, I'm sitting in my office, virtually, alone. I don't have any contact with anybody. I have the privilege of being here and knowing that I will be safe, medically. Yet that person that has to go to work at that Canada Post sorting plant doesn't have that, or that person that has to go to work at Qdoba making food for people doesn't have that luxury.

Each and every one of us in this Chamber has the luxury of doing that, has the luxury of wearing masks knowing that everyone else in that Chamber is wearing mask and that we're physically distant and that we clean our surfaces and that we follow through on the protocols and how important that is.

* (16:10)

There are many people in this province that don't have that. Our—a government that's responsive to those people's needs would have brought forward a bill that would talk about paid guaranteed sick days to mitigate the impact of the third wave, because we will feel the impact of the third wave. And I don't want to have to repeat the same lessons or the same experiences we had back in November and December of 2020, but I'm afraid that we're heading down this same slippery slope.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in getting back to the rebate cheques, these cheques are an integral part of why we're even debating this Bill 71. When we're asked about—when the government asks about mailing out these cheques, when people in the Finance Department were asked about this, they said that the individual cheques was the cheapest option available to process the rebate without creating extra administrative work.

Now, come on. It would have created extra administrative work, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to increase that line amount on our current municipal taxes from \$700 to \$825? Really? That's what would have happened? That borders on absurd.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, a pre-existing mechanism to process the property tax cuts already exists and it already provides these rebates to taxpayers here in the city of Winnipeg.

So currently, what we have here is a—yes, it is a bit of a clumsy mechanism that swaps out a system that is currently in place, but what clearly needed to be acted upon and clearly could have been done by this Premier, he could have sat at that kitchen table and said, okay, you know what, for many of the municipal taxpayers in this province, we're going to increase that rebate simply to \$825. Could have done that, would have been in keeping with whatever, you know, political ethos or philosophy that they follow and it would have been understandable.

But this mailing-out-of-the-cheque thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is something that really leaves a lot wanting on that kitchen table. This doesn't fit with this government's modus operandi. You're talking about small-c conservative values, and what we have here is large-piece spending. That's what we're having, right, by costing the treasury \$1.3 million to mail out these bonus cheques.

Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is clearly a last gasp, really, and a futile attempt to improve not only this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) rating but also the caucus' own approval ratings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we—as we sit here and debate in the Legislature, we are left with—scratching our heads as to what is the motivating factor on many of, not only the private members' bill, the private members' resolutions, but now Bill 71.

What are the motivating factors here? By issuing these cheques at a cost of \$1.3 million to taxpayers, this Premier and his caucus get to let property tax—property owners know exactly who is providing the tax relief—nothing more.

You know what? You may even want to put a picture on there. It ends up being like a frank that we get to send out three times a year. That's what this should be charged under. Should put it under every one of those members' constituency allowances. That's the same type of message that's being sent by mailing out those rebate cheques.

So, when someone in the Finance Department was asked why they couldn't just increase the current property tax rebate, the official said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it couldn't be done before the tax bills are

mailed out to property owners in May and June before the deadline.

Now, what kind of poor planning is that? If this was always the case, if this was always part of the fiscal plan for this government, they would have been able to plan this on a legislative agenda that made sense. Instead, no, we're here, second day in a row, debating a bill that has to get passed. That reflects poor planning. You mean to tell me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this was part of the plan back in 2020?

When this government did telegraph that they were going to do—remove property tax from the funding of education, of public education? That this was always part of the plan? To show up with a 25 and 50 per cent reduction right off the top, in the middle of a pandemic with a \$2-billion deficit?

Was that always the plan? I don't believe it was, by the very actions of what we had to do yesterday in this House to quickly pass a bill, and what we're doing today in this House to debate this bill. This explanation and the words that we get are—border on the preposterous. And what—and that seems to be all that we're getting.

We had that; we saw that with Bill 28. Again, what message is that sending to Manitobans with Bill 28? What message is Bill 16 sending to Manitobans? Bill 45? Bill 64? Bill 71? The message it is sending is that this government is currently tone-deaf to the needs of the citizenry.

So, we're here in debate today to remind this government of the needs of the citizens and the people of Manitoba. What they're crying for and what they're reaching for is any mechanism to get the attention of this government.

And I will say, every one of us that's been in committee for the past eight days has seen a steady stream, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of people that are frustrated because their voice isn't being heard, and because the values that make us Manitobans—make us who we are—are under attack.

And that's why we're having this—seeing a high level of frustration. That's why we're seeing very low approval ratings, not only for the Premier but also for his government. And this will continue. This will continue because it—this government seems to be hell-bent on making sure that they get these pieces of legislation passed for their own crass political purposes.

And there's nothing more frustrating to the citizens of Manitoba, to the people of Transcona of

whom I represent—is when the government is trying to take its agenda and shove it down the throat of people that are simply at the point of now saying, okay, enough, we're pushing back. And we're going to continue to push back. We'll continue to push back because bills such as Bill 71 simply don't reflect who we are as Manitobans.

Manitobans are a fair-minded people. They're ones where, you know—we can see through some of the political crassness of this particular bill, of what it's designed to do.

Instead of us sitting here in this Chamber debating bills like paid sick leave; debating bills like how we properly fund public education—instead, what we're doing and what we're spending on our time on is pushing back for Manitobans because the bills that are brought forward are so egregious and so antithetical to who we are that there has to be—there has to be a way that we can get the attention of this government so that they can reverse their course.

Because just wait, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I will say that once we get to committee stage on many of these bills, you're going—we are going to see that pushback. So that when the members opposite get up and say how great they are about providing these cheques to the—to people, to property owners, let's remember those that don't have a choice but to go to work under very dangerous circumstances.

Let's remember those that send their children to school expecting that they get not only a properly funded education system, but also one that cares about their kids. And with those terms—in those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I conclude my remarks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It gives me great pleasure to speak to this bill. Again, promise made, promise kept. And this is really a great day for Manitoba, a great day for Manitobans as we get to celebrate giving back more of—giving them more of their own hard-earned dollars.

* (16:20)

So I'm in a tremendously celebratory mood today and I really think that all Manitobans can be really happy as well as we anticipate that we will be able to—again, as I said—give them more of their hard-earned dollars back, you know, unless the opposition come out and decide to throw a monkey wrench into things.

And I just think, Mr. Speaker, let the record show that the opposition are opposed to giving help to Manitobans in the middle of a pandemic when we need it more than ever, that they will stand against and impede the ability of our government to give Manitobans their hard-earned dollars back.

We want to put the cheque on the kitchen table; they want to take it off. That much is clear from the debate that we've seen, all this ranting and raving, all this opposition. At the end of the day, it all comes down to their fundamental, ideological, core belief that government must take, take, take and the money must go on the Cabinet table, as it did for 17 years with all the tax hikes. They promised never—the NDP promised never to raise the PST and I think the premier—former premier Greg Selinger's on the record as having said ridiculous ideas that were going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense. Everybody knows that. And he said our plan is a five-year plan with no tax increases, and we'll deliver on that.

They know or they should know that Manitobans are taxed to the max. We are the highest-taxed province this side of Quebec. And to stand in opposition—small farmers are thanking the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) talking about how this government was making life harder for small farmers.

And it just reminds me of a quote from a former US president, and I'll just paraphrase: but the problem with our socialist friends is that they know so much about things that just are not true. And he's making up all these conspiracy theories and making up alternative facts but the reality is if he really cared about small business and about the family farm, why would he stand in opposition to small farmers getting some hard-earned help when they need it more than ever?

That's what this government's all about, and I'm proud of our government's record. Since taking office in 2016, we delivered Manitoba's first balanced budget in over a decade, and as the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) said, we did it while reducing the PST. So don't forget this was a \$1-billion deficit left to us after 17 years of the NDP. They tripled our debt. They raised Manitoba Hydro rates on Manitobans with 40 per cent over the 17 years. They raised the PST. There wasn't a tax they didn't hike that they didn't—there wasn't a tax they didn't like and that they didn't hike.

And, Mr. Speaker, in spite of all of that, they managed to triple the debt. So, think of this: Manitobans are paying more taxes than ever; we're one of the highest taxed provinces in the country, and

the NDP have an out-of-control deficit and a ballooning–ballooning interest rates–the fourth largest–if the interest servicing charges were a department of government, they'd be the fourth largest department.

And yet we have nothing to show for it. Crumbling roads, wait times–our hospital wait times–I think the national average was 3.1 when we came in 2016; it was–3.1 hours was the national average; Manitoba's 5.9. Our students are at the back of the pack. We're ninth in reading and 10th in math and literacy. Our scores, our academic achievement is desperately poor and needs changing.

So where did the money go? Where did the money go? And today, they're opposed–it's just perplexing, Madam–Mr. Speaker, that they can talk about saving the family farm, and all the statements they make, it just doesn't align. I mean, they're the party of–that tripled our debt, raised taxes and we've got nothing to show for it: crumbling services; health care and education erodes; infrastructure and all the rest of it. And this party comes in in 2016 and after four years of smart, targeted investments, we cut our wait times down to near the national average–almost half. We're investing record amounts of money in infrastructure, rebuilding our infrastructure, creating good jobs.

We cut taxes by one–we cut the PST; we've indexed the income tax; we have taken over 500 companies off of the payroll tax and benefitted further 2,000, I think it is, and we've done all of that while returning our budget back to balance.

And now, of course, with COVID, you know, the whole world's been plunged into, you know, an uncertain situation, but Manitoba is kind of an island of fiscal sanity out there because we were able to get our fiscal house in order and reduce taxes.

So, the education property tax rebate is a huge part of the reason why Manitobans re-elected us in 2019 and why the NDP lost.

And I think the debate today, I–just illustrates very clearly that the NDP haven't learned a thing in the–in their disastrous 2019 campaign experience and their disastrous 2016 election campaign. They haven't learned a thing. They're utterly tone-deaf.

This idea that they're going to take the cheque off the kitchen table and–no. Manitobans, I don't care if you're a farmer, I don't care if you're a small-business person, I don't care how much tax you pay–you don't

deserve that. You can't have that. That's not your money.

It's very clear that that's why Manitobans sent the NDP packing in 2016 and they did it again in 2019. And, if they're going to get in the way of this, Deputy Speaker, it's going to be disastrous. I'm trying to choose my words properly here, because as someone who lives outside the Perimeter, it's very clear; I didn't see any members of the NDP in my constituency in the 2019 election. They should come around a little more often. We don't bite, you know? We'd listen. I mean, 291 votes is what constituents of Borderland gave them last election and I think it's very clear why. Because if they're going to stand against something like phasing out the education property tax, which we're doing at 50 per cent over the next two years, allowing family farms and our farmers, who, believe me.

And again, I would encourage the NDP to come out, leave the Perimeter, come out, shake the hand of a farmer, look him in the eye and listen to them talk about their struggles and hanging onto the farm, hanging onto these family farms in the face of all that's going on and having to pay the onerous, burdensome property taxes–education property taxes.

Simply because they're trying to–they own land on which they're trying to grow food so that we can all eat and, you know, get on with our lives.

So, I'm–Mr. Speaker–I'm–I just think it's so–there couldn't be a clearer difference between the opposition and our party in what we're trying to do. The opposition would prevent Manitobans, would take that cheque. If they ever get power, mark my words, Mr. Speaker, they will take those rebate cheques off the kitchen table because they fundamentally do not believe that Manitobans deserve that. And that's a problem. That's a problem, and all Manitobans need to know that.

And, I'm more than happy to make sure that they do. I've got a very committed base of folks here in Borderland and we vote–we really do. We have good turnout in our rural constituencies, the PC-held constituencies, because we work hard, we asked for their vote, we ask for support and we knock on doors, unlike many of the NDP-held constituencies currently, where they don't do a thing and their voter turnout is desperately low.

We actually have a mandate to move forward with this and we're going to, and it's a matter of keeping

promises and that's what we're known to do as a government and that's what we're going to do.

* (16:30)

So I'm very happy that—very happy for the farmers in my constituency, for the small-business people who've had one hell of a year this year, that they're going to be getting—and our families—that they're going to be getting to keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

So, again, I'm not surprised by the reaction from the opposition. I did drive truck in a past life. I haven't lived very long, but I did drive. I was a long-haul truck driver, and down in Texas had a conversation with a—of course, Texas is known for their rattlesnakes—and had a conversation with a truck driver at a truck stop. And he was telling me about these rattlesnakes and how that if you take their head off with the shovel that you can't—don't touch it, don't try to pick it up with your hand because they'll get really nasty because they know they're on their way out and they can bite even though the head is separated from the body. And they can still potentially kill you.

And it's that nasty reaction that I just picture today in the debate, is the NDP knows that they're in real trouble because they're bound by their unions and their ideologues to oppose this thing but they know that Manitobans, more broadly, desperately need this help. And we're going to give it to them. And so it's a tough spot they're in, so I sympathize with them but only to a degree.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think with that I'll yield back my time and look forward to the constituents of Borderland and all Manitobans enjoying the fruits of their hard-earned dollars through the education property tax rebate.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I really think the member for Borderland (Mr. Guenter) should apologize to the House for referring to or suggesting in any way that the opposition are rattlesnakes. It's not parliamentary language. It's not acceptable. I'll start with that.

The fact is this is a totally unnecessary bill. This government has a majority. There is no reason that in—this bill needs to exist at all. This is this government pretending, once again, that they are somehow struggling for—fighting for the little guy against some imaginary forces of opposition when there is no reason, no reason whatsoever, for this bill.

In around 2008 the NDP brought forward some rebates for farmland, education property taxes on farmland. Did they require a special bill for it? No. Did they spend one point—look, I—there's lots that I agree—I disagree with them on, including around their elections at the time. But the only reason that we're going to be spending \$1.3 million to send personal cheques to Manitobans is because we're in the third wave of COVID, so we can't gather people in stadia for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to just fly over property owners with a helicopter and drop cash.

This is an absolutely terrible idea. Do people need relief? Absolutely. People are in desperate straits. But we have 1.3 million people who live in this province and this will provide relief to 600-some-thousand of them. And the more properties you own, the more you'll get. And to be doing this, to be borrowing, to be going two—more than \$200 million into debt and possibly eight—or, sorry, \$2 billion into debt in order to cut cheques to people who don't need help is—it's immoral. I cannot, in conscience, endorse the idea that we are going to borrow \$4,000 with interest that someone else is going to have to pay back and to send that cheque to the Premier. It's unbelievable.

The fact—the second is, so there's no reason that this bill needs to exist. This is pure—it's not even cheap political theatre, it's expensive political theatre. Because it doesn't need—this bill does not need to exist. We've lumped together a tax—sorry—a fairly meaningless rent freeze that's not even going to take place for another year and it also just allows the Premier to decide tax measures by regulation. It's a terrible bill.

And, look, is it—are there people who need relief? Absolutely. Over 50 per cent of Manitobans are less than \$200 away from insolvency. Over 20 per cent of Manitobans are technically insolvent. And this is a government that has continually refused to help those people who need it the most.

It's not just homeowners who are going to benefit from this. Pipeline owners will benefit from this. Corporations will benefit from this. The idea that we're going to be borrowing money to put—money we're borrowing—that we're all going to have to pay back down the line, we're borrowing this money in order to put more money on boardroom tables, not kitchen tables, doesn't make sense. It does not make sense at this time.

And I'll talk a bit about the history of, you know—because, again, the members—the PC members wondered, well, where did all that money go? Why is

it that Manitoba's fiscal situation was what it was? So let's talk about it, because we're a have-not province, so part of it is—some of it is own-source revenue and some of it is what we get from the federal government.

And so for six straight years, before this government—the Conservatives were first elected in 2016, the Harper Conservative government froze or cut transfers to Manitoba for six years straight. It capped them. The price for everything kept going up. And what was the response when in 2011 the Harper Conservative government unilaterally decided to cut health-care transfers from 6 per cent a year to 3 per cent, unilaterally. They said, well, you know what? Provinces, you can just raise taxes. That was the advice of Jim Flaherty at the time.

The fact is, this government has been able to do what it has fiscally because of—they are getting more than \$1 billion a year more—from the federal government. Just for the provincial government. That doesn't even account the amounts of money that are flowing into Manitoba through the child—Canada Child Benefit, which is \$500 million a year more than it used to be, or the hundreds of millions of dollars more that are now flowing to First Nations that were not flowing under our previous federal government.

So the idea that this government deserves a prize for fiscal management, when it had two downgrades from—because of its poor fiscal management. And this is an unbelievably risky thing that we're proposing. I don't have a problem with reducing taxes. I think our tax system is incredibly unfair. And it's incredibly unfair because for a long time—well, you know, the PCs want to talk about people's hard-earned dollars, this mostly benefits people who don't work. This mostly benefits people who earn for a living—sorry, who own for a living, right?

So we need to take care of seniors and make sure that they can stay in their houses, and there's ways of doing that. We need to make sure that people who are low income who are struggling could stay in their houses and can survive. But why are we giving tax breaks to pipelines? Why are we giving tax breaks to corporations who don't even have headquarters in Manitoba?

We're not putting money on the kitchen tables of Manitobans, we're putting money on the board tables—of board tables in Calgary and Toronto. It doesn't make sense because, ultimately, we're going into debt to do this. And if you talk about, well, what are you going to do to—we think—well, let's have government

run like a business. Let's have government run like a business.

So what are we doing right now if this government were a business? Right now, what we would be doing is, well, we have a bunch of customers and they're the biggest customers we have, they're the biggest source of revenue. We're going to borrow some money right now and we're going to keep borrowing year after year after year to lower their prices. They won't have to pay as much back, but someone else will. Someone else is going to have to pay off this \$2 billion. And that's part of what makes our tax system so unfair is that over the years we've been shifting more and more taxes onto people who work for a living and away from people who have the advantage of owning for a living.

And it's a huge problem, because it is the conflict of—that we're dealing with in society. And this government keeps shovelling money towards—we're actually borrowing money that future generations are going to have to pay back in order to enrich the richest people in Manitoba. That is actually what's happening with this. And it's unconscionable at a time when we're going into a third wave.

And I've heard many of the members of government saying, well, you know, this is a good day. Is it a good day? We're in the middle of a third wave. This government's response to the pandemic was an absolute disaster. An absolute disaster. The second wave was a disaster. We had the second worst mortality rate in Canada after that. And we had the worst mortality rate in personal-care homes in Canada, according to CIHI.

* (16:40)

Those should be sobering statistics, but this government is still patting themselves on the back for what is indisputably the worst—the worst response to the second wave in Canada. It's unbelievable. I'm truly—it is hard to take.

But, again, so people wanted to talk where did this supposed money go. The fact is—and this might be a big surprise because this is the great myth of politics in Manitoba—is that the NDP are mad or somehow wildly to the left, and only a party that's as extreme right as the PCs could actually believe that the NDP are that far to the left, especially if you actually—and maybe if the Premier (Mr. Pallister), I don't know if the Premier pays taxes in Manitoba or not, but he would certainly know that the NDP actually did cut

taxes. They took money from Hydro to try to pay their—to try to balance the budget.

But back in 2008, the NDP put out a press release saying that they had cut a billion dollars in taxes. And they used to rub it in the PCs' faces: listen, look, we've cut business taxes down to zero. And they did.

Now there's a difference between small business; there are different kinds of small businesses. There are small businesses that are, you know, they could be one to 500 employees. You can have mom-and-pop shops; you can have brick-and-mortar stores. There are people that actually do things that are productive.

But there are also shell companies that people set up. So, Jack Mintz, who is nobody's idea of a Liberal, at the University of Calgary pointed out that a huge number of these shell corporations that don't have any employees, that don't actually have any business, are owned by people who have very high incomes and they're used for tax avoidance. In fact, I'm the—in fact, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, you know what, I think that the other two leaders in the House are both corporations. I'm the only leader of a party in the House who is not a corporation.

I had a small business, which was—I meant that I was a—I had—I was a sole proprietor. So I paid my taxes as part of my income taxes. I haven't set up legal entities so that I can avoid paying taxes.

And I remember talking with Sandy Riley. He's a very—was a very prominent Conservative, and he said, you know, paying taxes is a privilege; it's probably a sign that you're enough of a success that you're in a position to pay taxes, that you're contributing to something of the greater whole. And you don't end up—you—we can't pay for roads without taxes. We can't pay for waterworks without taxes or libraries, and all these other things that are essential and they're part of the economy. They're part of the economy, and that's not an idea—that's not a left-wing or a socialist idea. As the first-ever business professor at Wharton business school recognized that the fundamental aspects of what government does—infrastructure, education, health care, they are a part of the economy. They're not a cost.

And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) likes to say, well, some things don't pay—some things don't cost, they pay. Well, education pays. And infrastructure pays. And putting money into health care pays. Because if we don't do those things, the thing that creates the value of the land that people are working on is the road or the railway that actually makes it possible for

farmers to be able to get their goods to market. And in lots of places, they can't, because the highways are rotten. With health care, it makes the difference between whether you're actually healthy enough to work. And with education, it makes the difference between whether you have people who can contribute and enrich themselves as well as the rest of society. And that is something that it's—that this government seems to be completely blind to.

But I do want to talk a bit about it because of the—is that the illusion that the NDP were wild big spenders. The fact is, is that the Conservative government massively cut federal taxes, sorry—fat cat—federal revenues. And one of the areas where those revenues were cut were again, were—was the Canada Health Transfer which the Premier himself when he—in 2007 voted to change a—the calculation for how the formula worked so that Manitoba lost out by \$31 million a year. Every province lost out except Alberta because they started going—treating everybody as per capita.

And that's exactly what's wrong with this bill as well—saying, well, you know what, we're going to have a per capita—we're going to treat everybody as equal.

Well, look, I believe in people's fundamental equality in all sorts of ways, but let's not pretend that some people don't own more property than others and some people don't own more income than others. But that doesn't make people more deserving.

And part of what happens is that when you have these taxes and they're being paid for, taxes—somebody said governments are like an insurance company with an army. Those taxes you're paying, they're—those are premiums.

So when a crisis hits, all those taxes you're paying, it's going to be better because what's going to happen when you have a pandemic? We're going to have a health-care system that's going to work for you. You're going to have roads that people can get to. You're going to have—you're going to be able to send people back to school to be able to learn and—how to come up with how to deal with this and how we're going to come up with new technology and new—or new ideas and a new innovation that's actually going to make these things better.

And none of that—we don't see any of this here. This is a procedural gambit. This is one of these phony—this is a phony bill; it's not necessary.

And we can and should be doing lots more and we're not, because the—one of the major things that is—that we have learned in the last year is that whether a business gets to open its doors or not and whether somebody gets to go to work or not appears to be a decision that's either made in public health or the Premier, and that is a massive responsibility.

So when you're dealing in a situation or a crisis like this—we've moved to a controlled economy. Do you get to go to work today? I don't know; I have to check with the government. Do I get to open my doors today? I don't know; I get to check with the government.

And no one has talked about this adequately because when you're—and when you're running that in a crisis, you better be sure that you're going to be fair. You better be sure that you're going to be fair and you're going to take care of the people who need taking care of.

And this government isn't doing that. Not on taxes; not on programs; not on vaccinations. We keep seeing partisanship.

And look, I'm partisan enough to be the leader of a party, but I also know that there are some people who are—were a lot more deserving than me who need help a lot more than me.

And to make this decision; to move forward and say, we're going to borrow not only—we're going to keep borrowing in order to cut cheques to some of the wealthiest people in Manitoba. It doesn't make sense.

And I am not as optimistic as others are about a possible rebound of the economy. I've warned before that we were sitting on a debt bomb and the pandemic is like pulling the pin on a grenade, right—is that, I think, in a few months, it's quite possible property taxes are going to be the least of anyone's worries because we have a very serious problem in the housing market.

So—and again, this bill doesn't really do anything significant to deal with risk. Because you can see it—you can see it on social media, you can read about it in the paper—that there are people who are doing 'renovictions.' They're using cheap debt to buy up a house, they buy up—or bid up the price of a house or buy up an apartment block and evict everybody, and then do some—a little bit of renovations. Then they're jacking up the rent by 50 to 70 per cent.

This—that dynamic—and we warned the Finance Minister about that. The—that dynamic is going to be

the thing that breaks the economy, because people are not going to be able to pay their rent. They're being evicted in the middle of a pandemic.

We're facing a third wave and I'll just give the example of one group: they bought an apartment building in St. James-Assiniboia and they expect to get \$2 million out of it. So that's \$75,000 per apartment for everybody they've evicted. Where are those people going to find \$75,000 in five years for rent? It's not going to work.

So what's going to happen is those people are going to be left without. And then there's going to be a point when, all of a sudden, all those real estate speculators are going to find out that they can't pay their debt, either. And it's going to be a big mess when the music stops.

But this government isn't doing anything to make it better. They're pouring—we have a red-hot housing market, which is risky. And measures like this, it's like taking a gas can and pouring it on that fire.

Because the idea that you're going to get to keep that money that you've got—so, let's say, it's \$400 for a family. I would absolutely support if this government were sending \$400 to families—families who needed it. Not \$4,000 cheques to people who don't.

I would absolutely support that, without the personalized letter from the Premier (Mr. Pallister), because there are too many families in Manitoba who are \$200 a month away from not being able to pay their bills.

*(16:50)

So the idea that this is a big favour to Manitobans, when it is tiding them—may tide them over for two months; two months when we're in a third wave and 19 per cent unemployment for youth. This is not—this is not the response we need to a crisis.

Massive tax cuts for the wealthiest—for people who are already doing very well is not going to be the answer to what we need to do. And we need meaningful rent regulation, not just a rubber stamp on approvals.

But, and I'll just go back again briefly, is that this government has already gone through—it actually, I guess, one of the worst fiscal records because it has actually had a number of credit rating downgrades and it was warned about those credit rating downgrades because it said, oh, if you're going to go ahead and cut your revenues, you're going to have trouble paying your debt.

And I'll go back again to the point about the unfairness of our tax system, is that what's happened is that there are people who are investors and people who are owners, people who own—who are able to make money just from rent—the people that—like John Stuart Mill said, they can make money in their sleep. They don't have to work. Maybe they were lucky enough to inherit something, right? They would inherit an apartment building or a bunch of apartment buildings, or they inherited a company. That's great. Great for them. But the fact is that they don't actually have to work for the money they have. Lots of people do and I'm not—certainly not going to begrudge anybody, but what's happened is that our tax system has been more and more focused on people who work for a living and not people who own for a living.

So what's going to happen is, is that we're going to have \$2 billion in extra debt and it's not the pipeline company that's going to pay it back. It's not the big commercial company that's going to pay it back. It's not the wealthiest person in Manitoba who's going to pay it back. It's everybody else. It's people who are working who are going to have to pay it back.

And that's why this is such an unjust bill, aside from the—the sort of phoney, expensive political theatrics around it. You know, this is—it's not a serious bill. It's not a serious response to what actually needs to happen because we are looking at a very rough ride out of this. And I'll say, for all that the—the government continually loves to pat itself on the back.

In August—then they've talked about their supports for business, most of which couldn't be accessed by businesses—in August, Manitoba was by—had by far, by far and away the worst number of insolvency registrations from businesses.

It was no comparison whatsoever to every other province. Every other province, it was either down or it was just slightly up. But the number of businesses who are filing for bankruptcy in August last year of Manitoba was unbelievable. We've seen 20 per cent of all sorts of businesses struggling and going under because this government has not done what it takes.

And even today, we were talking about help for people with sick leave, right? There were a thousand people who had to take time off. And back in November, we refused to let a bill pass in a single day because we said this isn't good enough; all this bill does is connect Manitobans with federal supports. We need provincial supports. We were the only party that did that. We were roundly criticized for it.

So I'm glad the opposition has come around now, but the fact is, is that it was clear to us then that this government was not willing to do what it takes and they were willing to blame everybody else, while taking credit for things they haven't done. And that's not leadership and it's not particularly mature. But these are—there are very, very serious issues that I think this government is blind to and as a—and I'll just say, it makes no sense to even to try to bring this forward in a day.

Why do we have to pass this today? We don't. The government could send all these cheques out tomorrow morning without having a bill. It doesn't need to happen. And to say, well, it all has to be passed today also doesn't make sense. Why not have hearings? Why not have witnesses? Why not have Manitobans say, give us all the opportunity to consult, so we're consulting with our constituents. Maybe my constituents will rise up and tell me that I need to support this at all costs and I'll change my mind.

But without that, without this is a—to spring a nonsense bill on this, which is just pure political theatre to say, well, you were going to back you into a corner. It's so transparent.

And it's such a waste of everyone's time when, as I asked questions about today, there are people who have yet to be vaccinated who are under the age of 40 who are vulnerable, there are teachers and transit drivers who deserve to be vaccinated. Our vaccine rollout is still not where it needs to be. We don't have a plan for the third wave other than denial, which doesn't work very well.

And, in too many ways, we—this is not a response, and this never was a response to the pandemic.

And finally, one of the sad results of what happens—like, and again, I have no problem with having a much fairer tax system than we have. Because it is unfair.

The NDP cut \$1 billion worth of taxes. And a lot of it was for people with the highest incomes, both income taxes and corporate taxes and business taxes. That is part of where the money went. That is where the—that—tax cuts create deficits.

Like, that's—you cut revenue. That revenue used to flow into the government. And it actually flows immediately right back out into the economy. It's not like paying off a mortgage. It is actually an—and the fact—if we're cutting all those people who work in public—there's a reason why we had a disastrous

response to the second wave, and why we're having a disastrous scenario in hospitals right now.

It's tragic. Because this government thought it could cut and cut and cut to the bone without ever taking—contemplating the possibility of an emergency.

And it has been very difficult for the last year because I have been—we've been doing what we can, we've been harshly critical sometimes but we've also done what we can to make suggestions and make recommendations. And we are still doing that.

But it's very difficult because this bill, when we are looking at a possible meltdown of the real estate market in property and in property values—which many economists and others are predicting because it's hard to see how this is going to go—the most important thing we can do is to actually—to give people a different kind of relief which is not tax relief. If their property taxes are already going to go down, they should all be reassessed. Fine. They can pay less. Fine.

But we have a much bigger crisis on our hands than anything that is going to be solved by two years of rent relief a couple years from now, and by a property tax cut that overwhelmingly benefits people who own many properties.

And that's—they—the other things about that is that there a lots of people who own one small property but when you start to look at the way—I asked the question—of this question—of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Friesen): what about distribution?

The fact is, right, if I'm in a bar and Bill Gates walks in, all of a sudden, on—and there are 50 people there—on average, we're all billionaires. He walks out again, none of us are billionaires anymore.

There—we cannot keep thinking about things and treating everybody as average, talking about per capita, because it is not realistic and it's bad policy. Because ultimately, you end up denying people who are in genuine need.

And I—well, I'll say, there are lots of people in genuine need. I have been out there. I've talked to farmers. I've talked to Crown lands, farmers on Crown lands, who are all being evicted, who are—who have lost land, who've lost everything they've ever worked for because of the policies of this government.

In Rosburn, where my family farm is, 95 per cent of the people saw their property—because their school property taxes go up when this government eliminated a property tax rebate.

So, there are always, you know, unintended consequences. It's a polite way of talking about it, because I think a lot of these consequences are entirely intended.

And I will say, you can't be warned, because we warned this government over and over again that they're being reckless: reckless with finances, reckless with plans and reckless with preparations for COVID, for the economy. We still don't have a plan for the economy and for recovery, either.

There need to be emergency measures taken to make sure that people keep owning what they can own, that people can stay in their houses.

But, again, when I heard what this government has said, it just reminds me of Andrew Mellon, who said, liquidate the farmers, liquidate businesses, liquidate everything. It's exactly the policies that caused and extended the Great Depression.

And it's not necessarily—there are other choices that can be made and better choices that can be made and better ways to help people than cutting cheques to pipeline owners. So, I certainly, you know, I wish we were having—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) will have two minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow morning—or, tomorrow afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Committee Reports		Drug Overdose Deaths	
Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development Seventh Report Teitsma	2539	Lamoureux	2551
		Gordon	2552
Members' Statements		Advanced Education Amendment Act	
All Seniors Care Malaria Fundraiser A. Smith	2541	Micklefield	2552
Child-Care Services Marcelino	2542	Ewasko	2552
Karl and Andrea Jaek Micklefield	2542	Public Health Amendment Act	
Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Wiebe	2543	Asagwara	2552
NorWest Co-op Community Health Lamoureux	2543	Stefanson	2552
Oral Questions		Petitions	
Health-Care System Reform Kinew	2544	Public Child-Care Grants	
Pallister	2544	Adams	2553
Drug Overdose Deaths Fontaine	2547	Vivian Sand Facility Project– Clean Environment Commission Review	
Gordon	2547	Gerrard	2553
Safe Consumption Sites Fontaine	2547	Diagnostic Testing Accessibility Maloway	2554
Gordon	2547	Public Child-Care Grants	
Planning Amendment Act Wiebe	2548	Moses	2554
Johnson	2548	Dauphin Correctional Centre	
Smoking and Vapour Products Legislation B. Smith	2549	Sandhu	2555
Gordon	2549	Wasyliw	2555
Paid Sick Leave Lindsey	2550	Public Child-Care Grants	
Fielding	2550	Wiebe	2555
COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Lamont	2551		
Pallister	2551		

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Second Readings

Bill 71–The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended)	2557
---	------

Questions

Wasyliw	2558
Fielding	2558
Gerrard	2558
Lamont	2560

Debate

Wasyliw	2561
Teitsma	2567
Altomare	2569
Guenter	2574
Lamont	2576

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