

Fourth 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	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, Hon.	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	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon, Hon.	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
<i>Vacant</i>	Fort Whyte	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 25, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): On a matter of privilege, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a matter of privilege.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I rise on a matter of privilege.

This is the first opportunity I've had to present this matter in the House. The breach I will identify is unprecedented and required further research and consultation with the relevant authorities prior to being presented for consideration.

The breach of privilege is that legislation that has yet to be introduced and distributed in the Legislature was made public prior to members of the Legislature having the opportunity to review the legislation.

I table screenshots of a now-deleted Facebook post—or a post from Meta showing the president of the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg sharing a post made by the United Fire Fighters of Winnipeg onto her—his personal page.

I quote from the post, quote: "Friday November 26, Premier Stefanson is announcing expansion of presumptive legislation at Noon in the Rotunda at the Legislature." End quote.

The tabled document also references the specific cancers that will be covered as a result of the legislation that we all know is being introduced tomorrow.

I will say this is not a reflection of the contents of the bill itself. We take workplace health and safety extremely seriously. My own father worked in a mine in Flin Flon in the 1950s and died of esophageal

cancer, and several of his friends who worked with him also died of cancers before their time.

However, in addition to this breach of privilege, we are concerned by what appears to be the implication of a special relationship or connection to the government.

Madam Speaker, again, I quote. Quote: A sincere thank you and job well done to everyone who came together in support of Premier Stefanson to ensure her success in the Conservative leadership election to make this coverage possible, end quote, while also inviting members of the public into the Legislature for the supposed announcement on Friday, November 26.

It should not take a special relationship with the government to get cancer treatment, Madam Speaker. The text of the bills must be presented to the House and elected MLAs first, prior to the information being in the public realm. This should be a matter for the House to resolve in an expeditious matter.

I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that as a result of this serious breach of privilege, this issue be immediately referred to an all-party committee of this House.

Madam Speaker: Just a reminder to the member that when referring to somebody in the House, it should be by their appropriate title. In this case, it would have been the honourable First Minister.

Thank you to the honourable member for St. Boniface.

Before recognizing any other members to speak, I would remind the House that remarks at this time by honourable members are limited to strictly relevant comments about whether the alleged matter of privilege has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether a prima facie case has been established.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): I won't argue with the member opposite on his assertion that this is the earliest opportunity that he's had to raise this in the House. I would take him at his word on that assertion.

On the issue—and of course he references the fact that this government has a strong relationship with the firefighters, Madam Speaker. If he wants to accuse this government of having a strong relationship with many, many Manitobans and organizations, he can do

that every day because we do have strong relationships with many in Manitoba, and those relationships are becoming more vaster and growing more stronger every day. So he may have lots to argue about in the days and the months ahead.

But specifically on this issue, Madam Speaker, it is not uncommon or unusual, nor is it unparliamentary for governments to signal legislation that is going to be coming into the House. The NDP often did that when they were in government. I know the member opposite hasn't had the opportunity and his party hasn't had the opportunity for half a century to be in government but had they had had that opportunity in the last half of 100 years, he would know that that is not an unusual thing for governments to say that this is the legislation they are going to be bringing forward.

I do not see in the documentation that has been provided by my friend from St. Boniface any specific written text of any legislation that is going to be tabled or may be tabled in this House at some time in the future, Madam Speaker. So, signalling that a government is going to do something is not unusual. In fact, the government signalled it in the Throne Speech that this was going to be coming forward. So there's lot of understanding that this legislation is going to be coming forward.

I'll take him at his word that he's not concerned about the content of the legislation and the intent of the legislation. We'll find out when he has an opportunity to vote on it, Madam Speaker. But, yes, we are guilty of one thing and that is growing relationships with many organizations and Manitobans around the province and we'll continue to be guilty of that in the days and the months ahead.

Madam Speaker: A matter of privilege is a serious concern. I am going to take this matter under advisement to consult the authorities and will return to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Public Services Sustainability Repeal Act

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that Bill 2, The Public Services Sustainability Repeal Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: This bill repeals The Public Services Sustainability Act, which is unproclaimed, and three other legislative references to it. It is evidence of our fresh start and our—we feel it's time to move on and we hope to build to enable others to move along with us.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 3—The Family Maintenance Amendment Act

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Seniors Care (Ms. Gordon), that Bill 3, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'obligation alimentaire, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, The Family Maintenance Amendment Act will replace part II of The Family Maintenance Act dealing with the parentage of children. It includes provisions addressing parentage of children conceived through assisted production with or without surrogacy. In so doing, the new legislation will safeguard the rights of children and ensure legal recognition of the intended parents.

* (13:40)

The bill responds to a court determination of invalidity respecting existing provisions of The Family Maintenance Act that do not address parentage of children conceived through assisted reproduction.

Modernizing and improving the justice system in Manitoba continues to be the priority of our government. We believe this bill is an important step forward in our government's commitment to modernize family law in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *Agreed? [Agreed]*

Bill 4—The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act

Hon. Alan Lagimodiere (Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations): I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 4, The Path to Reconciliation Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lagimodiere: Our government is proposing amendments to The Path to Reconciliation Act that will affirm in legislation our commitment to the missing and murdered women and girls calls for justice as the central and guiding aspect of our work.

Manitoba's commitment to reconciliation is outlined in the path to the reconciliation act.

Under this legislation, Manitoba's efforts are to be guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action and the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Today's proposed amendments will add the MMIWG calls to justice as foundational to guiding our work.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Bill 202—The Louis Riel Act

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I move, seconded by the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie), that Bill 202, The Louis Riel Act; Loi sur Louis Riel, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kinew: Merci, Madame la Présidente. Je suis très content de présenter ce projet de loi aujourd'hui, qui va rendre une situation où Monsieur Riel pourrait être reconnu comme le premier Premier ministre du Manitoba.

Translation

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce this bill today, which could lead to Louis Riel being recognized as the first Premier of Manitoba.

English

We all know that Louis Riel is the father of Manitoba, and while he carried a political title of president during his time here on earth, today, as members of the Legislative Assembly, we recognize that one of the names for the First Minister is the president of the executive council. Therefore, this bill would recognize Louis Riel as the first Premier of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Bill 200—The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I move, seconded by the member from Fort Rouge, that Bill 200, the orange shirt statutory holiday act, various acts amended, be now read a first time.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Keewatinook, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), that Bill 200, The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act (Various Acts Amended), be now read a first time.

Mr. Bushie: I'm honoured, as an Indigenous MLA here in the Manitoba Legislature, to introduce The Orange Shirt Day Statutory Holiday Act to recognize and honour the lives lost and the survivors of residential schools, their families and their communities by making September 30 a statutory holiday.

The orange shirt has become a symbol of remembrance for residential school survivors, and this day not only recognizes that, but it would allow for public education of the history and legacy of the residential school system on Indigenous peoples and to commemorate the lives lost. It will also help to move Manitoba forward in a spirit of reconciliation.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Bill 201—The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 201, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act; la—Loi modifiant la Loi sur les offices régionaux de la santé, be now read a first time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, this bill will provide for improved accountability in health care. It will provide that the health authorities—that includes the regional health authorities, Shared Health and CancerCare Manitoba—that their reports would come to the Legislative Assembly and that they would be then discussed in committee, just as we do with Crown corporations currently.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Madam Speaker: Are there any tabling of reports?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am pleased to table, pursuant to The Statutes and Regulations Act, a copy of each regulation registered under that act after the last

regulation tabled in the House and more than 14 days before the commencement of this session.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Holodomor Awareness Week

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage—and I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I rise today to shine a light on the Holodomor, remembered as one of the darkest times in Ukrainian history when Ukrainians were starved to death during the Stalin regime.

This year marks the 89th anniversary of this tragic chapter in history where an artificial famine in Ukraine was created through the deliberate seizure of lands and crops. Millions of people slowly starved to death on Ukraine's fertile lands known as the breadbasket of the world.

Madam Speaker, for decades, the Holodomor went unrecognized and even denied. Our government is committed to shed a light on the Holodomor genocide through public education and commemorative events.

This year, we are again not able to host Holodomor survivors, but I am forever grateful for those brave survivors like Mrs. Luba Semaniuk, who bravely shared her heart-wrenching story to help ensure this horrific chapter in Ukrainian history is never repeated or forgotten.

Madam Speaker, I will never forget when Mrs. Semaniuk shared her personal story, recalling the sad memory of her neighbours crying because they had no food to feed their families. Her story is forever etched in my mind and serves as a terrible reminder of the horror inflicted on innocent Ukrainians.

We must forever shine a light on this dark time in Ukrainian history to ensure atrocities like the Holodomor are never, ever repeated.

Just a few moments ago, I was humbled to stand together with our Ukrainian community at the Bitter Memories of Childhood Monument to light candles and offer prayers in memory of those lives who perished during this dark chapter in Ukrainian history.

And today, as we remember the Holodomor, we also recognize the universal values of compassion, acceptance, equality and human rights. It is by recognizing and acting on these values that we foster peace, mutual respect and understanding.

Madam Speaker, on this solemn anniversary, I invite all of my colleagues, the Manitoba Legislature and virtually, to join me in a moment of silence in honour of those who perished in the Holodomor.

Thank you.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): This week is national Holodomor awareness and education week in Canada, and as we join Ukrainian communities all around the world to commemorate the 89th year since the Holodomor, the 'importance' of remembering the horrors of the Holodomor, a 'famine' deliberately induced by the Soviet regime that killed between 10 and 14 million people, cannot be understated.

The name Holodomor translates literally to death by hunger. It's a stark reminder of how the famine was man-made and efforts to help the Ukrainian people were purposely thwarted.

*(13:50)

We must remember and honour the victims of the Holodomor to ensure we remain vigilant in upholding human rights and freedoms in our own nation and respond to the persecution and state-mandated atrocities many ethnic groups and nations around the world are experiencing today.

The Holodomor genocide is remembered by the Ukrainian community throughout the world, including here in Manitoba, where many survivors and their descendants have made their home.

Manitoba's Ukrainian community has played a major role in the development of our society and our province and every Ukrainian family in Manitoba has, in some way, felt the suffering and loss of the Holodomor.

To honour the memory of those we lost, the Province of Manitoba marks the fourth Saturday of November as the Holodomor Ukrainian famine genocide memorial day.

I encourage Manitobans to engage with some of the events about the Holodomor over the next several days. We must never forget the past.

You can visit the Holodomor famine genocide monument, Mother and Child, at the Winnipeg City Hall or the Holodomor famine genocide monument,

Bitter Memories of Childhood, on the west side of the Manitoba Legislative grounds.

You can also attend or view virtual Holodomor memorial Panakhyda services at participating Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic churches this Sunday, November 28th.

May we continue to honour the lives of those lost by doing all that we can to aid those affected by genocides and to prevent future genocides.

Eternal memory, eternal memory, eternal memory. Vichnaya pamyat, vichnaya pamyat, vichnaya pamyat.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Lamoureux: *[inaudible]* virtually today in remembrance of those from Ukraine who suffered the horror of the genocide, the Holodomor.

Madam Speaker, several years back I had the opportunity to experience the national museum memorial to Holodomor victims in Kyiv, Ukraine, and the senses that overcome one's body in this museum resonates and amplifies how horrific the famine was. It portrays the pain and suffering that millions of people were forced to endure.

When I reflect upon this experience, I also remember the two angels of sorrow at the entrance of the monument representing the guardians of the souls who starved. I also think about the replica statue on our Legislative grounds of the young girl clutching a handful of wheat. This statue is titled the Bitter Memories of Childhood and has been dedicated to the most vulnerable victims of starvation.

Madam Speaker, history is being made right now and, sadly, it's not for any good reason. As we speak, there is great concern about Russia's invasion of eastern Ukraine. We have such a strong presence of Ukrainian heritage here in Manitoba, and we need to stand in full support with Ukraine in their defence of their territory.

In closing, I'd like to thank the minister for bringing forward this ministerial statement, as we know that much of what we discuss is difficult to articulate, but we must continue to speak and share stories in remembrance and the hope to learn from the

past. We honour the memory of those who died and those who survived.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for a moment of silence? *[Agreed]*

Madam Speaker: Please stand.

A moment of silence was observed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Noel Lee Beckel

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I rise in the House today to recognize an outstanding Windsor Park resident, Noel Beckel. Noel is an amazing role model and a ray of sunshine for so many in the community.

Last year, Noel ran for 30 consecutive days, wearing 30 different costumes on the streets of Windsor Park. He brightened the lives of residents with joy and laughter during the COVID-19 pandemic. His costumed runs were a delight for the entire neighbourhood that needed a break from the stress and isolation of the pandemic.

Noel has a passion for running, which he has done for many years for his own physical and mental well-being: I love to run and I love to help people, and I am combining my two passions, Noel told me.

Recently, Noel held his second annual 24-hour Windsor Park has a heart treadmill run in support of the Christmas Cheer Board, an organization very near and dear to his heart. While he ran on the treadmill, people from rural and urban communities stopped by his home to donate toys and non-perishable food items. The run was a huge success.

This year, Noel collected enough toys and food items for 15 family hampers that will be delivered over the holidays.

While helping people is Noel's primary goal, he values the opportunity to bring people together for a common cause.

Santa has a new helper, and his name is Noel. Watch out your window, as you may see him dressed in a Santa suit, running around Windsor Park this December, handing out candy canes and spreading Christmas cheer.

Please join me in thanking Noel Lee Beckel for his selfless deeds and commitment to the Windsor Park community and beyond.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and first day of 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, I acknowledge service providers working on the front lines of addressing gender-based violence.

Year after year, shelters and resource centres tell us more funding is needed to effectively support individuals fleeing domestic violence.

Instead, this PC government doesn't listen but, rather, demands these organizations do more with less and hired men to interrogate experts to explain what their business model was, what would be the return on the government's investment, or explain why they can't fix their clients after one hour of counselling, or why they need four counsellors instead of two and why can't they get a job and find a house and get daycare once they leave the shelter.

Organizations are expected to simply absorb the cost of inflation of heating bills, food bills, menstrual products, diapers within their existing budgets. Organizations are supposed to be satisfied with paying staff \$17 an hour to work with individuals experiencing severe trauma and have more complex needs. Organizations are supposed to feel grateful for the bread crumbs offered to run their services by this PC government.

Year after year, the paternalistic approach to supporting agencies continue under this PC government. And the question is whether this will this change under the new PC leader.

The PC leader, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), didn't even think that it was important enough today to stand in the House and offer a statement on this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

So, Madam Speaker, today, and every single day, I stand with all the organizations who are providing expert, critical services to Manitobans escaping violence, and I will push this PC leader to do something different than her predecessor.

Miigwech.

Take Your MLA to Work Day

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): Madam Speaker, I rise today in the Chamber to talk about Take Your MLA to Work Day. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with Mackenza *[phonetic]* Spitzke, a Lagimodière constituent, at her workplace, rainbow daycare. The meeting was arranged by Lori Watson Sewell and Amber Raill from Connect Employment Services.

Speaking with this young lady and her colleagues, Alejandra Mireles and Louise Cote, was a very positive experience, as the workplace environment was warm and friendly, a perfect setting for children to be socialized, cared for and educated. I quickly learned that despite her short time as a child-care assistant, she had a keen eye for picking up on child development issues.

I also learned that while attending college, she previously volunteered her services at St. Amant Centre to care for special needs adults, starting in 2017, and special needs children in 2019. It was inspiring to see a young person who was so focused and dedicated for caring to—for others. She described that focus as a passion for working with children.

There were a few situations that were described to us about some children who refused to socialize and simply kept to themselves. One child in particular, who was not able to make eye contact and had inclusion issues, he would not open up to anyone until Mackenna worked directly with him. After a short time, he developed improved eye contact and would not only hug her, but her colleagues as well, a testament to the gift she possesses in regard to working with children.

* (14:00)

I wish Ms. Spitzke the best in her endeavours, as I believe she will have a promising career in child care. The Take Your MLA to Work Day program is a perfect opportunity to learn about those who share their special gifts working with others in the workplace environments. If you have not taken part in this, I strongly urge all my colleagues to do so.

Thank you.

Early Childhood Education

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Just like my colleague, the member from Lagimodière, I had the good fortune to shadow an early childhood educator at Prairie Nature Children's Centre located at Westview School. Spending time there certainly brought to light the many challenges facing child care as we begin to navigate our way out of the pandemic.

I am grateful to the director, Mariella Carr, for taking the time to review with me the balancing act she and many other directors perform daily to get to the end of the month. For example, they must balance the never-ending phone calls asking for space from desperate parents with the human resource challenges that get harder every day.

It's clear to me that the people that work in early childhood education certainly don't do it for the money. They do it for the love of kids. However, when faced by mounting bills at home and the pressures of this pandemic, we are losing far too many people from this profession. Directors like Mariella are left scrambling to find trained ECEs, and what exacerbates the situation even more is the lack of benefits experienced by people that work in this sector.

We all know that a significant body of research demonstrates how important early childhood education is for child development. We also know how crucial child care is to allowing parents to fully participate in the economy.

Many in child care are in a waiting game to see how child care will be changed. They need support now.

I want all early childhood educators to know they have our full support and commitment to improve their profession, and I would like to thank Mariella and the staff at Prairie Nature Children's Centre for the opportunity to shadow them for a day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Accountability in Health Care

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, Manitoba Liberals have long believed in improved accountability in health care. Two decades ago, I introduced legislation to make accountability a general principle in health care, just as universality and public administration are general principles. My bill, though introduced a number of times, never passed because the government of the day would not support it.

A few minutes ago, I introduced Bill 201, The Regional Health Authorities Amendment Act. It takes another approach to bring accountability to health care. This bill provides that each of the provincial health authorities—the regional health authorities, Shared Health and CancerCare Manitoba—must table their annual reports in the Manitoba Legislature, and then these reports would be discussed at committee meetings, just as we do with Crown corporations.

The budgets of each of these health authorities are large, totalling more than \$3.8 billion this fiscal year. Yet, when we do Estimates currently, the Minister of Health appears but the health authorities do not, and the result is the health authorities operate with insufficient accountability to Manitoba MLAs in our Legislature. It's time this changed. Indeed, it is past time this changed.

By bringing the health authorities before a legislative committee, as we do with Crown corporations, we can get significantly greater accountability. We will get much more information about the changes that have been made in health care in the last several years and about decisions made during the pandemic. This accountability will help government, it will help the opposition and, even more importantly, it will help improve health care delivery for all Manitobans.

I hope all parties will support this bill to have improved accountability in health care.

Merci. Miigwech. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba ICUs and ERs Staff Vacancy Rate Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): We need nurses at the bedside to deliver good health care. Documents that we've obtained and are sharing today show that there is a crisis in our hospitals, and it's been caused by the Pallister-Stefanson government's cuts.

At St. Boniface Hospital, there is a 32 per cent vacancy rate in critical care. That means one third of positions for ICU nurses are empty. There is a 26 per cent vacancy rate in the ER—that means the emergency room—almost one in four nursing jobs is empty. These are massive shortages.

The Pallister-Stefanson government's cuts to health care have only made the situation worse.

Will the former minister of Health take responsibility for causing a crisis in our critical care and emergency rooms at St. Boniface?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Premier): We know that, for many years, there's been a challenge in terms of recruiting nurses in Manitoba. It's a challenge that the former NDP government faced for many years and didn't actually step up to ensure that those positions were filled for many years, Madam Speaker.

Of course, this has been a unique challenge during the pandemic that all provinces have faced, that all

countries have faced around the world, Madam Speaker. In response, this is a government that has stepped up not only to commit to hiring and—or, training and hiring 400 new nurses, but have worked to train more than 100 ICU nurses so they could go into the ICU system during the pandemic, Madam Speaker.

It's a government that's responded to a very difficult situation that all provinces are facing. The former NDP government, of course, didn't have to deal with a pandemic and had much worse results.

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

Mr. Kinew: Well, the new PC leader was the Health minister when these cuts took place and when these numbers come from. She was a Health minister when more and more nurses were driven out of the province because of this government's behaviour.

At the Grace Hospital, there is a 37 per cent vacancy rate in critical care—37 per cent vacancy rate in the ICU—more than a third. There's a 25 per cent vacancy rate in the ER at the Grace. One in four positions are empty at Grace's emergency department.

Patients just can't get the care that they need when there aren't the front-line nurses there to provide it and we've all seen the impacts of that time and time again through the pandemic.

Why does the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) think a 37 per cent vacancy rate at Grace's ICU is acceptable?

Mr. Goertzen: Of course, the Premier has led a number of important initiatives, when it comes to responding to the pandemic, not the least of which was training more than 130 nurses to be able to provide ICU coverage, Madam Speaker, which allowed the Province of Manitoba to be able to expand, to double the ICU capacity—far greater than ever existed under the NDP government. Of course, there's been investments announced, more than \$800 million of capital investments, historic investments announced.

We know that every province in Canada has been struggling with this, Madam Speaker, from coast to coast. This is a pandemic. It's been difficult for every province, but Manitoba has brought forward a number of initiatives to ensure that we're able to 'meet' the needs of Manitobans as best that can happen in a pandemic where everyone is facing the similar challenges.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, these numbers show why Manitoba fared so poorly and why our ICUs were overrun so quickly, and it's all because of the Pallister-Stefanson government's health-care cuts.

It was a political decision to create these vacancies. At our biggest hospital, the Health Sciences Centre, there is a 22 per cent vacancy rate for nurses in the ICU and there's almost a 19 per cent vacancy rate in the emergency department.

That's one of the most important hospitals in Manitoba and one in five nursing positions in their emergency department are sitting empty because of the political decisions made by the current Deputy Premier, the current PC leader and, of course, all of the PC MLAs.

This is on the Pallister-Stefanson government and their cuts.

Will the new PC leader take responsibility and acknowledge that they have created a crisis at St. Boniface, the Grace and the Health Sciences Centre?

Mr. Goertzen: There've been billions of dollars of new investments under this government, Madam Speaker. There've been hundreds of nurses who've been trained in ICU capacity to meet the needs of the pandemic.

Even though every province is struggling with the same challenge, Madam Speaker, including provinces that are run by NDP governments where everybody is challenged with the same situation, the pandemic, but we've been able to increase ICU capacity significantly, double that that the NDP ever had when they were in government.

* (14:10)

But, of course, the Premier also understands that there are longer term solutions, and so today the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is meeting with other premiers across the country, virtually, to ensure that we get a fair and equitable deal, when it comes to health-care funding, with the federal government.

That is a priority of her and all other premiers across Canada, and she is involved with those important discussions today, Madam Speaker.

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

**Personal-Care-Home Placement
Constituent Case Concern**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, let's talk about the impact of the health-care cuts on people.

Ruth Sampson has lived her entire life in the Stonewall area. She and her husband farmed and made a life for themselves there. She's now 100 years old and she needs a bed in a personal-care home. But instead of staying at the Stonewall hospital, close to her family, friends and where she's lived for a century, she has been moved by this government hours away, to Crystal City.

Moving seniors in their time of need to free up beds is simply the wrong move and shows we haven't learned any of the lessons of the pandemic under this PC government.

Will the new PC leader take action and make sure that Ruth can get a personal-care-home bed close to where she has lived for 100 years?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Premier): Of course, Manitoba has been adding new personal-care-home beds, Madam Speaker, over the last number of years. There are many beds, of course, that were never built under the NDP government. But we do know that that continues to be a challenge, and a challenge that's been exasperated by the pandemic.

There've been a—many difficult decisions that have had to be made by the health-care system as they try to ensure that the best care possible can be provided in these unprecedented times—in a one-in-100-year pandemic, Madam Speaker. That does not minimize the difficult decisions that every province and every jurisdiction has had to make, not only in Canada but around the world.

Madam Speaker, we are relying on those health-care experts to do the best that they can in a very trying circumstance while looking to the future and ensuring that there're investments within the health-care system.

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

Mr. Kinew: This government has not created any net new personal-care-home beds.

Two years into the pandemic, it's simply not good enough for them to say that the pandemic is a unique challenge. We need to do better for seniors.

Ruth Sampson's family, they're worried about her well-being. There was effectively no notice given to Ruth that she was going to be moved, and she's been sent by this government to—hours away, to a community where she doesn't have her family and she doesn't have the supports. This shows just how much the PCs have failed to improve things for seniors during the pandemic.

Now, we know that this move was wrong. We know that her family would like to see her get a personal-care-home bed much closer to Stonewall.

Can the minister commit to doing so immediately?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Official Opposition say that the one-in-100-year pandemic is not a unique challenge for the health-care system. I would ask him to look around at all jurisdictions in the world that have gone through very difficult situations in the last 20 months.

There is not a jurisdiction that has been untouched by this pandemic, and there's no question that there are people around the world who've been impacted—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —as a result.

And I know the members opposite don't feel that the pandemic is significant either, but there are many Manitobans, many Canadians, many citizens of the world that have been impacted as a result of the pandemic in many different ways, Madam Speaker, including in health care. We are relying upon our 'healthspert'—our health experts in the system to ensure that those are minimized as best as possible.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, Madam Speaker, we're bringing forward important issues that are affecting Manitobans directly, and all the Deputy Premier has are word games. It's disappointing, two years into the pandemic.

The thing is, we're aware of many other families in similar situations, including one family—also in the Interlake—whose loved one is being moved from Selkirk to Flin Flon. Now, instead of being able to be close to family and friends and caregivers during the holiday season, this family's loved one is being sent almost eight hours away from where they live.

That's wrong, and it shows that this government has not learned the lessons of the pandemic. We need to treat seniors in Manitoba with dignity, not send them hours away from supports and from loved ones as we go into the holidays.

This is a decision that is all on the new PC leader.

Will she simply put a stop to this policy that is hurting families in Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, nobody is suggesting that the pandemic and its effect hasn't been incalculable in terms of its impact on individuals in Manitoba, Canada and around the world. It's been devastating for many individuals and in many different ways.

We are relying upon health-care experts to try to minimize those impacts as best as can be done. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: And while the members of the opposition continue to yell from their seat and don't have respect for those impacts, Madam Speaker, we know that it's important to listen to those health-care experts. I don't know if the Leader of the Official Opposition thinks that it should be politicians sitting at their desk and deciding where people move within the health-care system. That would have devastating effects. Of course, he suggested that at different times in the pandemic.

We have to rely on those health-care experts to minimize the effect of this one-in-100-year pandemic, and we will continue to rely on their advice.

Education Modernization Act Consultant and Advertising Costs

MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): We know bill 64 caused a lot of damage and disruption for parents, teachers and educators. It was a terrible bill, and that's why we opposed it from the start. That's why it was so sad to see the new PC leader second that bill in the House. But now we've learned through FIPPA, bill 64 is costing us even more: \$1.5 million was spent on consultants and advertising for bill 64. What a waste.

Will the Education Minister tell this House why he wasted \$1.5 million promoting bill 64?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Education): Well, thank you very much—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen:—Madam Speaker, and I do appreciate the questions from the members opposite.

I'll reflect back on the K-to-12 report. We engaged Manitobans, thousands of Manitobans, on a K-to-12 commission review—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen:—brought forward 75 recommendations that we're reviewing currently.

Madam Speaker, we will never, never—and we'll always work with Manitobans. We're going to invest money in consulting with Manitobans. That's what we do: we consult with Manitobans before we make decisions.

Madam Speaker: I just want to indicate to members that I'm having a lot of difficulty hearing that answer because of the noise that is coming from the floor, so I'm going to ask everybody to please—I need to be able to hear what is being said so that I can catch anything that shouldn't be said according to our rules. So I need, please, for everybody to show respect and allow people to ask and answer their questions in a respectful manner.

The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a supplementary question.

MLA Marcelino: We know we need more teachers, educational assistants and other educators in the classrooms right now. But instead of hiring more teachers or more EAs, the Pallister and Stefanson governments decided to spend \$1.5 million promoting bill 64. That's wrong, that's a waste, and it means fewer teachers in the classroom.

The minister needs to be accountable for this terrible waste of money.

Will the minister stand in his place and apologize for wasting \$1.5 million advertising bill 64?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, we'll—never going to apologize for consulting with Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we continue—*[interjection]*—we continue—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen:—despite the noise from the other side, we continue to consult with Manitobans. We have currently 637—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen:—Manitobans who are working and—on advisory roles through intakes. We have 243 officials

and educators participating across 13 teams. And these 13 teams are out in the field today consulting with Manitobans on how we can improve the education system here in Manitoba.

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

MLA Marcelino: If you ask any Manitoban, they would tell you we need more teachers in the classroom and less money spent on the political agenda of the government, but FIPPA documents show that \$1.5 million was spent on promoting bill 64, and I will table those documents. That's an enormous amount of money that was wasted by the Pallister and Stefanson government. But there is no accountability from this government.

* (14:20)

He needs to be clear: Will he take responsibility and apologize for wasting \$1.5 million on advertising this terrible bill 64? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: If the members want to lose time in oral questions, this is exactly how to do it. Keep heckling from the seats, and this will just cut everybody short on oral questions. So, your decision. I'm asking for co-operation, please.

Mr. Cullen: If anybody should apologize, it's the NDP for not trying to make education in Manitoba better for 17 years.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Cullen: Manitobans are investing over \$3 billion in the K-to-12 education system in Manitoba. Educators, parents, students say they want a better education system here in Manitoba.

We are committing to that. We're investing in education in Manitoba. We're working to make it better, and we're going to continue to consult and invest in education in Manitoba.

Education Property Tax Corporate Landlord Rebate

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): Times are tough for families right now, and life's getting less affordable as the cost of living keeps rising. That's why, Madam Speaker, it's disappointing to see that,

instead of helping Manitobans through these difficult times, this Pallister-Stefanson government is, yet again, only helping the wealthy.

I'll table, for the House, the minister's own briefing note, which shows that landlords are getting nearly seven times more in education tax rebates than average homeowners. The facts don't lie, Madam Speaker: hundreds of dollars more is going to landlords than homeowners.

Why is the minister doling out corporate welfare to landlords and leaving the rest of Manitobans behind?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): One thing that we've seen with the pandemic lately, is the cost of inflation. And one thing our government has done, it provides important tax relief to Manitobans that has been voted against by the NDP time and time and time again.

What we provide in terms of education property tax, over 450,000 Manitobans got benefit to this tax increase. If you're living in the city of Winnipeg, that means close to \$500 more. That's going to help with things like inflation that we're seeing.

We wish the NDP would get on board, instead of—quit jacking up taxes on Manitobans at every chance they get.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Wasyliv: Seven times, Madam Speaker. Seven times the amount is going to corporate landlords than it is to the average Manitoban household.

Each and every day, we see more Manitobans being left behind by this government. Landlords are getting nearly \$1,500 more than the average Manitoba homeowner. And just like Brian Pallister, all this new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and her Cabinet cares about is lining the pockets of the very wealthy friends.

Why is the minister doling out hundreds more in handouts to landlords, while ignoring the needs of Manitobans?

Mr. Fielding: Well, we know that providing important tax relief to Manitobans, especially during a time of high inflation, is extremely important.

Over 425,000 people—property owners—got more tax money back. Your farm-owner—property—over 175,000 property owners—farm property owners—got supports.

And, yes, Madam Speaker, with our rent control we've put on for two years, renters are going to be better off under our plan than the NDP plan.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Wasyliw: This is isn't about giving Manitobans a break; it's about skewing the tax system and making it less fair to Manitobans—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: This government continues to deliberately undermine the funding and delivery of our promises—education system, and they are shortchanging Manitobans so they can line the pockets of their wealthy friends.

Renters have been—basically had their taxes raised while the minister still approves hundreds of above-guideline increases each year. Homeowners are seeing less returns to them as their costs of living keep rising.

Meanwhile, landlords are reaping the benefits—seven times more in rebates going to them than the average Manitoban.

I'll ask again: Why is the minister doling out hundreds more in corporate welfare to landlords while many—making life more—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Fielding: This member obviously thinks its over 650,000 property owners don't count, Madam Speaker.

We are on their backs, and we are supporting property owners here in the province of Manitoba, having important tax relief because of the inflation that's going on that's much needed.

We know what the member does when he is on things like the residency tenancy commission, where he approved over 2,079—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —above-rent guideline increases. That's his record in office. That's his record when he was on the Winnipeg School Division where he continuously jacked up taxes on residents.

We're not going to make those same mistakes.

Safe Consumption Site Request for Facility

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, according to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, the first half of 2021 saw 109 drug-related deaths, already more than half of the number of deaths that occurred in 2020.

As we see drug-related deaths continue to increase, we know that there are solutions that this government can act on today to help those struggling with addictions.

Safe consumption sites are one important way that this government can reduce the number of drug-related deaths here in Manitoba. But Brian Pallister said that a consumption site is not a priority of this government.

The question is: Will this PC leader follow in Brian Pallister's footsteps, or will she do the right thing and invest in safe consumption sites and help save Manitobans' lives?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery): I'd like to start by extending my deepest condolences to the member for Point Douglas on the loss of her brother-in-law.

Every death, Madam Speaker, is sad and very tragic, and when it happens as a result of overdoses or illicit drugs or any other—or opiates—it is even more disheartening. And so, again, I extend my deepest condolences.

Our government is very committed to tackling this problem. That is why we created the Ministry of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery. That's why we have announced 34 initiatives valued at more than \$51.3 million to improve mental health and addiction services in this province.

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

Mrs. Smith: I appreciate that condolences.

But this PC government has, you know, the responsibility to make sure that Manitobans aren't dying, and they're not taking that responsibility and putting that into action. It's simply words coming from that side, announcing all of these things when safe consumption sites we know have proven to save lives in this province.

So I'll ask the minister again: Will this minister and the PC leader commit to opening a safe consumption in Manitoba so that Manitobans' lives can be

saved and we don't have to continue to see these numbers rise—80 per cent increase last year in deaths of Manitobans. That's on the rise this year.

We have the responsibility and they have the resources, so will the minister open a safe consumption site in Manitoba today?

* (14:30)

Ms. Gordon: Our government is committed to reducing the risk for people using drugs and saving lives by preventing premature mortality and improving quality of life, and we do take this matter very, very seriously. The member for Point Douglas is incorrect in stating that we do not.

That is why we have committed \$282,000 to expand mobile withdrawal management services at Klinik community centre, \$35,000 for Tamarack Recovery Centre; \$3.5 million for the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre; and \$819,000 to expand services at the rapid access for addictions medicine because we care and because we take it seriously.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

Mrs. Smith: If all of those things were making a difference, we wouldn't see this rise that we're having. That's a drop in the bucket to what we need in this province—87 per cent increase in deaths in this province last year, and we're on par to exceed that.

So what's this Province, what's this government doing differently that's going to help Manitobans today; \$800,000 to a RAAM clinic that's open 1.8 hours a day is not working for Manitobans. Obviously, there's more resources that need to be—money needs to go to.

So I'll ask the minister again: Will she commit to opening a safe consumption site that's going to make sure that Manitobans lives are saved—safe and that they can get their—access to resources that they need?

Ms. Gordon: I'm not sure why the member for Point Douglas continues on this narrative of discrediting the good work that is being done at rapid access for addiction medicine clinics. And prior to 2018, RAAM clinics did not even exist at all because—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: —the members opposite didn't think that they were needed in terms of helping the 7,000 Manitobans the RAAM clinics have helped to date, in terms of individuals seeking—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Gordon: And we're committed to doing more.

That is why, Madam Speaker, we are going across the province talking to health experts, talking to people with lived experiences so we can develop a five-year action plan that will meet the needs of all Manitobans.

International Students Health Coverage Request to Reinstate Program

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Brian Pallister and his Conservatives cut coverage of health care for international students. It was a discriminatory and regrettable decision.

We should all be doing everything we can to encourage people to come to Manitoba. That cut sent the exact opposite message and it's had real-life consequences. Students without coverage are caught between plans, have found they owe tens, even hundreds of thousands of dollars for essential health care. That needs to change.

Will the PC leader reverse Brian Pallister's cuts and ensure all international students get a Manitoba Health card?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question.

Madam Speaker, we know that we work closely with our post-secondary institutions in regards to making sure that our programs here in Manitoba, as far as post-secondary education, are second to none, not only here in Manitoba, but across Canada.

And that's why many students from international countries decide to come to Manitoba and study, and then eventually, Madam Speaker, they actually grow roots and raise families here and stay with us, and then apply for their permanent residency and become long-time Manitobans.

So I applaud the international students for coming to Manitoba and calling—

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

Order. Order.

The honourable member for Union Station, on a supplementary question.

MLA Asagwara: Brian Pallister's cuts have real-world consequence.

Calvin Lugumbali [*phonetic*] is an international student studying engineering. His private health insurance lapsed in a short break between programs. In that—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —time, he got sick and needed surgery and then he got COVID. His final bill: \$126,000. That is completely unacceptable.

We need to encourage students, newcomers to study here, live here and work here in Manitoba. This government and PC leader need to restore health coverage for international students if they want to live up to their own commitments in their Throne Speech.

Will they do so today?

Mr. Ewasko: Again, I thank the member opposite for the question.

As, you know, the personal situation that the member has brought up, of course, the department is aware of it and has been working with also the Department of Health and having these conversations in regards to international students coming to the great province of ours—of Manitoba, Madam Speaker. We are committed to supporting the safe arrival of international students while protecting all students here in Manitoba.

And universities and colleges continue to work within their institutions to make sure that we're—they're working with public health insurance to make sure that health-care insurance is affordable for international students coming to Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, this minister just says words when he has the ability to take real action and improve health care for international students here in Manitoba.

His and his government's—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —decision-making is causing literal misery for some of my own constituents. Caught in the initial waves of the pandemic, far too many had medical issues for which they were not insured. Calvin's situation is not unique.

What we want is a province that is welcoming to newcomers to study, live and work. That's what this government says it wants. They need to make it more

than words and restore health-care coverage for international students.

Will this government do so today, or will they just simply carry on with Brian Pallister's agenda?

Mr. Ewasko: Again, I think I thank the member opposite for the question, Madam Speaker. I'm not quite sure how I'm supposed to answer their question without using some form of words.

International students, we know, bring—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —diversity to this great province of ours, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: Our province is a destination of choice due to, in part, our low cost of living and the strong programs that we have right here in Manitoba.

We also have—as I've mentioned before, we have the lowest tuition west of Quebec, Madam Speaker, and third lowest in all of Canada. And that's why international students come to Manitoba.

We work quite closely with IRCC to make sure that our—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Health-Care Services Constituent Case Concern

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I table a letter which the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) and some of her ministers have also received about the terrible case of Tim Shumilak.

Tim is a 58-year-old farmer from East Selkirk dealing with years of drought who walked into a hospital last December with an infection and has not walked since. After an initial surgery, the infection spread to his spine, leaving him unable to walk. He caught COVID in hospital. He was moved from Selkirk to Beausejour in the middle of the third wave where there 'wers' no air conditioning or even lifts, so he couldn't be properly bathed for months.

He can't be discharged from hospital, but Selkirk started charging him \$40 a day and he was told that he may have to be moved to clear space for COVID overflow 'pasents', possibly to Flin Flon, possibly not.

Mr. Shumilak's family says Tim deserves better care.

What is the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) going to do to provide it?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Deputy Premier): Madam Speaker, we are all concerned any time that a Manitoban is having difficulty getting care and the right kind of care that they need.

I know this letter was only sent very recently to the Minister of Health. I have no doubt that her and her diligent department are looking into the case and will respond shortly.

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

Mr. Lamont: There have been many letters before this, Madam Speaker.

Tim can't work. He can't walk. He's being told he'll have to find \$4,000 for a wheelchair, that he may have to sell everything and go on EIA with no guarantee of coverage. This is not just the pandemic, it's decades of neglect and the choices of this government.

I will quote Tim's sister: If the isolation of a pandemic hasn't created enough mental anguish, then the flippant disregard for his physical and mental well-being by this government and health district is more than apparent. End quote.

*(14:40)

His family has asked, quote, that he be placed in a facility in Selkirk that can meet his health-care needs in a dignified manner. End quote.

What is this government going to do that is new and different to fix what they broke and ensure that Tim and Manitobans like him in the health-care system will get that care with dignity?

Mr. Goertzen: I do appreciate the member opposite bringing forward a significant situation on behalf of a Manitoban. I think that all of us, when we hear difficult situations from our constituents, or those who aren't in our constituency, want to do all that we can to help, and so it is appropriate for him to raise the issue.

But I've already indicated that the Minister of Health, I'm sure, is now vested with this information. Her department, I'm sure, will be speaking to the regional health authority on this very significant situation.

MABs for Early COVID Treatment Approval for Use in Manitoba

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, two monoclonal antibodies, casirivimab and imdevimab—colloquially called mAbs—are remarkably effective in the early treatment of COVID, decreasing the number of people having to go to the ICU or dying by up to 70 per cent. These mAbs are now widely used in BC, Alberta and Ontario, including in Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay, but not in Manitoba, because this Province has not acted with the urgency needed.

Why is the Province hesitating to approve these mAbs when they save lives and decrease ICU use and can enable Manitoba to return to elective surgeries and address the enormous backlog which we have now?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I thank the member for—from River Heights for the question.

Our government continues to seek the advice and listen to the experts at Public Health, as well as the national advisory council on immunization. The best defence we have against COVID-19 is for individuals to get vaccinated. When new drugs become available, once again, we seek the advice of public health experts.

As you know, Madam Speaker, earlier this year, I also changed regulation to make it easier for us to add new drugs to the formulary, and I look forward to hearing more from Public Health as new drugs come to the market.

#ProtectMBKids Campaign Immunization Rollout for Children

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Last week, Manitoba parents were excited to learn that plans had been finalized for the delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations for children between the ages of five and 11. I can speak with certainty, that parents have been eagerly anticipating this opportunity to extend the protection to their children.

Can the Minister of Health please elaborate on these excellent plans?

Hon. Audrey Gordon (Minister of Health and Seniors Care): I thank the member for that question.

Last Wednesday, Manitoba led the country with an immunization strategy for kids aged five to 11. Health Canada approval came last Friday, and parents

were able to book appointments on Monday morning. Almost 25,000 appointments have been booked, not including appointments with doctors and pharmacists.

The protect Manitoba kids campaign started immunizing kids aged five to 11 yesterday, and on behalf of all Manitobans, I thank Dr. Reimer and the Vaccine Implementation Task Force for such an effective vaccine roll-out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

North Perimeter Highway Access Point Closures

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Earlier this year, this government rushed through a decision to dig up several access points along the north Perimeter, cutting off businesses, schools and communities. Almost zero additional investments have been made to mitigate these closures, and residents, schools and businesses are left scrambling.

Now, 750 residents have signed a petition. Over 50 residents were at a community meeting, this—over the weekend, and dozens protested along the north Perimeter on these closures, and yet the minister—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wiebe: —refuses to listen to them and refuses to listen to his own government's documents that flagged these residents' concerns as key themes.

Will the minister admit that he was wrong, reverse these closures and restore road access to these communities?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): Upon forming government we initiated the south Perimeter safety review, after which we funded it by over \$40 million.

The member for Concordia, Leader of the Opposition, they voted against safety. We then initiated the North Perimeter Safety Review—also more than \$40 million—and the NDP voted against it. In public outreach, 80 per cent of all the respondents said yes, we need a safer Perimeter.

Question is, why is the NDP so opposed to safety on the Perimeter?

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Health-Care Coverage

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care: migrant workers with work permits of less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

(2) Private health insurance is not a substitute for public health insurance. Private insurance plans available to most migrant workers and international students are paid for by the worker or student. They do not provide coverage for all of the potential health needs covered by public health coverage. Individuals are required to pay up front for health expenses without a guarantee that they will be covered and wait weeks for reimbursement.

(3) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(4) Without adequate health coverage, if they are ill, many of those without provincial health coverage will avoid seeking health care due to fear of being charged for the care, and some will fear possible detention and deportation if their immigration status—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: —is reported to the authorities.

(5) According to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care to undocumented irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(6) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

(7) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to public

health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free public-health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba, regardless of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependant children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to inform all health-care institutions and providers of expanded coverage for those without public health insurance and the details on how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

(4) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to create and enforce strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with the training to protect the safety of residents with precarious immigration status and ensure they can access public health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Road Closures

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba Infrastructure has undertaken the closure of all farm-access roads along North Perimeter Highway, forcing rural residents to drive up to six miles out of their way to leave or return to their property.

(2) The provincial government's own consultation showed that closing the access of some of these roads, including Sturgeon Road, was an emerging concern to residents and business owners, yet the North Perimeter plan does nothing to address this issue.

(3) Residents and business owners were assured that their concerns about these closures, including safety issues cited by engineers, would be taken into account and their access at Sturgeon Road would be maintained. However, weeks later, the median was nonetheless torn up, leaving local residents and businesses scrambling.

* (14:50)

(4) Closing all access to the Perimeter puts more people in danger, as it emboldens speeders and forces farmers to take large equipment into heavy traffic, putting road users at risk.

(5) Local traffic, commuter traffic, school buses, emergency vehicles and commercial traffic, including up to 200 gravel trucks per day from the Lilyfield Quarry will all be expected to merge and travel out of their way in order to access the Perimeter, causing increased traffic and longer response times in emergencies.

(6) Small businesses located along the Perimeter and Sturgeon Road are expected to lose business, as customers will give up on finding a way to their premises.

(7) Residents, business owners and those who use these roads have been left behind by the provincial government's refusal to listen to their concerns that closures will only result in worse safety and major inconveniences for users of the north Perimeter.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to leave residents' access to the Perimeter Highway at least every two miles along its length, especially at intersections such as Sturgeon Road, which are vital to local businesses; and

(2) To urge the Minister of Infrastructure to listen to the needs and opinions of local residents and business owners who took the time to complete the Perimeter safety study while working with engineers and technicians to ensure their concerns are addressed.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Abortion Services

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, gender-queer, non-binary and trans persons deserve to be safe and supported when accessing abortion services.

(2) Limited access to effective and safe abortion services contributes to the detrimental outcomes and consequences for those seeking an abortion, as an estimated 25 million unsafe abortions occur worldwide each year.

(3) The provincial government's reckless health-care cuts have created inequity within the health-care system whereby access to the abortion pill, Mifegymiso, and surgical abortions are less accessible for northern and rural individuals than individuals in southern Manitoba, as they face travel barriers to access the handful of non-urban health-care professionals who are trained to provide medical abortions.

(4) For over five years and over the administration of three failed health ministers, the provincial government operated under the pretense that reproductive health was not the responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Seniors Care and shifted the responsibility to a secretariat with no policy program or financial authority within the health-care system.

(5) For over four years, the provincial government has refused to support bill 200, The Safe Access to Abortion Services Act, which will ensure the safety of Manitoba women, girls, two-spirit, gender-queer and non-binary and trans persons accessing abortion services, and the staff who provide such services, by establishing buffer zones for anti-choice Manitobans around clinics.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to immediately ensure effective and safe access to abortion services for individuals, regardless of where they reside in Manitoba, and to ensure that buffer zones are immediately legislated.

Miigwech.

Cochlear Implant Program

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

People who suffer hearing loss due to aging, illness, employment or accident not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, relatives or colleagues; they also can experience

unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

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

The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Surgical Hearing Implant program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked the completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 50 devices per year.

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

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

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

In Manitoba, pediatric patients under 18 years of age are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement

Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Patrice Land, Jean Land, Gary Bell and many, many other Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey)?

The honourable member for Elmwood.

Louise Bridge

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Over 25,000 vehicles per day cross the Louise Bridge, which has served as a vital link for vehicular traffic between northeast Winnipeg and the downtown for the last 110 years.

The current structure—(2) The current structure will undoubtedly be declared unsafe in a few years as it has deteriorated extensively, becoming functionally obsolete, subject to more frequent unplanned repairs and cannot be widened to accommodate future traffic capacity.

(3) As far back as 2008, the City of Winnipeg has studied where the new replacement bridge should be situated.

(4) After including the bridge replacement in the City's five-year capital budget forecast in 2009, the new bridge became a short-term construction priority in the City's transportation master plan of 2011.

(5) City capital and budget plans identified replacement to the Louise Bridge on a site just east of

the bridge and expropriated homes there on the south side of Nairn Avenue in anticipation of a 2015 start.

(6) In 2014, the new City administration did not make use of available federal infrastructure funds.

(7) The new Louise Bridge Committee began its campaign to demand a new bridge and its surveys confirmed residents wanted a new bridge beside the current bridge, with the old bridge kept open for local traffic.

(8) The NDP provincial government signalled its firm commitment to partner with the City on replacing the Louise Bridge in its 2015 Throne Speech. Unfortunately, provincial infrastructure initiatives, such as the new Louise bridge, came to a halt with the election of the Progressive Conservative government in 2016.

* (15:00)

(9) More recently, the City tethered the Louise Bridge replacement issue to its new transportation master plan and eastern corridor project. Its recommendations have now identified the location of the new bridge to be placed just to the west of the current bridge, not to the east as originally proposed. The City expropriation process has begun.

(10) The new Premier has a duty to direct the provincial government to provide financial assistance to the City so that complete—that it can complete this long overdue vital link to northeast Winnipeg and Transcona.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

(1) To urge the new Premier to financially assist the City of Winnipeg on building this three-lane bridge in each direction to maintain this vital link between northeast Winnipeg, Transcona and the downtown.

(2) To urge the provincial government to recommend that the City of Winnipeg keep the old bridge fully open to traffic while the new bridge is under construction.

(3) To urge the provincial government to consider the feasibility of keeping the old bridge open for active transportation in the future.

And this petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Health-Care Coverage

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

(1) Health care is a basic human right and a fundamental part of responsible public health. Many people in Manitoba are not covered by provincial health care: migrant workers with permanent permits of less than one year, international students and those undocumented residents who have lost their status for a variety of reasons.

(2) Racialized people and communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, mainly due to the social and economic conditions which leave them vulnerable while performing essential work in a variety of industries in Manitoba.

(3) Without adequate health coverage—health-care coverage, if they are ill, many of the uninsured will avoid seeking health care due to fear of being charged for the care, and some will fear possible detention or—and deportation if their immigration status is reported to the authorities.

(4) According to United Nations Human Rights Committee, denying essential health care to undocumented irregular migrants is a violation of their rights.

(5) Jurisdictions across Canada and the world have adopted access-without-fear policies to prevent sharing personal health information or immigration status with immigration authorities and to give uninsured residents the confidence to access health care.

(6) The pandemic has clearly identified the need for everyone in Manitoba to have access to health care to protect the health and safety of all who live in the province.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the provincial government to immediately provide comprehensive and free health-care coverage to all residents of Manitoba regardless of immigration status, including refugee claimants, migrant workers, international students, dependant children of temporary residents and undocumented residents.

(2) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to undertake a multilingual communication campaign to provide information on expanded coverage to all affected residents.

(3) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to inform all health-care institutions and

providers of extended coverage for those without health insurance and the details on how necessary policy and protocol changes will be implemented.

(4) To urge the Minister of Health and Seniors Care to create and enforce a strict confidentiality policies and provide staff with training to 'protect' the safety of residents with precarious immigration status to ensure that they access health care without jeopardizing their ability to remain in Canada.

This petition has been signed by many, many Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please resume debate on the Throne Speech? *[interjection]* Oh. Apparently, we have other things that we need to hear, Madam Speaker and I'm very eager to. So I will let the Opposition House Leader make an announcement and then I will follow with one myself.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I appreciate the Government House Leader allowing me to go.

House Business

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): So, pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara). The title of the resolution is: Calling Upon the Provincial Government to Immediately Launch an Inquiry into Manitoba's Pandemic Response.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private members' resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Union Station. The title of the resolution is: Calling Upon the Provincial Government to Immediately Launch an Inquiry into Manitoba's Pandemic Response.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): We'll try that again. I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, November 30th, 2021, at 10 a.m. to consider the following: the annual report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2020.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs will meet on Tuesday, November 30th, 2021, at 10 a.m. to consider the following: annual report of Elections Manitoba for the year ending December 31st, 2020.

* * *

Mr. Goertzen: Would you please resume debate on the Throne Speech, Madam Speaker.

**THRONE SPEECH
(Second Day of Debate)**

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will resume debate on the motion of the honourable member for Lagimodière (Mr. Smith) and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Conservation and Climate who has 19 minutes remaining.

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Yesterday, I had emphasized that our new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) has taken a great focus on building relationships and restoring relationships. And Madam Speaker, relationships must begin with respect and must be based on truth, and they must build trust. Truth without love is empty words.

Madam Speaker, when I've met with Indigenous leaders and individuals, I was taught the importance of introductions, of who we are and who we are connected to by relations when we want to establish connections and trust. And I learned very quickly that who we are is not the titles that we are given but rather the people who have influenced who we are today and the choices that we make.

Mr. Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to share a little bit of who I am today and how some of my choices are influenced by family, and I really would like to focus especially on my grandmother. Margaret Marion Holliday was her name and she lived to the age of 96 years old and passed away just this last September.

I was asked to write her eulogy and to present it in front of family and many friends. And one of the elements that really resonated with me as I sat down to remember my grandmother and her influence on my life, and the lessons that she had taught me, really stemmed from the lessons that she had learned a young girl from her own father, who would be my great-grandfather, Alex Ramsay.

He was a soldier—or a signaller in World War I and he was captured after the Battle of Ypres and walked across no man's land. As he was marched across no man's land by the German soldiers, he was worried about his own safety, his own life and whether or not he would return to his one true love, Nessie.

As he was concerned about this and worried about this, one of the soldiers reached into his backpack and pulled out a loaf of bread. And he broke it in half and gave a portion of it to my grandfather—or, my great-grandfather. That was the moment that my great-grandfather knew that he would be okay.

* (15:10)

He spent a number of years in the prisoner of war camp, where there was hard labour, harsh conditions. They were made to build roads and dig many ditches. At the end of his time within the POW camp, when the war was over, after he had learned to speak German and communicate with the guards, one of the guards had gifted him with a fountain pen in recognition of the friendship that they had formed over the years. That fountain pen was something my grandmother learned about, heard the history of and one day asked if she could bring it to school as a show-and-tell item. She was given permission by my great-grandfather and she eagerly took it to school.

Her teacher had her leave it on his desk while they went out for recess. When she came back in after recess the pen was missing. It had been taken. My grandmother was devastated. Her heart had sunk. She didn't know how she was going to face my great-grandfather—her father—and tell him that this prized possession that meant so much to him and signified a strong relationship, she couldn't imagine how he would respond to this. She was devastated and full of tears, and when she got home my great-grandfather pulled her up on his lap, and he asked her, Margaret, who do you think I love more, that pen or my daughter?

From that moment on my grandmother learned an important lesson about love and about forgiveness, and she resonated that love and that grace and that forgiveness throughout her life and bestowed that gift upon her grandchildren and her children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important that we establish relationship. We build trust. We build the working relationship based on who we are and where we come from and the lessons we've learned in life. That is what establishes whether or not you can trust

someone, and once you have established relationship, once you have established trust it is important that you continue to build upon it with truth and with love, because without love truth are empty words.

I do want to take a moment to thank the Riverview personal care home, for the wonderful care that they did provide my grandmother right up until the day that she passed. It has been a difficult time on many families, saying goodbye to loved ones, and especially in the personal care homes where you worried on a daily basis on what their exposures are and you have limited access to visit loved ones. But I do appreciate the care that my grandmother received and many others are receiving to this day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I had stated before my time had run out last time, I'd like to focus a little bit about—or, on our climate green plan. Our government is very much committed to working with our Indigenous leaders who are the keepers of our land, and we would love to learn from their decades of experience with the natural environment to help inform our climate strategies. Just earlier this year I was very pleased to announce \$100,000 in funding for the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources for a project on nutrient reduction in the Lake Winnipeg basin through nature-based solutions and a collaborative approach involving Indigenous and municipal leaders.

In addition to consulting with our Indigenous leaders and communities, we have to recognize that youth involvement is key to addressing the challenges presented by climate change. The burden of the decisions that are made today will affect all of their futures. That's why our government created and supported the Youth Advisory Council who have done very meaningful work by providing input for our government's water strategy, and we will continue to look to youth leaders to lead the charge for climate change actions.

Through the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan, our government is taking action to protect our environment for our current and our future generations. At the start of 2021, we increased the renewal-renewable fuel content in gasoline to 9.25 per cent and in diesel to 3.5 per cent. And 2022, we will raise it to 10 per cent for gasoline and 5 per cent in diesel. These changes decrease greenhouse gas emissions from renewable fuels by 150,000 tons annually, bringing greenhouse gas emissions reductions attributed to renewable fuels to 550,000 tons annually in Manitoba.

We've also committed up to \$5.9 million, with Canada matching \$5.9 million as a funding partner, for the three-year Efficient Trucking Program towards providing our trucking sector rebate incentives for technologies to improve fuel efficiency and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We know the importance of continuing to work with our green sector, which is why in July we launched the second intake of the Conservation and Climate Fund, with total funding of \$1 million, which was increased by \$400,000 over the previous year's intake. These funds are allocated to projects that support the ongoing commitment to green investments that align with the Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan.

We know that reducing GHG emissions is imperative to our fight against climate change, and we will be making investments that help support that goal. We all know the importance of reducing the GHG emissions.

Another very important tool in combatting climate change is to ensure that we are supporting waste reduction and recycling initiatives as well. Increased waste diversion and recycling is a key priority for my department. Doing so not only saves valuable landfill space and resources; it also significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Just a few months ago, I was very happy to announce \$8.7 million to municipalities, companies and organizations for waste reduction and recycling support. This financial support from our government helps keep organic waste out of our Manitoba landfills through composting initiatives that play a key role in our recycling and waste diversion programming.

By reducing organic waste in landfills, we prolong their lifespan, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce a valuable soil amendment that contributes to the circular economy. Organic waste comprises up to 40 per cent of the material disposed in landfills and represents the largest opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from waste going into landfills. So we are very pleased to see the program reach a new high in waste diversions.

Our government is following through on our commitment to reduce the environmental impacts of orphaned and abandoned mines. We have made great progress in advancing remediation at orphaned and abandoned mine sites. Manitoba has invested over \$50 million to remediate the Sherridon site, and

construction activities were completed in September of this year.

Our commitment does not end after the remediation work. In April of 2021, my department launched a \$22-million site monitoring and water treatment program to ensure that orphaned and abandoned mine sites remain safe in Manitoba.

Manitoba's provincial parks are cherished assets, and our government knows the importance of them, which is why we dedicated \$20 million to establish the provincial park endowment fund. The purpose of the fund is to support projects that enhance the ecological integrity and public experiences in Manitoba—or, in Manitoba's provincial parks.

During the pandemic, as many Manitobans sought to connect with nature, the increased use highlighted the importance of provincial parks, as they play an important role in the lives of Manitobans. Parks contribute not only to the conservation of our natural lands and cultural heritage, but also provide excellent recreational opportunities and experiences that lend to the economic and mental resiliency of Manitobans.

Manitoba recognizes the importance of trails for recreation, transportation and resource use purposes and is committed to continuing to build, maintain and expand Manitoba's trail network in partnership with volunteer and community organizations. Input from stakeholders, communities and the public has been a critical part of the process to develop the draft trails strategy, and I am very thankful to all who took time to share their comments and ideas.

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges that we face as a global community. We know we have to do more to save our planet. Bold decisions have to be taken, tough choices have to be considered, but they are all done through the lens of providing a habitable and safe place to live for my kids, for your kids and for generations to come.

* (15:20)

This government will continue to make investments in green technology and innovative solutions that help in the reduction of GHG emissions. We are already one of the cleanest provinces in Canada, with our 99.7 per cent clean hydro energy, but as I have reiterated, we need to continue to do more because there is only one planet and we do not get to do a do-over.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): No matter what this new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) or new PC leader says to inspire confidence, Manitobans are traumatized because of the disastrous decisions her government has made. When each person in this building leaves tonight and goes home for the day, we'll all pass by fellow Manitobans who have lost loved ones to COVID-19, to an overdose, who have lost their homes because of poor policy and management of EIA and public housing, and who have lost their jobs and even businesses.

When this PC leader goes home tonight, Mr. Speaker, she may even pass by a health-care worker who has been working day in and day out to exhaustion in dangerous conditions. Manitobans aren't buying what this PC government is selling. They don't want political messaging. They want action that this government can't or won't deliver.

We have a new PC leader, a new Pallister Conservative government that is still operating under a Pallister-'isque' leadership. But it's the same ineffective old government we had a few months ago under Brian Pallister and with her as the Health Minister at the time, the disastrous decisions that were made has led us to where we are at now.

This isn't the first time that this—the government has declared victory and told Manitobans that they were starting a clean slate, and it isn't any more true now than it was then.

In the summer of 2020, the government ignored the best advice of professionals when they scrapped public health protections and dove headfirst into the Restart Manitoba campaign; even billboards and all spread across this province. They made this decision despite vaccines being months away and other governments dealing with deaths on a scale we haven't seen since the 1919 flu.

A few months later, in the winter, our health-care system was flooded with—understaffed, nurses were burning out and Manitobans were dying. Since then, Manitobans have watched in frustration as this government repeated the cycle of deciding that the coast was clear and loosening public health orders and shutting back down again and again when infection rates predictably skyrocketed.

The government claims that it was doing this to benefit Manitobans and benefit businesses, yet the high levels of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace and the cost associated with repeatedly closing

and reopening hurt small businesses far more than it helped.

This pattern continued through multiple Health ministers—multiple versions of a confusing and ineffective pandemic response system—and now multiple premiers, but only one government. Same government, same MLA sitting, same Cabinet ministers—nothing has changed, still the same Pallister leadership style on that side.

Case numbers are on the upswing yet again and nobody is buying what this PC leader or this government is selling. In fact, the PC leader got her job as Health Minister after predecessor resigned in controversy over a long string of poor decisions.

As long as I live—

An Honourable Member: He was fired.

Mrs. Smith: Yes, he was fired, actually.

I'll never forget the feeling of helplessness as I watched this government—including the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)—sit on their hands while COVID-19 was ripping through Revera-owned personal-care homes, listening to families losing their loved ones, crying, begging for this government to do something.

Our government—our opposition called for the military and what did this government do? They did nothing. They sat on their hands, they plugged their ears and they did nothing while Manitobans were dying in personal-care homes.

That was the last straw, was when we met with anti-mask protestors and claimed that, well, they made good points. Just like that, the new PC leader had a chance then to be different from her predecessor. Instead, her response to media was—media questions about sick Manitobans being sent out of province was coulda, shouda, woulda. That flippant, bored response to Manitobans dying on the government's watch does not inspire confidence.

The Premier does not have the confidence of health-care workers or Manitobans. She barely has the confidence of half of her party's membership, and there's an ongoing challenge in the controversial leadership election that we all watched.

If the Premier wants to start with a clean slate, if she is truly different from Pallister like she wants us to think, she should call an independent inquiry into PC government's pandemic response.

The member from St. Johns brought that forward. This government has a chance to learn from the

mistakes that they made during this pandemic and ensure that those mistakes aren't made again.

So they have the chance to pass that, but will they? No, because they know that it was under their watch that thousands—or hundreds of Manitobans died.

A quick quote from the Speech from the Throne on Tuesday claims, and I quote: You will notice her style of government is one of the willingness to listen and an openness to engage. End of quote. If that's true, it shouldn't be a problem to call this independent inquiry or to provide regular reports on overdose deaths, for that matter, a bill that I've brought forward that other advocates and other families have called for. In fact, you know, a family member has to go to the medical examiner and get those numbers herself, and she brought that to the media and still, this government hides those numbers. What are they hiding?

The Premier or the PC leader is every bit out of touch with Manitobans as the last one. The opposition listened to and stood with health-care workers from the beginning. We stood with them through the health-care cuts, through the addictions crisis, and through the botched pandemic response, but this government has more interest in paying Manitobans' tax dollars to expensive private consultants to tell them what they want to hear, and we heard that today—\$1.5 million spent on bill 64, a bill that was squashed in this House because Manitobans stood up and told this government exactly what they should have been listening to in the first place.

In 2016, the government paid KPMG to rubber-stamp their agenda of cuts and privatization, just like the Filmon government did in the 1990s. They ignored the real health-care experts, scientists and front-line workers who warned this government that weakening our health-care system would open the door to disaster.

Well, they didn't listen, and look where we ended up. We're in this mess today where hundreds of Manitobans have died, thousands of Manitobans are waiting for surgery—life-saving surgery. During this government's time in power we saw a 98 per cent strike vote from nurses and that didn't come from nowhere. If any Health minister of this government, including the current PC leader, wanted good advice, all they have to do is go to—go and talk to a doctor or a nurse in our province and they'll tell them exactly what is needed in our health-care system.

But they're not listening to the experts. They would have been told the opposite of what private consultants were being paid to tell them. They would have been told that Manitoba's population is ageing, and we heard that today. People are being sent away from the place that they've called home for almost a hundred years, away from their support systems, to go live in a PCH home hundreds of miles away. And this government has not built one PCH home. They knew that this was coming and they've been told this for how long, and still it's about saving money with this government instead of ensuring that families are close to home and that they can get health care close to home.

Even though they didn't actively seek out this advice, I've attended enough protests and pickets to know that it is possible that they didn't hear it—that it isn't possible that they didn't hear it. Instead of investing in the future, this government closed QuickCare clinics, emergency room, CancerCare clinics. The PC Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) promised more nurses, but she was in the room when the government made the decision to kill nurses and doctor recruitment and retention in this province.

It's been nearly a year since the Seven Oaks CancerCare clinic ended out-patient care. I was part of a community-led protest and resist to this dangerous decision. I spoke with Manitobans with cancer who were outraged and afraid, forcing immune-compromised Manitobans suffering from cancer to jump on a bus and drive across town to get the services that they need.

Yet, again, this government says, oh, care close to home—no care close to home if you're in certain areas. These concerns are raised often and loudly. I know the current PC leader must have heard Manitobans saying no, but did she speak up? No, she kept quiet. A month later, she was actually the new Health Minister.

* (15:30)

At the same time, this government tried to deflect from their complete neglect of Manitoba's growing overdose crisis and underfunded health-care system by appointing a minister of Mental Health and Wellness and Recovery. They proved that this was nothing more than a political ploy when they rolled that minister's portfolio back into the rest of Health. We are still waiting for a new minister that is actually going to have that portfolio and put some real action to save lives in Manitoba.

The government admitted in the Throne Speech on Tuesday that we, and I quote, have a greater need for resources and programs, end of quote, with respect to mental health. I'm glad that we're finally on the same page here because so far, this government has refused to build a safe-consumption site or make investments to bring down long wait times for harmful-substance-use treatment services.

Well, let's talk about RAAM clinics. RAAM clinics are still only open a few hours a week, 1.8 hours a day, and people are dying because of it. I've said it once, I'll say it again, and I'll keep saying it, and I've probably said it a thousand times in this House: if a Manitoban struggling with harmful substance use has to wait multiple weeks for a detox bed for the treatment that they need, they may be dead by the time that their name is up.

And we've seen that with Lee, and his family is calling for an inquest, and I implore this government to call that inquest to ensure that we get the services that are needed so the—no other Manitoban has to die waiting on a waiting list.

Another promise we heard on Tuesday was, I quote, appropriate and inclusive care available to every Manitoban who needs it at any point in their life, end quote. Well, I'm the critic for mental health and addictions. It's my job to keep in touch with stakeholders, organizations and workers in this sector.

All of them will tell you how much courage and strength it takes for a person suffering from harmful substance use to make the decision to go into treatment. We cannot expect them to plan and wait for an appointment to get into treatment. Three weeks in advance for a detox bed? That person could be dead by the time that happens. We need to do more, not less.

It just doesn't work that way, and many Manitobans in this vulnerable population are struggling with homelessness and other mental health challenges. Without steady phone access and Internet, it may be impossible for service providers to even reach them. I've spoken to people who are homeless that live at Siloam Mission and Salvation Army and Main Street Project. They do go sit and wait for a phone call every single day, but that phone call doesn't come.

And that's the only way that RAAM clinics can get in touch with them to make an appointment to set up for them to go into detox, if there's any detox beds. So it's not serving everybody. There's lots of barriers,

and those barriers need to be taken down so that everyone can access those services.

I recently lost a loved one, friends and family to overdose. My brother-in-law didn't have access to appropriate and inclusive care when he needed it, and it cost him his life.

My constituency has been especially hit hard as anywhere else by the meth and opioid epidemic that has been—that has spiralled out of control under multiple Health ministers and under this Pallister Conservative government that is trying to rebrand themselves—including, you know, this current PC leader, who was the Health minister that had, you know, the authority, that had the power to do something but did nothing; allowed, you know, Manitobans to die.

Even if a Manitoban is lucky enough to access the limited supply of detox beds, there's a severe lack of continued supports after the course of treatment is over. Harmful substance use doesn't exist in a vacuum. It exists on the intersection of a myriad of factors like poverty, homelessness and mental unwellness that can increase the risk of forming a harmful-substance-use habit and relapse.

Any service provider, any front-line worker could tell you that it's not enough to provide a couple of weeks of detox for a Manitoban struggling. They need wraparound services. They need continued care. They need to ensure that they have housing when they leave their beds. Addiction is a lifelong struggle, that they have access to those supports so that they don't relapse and go back into the system.

That's a far cry from what's happening here in the Manitoba now. A Manitoban has to wait for a detox bed. They have to make an appointment at a RAAM clinic. RAAM clinics aren't barrier-free. Many Manitobans have gone to try and access methadone treatment and have been turned away. We need to do more and we need a dedicated minister to be looking after this.

This new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), PC leader, claims to care about all of these issues, but then, again, so did Brian Pallister, and we saw that—what happened. Manitobans died of COVID. Seniors died in personal care homes. Many are still dying from addictions, and this government still has not acted under this new PC leader that says that they care.

Let's talk about housing. On Tuesday, I listened intently for anything that might resemble a long-term comprehensive housing strategy. I was disappointed.

Many of my constituents, anyone can drive down Main Street and see how many people are homeless. You know, allocating another 125 warming beds is not enough. It's not sustainable. People aren't going to have long-term housing and this government continues to sell off social housing. They're not building any more social housing, in fact, they're not even maintaining the social housing that they have.

There are so many boarded up social housing units in my constituency. Those are units that people can be living in. In fact, Purpose Construction has gone to a non-profit in Toronto because this government won't help them build some social and affordable and geared-to-income housing in the central area.

I recently went to visit a site on Mountain that they're turning into a three-bedroom, a two-bedroom and then a independent living for someone who is ageing out of care. The three-bedroom will be for families who are getting their children back out of care. The two-bedroom upstairs will be for kids who are ageing out of care that wish to live with other people—because we know that not everybody likes to live alone—and they'll be supported, as well, by the North Point Douglas Women's Centre. So they're doing their part, and there's actually other non-profits that are doing their part, but this government is, you know, giving them bread crumbs, as the member from St. Johns had spoke earlier about, that they're not properly funding these organizations which has led Manitobans to be homeless.

So, you know, Manitobans need hope and they need a government that'll invest in the services that they rely on and support them as they recover from the fallout from this pandemic. Manitobans want affordable housing. They want investments in health care and education. They want safety for their families and a bright future for our children. They want a fair system that lifts up and supports vulnerable populations like seniors, Manitobans experiencing homelessness and Manitobans who are marginalised and are targeted due to their identity. Manitobans want true accountability for a long line of reckless and poor decisions that this PC government has made during the COVID-19 pandemic—and even before—that has resulted in so many preventable deaths, and I spoke about many of them.

What Brian Pallister, what the current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) gave Manitobans was none of those things and this current Premier is also doing the same and following in those footsteps. So far we've seen

nothing from this new PC leader and it's nothing but the same Pallister politics.

Miigwech.

* (15:40)

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): I wish to take this opportunity to express my continued appreciation to the people of Assiniboia for giving me the honour of representing them here in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. We as members are blessed to be elected to serve and I never take that honour and confidence that they've given me for granted. I wish to recognize the strength and the responsibility my—the people of the constituency of Assiniboia have demonstrated during the COVID pandemic.

As we all know, this pandemic has been a challenge that our generation has not seen before and I applaud our front-line workers for their dedication and their commitment to the people of Manitoba.

Our government has always given the most vulnerable the priority of treatment and vaccinations. Challenges of isolations continue, however. Through immunization, we are winning. However, the variants are still a challenge and I thank my constituents for staying vigilant.

Our Health Minister and the Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer) are ensuring that supplies of vaccines are available for the first, second and now, boosters to further fight this pandemic. Just recently, vaccines have been approved for our young people, ages five to 12, and I'm so appreciative and overwhelmed by the response of the parents to take advantage of immunizations for their children.

One of the very positive developments in my constituency this year was the opening of the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre to help address the serious issue of addiction. The Bruce Oake Recovery Centre started out as a dream by the family of Bruce Oake after his premature passing due to drug addiction. Our government endorsed and supported this project right from the beginning.

Anne, Scott and son Darcy Oake pursued this dream of doing something to help prevent the same fate to addicts that occurred with Bruce. The project faced some adversity, but due to the Oake family's enduring commitment, this worthy project proceeded.

I had the opportunity to see the continued development of this worthy project with the then-minister of Health, and we were all so impressed with the development and the enthusiastic about the project.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have heard many words spoken by political representatives on opening occasions but never as moving as by the then-deputy premier and the member from Steinbach. He related a lot of his personal situations, and it was a very heartfelt delivery and I was so impressed and so proud to be one of his associates.

Bruce's 'asage'—ashes and story are at the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre and act as an inspiration to those overcoming these terrible addictions.

A celebration of life took place for Bruce's mother, Anne Oake, on September the 11th, 2021, and the grand opening of the Bruce Oake Recovery Centre was August 22nd, 2021. She was very ill but she made it to see the opening of the Bruce Oake centre.

It is particularly an honour to rise to speak in favour of the Throne Speech. I feel that we are making history and I am thrilled to be part of it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am part of the Legislative Assembly that has the distinction of having the first female Premier. I can't tell you the pride I felt sharing this with my family. I can't tell you what it meant to my wife. I can't tell you what it meant to my daughter and my daughter-in-law. I can't tell you how much it means for me to see my one-and-a-half year old granddaughter, and now—now that the Province has broken a barrier for her future. Progressive Conservative Party is open and recognizes that times are a-changing and, Madam Speaker, we're a party that can welcome change.

Madam Speaker—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you don't elect a man because he's a man. You don't elect a woman because she's a woman. You don't elect a gender-neutral person because they are a gender-neutral person. You elect people to this place of honour because they are passionate about helping people. You elect people because they put their community and their province above their own interests. You elect people because they can find solutions. You elect people because they can compromise to achieve a common goal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have elected a Premier who has all those attributes. I have had the privilege of knowing our new Premier for a number of years. She is one of the most capable individuals I have ever had the privilege of knowing and serving with.

The word most associated with our new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) is collaboration. Collaboration is what she based her leadership bid on and is the underpinning of our government's new direction.

Our Premier is prepared to work with all stakeholders and vested groups to try to find solutions as we find common ground. Proponents of various issues may not agree with the direction all the time, but our Premier is committed to ensuring voices are heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government's Throne Speech represents the direction of a government under a new and vibrant Premier.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, recovery from the COVID pandemic has to be our government's priority. As indicated in the Throne Speech, we, as a government, will not let our guard down. I mentioned priority to the vulnerable, ensuring vaccinations, as well as access to all methods of fighting the variants, including an aggressive rollout strategy.

I am so relieved that we have reached a point where those who are double vaccinated are able to help with the needs of their loved ones. No one can deny the stress on families during the difficult time of isolations.

A fundamental responsibility of government is to assess and evaluate its responses to challenges. Our government continues to do just that. Our new Premier has made it quite clear our government will be open to discussions with stakeholders and those wishing to contribute.

Madam Speaker, our government's Throne Speech addresses and identifies the needs of Manitobans. I would like to touch—a touch on a couple of those highlights.

We recognize that the COVID threat has put an enormous stress on our health-care system. We understand the need for shortening wait times. The task force we are assembling is made up of doctors and nurses, and they will advise the path forward.

Difficult times created such a demand on the resources that had to be reallocated. We must revisit our strategies by creating an opportunity to take the current pulse of the system and act accordingly, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is what the Throne Speech is directing.

We know that we have a shortage of nurses. We know and—that that must be addressed. We have ensured that those nurses that qualify with international experience are fast-tracked. The Throne Speech recognizes the need for a made-in-Manitoba solution. That's why increasing training spaces for 400 additional nurses is on our government's agenda.

I was also very pleased that the agreement was reached between the nurses and the health authority. It was long overdue.

* (15:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to recognize the Grace Hospital Foundation for all the work that they do in my constituency. Chairman Jeff Coleman and the board of directors, as well as the executive director, Jon Einarson, do a fantastic job and they are dedicated and committed to their task.

Madam Speaker, our economy will have some challenges as we recover from the pandemic. I was pleased to see our business community indicate they supported many initiatives in our Throne Speech. We understand the need to support our business community by ensuring that we have a labour force that can fulfil the needs of our province's employers. A renewed commitment to the nominee program, to continue to address the labour needs is essential.

Education is the path to success and I was pleased to see the Throne Speech indicated a plan to ensure Indigenous and new Canadians are given full opportunities to pursue post-secondary education.

I support the intention of the Throne Speech to address some safety concerns in work environments. I applaud the intention of the Throne Speech to recognize some cancers that are dangerous and create a very difficult and critical situation for our firefighters. Our government reacts to safety needs of work environments. A great success story is the violence reduction in our health—in our Liquor Marts. The government supported a solution preventing horrendous criminal activity that threatened the MBLL employees, as well as Manitoba consumers. Our government recognized that we had to act and our minister was certainly responsible in ensuring that that took place.

The Throne Speech recognizes an increasing seniors demographic. A plan to enhance our seniors strategy is welcome. A review of our seniors' needs is timely and warranted.

I am supportive of our government's commitment to continue to implement reconciliation. Reconciliation is now part of the people of Manitoba's vocabulary. Our Premier has demonstrated her desire to move forward and work with Indigenous leaders.

Education reform is a priority. The Throne Speech indicates that there has been much study of Manitoba education, and that the study continues. It has been my experience that the people of Manitoba

do want to support education reform. I chaired the Parent Engagement Task Force that engaged parents from all over Manitoba. The consistent theme from all parents was that they wanted to contribute and have real input rather than being one-dimensional.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation for serving as Manitoba's special envoy to the military affairs. I am honoured to be Manitoba's contact and liaison with the regular and reserve forces. I'm always humbled when connecting with the fine women, men and other individuals that serve our province and our country.

I enjoy our province's liaison with organizations that continue to support those who fought so gallantly and ensure the freedoms and privileges that we have today. I have had the honour of representing the province of Manitoba on several occasions. Our military personnel express so much pride in being—in offering their service to our province and our country. We can never thank our military services enough for what they contribute. We must recognize their continuing commitment and sacrifice, being there for us when we face crisis. Whether it's fighting forest fires in Manitoba, whether it's fighting floods in BC or stepping up to support the entire country to combat COVID—the COVID pandemic, they always answer the call.

On behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly and the people of Manitoba, we extend our deepest appreciation and sincere thanks to our military and veterans for their devotion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm in full support of the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) on her election. It is an important step forward for Manitoba to have a woman as Premier.

Next, I thank my own constituents in River Heights. They've provided much support for me but, at the same time, I have done my best to serve them and to help those who have issues—whether it be personal concerns, a family concern, a business concern or a concern related to the policies of the current government. There have been a lot of the latter in the last two years, as we've been going through the COVID-19 pandemic.

I'll now move on to comment on four of the major issues of today. The COVID pandemic continues and now is in the middle of the fourth wave. The projections from our chief public health officer, Dr. Brent Roussin, are that it will get worse.

Already, many surgical and diagnostic procedures are being postponed. Postponed is a government euphemism for cancelled, to be rescheduled at some unknown future date. It means the backlog of surgeries and diagnostic tests will grow.

It did not have to be this way. I have, for example, already written repeatedly to the Minister of Health to allow the use of two monoclonal antibodies, mAbs. These two are, specifically, casirivimab, and imdevimab, and their use early in the course of COVID-19 infection has been shown to reduce deaths and to reduce the number of individuals who need ICU care by up to 70 per cent.

The reduction in the need for ICU care would be sufficient that surgeries would not have needed to be cancelled in the way they were. It's really unfortunate that Manitoba has been so slow to approve the use of mAbs. Currently, these mAbs are being used widely in Ontario, in Alberta and BC. Indeed, it's shocking that these mAbs can be used in Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay, but can't be used in Winnipeg.

Bob Dylan had a song, when will they ever learn. One wonders whether the current government will ever learn.

Outside the doors of our Legislature today, as they have been for the last 23 days, are faculty and staff of the University of Manitoba. We have a university in chaos, a government which does not know what to do and highly educated professional faculty members who are, in desperation, walking the picket line instead of teaching students and carrying out world-leading research.

And while this is happening, increasingly, the world-leading researchers are feeling they have government who doesn't support them and are considering their options and looking at moving elsewhere.

We have a globally competitive educational world. A strike at the University of Manitoba, but no strike at other universities is like having a Winnipeg Jets players' strike while the—all the other teams just continue playing away and scoring points. There's a better way.

Our university is losing its reputation. Our researchers are falling behind. International conferences

which were to be held are being cancelled. Students are losing out. It's a disaster, and yet the government keeps on coming to work in the Legislature as if this was normal. It is not normal. It is a disaster for the University of Manitoba and for the province of Manitoba.

All we ask is that the government treat it for the crisis that it is. The University of Manitoba is our most prestigious post-secondary educational institution, and all the government can do is treat it as if it were just another manufacturing business. It isn't. Students are not widgets. Students and faculty should be treated seriously and should be supported, instead of being treated like widgets.

There's a refrain when it comes to this government: when will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

Today, there is a global crisis. We have just watched the proceedings of COP26. Anyone who was paying attention knows that the surface of our planet is heating up. Global warming is giving rise to floods, droughts and forest fires, the likes of which we haven't seen before. It's said that the recent disastrous floods and landslides in BC may be one of the most costly disasters in the history of Canada. What will be next?

* (16:00)

When it comes to greenhouse gases in Manitoba the majority of greenhouse gases come from transportation, agriculture, buildings which are heated by fossil fuels and from industry which uses fossil fuels. Very little comes from the generation of electricity, which is largely based on hydroelectric power.

Yet, the government, in its Throne Speech, focuses on an energy policy framework when we already have clean, green, hydroelectric energy. There's no mention of conversion of cars, trucks, buses, trains, planes and boats to increase our electric vehicle fleet or measures to achieve this. There's no mention of renovation of homes to reduce fossil fuel use. There's no mention of reducing methane and nitrous oxide from agricultural sources and landfills.

All I can say is, when will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

On the other side of the world in Afghanistan, there's a crisis of a different kind. Large numbers of people in Afghanistan or who have escaped from Afghanistan and want to come to Canada—and many are very highly skilled—and many have relatives in Winnipeg who want their relative to escape from the

dangers of Afghanistan to come and work here. There are doctors, nurses, midwives, engineers, teachers and so many more people who are keen to work here and to contribute in Manitoba.

I applaud the government for its desire to increase immigration to address our skill needs, yet right now in the federal government focusing on Afghanistan, with about 2,000 people in the Afghan community in Winnipeg, we've an opportunity to act quickly to help those in danger in Afghanistan and in nearby countries, yet, there was no mention of Afghanistan and working with people in the Afghan community in Winnipeg in the Throne Speech.

When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

To be fair, the government, in one small recent action, did show it can learn, after a year in which Liberals have worked with people in southeast Manitoba to protect the Sandilands aquifer, a year of collecting and reading petitions in the Legislature calling for a Clean Environment Commission review of the proposed sand mine near Vivian, the government has finally answered the Liberals' call for a Clean Environment Commission hearing.

But it took 21 petitions read by the MLA for Tyndall Park and myself over the last year for the government to act. We thank the government for acting and ask the government to make sure there's some level of participant funding to ensure a high quality review.

I was also pleased—it was a mention of individuals with disabilities in the Throne Speech—that action is needed. A hearing disability is one of the worst disabilities imaginable as a person ages. We've read many, many petitions for the government calling for the government to provide funding to ensure individuals with cochlear implants are able to afford the replacement processor for these implants when it's needed. Helping people to hear is vital to keeping our elders well. We need action; yet, support for those with cochlear implants was not mentioned in the Throne Speech.

And it's not just hearing. Sight is vital as well. It is unbelievable that there are now about 9,000 people waiting for eye surgery or cataract procedures which are critical to ensure people can see. It's unconscionable that the government has such long waiting times for such vital procedures. It shows the worst possible kind of planning. The extra costs of delayed surgeries are large in falls and injuries and

lack of the ability to see, to work, and to live fully in the extra costs of more complicated procedures needed when the surgery is not done quickly. When the topic comes up, the government calls on the pandemic scapegoat rising like a spectre as excuse for everything.

But the situation was bad before the pandemic started, and the costs to address this and bring the situation to a more reasonable and much shorter wait are considerable; perhaps, as high as \$38 million in eye surgeries alone.

The government allocation of \$50 million for all backlogs is a number drawn out of a hat, not a realistic number for what's needed. Numerous studies show getting quick eye surgery when needed saves money. The PC government knows how to cut, but it has not learned how to save money.

Vision disabilities need to be addressed, as well as hearing disabilities. The government should know that the government has operated for too long as if it had no vision. It needs some eye surgery itself, I suggest.

And our elders in long-term care facilities, many of them have disabilities of one sort or another. Yet, care for individuals in long-term care facilities has been exposed during the pandemic as falling far short of what we should accept to ensure the dignity and well-being of our elders. The government talks of addressing these issues, but has so far done nothing to correct the most critical shortcoming of all: the funding and staffing shortfall in the care of our elders. When will they ever learn?

There are others with disabilities in our communities. There are too many children in the care of Manitoba's Child and Family Services and too many of these children have physical, behavioural or learning disabilities. Reconciliation requires that the money stolen from children in CFS care be returned as a first step. This was not small change. It was \$338 million stolen from children, many with disabilities. It was stolen by NDP and PC governments. It needs to be returned.

And talking of learning and behavioural disabilities, one of the significant causes of learning and behavioural disabilities is exposure to lead.

In October 12th, a little over a month ago, I asked the Minister of Health about the Intrinsic report concerning the potential for high lead levels in children in Winnipeg neighbourhoods. The minister said in response that the report confirms that there is a low

health risk for Manitobans when it comes to lead in soil.

This statement was a direct quote from the government's press release at the time of the report's release. It is what the press release said, but it is not what the report said. I caution the minister to rely on government press releases, for they are often, under this government, politicized and not accurate. In fact, the report said, and I quote, 10 neighbourhoods were identified as being of potential concern: Centennial, Daniel McIntyre, Glenelm/Chalmers, North Point Douglas, River/Osborne, Sargent Park, St. Boniface, West End, Weston and Wolseley/Minto.

I note that not one of these neighbourhoods were in Conservative-held constituencies. Is that why the government, in its press release, said the risk was low? Was the government only concerned about constituencies with Conservative MLAs? Inside the report are statements and data which show a different story. In table 5-4, the probability of exceeding the level of concern in a child's blood sample was 97 per cent in Point Douglas; was 70 per cent in Weston.

In North Point Douglas, the predicted blood level for children age one to two years was 6.1 micrograms per decilitre. This is a level at which numerous studies show a general decrease in IQ, an increase in ADHD, an increase in learning difficulties, an increase in behavioural problems, an increase in substance use and an increase in criminal activity.

The minister says the risk is low, but not for those 97 per cent of kids in Point Douglas. The facts and the report show otherwise than the minister said.

The minister says the government will make high blood levels reportable. The government said it was going to do this almost two years ago. It is inexcusable that this has not yet been done. The report also recommends biomonitoring. This is usually done by screening children between the ages of one and three and taking measures to reduce lead exposure and address behavioural and other issues.

This is what the government needs to do: to adopt the biomonitoring recommendation from the intrinsic report.

When will this government ever learn? When will they ever learn?

And continuing on lead, the government needs measures to make sure our houses are safe and to address issues of lead water pipes and lead paint. And while they're at it, they should address radon issues as

well. None of these were mentioned in the Throne Speech.

When will they ever learn?

Adequately addressing addictions and substance use, one of the results of lead exposure, is also a shortcoming. But as I pointed out yesterday in my response to the minister's statement, the government's response and the response of the government before them was inadequate.

When will they ever learn?

Homelessness was mentioned in the Throne Speech. The government is going to put up some new housing; that is only a fraction of what is needed. The government is going to tinker with helping those who are homeless without ending it, as Medicine Hat has done.

* (16:10)

When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?

And now for the NDP. The NDP House leader raised an important concern in the last session. She raised concerns that there has been harassment and differential treatment of BIPOC individuals who are MLAs or staff in the Legislature.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this needs to be taken seriously. It is not a question of blame but rather of improvement. There have been major security changes at the Legislature, and it is important that we have a secure Legislature and also very important that we have a place where all MLAs and staff feel safe and comfortable.

One option would be for the Speaker to put together a group of individuals with at least one representative from each caucus and representatives from those who are on the front lines of security to ensure our Legislature is safe and friendly to MLAs and staff. We can improve the situation for all.

But there is also an issue of ethics and fairness which the NDP also need to listen to. During Estimates this year, Liberal MLAs had three hours and 17 minutes of time to ask questions. This compares to the years when I was the sole MLA from 2010 to 2015, when I averaged six hours and 11 minutes, and the years where there were two Liberal MLAs, myself and Kevin Lamoureux from 2007 to 2009, when together we had an average of nine hours and five minutes to ask questions in Estimates.

In 2019, Liberal MLAs only had three hours and 20 minutes. This was a reduction of 38 per cent from the years when I was the sole Liberal MLA and a reduction of 58 per cent from the years when there were two Liberal MLAs. This year, the number was similar: three hours and 17 minutes, a 42 per cent reduction from when I was a sole MLA and a 58 per cent reduction from when there were previously two Liberal MLAs.

The facts are clear: when the NDP are in opposition, Liberal MLAs are not getting a fair amount of time to ask questions in Estimates. Estimates are not, as one MLA suggested, our opposition Estimates time. I suggest to all members that Estimates do not belong to MLAs; they belong to the people of Manitoba. MLAs are privileged to be able to bring forward questions from the people of Manitoba.

As the Liberal Party received about half the vote of the NDP party in the last provincial election, Liberals, in fact, represent overall about half the number of Manitobans as the NDP. We are not asking for half the Estimates time; indeed, we thank opposition critics who were generous in sharing their time. We only seek a fairer overall allocation of Estimates time in the future. Ethics and fairness are important. When will the NDP ever learn?

Madam Speaker, these are my comments on the Throne Speech: it was a Throne Speech which fell far short of what should have been. The government should be better at learning.

My final comment is this: When will they ever learn—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I'd like to remind the member for River Heights that singing is not allowed in the Chamber.

Mr. Gerrard: Merci, miigwech, thank you.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): It's a pleasure to rise today in this House to speak to the first Throne Speech of the new Stefanson government.

These are times of—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would like to remind the—*[interjection]* No? That's okay.

Mr. Guenter: These are times of renewal, openness and a new direction. I'm happy to be part of the united Progressive Conservative team led by the first woman to be Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) in Manitoba history as we advance the work of building a more prosperous, healthier and stronger Manitoba.

I believe this Throne Speech sets out some important areas of focus for the government, and I appreciate in particular the emphasis on addressing the labour shortage in Manitoba, an issue I've heard about first-hand from many business owners and employers in my constituency.

My constituency has historically always had a very low unemployment rate. The RM of Stanley, one of four municipalities I have the distinct honour of representing, is believed to have had the lowest CERB uptake in all of Canada. The people I represent are hard-working. It's in our blood, and it's yielded many success stories.

I think of Runnin' Red in Emerson, owned by local businessman Jeff French, someone I admire for his commitment to family and his community. There's Miller Environmental in the RM of Montcalm; Jablonski electric in St. Jean; I think of Jack Wiebe and his family who built JKW Construction in Plum Coulee; or Mandako Agri, a farm equipment manufacturing company also located in Plum Coulee, built by John Redekop.

There's Load Line Manufacturing in Schanzenfeld; Pembina Valley Canvas in Reinfeld; Friesens Corporation in Altona; Elmer's Manufacturing in Altona; The Gables Wedding Barn near Gretna. I think of Golden West Broadcasting, built into a national media company right out of Altona, and Elmer Hildebrand, the long-time CEO there, is someone whose council and insights I greatly value.

There's Richland Transport, located near Reinfeld, or Roots Transport, a great company near Blumenfeld that I had the privilege of driving for, owned by Juston Schmidt, one of the best bosses I've ever had.

So many of my constituents, despite having had very little formal education, have built wonderful, successful businesses that provide jobs in our communities with products that reach international markets. Several started out as small businesses and now are quite large, and finding labour is critical to their growth. The need for skilled labour, as well as unskilled labour, people who are willing to work, drive tractors, drive truck and perform general labour is very real in my area, and so I'm pleased to see this government indicate plans to strengthen immigration to Manitoba, including the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, to attract more people to our province each year to fill gaps in the job market.

I'm also happy to see initiatives such as our recently launched Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy and work being undertaken to collaborate with our universities so that there is greater alignment between students and employers. It is important that our universities and training institutions align with the demands of the labour market and our economy.

I welcome the focus on infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, but also water and wastewater infrastructure. The area I represent has grown rapidly in the last 20 years, and 17 years of NDP neglect in rural Manitoba has left us with an infrastructure deficit. Much of our water infrastructure is running at full capacity, not quite able to keep up with the demand in the summer months. The drought this summer added additional strains on our water treatment systems, and it remains to be seen whether the drought will continue into the next year.

I thank my colleague, the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler), for coming out to Borderland to see first-hand the effects of the drought in our communities and agriculture, and I am particularly pleased to welcome nearly \$10 million in funding through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program for the Letellier water treatment plant, which services tens of thousands of residents as well as our local hospitals and many businesses and farms.

After years of NDP neglect of our region, I have been focused on working with my Progressive Conservative colleagues to deliver for the constituency of Borderland when it comes to investments in infrastructure. We've invested half a million dollars to upgrade village roads in Reinfeld and Schanzenfeld, and with the—further—and with a further \$1 million, the villages of Blumenfeld, Chortitz, Hochfeld and Thornhill will all have their roads rehabilitated.

We've rehabilitated the Main Street in St. Jean, and we're spending \$5 million in partnership with the federal government in upgrades to the dike in Emerson.

We're also investing, in partnership with the federal government, \$4 million in upgrades to 50 kilometres of priority grain roads in the RM of Reinland. Our government has invested \$3 million for the Gnadenfeld, New Bercthal and Sommerfeld east pumphouse expansion, \$7 million for the St. Mary's flood road in the RM of Montcalm and over \$2 million in upgrades to Altona's downtown drainage infrastructure.

In a massive announcement for the area of Emerson-Franklin, our government will also be upgrading Highway 201 from Dominion City to Highway 59 to an RTAC standard, something local producers and farmers in the area are very happy about.

These are but a few of the projects I've been working on in partnership with municipal representatives in the area, as well as my colleagues here in the Legislature, and I welcome this government's recognition of the importance of building good infrastructure that meets the needs of our growing province.

* (16:20)

I was also pleased to join my colleague, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Friesen), the member for Morden-Winkler and the Minister of Health several weeks ago for a very significant announcement of a \$64-million expansion of Boundary Trails hospital. This investment will ensure that the region receives better care, and closer to home.

This Throne Speech commits to further the work of strengthening our health-care system by re-examining rural health care and creating an additional 400 nursing seats at our post-secondary institutions, a 50 per cent overall increase.

Nursing students will also be able to earn income and gain valuable experience and knowledge by working in hospitals in their senior years of study. Our government will also ensure that every graduating nurse is offered a job. These initiatives, along with further investments in our health-care system, will ensure that it meets the needs of Manitobans now and into the future.

The pandemic has meant that many surgeries have had to be cancelled to make room for additional patients in our hospitals, and many of my constituents have been impacted as well. Addressing the surgical backlog is a top priority for this government, and I think it's appropriate that doctors and nurses will be advising on ways to clear the backlog.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank my constituents for the honour of serving as their representative in the Legislature since the fall of 2019. In the past two years, our lives and the lives of all Manitobans and Canadians have been changed, but through the fog, we can still be thankful for so many things.

I often wish the NDP would come down to my constituency and see what conservative values look

like in action. The residents of southern Manitoba have a rural and small-town grit and determination that never ceases to inspire me, and we have so many people within our communities who go above and beyond to generously and compassionately meet the needs of others.

Our area may not be home to many people with Ph.D.s or bachelor degrees, but it is home to low crime rates, a strong entrepreneurial spirit and people who place a premium on the importance of family and strong family values. People who work hard and who come together to build progressive communities with so many offerings.

So often, it's government that gets in the way of these folks rather than helping them. Government tends to take from these people, not because they were born with silver spoons in their mouths or because they belong to a special class or group of people, but because the people I represent have a can-do spirit, a tenacity and a willingness to work hard and punch through adversity.

The people I represent aren't prone to protest. They prefer to be left alone to themselves to help each other out and live meaningful lives without excessive government interference, and that's exactly why I'm proud to be their voice in a government that has reduced red tape by instituting the two-for-one and one-for-one rule when it comes to regulations and returned more money back to Manitoba taxpayers through things like indexing the income tax brackets, reducing the PST and phasing out the education tax on property.

This government fixed the finances and delivered Manitoba's first balanced budget in over a decade right before the pandemic hit, which allowed us the fiscal room to provide some of the most extensive and generous supports in the country to Manitoba's small businesses as they faced the challenges of an ever-evolving situation, and we have made key investments in our economy and communities all along the way. New hospitals, more personal-care home beds, new schools and much-needed investments in our roads and bridges.

Mr. Speaker, there's more work to do, and I'm proud to be part of a team that is focused on tackling the challenges before us and harnessing the energies, the talents and strengths of Manitobans to secure our future, our freedom and our prosperity.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): You know, like many Manitobans, I've been spending a lot of time in picket lines and in protests lately, and a few days ago, when I was standing in solidarity with Manitobans who thought the Pallister-Stefanson government's housing plan using bus shelters was a bad thing, it sort of occurred to me looking around going, you know, since I've been elected as an MLA, I don't think there has been a day in Manitoba that somebody hasn't been at the Legislature either camped in protest or lending their voice, protesting the direction of this very toxic and mean-spirited government.

And it's kind of saddened me because, you know, for many years the Legislative grounds brought Manitobans together. We would come here, we would celebrate, we would come together as a community. We are again, but now our voices are in unison with protest and with acrimony.

And, you know, most of my adult life I've spent in Manitoba, and we didn't have labour strife in Manitoba. Now it's a routine, regular event where thousands of Manitobans are on strike at any given time. And, you know, this government is trying to rebrand, and best of luck to you; hasn't been going very well. But part of that rebrand is, oh, we're opening, we're going to listen. We're not going to do what you want, but we're going to at least listen to you.

And then you juxtapose, just in two years since I've been elected, how the Manitoba Leg. grounds looks. There are now huge concrete barriers in front of the stairs. You can't even get on the Leg. grounds without going through a security guard. We now have armed guards, at huge expense to the Manitoba people, stationed at our front door. We have overzealous security officers who are hassling MLAs about whether or not they deserve to be in this building—shameful, absolutely shameful.

So what does that say about this government, when this building should be welcoming and open to all Manitobans, and it is a building under siege and lockdown, and this is a government that is scared of Manitobans, that is trying to keep them out, and it is very symbolic about how this government actually governs. And it's sad, and it's shameful, and it needs to end.

So, you know, the pandemic was this sort of right-wing fever dream that we would all sort of degenerate into rugged individualists and we would collapse as a community. Thankfully, that didn't happen. If anything, it showed that Manitobans believe in community. They believe in co-operation. They came

together and fought the pandemic together. They sacrificed as a community together. Everybody sacrificed here except their government—except the Pallister-Stefanson government did not meet the moment.

Instead of fixing problems, this government doubled down and made them worse. They tried to have a pandemic on the cheap. They still try to have a pandemic on the cheap and are mystified when things don't work out, despite their lack of effort and their lack of trying. It is absolutely frightening that how much our province has fallen and diminished since 2016.

Prior to the pandemic, we had the second fastest growing economy in Canada. Where are we now? Stagnating and that was before the pandemic. And, of course, what does this government do during the pandemic? They make the largest civil service and public spending cut in Manitoba's history, laying off 11,000 people in their time of need. We had mass business closures with some of the weakest small business supports in Canada. And you don't have to go very far. I think there's over 50 small businesses just within walking distance of this Legislature that have closed because of the Pallister-Stefanson government neglect.

When you go into Fort Garry and you go down high streets like Corydon, it is absolutely sad to see how many community businesses have shut down. And they didn't have to. But it just shows this government's neglect and this—their distraction with their own internal fights—in deciding, you know, who's their leader, who's their premier—and not being focused on Manitobans.

* (16:30)

We had the deadliest long-term-care homes in Canada. I mean, think about that, how incredibly shameful that is. And rebranding doesn't fix that. Rebranding doesn't bring those loved ones back.

What is this government going to say to Manitobans who lost people, needlessly, in long-term-care homes because of their incompetence and their neglect? There is no answer. They don't even have the courage to face those families; they certainly don't have the courage to show leadership and try to admit their problems and fix it.

Because of the cuts to the ICU, we now have a nursing shortage, and my friends in my caucus have spoken about this in much more eloquent terms than I

could, but the end result is 130,000 surgeries backlogged and growing. And every one of those is a suffering Manitoban. Every one of those is somebody that we could help, that we could improve their life but can't because this government made choices. They made radically ideological choices that they were going to not put money into health care because they wanted money for tax cuts for wealthy Manitobans.

That's the choice. So the wealthiest amongst us get a tax break from this government while 130,000 Manitobans suffer to pay for it. That is absolutely shameful. Shame on you.

This is a government that used the pandemic as cover to continue their slash-and-burn politics of austerity. Despite that, they ran the largest deficit in Manitoba's history. They did it at the same time they were making cuts to health care and education.

Hundreds of millions of dollars of federal government that came here specifically to help Manitobans was not spent. Who does that? The federal government comes and finally gives money to Manitoba and you sock it away in some piggy bank. Why? Because apparently wealthy Manitobans need more tax breaks.

Numerous strikes in the past two years. We have never seen, in my adult lifetime, this kind of labour disruption in Manitoba. Every single one of them was avoidable. Every one of those cost millions to the Manitoba economy. Every one of them slowed down our progress and our recovery and will continue to do that.

Every time the government fights with Manitobans, it prolongs the effects of the pandemic and it makes things worse.

So nothing clearly has changed with this government. We have the Stefanson-Pallister government that's prepared to pander to anti-vaxxers, many of them in their own party, many in their caucus.

They continue to diminish the contributions of Manitobans, because every day you allow a professors' strike to go on or a school custodian strike to go on, you're sending a message to those Manitobans that you don't value their contribution. You don't think they deserve to have a decent, family-supporting wage.

We hear horror stories from professors about early retirement. They're planning to leave the province or looking for other jobs because they aren't valued by this government. And why would they stay?

We see that with all the nursing shortages. They are not valued by this government; why would they stay?

So it's not enough to say, okay, you know what? You know, Pallister, we didn't like his style and we're going to change the style; it wasn't the style that was the problem. It was the misguided and mean-spirited policies. They are not who we are as Manitobans.

Manitobans had told this government, repeatedly, to go in a different direction, and even now—even now—this government refuses to change direction and is just simply saying, well, you know what? We're going to slap some lipstick on this pig and that'll do it. Well, I mean, clock's running out on this government. It was 22 months before many of you will have new careers, and, you know, nothing's changed. Nothing's changed.

You know, this government could have made a hard break from the past. You certainly could prove that you were definitely not the Pallister government of old, but the honest, ugly truth is, is that the Stefanson-Pallister government agreed with everything he did. Voted for it.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I apologize. I might have missed some of that because I was in conversation with the Deputy Clerk, but if the member is going to be referring to the joint governments, he should first use the past government name, and the current government name, if the members actually feel the need to actually do that.

Mr. Wasyliw: So, not only was Premier Pallister enabled by this caucus, he was supported by him. So, you know, one of the also troubling things that I've sort of witnessed in the past couple of years is that the Pallister-Stefanson government lives in its own reality. It is so out of touch with what's happening in Manitoba that they have constructed this alternative universe that they live in, where up is down, down is up.

And I think there's no better example than that than this absolute delusion that they're good fiscal managers. You know, this government, you know, has claimed that the previous NDP government was just fiscally irresponsible, but let's look at their actual record.

You know, the previous government certainly had its issues, but they had 10 balanced budgets. The Pallister-Stefanson government has had one—one. So, the debt-to-GDP ratio when they took office—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable member for Rossmere.

Point of Order

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

I believe you have just instructed the member, and the member just disregarded your instruction by referring to the Pallister-Stefanson government. I'm just wondering if you could call that member to order, please, in keeping with your previous instruction.

Madam Speaker: I do not believe the member has a point of order. What has been happening today is the use of the word Pallister-Stefanson government. And that has been allowed in that particular order, with the past government identified first and the current government identified second.

So I would indicate that the member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Wasyliw: And, of course, so, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 34.6 per cent when they took office. It's now 38.5 per cent, and it's going to be higher next year. So the Pallister-Stefanson government ran the largest deficit in Manitoba's history. They have now borrowed the most money in Manitoba's history, and all while expanding the debt-to-GDP ratio. They had two credit downgrades—unprecedented—two of them. And that's after they've savagely cut health care, education, infrastructure, child care.

So, despite all of—those cuts, the bond-rating agencies are not confident about Manitoba and have downgraded us twice, raising the cost of us borrowing money.

So, when we look at the net debt-to-GDP ratio for every single year that they've been in office, it's been hovering around 34 per cent and it hasn't gone down at all—not one year. And now it's jumped up almost to 40.

* (16:40)

So—and keep in mind, this government's rationale was, well, we have to make all these horrible cuts to education and health care and infrastructure—pretty much everything, because we're going to pay down the debt and deficit. Well, none of that happened.

None of that happened, so where did all that pile of money that they were getting—they got a \$1 billion more money from the federal government—where did

all that money go? Because it didn't go to our children. It didn't go to our long-term-care homes. It didn't go to our health-care system.

Well, where it went was tax cuts to the very wealthy in Manitoba—absolutely shameful. This government's main priority, fiscal priority, has been to warp and distort our tax system to make it less fair for Manitobans. They have pushed the tax system onto middle- and lower income Manitobans.

They've cut our civil servants by 18 per cent. That's 2,600 good-paying, family-supporting jobs lost in a recession. And they wonder why we're number seventh in economic growth in Canada. Class sizes have ballooned. It is now not unusual to have 30 kids in a Manitoba classroom. Teacher-librarians have lost their jobs. Child-care centres are forced to close because they can't find enough staff to keep them open. We've had two professor strikes in five years. They are having a hard time recruiting professors, and many are leaving, taking valuable research funding and innovative research with them.

We no longer have labour peace in this province, and labour peace costs our economy. We had this unnecessary, bizarre Hydro strike, ended up spending millions on it with nothing gained. Bus driver strikes, school custodians—we narrowly averted a nursing strike. They had gone four years without it.

So what did they do with all this borrowed money? Go, now's the time to give a tax break on Calgary-based corporate landlords.

The federal government Parliamentary Budget Office has come out with a report saying that this government has mismanaged finances in Manitoba so badly that we cannot currently pay for the social services we provide based on the level of taxation that we currently have in Manitoba. And what does this government do? They go, great, we'll just cut some more, right? There is absolutely nothing fiscally responsible about this government.

So, this government says it's focused on the economy. If that was true, it would deal fairly with workers and would make sure there was no labour conflict in Manitoba, because labour conflict costs money and it hurts our economy.

If it was true that they cared about the economy, they would not be laying off 18 per cent of our civil service—good, family-supporting jobs, which are the backbone of the economy—and actually help us to be recession-proof.

If they cared about the economy, they would fund our universities properly and our public school system so we could invest in the students of tomorrow and the jobs and workers of tomorrow.

If they cared about the economy, they would have a properly functioning health-care system, because if your community is not healthy, you cannot grow your economy. Those things are linked.

If this care—government cared about the economy, they wouldn't have abandoned small business in Manitoba as they have. We would have hundreds of businesses currently open, hiring Manitobans, paying taxes and growing our economy instead of seeing our economy shrink.

It's interesting. One of the big sort of statistics that this government, obviously, glosses over is that more responsible provinces that actually didn't play footsie with anti-vaxxers and actually had a strong response to COVID came out, from an economic point of view, much stronger than Manitoba did. You just have to look at BC and the Maritime provinces that had a much more robust response—

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

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): I'm encouraged by the words contained in our government's Throne Speech and the new collaborative approach that our government is taking. To be here in the presence of our very first female Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) as we move towards gender equity means the world, not only for me but for all of our young women who have aspirations to also lead in a capacity such as a premier or in the capacity to serve in this Chamber. And I am truly fortunate to have this opportunity to work together with our new leader and all of my caucus colleagues to build a better Manitoba.

Our government has pledged a new beginning for all of us. We must work together with our Indigenous leaders, our Métis people and Inuit to advance reconciliation in our province. This is a time to heal, listen and bring all Manitobans together, and I am so proud—I was so proud just last Friday to stand side by side with Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, our Premier, our Minister of Families (Ms. Squires) to announce \$1.5 million for a new warming shelter for those individuals needing a safe, warm place to call home this winter.

And I'd like to thank James [*phonetic*] Whitford from End Homelessness Winnipeg for leading the project and acknowledge the heartfelt work of the

Bear Clan, the Saabe Peacewalkers and all of the grassroots organizations in attendance. We know that you do the heart work and often aren't acknowledged for the life-saving work that you do, but I would personally like to say thank you.

There are no easy answers to address homelessness and it doesn't discriminate, Madam Speaker. I encourage all members of this Chamber to take a moment and make a donation as we approach the Christmas season to help someone get out of the cold. I know, because there were evenings when I remember searching for my brother on those same streets.

Our Throne Speech provides hope to Manitobans experiencing mental illness and personally, my spirits were lifted when I heard of the establishment of a department that focused on mental health, wellness and recovery. I am so proud that our government has made mental health a priority, investing \$51.3 million to address mental health and recovery.

Again, Madam Speaker, mental illness doesn't discriminate. It affects families from all walks of life. I know because I lost my brother to suicide. My brother, Gregory Sawula, was only 34 years old when he ended his life and for many years he lived with those demons, often veiled in the darkness of mental illness. There were some bright times and I do remember those times with my brother, as a child, but the darkness more often than not left him feeling isolated, dark and unable to cope.

Our family, my mom and dad, tried so hard to find an answer, to find some help, but there was no help for my brother; and on a cold, dismal morning—winter morning, on December 24th, I received that call from my dad, sharing with me that my brother took his life the day before, on December 23rd. Yes, it was Christmas Eve, and while most families were preparing for Christmas celebrations, our thoughts were with my brother, who lost his will to continue the battle against those demons, the demons that he unfortunately endured throughout his teenage and adult life. And I am not sharing my brother's story looking for sympathy, but to serve as a reminder that mental illness affects families from all walks of life.

* (16:50)

For most of my life, following my brother's passing, I kept quiet. I was ashamed to share the reason for my brother's departure. Even my best friends had no idea my brother had taken his own life. My cousins and family never discussed my brother

and the method in which he lost his life. That stigma hung over my head for years. And our three sons were never told about the reason for my brother's passing. I never shared the details for fear that they might also consider suicide as an option, when the anxiety and cruelty of life became too overwhelming.

I buried our wedding album deep under the steps, at the back of our closet. I didn't want to answer those questions when our boys asked, who was that person in those photos? And I regret those actions, for my brother deserved to be remembered and celebrated for the beautiful person he was.

And this year, Madam Speaker, I pledged that our wedding album will be under our Christmas tree as a reminder of my dear brother Greg. We will have those conversations with our granddaughters and sons and remember my brother for the kind, sensitive and loving person he was. And I will personally no longer let the darkness of his death overshadow the beautiful person and brother he was to me. I will no longer hide or forget his memory, but I vow to share his story, so other families suffering know that they are not alone.

As Christmas approaches, and we all leave our seats here in the Legislature to return to our families, please remember those less fortunate, those who are not seeing Christmas as a time of hope, but as the time of desperation. And as we gather to enjoy the beauty of those bright-coloured lights that adorn our homes and tree, be cognizant of those less fortunate. Reach out, lend a hand and ask how you can help. Because your kindness could make a difference.

So today I am here, not as an MLA, but as a mom, as a sister and as a grandmother. And I ask all of you to have compassion in your hearts for everyone who is feeling the effects of drugs, mental illness or any of those demons that quite often many people live with and do not share—share with others, whether it be friends, family, colleagues. This is an illness. This is something that affects people from all walks of life, as I said earlier. And we can't be afraid to talk about mental illness, talk about drug overdose.

I'd also like to extend to my colleague on the other side from Point Douglas, my sincere condolences on the loss of your brother-in-law. I know how hard it is and how difficult it is, and we are all on this earth together. So, I ask all of you to have compassion and, if possible, to try to help those individuals who are currently suffering.

Thank you and God bless.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Before I start, I'd just like to thank our colleague for that powerful story. Thank you so much for sharing. It was really impactful.

Before launching into my comments in response to the Throne Speech, I do just want to congratulate Premier Stefanson. It is a historic accomplishment that we have our first—[interjection] Okay. It is a historic accomplishment, and as a dad to two little girls it does make me really proud that they were able to see this and that they can see themselves in the highest office in this province.

And congratulations, again, to Premier Stefanson on having—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Yes, we were going to let it go once, but twice, maybe not. When referring to members it should be by—in this case, the honourable First Minister.

The honourable member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses)—or, sorry, St. James.

Mr. Sala: So in thinking about my response here to the Throne Speech, you know, I thought it would be important to start just by taking stock of where we're at as a province, and in thinking about that, what I'm reminded of is just how tough of a five years it's been for Manitobans—very, very challenging.

We've had a huge number of Manitobans who've been forced to undergo a lot of struggle as a result of decisions that have been made by this government. And we have heard a lot about how, you know, this government seems to want to place blame on COVID for the challenges that we're facing. But I want to be clear: we know that a huge amount of struggle and suffering has been endured by Manitobans due directly to decisions that have been made by this PC government over the last five years.

It's clear that our new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson)—who wants Manitobans to forget about the last five years—and that they really want to try to turn the page and do a hard rebrand and a reset, hopefully, I guess, with the goal of making Manitobans forget about what's been done. And it's clear that this Throne Speech was focused on trying to do just that.

But there's a big problem for this PC government. It's a really big problem, and that problem is that, you know, when you speak with people in the community, you speak with teachers, you speak with health-care workers, we know that there's a huge problem with trust. This government has broken the trust of

Manitobans. They've broken it time and time again, and Manitobans just simply do not have confidence in the words that are put out by this government.

They know that this Throne Speech was a branding exercise and, you know, that's made pretty clear by the fact that the vast majority of the things that were announced in this Throne Speech were just simply repackaged commitments that were put in place under the Pallister government.

Manitobans know that what the PCs say is one thing and what they do is an entirely different thing. And it's what they do when they think folks aren't looking or once they're already in, and it's what they try to ram through that is of such huge concern with this government.

The last five years have taught us that. We've seen that over and over again. We saw that with what they did to education. Manitobans didn't vote to have our education system dismantled, and, yet, this PC government tried to ram through a bill that ended up being fought against by a huge proportion of Manitobans—and I'm proud to say, our caucus—and that was put to rest.

They also tried to do that with Hydro, in selling off Hydro subsidiaries. They tried to do this—they made massive cuts to our health-care system. Manitobans learned there that we cannot trust this PC government. So we're taught to watch what they do and now what they say; that trust has been broken.

We know what this PC government is about regardless of what it said in the Throne Speech or regardless of the fact that some deck chairs have been moved around here on the Titanic. We know that it's the same government that we're dealing with.

And Premier Stefanson wants to separate herself. It's—[interjection] I apologize. The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) wants to—it's in the notes. I'll fix this for—starting out tomorrow.

The Premier wants to separate herself from the record of this—of the Pallister government and the record that they have over the last five years. But Manitobans know she was there and it's hard to separate yourself when you were the Deputy Premier and the Health Minister during the darkest days in this province's recent history.

And we know that Manitobans recognize that the Premier was there under one of the most horrifying failures of leadership in our Health Department, there at the decision-making table when this government tried to ram through education reform—which was completely refuted by Manitobans—did nothing to resist that, did nothing publicly until it became—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 15 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

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